



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for November 8, 2009
Released on Wednesday, November 4, 2009**

"A Chosen People"

Lesson Text: 1 Peter 2:1-10

Background Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-17

Devotional Reading: Deuteronomy 10:10-15

1 Peter 2:1-10

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to show what Peter teaches us about being God's chosen people.

Principle: to demonstrate that all those who put their faith in Christ are God's chosen people.

Application: to show that when we trust Jesus as our Lord, we become His chosen people, with all the privileges that come with that.

INTRODUCTION

Building Projects

"Measure twice, cut once." "Fresh paint covers a multitude of mistakes." "A job worth doing is worth doing right." These and many other axioms form the folk wisdom of remodelers and their construction projects. One engaged in such work

soon learns, however, that slogans must be backed up by the right tools, quality materials, a good plan, and practiced skills.

To achieve quality results in building projects requires the patience, diligence, and planning abilities of a skilled builder. The true craftsman will not use cull lumber or sloppy workers. The master will not proceed with half-baked plans. The true artisan will not hurry the project to conclusion by cutting corners or compromising the design.

The New Testament sometimes pictures the church as a spiritual "house," an edifice constructed by God for His glory. Paul uses this construction metaphor to picture the church as a temple built on the foundation of the apostles with Jesus as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20, 21; compare 1 Corinthians 3:9-11).

God is the master craftsman with the perfect plan. We are His building material, and He has refined us and sanctified us through His Spirit to be just as He desires. We are built by God to be His chosen household, His holy habitation, or dwelling (Ephesians 2:22).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 63

Place: from "Babylon" (most likely Rome)

In this week's Scripture text, Peter presented his readers with a picture of a life of eternal value and purpose. We should remember the general context and purpose of Peter's letters: advice on how to live as Christians in the midst of hostile nonbelievers.

Our lesson picks up where we left off last week. In the verses just preceding our Scripture text, Peter had described the new hope the apostles' readers had been blessed with. They had been "born again" (1:23), and because of this they had a life that would not fade away. In light of this ("Wherefore" [2:1]), they were to order their walk with a transformed sense of purpose.

Peter undertook to show his readers just how glorious their standing in Christ is. In this light, the lure of the world grows dim.

GROWING STRONG IN THE FAITH (1 Peter 2:1-3)

1. What things must the believer cast off in order to grow in holiness (1 Peter 2:1)?

Peter begins his advice on casting off the impediments to spiritual growth with a list of five attitudes and actions that should be avoided by believers. They are toxic and will poison the soul. He divides the five into three groupings.

First, he exhorts his readers to eliminate *all malice*. This has the sense of evil actions in general. Such actions can be motivated by greed, spite, jealousy, or other moral failings. But the result is an action that intends to harm another person. The word malice can have the connotation of "ugly," the opposite of what is beautiful or lovely (see Philippians 4:8).

The second grouping consists of *guile*, *hypocrisies*, and *envies*. These are attitudes or personality traits. *Guile* is deceit, an orientation of general dishonesty. It describes persons who may be counted on to lie if it benefits them in some way. *Hypocrisies* describe deep insincerity. The hypocritical person will play whatever role is most beneficial to him or her on a personal level. Today, we would describe this as "phoniness." The third attitude in this grouping is *envies*. This bitter, restless spirit always begrudges the success or nice possessions of others. Envy is the opposite of gratitude, of contentment with what God has given to you (see 1 Timothy 6:8).

The last of the three groupings consists of the fifth spiritual poison of *evil speakings*. This word is translated “backbitings” in 2 Corinthians 12:20. This backstabbing behavior is the manifestation of the previous three: a deceitful person who feigns innocence and friendship yet harbors deep resentment and envy. Such persons work behind the scenes to damage the reputation of those whom they dislike.

2. Which of the unhealthy, toxic attitudes and actions Peter mentions gives Christians the most trouble? How do we lay these aside?

Toxic actions spring from toxic attitudes. Such attitudes are part of the old man of sin (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9). Getting rid of these attitudes demands making changes in the way we think and what we allow to dominate our thinking.

Hurtful and harmful attitudes against others come from pride and selfishness. Although this is not a problem Jesus had, He provided an example of overcoming this attitude by demonstrating as a servant what it means to put others first. Paul describes this attitude of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–11. Practicing sincere love by honoring others above self and caring for the needs of others helps eliminate toxic attitudes.

3. In what way is the believer like a newborn baby (vs. 2,3)?

Peter has already reminded us of the eternal *Word* of God as that which results in our new birth as believers. He pictures it as spiritual seed planted in our souls (1 Peter 1:23–25, last week’s lesson). Now he expands this to teach us that the Word is also a source for ongoing growth.

Just as the *newborn* baby denied nourishment will die, so will the Christian who neglects God’s Word. For Peter, this is primarily the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament. But Peter also realizes that the New Testament Scriptures are coming into existence in his day (2 Peter 3:16). Even in his old age, Peter loved Scripture. He testifies that he, the great apostle, continued to grow spiritually by absorbing more truths from God’s Word. He acknowledges this by thanking the source of the Word, our *gracious* Lord.

People are more cautious these days about what ingredients are included in the foods they eat. Some avoid trans-fats, preservatives, and various additives. But how careful are we about our spiritual diet? Do we shun the unhealthy and feast on the healthy in this realm?

BEING UNITED IN CHRIST (1 Peter 2:4-8)

4. Why did Peter compare Christ to a stone (v. 4)?

Peter is saying that God’s building project is a spiritual house made up of people. It started with the first *chosen* and *living stone*, namely Jesus. But He was *disallowed* by His human evaluators. They had no insight into the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, was the most *precious* of all human beings. This lack of recognition led to Jesus’ death (see 1 Corinthians 2:8). This does not negate the truth that Jesus is indeed the cornerstone for the church (see Ephesians 2:20).

5. What kinds of sacrifices do believers offer up to God in their role as priests (v. 5)?

One stone does not make a building no matter how immense it may be. God’s *spiritual house* requires other *lively* (living) *stones*. These are the believers—us. Peter also now reveals the nature of this spiritual house. It is a temple, a place of worship. It is where priests *offer sacrifices* to God.

Under the old covenant, only a special group of people could act as priests. In Christ, every believer has this privilege. Peter called it a holy priesthood because believers are set apart to serve God in the spiritual temple that is the church, the body of Christ. Instead of offering animal sacrifices, the Christian gives the offerings of a consecrated life and words of praise and thanksgiving (cf. Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15).

Peter made sure that we do not think we have somehow merited this honor in our own righteousness. The sacrifices that we offer are accepted only because of the redeeming work of Christ. He is the great High Priest (cf. Heb. 4:14-16), under whom we serve by His grace.

6. From what book was Peter quoting in verse 6?

In this verse Peter was referring to Isaiah 28:16. The "wherefore" (1 Pet. 2:6) indicates that this quotation offers support to what he had just written. God promised that He would lay down a great cornerstone. This stone would be placed in "Sion," or Zion, a name for Jerusalem that connotes the place of God's presence and ultimately of His rule in that day when His kingdom will be fully manifest (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Neb. 12:22-24).

This cornerstone is "elect" (1 Pet. 2:6), or chosen, and, as already indicated, "precious" (v. 4), or greatly valued. Any person who places his trust in this stone, who of course is Christ, will have no cause to be ashamed ("confounded"). Shame is the result of building our life on what is foolish and insubstantial. In Christ, we have eternal purpose and protection.

7. In what areas of life have you experienced the preciousness of Christ? How do you share this fact with others?

Christ is so precious that people are willing to give up wealth, power, and prestige just to dwell in His presence. Matthew 13:44-46 relates how precious and valuable He is to those who truly know Him. Some of the most precious words in the world are "I love you." The precious Christ shouts these words from the cross and whispers them at the bedside of the sick.

The knowledge and presence of Christ has brought comfort and peace in the midst of trials and disappointments. Christians have felt the preciousness of Christ through His body on earth, the church. As members of the church support, encourage, and provide for one another, Christ's nearness is felt.

The greatest way in which we experience the precious love of Christ is in salvation. John 3:16 echoes this precious love that all believers have experienced.

8. In what sense is Christ the pivotal figure in the history of every person (vs. 7,8)?

The Lord Jesus is the One with whom all men have to deal. The believer understands what a great treasure He is. He knows that apart from Him he would have no hope. However, Peter's quotation from Psalm 118:22 also makes the converse clear: for the unbeliever, a failure to believe in Christ leads to ultimate sorrow.

Concerning the word "disallowed" in 1Peter 2:7, Alan Stibbs pointed out that "stones were examined and approved before they were used in first-class building. Rejected stones were described, and perhaps in some way marked, as 'disapproved' (cf....1Cor. ix. 27)" (*The First Epistle General of Peter*, Eerdmans). Just as the Jewish leaders rejected Christ, so too the pagan leaders of Peter's day refused to believe.

First Peter 2:8 begins with a quotation from Isaiah 8:14 that adds to the thought already expressed from Psalms. We can picture in our minds stumbling over a rock that stands in our path. This is what happens to all those who reject Christ. There is no neutral position in regard to Him. We either embrace Him and are built up in Him, or we stumble to our ruin by our rejection of His gracious work.

The last phrase of 1 Peter 2:8, Peter understands that God in His foreknowledge is aware that the enemies of the cross will reject the gospel, thus *they were appointed* to this. We can be sure, however, that Peter's heart longs for the salvation of his nation, as does Paul's (Romans 9:1-3).

RECEIVING GREAT PRIVILEGES (1 Peter 2:9-10)

9. How does verse 9 convey the great privileges of the believer?

These verses present one of the great catalogs of the believer's exalted standing in Christ. The privileges that Israel had under the old covenant are now extended to the Christian church, including both believing Jews and Gentiles, and they are experienced in an even richer way.

The believers are first called a chosen generation. Just as Israel had been chosen not for any merit of their own (c.f. Deut. 7:6-8), so believers have favored by God's electing love. The words of Isaiah are applied to the church: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise" (43:21).

Because they belong to Christ, the great High Priest and King, all believers are part of a royal priesthood (see Exodus 19:5-6, which emphasizes the idea of priesthood much as in 1 Peter 2:9).

Believers are also part of a holy nation. Believers are part of something greater than themselves, part of a grand covenant community.

Finally, believers are referred to as a peculiar people, or a special people uniquely possessed by God. We are honored beyond measure to have a close relationship with the Almighty.

Ultimately, all of these privileges are ours so that God will receive glory. How amazing it is that such poor, lowly people could be rescued from sin's "darkness" into the "marvelous light" of God's truth. Again, the ultimate purpose, the church's "reason for being," is to *show forth* His praises. The church does not exist for its own pleasure, but to glorify God in all it does.

10. How did Peter emphasize the grace God bestowed (v. 10)?

Peter summarized the richness of God's grace in our lives by emphasizing how He took us who had been separated from Him and made us part of His family (1 Pet. 2:10; cf. Eph. 2:11-19). We were lost in sin, but He rescued us. An awareness of these rich blessings should have a transformative effect on our lives, firing us with a holy purpose.

PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1.** Spiritual growth comes when we embrace God's Word and leave sin behind (1 Pet. 2:1-3).
- 2.** We must never allow the world's opinions to keep us from following Christ (v. 4).
- 3.** Spiritual growth occurs as we participate in the community of believers (v. 5).
- 4.** We should be prepared for rejection, for we represent the One the world rejects (vs. 6-8).
- 5.** Our high position carries a high responsibility—telling others about our Lord (v. 9).
- 6.** We should serve God humbly, always recalling His mercy (v. 10).

CONCLUSION

Being Royalty, Being Holy

How would you react if you learned that the Queen of England were coming to visit your home? Would you clean, paint, and prepare carefully? Or would you let the trash accumulate until the house smelled like a landfill? Even if we are not British, most of us would feel honored to have a visit from royalty, and we would want to be seen at our best.

Within the church, there is (or should be) a real sense that all are royals. We don't use titles like queen, count, prince, or duchess, but we are part of God's chosen, royal nation. Do we act like royalty in the best sense of the word? Do we treat fellow Christians as if they are princes and princesses? Most of all, do we honor King Jesus in all we do? Are we His obedient servants?

The apostle Peter was a Jew, and he grew up with the rich heritage of his people. One of the things that distinguished the Jews from other nations in the ancient world was their awareness of being a chosen people, a nation set apart by God for His purposes. The Jews were to be a holy nation, dedicated to serving God. This role of being the holy people of God was continued in the church by its early leaders—leaders such as Peter. May we honor this role in the year 2010 and beyond as we work toward the unity of believers as a holy, royal nation for Jesus.

PRAYER

Holy God, king of all, to You we offer our loyalty, our obedience, and our service. May Your name be praised above all others, and may You build us into a holy church for Your glory. We pray this in the name of Your precious cornerstone, Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God continues to build His people.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "A Suffering People." We are called to commit ourselves to God during our times of suffering for Jesus. Study 1 Peter 4:12-19.

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