

Our Priestly Calling (1 Peter 2:9-12)

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[0 : 00] And of course, we're going to hear more about how this grace looks like, what it looks like flowing into our lives. Wonderful privilege to have Pastor Sam cut forth from Howard Baptist to preach in just a moment.

But why don't we turn our Bibles on or open them? And I'm just going to read from 1 Peter 2. And we're just going to hear from the first couple of verses, which will give us the context for what Sam's going to be talking about.

So again, we're speaking through our statement of faith. And this is one of the parts that will connect to the next part of our faith. So, all right, this is God's Word. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to Him, the living stone, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to Him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[1 : 16] For in Scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe this stone is precious, but to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.

They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. So dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul.

We'll pause there. And maybe, Sam, if you want to come up briefly, what's one thing that's been happening in your life that you're grateful to God about, and that we can praise God with you? Well, I would be very grateful. There's a lot of things. Which one do I want to pick? Well, I'm very thankful for my wife. She's at home looking after my two girls. She's Anna.

[2 : 41] One of my girls is very sick, and so she's been looking after her so kindly and graciously and gave me a break today between church services, and so very thankful for Anna. Fantastic. So normally you'll see any pastor at Howard Baptist.

Your worship service time is at 9.30, and so some of us were like, wow, what's that even look like? But thank you for bringing us the word, and you'll be speaking into the next statement of faith. So, yeah, over to you. I'll bring our music stand. Thanks. It's wonderful to be here again to share the word of God with you.

Hope you're encouraged and built up in your faith and your love of God. Let's just pray as we come to God's word. Heavenly Father, please come and speak to us by your word.

We need your encouragement, your blessing, and your goodness to flow into our lives, so please do come. We pray we would be open to hear and listen. Lord, we pray for our flesh that it wouldn't rebel against you or be inattentive to your voice now.

[3 : 45] We pray against the world and the world's influence, that the world would not make us feel ashamed or embarrassed by what we read in your word, but we would believe on it and hold on to it and obey it.

Lord, we pray for the devil, that he would not come along like a bird to pick up the seeds that you want to see sprout in our life because of your word now. And so please do protect us.

Please do help us to listen to your word, I pray. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Today we address the difference that Jesus will make in your life, the role and calling that he has upon you once he has saved you.

As you've been going through your statement of faith, you've looked at different topics, scripture and how they speak to us about God. You've looked at God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and their work in your life, and at sin and the wonderful salvation that is in Jesus.

Now we look at your Christian life, the difference, the change and the responsibility that comes with God's wonderful work in you, a new calling upon your life as his priest.

[4 : 58] 1 Peter is going to help us do that. I am going to be speaking from 1 Peter 2 verses 9 to 12 to help understand our new calling that Jesus makes on our life.

To get us quickly into the book of 1 Peter and the lives of the Christians that first heard this book, let me take you back in history a little bit. It's 150 AD, so 150 years after Jesus.

You're a Christian in the town of Lyon and the province of Gaul, and you're under the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, the local officials hate Christians, and so do most of the people, and they want to eradicate you from the city.

At first, you're beaten up and you're robbed. They know that you worship on a Sunday, so they break into your house on a Sunday and ransack your house. It gets worse, though, as they round the church up and they imprison you.

They put you in prison for two weeks later. Then they get you out and ask you to deny your faith and recant what you believe. You refuse, so back to prison you go. Two weeks later, you're brought out in front of a baying crowd and told to deny your faith or die.

[6 : 11] Some do, but most don't, and they are killed for their faith. All 46 of them. Just 46 in a major town in Gaul.

This is truly what happened in Lyon. And one man, an elder of the church called Arrhenius, he had left to petition Caesar to stop this persecution.

He left before the imprisonment, and when he got home, he found that the whole church had been martyred. And do you know what he did? He started the church again.

He started preaching Jesus. This is the type of context, historical context, in which Peter writes and speaks into. It's not the exact same time period, but this was what was going on.

So Peter's writing to kind of a dispersed and persecuted minority. Christianity is a new religion. It was started in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when people were gathered from all around the Roman Empire, and the apostles spoke the gospel in many languages.

[7 : 16] And as those heard and believed, they went back to their hometown, or they were persecuted and had to flee. And now they took this message of forgiveness with them as they returned home. But they were just minorities in towns, 46 people there in Lyon.

Scattered, thought of as weird. They were called cannibals, because of the idea of communion, and eating and drinking Jesus' body and blood. Believe it or not, they were called atheists, because they only believed in one God, and not many gods.

And so they had a lot going against them. And so Paul's writing into this atmosphere to people who perhaps feel small and insignificant. They would have been tempted to feel alone and isolated and fearful.

He's writing here to encourage them. He wants to encourage, build them up and bless them. He wants to do that to us today. He's going to write to them about their identity, who they are as Christians, and then the life that will naturally flow from that.

Paul writes that to us today, to build us up and strengthen us with who we are, our identity, and our purpose here. So do keep your Bibles open or on to 1 Peter 2, 9 to 12, as we're going to be strengthened to see our identity and our purpose.

[8 : 31] So first, our new identity is in verses 9 and 10. God's description of us is rather beautiful and endearing. Just listen to it from verse 9 and 10. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you're God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. All the work of the Father that you've looked at, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all the work of salvation and justification, all of that in your statement of faith has produced a new people, a new people group, a new race here, a new priesthood, a new nation.

This is who you have become. And all the slightly odd language we read about nations and priests and households and sacrifices and peoples. It's meant to remind us, of course, of the people of Israel.

So Israel was a literal people group and race and nation. And they had real priests who killed real animals as sacrifices. And so when Peter's using this language that you are a people, that you are a new race, that you are priests, he's intentionally reminding us of the special people of God and saying you are now welcomed as one of God's people.

And to the Jewish people at the time, you would have been used to a national faith and looking for kind of a geographical unity, but then you're scattered and so you would have felt very unsure about your faith and faith was hard.

[10:15] And so what a relief to come here into 1 Peter and to read, you are still a nation loved by God, even if you're scattered. Scattered, but a global new people.

And these verses teach us that if you are building your life upon Jesus, you are fundamentally different from your friends and family who aren't. You are a different race, a different nation, and a completely different people.

You might have friends with whom you share hobbies and past experiences, but if you believe in Jesus, you are a whole different race, spiritually speaking.

You have a different culture, different rules for your life, a different mindset, a different shape to your week, and a different set of priorities, and the difference will show.

New Zealand is a really multicultural nation, and so I'm sure that you have friends who are of different races and cultures than you, who are born in a different country, and the way that you work and think can be quite different from them.

[11:17] And so if you are from an Asian background, then I bet you wash dishes differently from me. European New Zealanders, we do this unhygienic thing where we wash all the dishes in the same water, the same dirty water.

Whereas Asian New Zealanders have this constant running water technique that they use that's quite a bit different from us. If you're from a Pacific Islander background, you're a New Zealander here, you have big family gatherings with lots of cousins, that might be a more important priority to you.

You see your race and your people group and your culture, they do make a difference to your life, to how you live. And it's the same with you if you are now a holy people, a new nation, a priest of God. You are different because you believe in Jesus and you have become part of his nation. As a Christian, you should be expecting to face culture shock all the time.

at your school, when you go off to uni, when you start work, wow, I'm different. Why am I so different? Well, it's because you're a whole new race, a whole new people, a whole new culture before God.

[12:30] Jesus has changed you. Yet though you are different, you are incredibly loved. Peter calls us a people of God's own possession in verse 9 and says that once you weren't a people but now you are God's people in verse 10.

We are God's. God wants us. We are treasured by him. You imagine a small child sees her favorite cuddly toy being moved by a guest, by another kid.

She immediately runs over, snatches it up, clutching it, informing everyone around her, that's mine. God has a similar passion for those he has rescued out of darkness and into his great light.

You are mine. Those who believe in Jesus are God's people and that's a precious identity to have. And out of that identity of being loved but also different from others, we see our purpose flow.

The purpose to which God has called us. So verse 9 says that you may proclaim the excellencies of God who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[13:42] We are a people who proclaim the superb, supreme nature of Jesus because of his rescue of us. Because of how good the change he has made in our life is.

And the idea here is that it's easy to talk about the things that you love and the things that are important to you. So you can talk for ages about your favorite new TV show, about investments, about baking, blogging, fitness, politics, anime, whatever it is you really love.

I'm sure you could talk to me about it. We can talk lots about the things that we love. What this passage is showing us is that above us, if we believe in Jesus, see him as excellent, have him as the center of our lives, love him for his mercy, love him for making us a new people, we should want

to proclaim his excellencies, what he has done.

We want to talk about him. He's wonderful to us. In China, when Christians gather, they have to hide, arriving at different times, meeting in different places, putting mattresses up on the walls against the windows and doors so their singing isn't heard so they don't get arrested.

They probably would love that loud rain out there because it might drown out the singing so they are not caught. What a privilege and opportunity we have to proclaim Jesus in New Zealand.

[15:05] You can open your doors wide, your windows wide so your neighbors will hear you praising Jesus. We have that opportunity every day to proclaim how amazing he is.

And I want you to note the word that says there to proclaim his excellencies. It's a word we do well to use more often and we don't use it because often we've substituted in a word like share.

We share the gospel, we don't necessarily proclaim it but the Bible does tell us not just to share the gospel but to preach it and to proclaim it. The message of the gospel, the message about Jesus is so important and so truthful and so life-saving that it must be proclaimed.

A proclamation carries with it authority and conviction and joy and urgency. Proclaim God's excellencies. Don't just share it like it's something that you could say yes or no to.

Evangelism isn't kind of a potluck where we all bring something to share and all have a bit. No, it's an urgent declaration of the most important truth that Jesus saves.

[16:13] Later we'll read that in the book you read that you need to proclaim with gentleness and grace so we don't want to be arrogant or annoying about it but we do want to proclaim with authority the truth of Jesus and what he's done for us.

So we have this new identity, the beloved people of God who begin to see our purpose and to proclaim him and then our purpose continues in verses 11 and 12.

Here we have a real pivot point in the whole book. You know a netball when you can't move your foot you catch it and you can take one foot off and you can pivot on that foot that's what Peter does here.

He pivots on this one foot of our identity and he says now we go off this way. This is a real pivot. We talked about our Christian identity and now we move onto how we are to live for him.

So verses 11 and 12 they give us an overview and they pivot us in the direction. So look at verse 12. Beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

[17:21] Verse 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Now Peter here in these verses he returns to calling us exiles and sojourners that's exiles people who are cast out and sojourners that's kind of strangers. So in the last section we have been used different titles for Christians hasn't he?

He says we're a chosen race a holy nation living stones royal priesthood they are very grand and heavenly in spiritual terms and when Peter uses them it's though our heads poke up into the clouds into the heavens and we get to see through God's eyes who we are but then in verse 11 we kind of come back down to the earth back down to the ground with a bit of a thud and we remember hey we're exiles we're strangers we're different in this world so once again how do we live as people who are royal priest holy nation and also exiles?

Paul lays out what we're to do and why. He writes to abstain from your sinful passions or desires so Paul wants us as new Christians as those are loved and saved by Jesus to fight against the sin that wages war in our soul fight against evil that still remains in you and then on the other hand verse 12 keep your conduct honourable among others godly among the Gentiles so conduct is this pattern of life day in day out your conduct your regular habit of life godly Gentiles are those who aren't God's people so display a godly pattern of life day after day before other people negatively don't do evil fight evil positively do what is good before others and he tells us why so that others will see your good deeds and glorify god on the day of visitation so your good deeds your fighting of the flesh they're going to be used to bring about more glory for this excellent god who you love more glory when he returns and I want you to notice first we're still to fight sin and not become like the world fight sin that's key but second we're called not to withdraw from the world because people need to see our lives see our good deeds that's key too so don't give up on godliness and don't withdraw from the world but this is the harder way this is hard it's harder to be in the world and godly it's easy to be godly when you're surrounded by godly people when you're in church when you're at a church camp a christian camp when you're among your friends it's easy to be godly and it's easy to live in

the world when you don't look any different from the world and you just go along with everybody else that's easy too but neither of those easy ways is right because neither of them brings the glory that is due to god's name for as we live godly lives in the world god will be glorified we're called to live in the world and to live in the world as godly christians one writer summed up the point nicely by saying we are different new identity we are different so live differently and you will make a difference we are different so live differently and you will make a difference peter will go on to address this different living as exiles and as a treasure position we'll live differently in society in the workplace and at home we'll live different lives as citizens under our government as workers under our boss and as wives and fathers in our household our christian life will affect every area of our life our priestly calling means we're completely changed in every area of our life and so to this scattered and isolated christian groups peter says you are a new people sometimes it's hard but you are treasured by god he welcomes you into his people live for him and for his glory even if it is your small godliness surrounded by others who do not obey live for him glory in him proclaim his excellencies so you can be encouraged as you serve god as you love god you are dearly loved by god you are a part of his special chosen loved people he treasures you you are a prize to him and he's asking you to go and live for him to fight a sin in your life to proclaim the new life that you have in him and to live in the world for his glory this is what we have been called to as those who have been wonderfully saved by the grace of the lord jesus let's pray heavenly father please do change us more and more into the image of our son of your son jesus thank you so much that you have saved us you have called us you have made us your people a wonderful people of your possession please help us to live godly lives in front of others not to be ashamed or embarrassed not to have weak wills or feeble hearts but help us to live for you desiring for your glory and your excellencies to be displayed to the world give us courage to do this we pray in jesus name amen do you