

Hope When Life is Hard...



A VERSE BY VERSE
EXPOSITION OF
THE EPISTLE OF
FIRST PETER

The People of God 1 Peter 2:9-10 (692)

As a couple of writers put it, “The sunset burial at [Ronald] Reagan’s presidential library in Simi Valley closed the curtain on six days of remembrance, pageantry and patriotic ritual for a larger-than-life figure whose influence was felt around the globe” (Hutcheson/Chmielewski, Knight Ridder, *Star-Telegram*, 6/12/04). Most of us watched at least some of the ceremonies that followed the death of Ronald Reagan this past week. Two highlights were his lying in state in the Rotunda of the nation’s Capital and, of course, the State Funeral service in the National Cathedral. Thousands of funerals were held in this country last week. But only one merited the privilege of a state funeral with all its formality and pageantry. Was Mr. Reagan so much better than the other men and women who died? No. This extraordinary privilege was Reagan’s on account of his status, his standing, his position as a former President of the United States. Those two words “position” and “privilege” introduce us to the big idea of this particular sermon. Because of *our* position in Christ we enjoy the privileges, are heirs of the promises, and fulfill the purposes that God intended for His chosen people.

Listen carefully as I read **1 Peter 2:9-10**. *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies*

of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We have arrived at the last two verses in the first major section of 1 Peter (1:3-2:10). Verses 9-10 are packed with theological and practical implications. In these verses Peter answers two of the most important questions that Christians can ask – who are we and what are we to do. Look at the verses with me – *But you are (2:9), for you once were (2:10), but now you are (2:10), that you may (2:9)*. So my sermon is structured around three questions. First, who are we ... really? Second, what are we called to do? Third, so what?

Who are we? Beloved, our identity is completely in Christ. As He is, we are. In Christ we enjoy the privileges, are heirs of the promises, and fulfill the purposes that God intended for His chosen people. By referring to his readers as “chosen” in the very first sentence of his letter (*who are chosen, 1:1*), Peter had hinted that the Church is the true Israel, the rightful heir of all the privileges and all the promises made to the Old Testament people of God. So here, calling on additional Old Testament texts, he transfers to the Christian community a string of titles that originally applied to Israel (see Kelly, p. 95-96). *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession (2:9a)*.

This transfer of titles is easy enough to see when you look at the Old Testament texts from which the titles are taken. **Exodus 19:5-6**, “ ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be **My own possession among all the peoples (2:9)**, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a **kingdom of priests** (royal priesthood, 2:9) and a **holy nation (2:9)**. These are the words that you

*shall speak to the sons of Israel.’ “ Isaiah 43:20, “The beasts of the field will glorify Me; the jackals and the ostriches; because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My **chosen people**” (chosen race, 2:9). Peter makes explicit in 2:9 what he hinted at in 1:2, that the Church is the true Israel of God. In Christ we enjoy the privileges, are heirs of the promises, and fulfill the purposes that God intended for His chosen people.*

How is it that the Church assumes these titles in verse 9? Let’s examine the question **theologically**. You need to remember three points. First, the person and work of Jesus Christ is the focus of the Old Testament. If one is to interpret the Scriptures properly one must always keep in mind the goal of the Scriptures, the point of the Bible, the ultimate horizon of God’s revelation. Reformed theology has always argued that Jesus Christ Himself is the central truth of the Old Testament; that Jesus Christ – not Israel or the Millennium - stands at the center of everything. Together John, Tom, and I read a very helpful book by R. T. France called *Jesus in the Old Testament*. France says, “Jesus saw *his* mission as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures; not just of those which predicted a coming redeemer, but of the *whole sweep* of Old Testament ideas ... That was why he could find in *all the scriptures the things concerning himself*” (*Jesus and the Old Testament*, p.79-80). He says, “Jesus presented *his* ministry as the fulfillment of the *whole future hope* of the Old Testament” (*Tyndale Bulletin*, p.58).

The Reformation Study Bible (Geneva Study Bible) includes an article by Edmund Clowney entitled “What Is the Bible About?” Listen to part of Clowney’s answer: “Jesus Christ is therefore the theme of the whole Old Testament ... There is no strand in the history of God’s salvation (or of His work of judgment) that does not lead to Jesus Christ, that in all things He may have the preeminence

(**Col.1:18**). Jesus Christ is in all the Old Testament, not merely in a few messianic passages” (p. 2039). The person and work of Jesus Christ is the focus of the Old Testament.

Second, Jesus saw Himself as the true Israel of God. France asks, “What relationship did [Jesus] see between Old Testament Israel on the one hand and himself and his disciples on the other? In particular, what reference did [Jesus] make to Old Testament prophecies about the future of Israel, and where did *he* look for their fulfillment” (*Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel: A Study of the Teaching of Jesus*, p.55). Jesus saw Himself and His ministry as the fulfillment of the Old Testament texts often claimed to be referring to a future millennium (**Isaiah 35:5-6; Matt. 11:45**). Jesus interpreted the experiences of the nation as foreshadowing his own experiences (**Matt. 4:4/Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:7/Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:10/Deut. 6:13; Hosea 11:1/Matt. 2:14-15**). Jesus saw Himself in His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King foreshadowed in the individuals in the Old Testament history. Jesus understood men like Jonah, Solomon, David, the priesthood, Elisha, Elijah, and Isaiah to be types of Himself (**Matt. 12:41-42, 22:45; John 4:12, 8:53**). Jesus saw Himself as the fulfillment of the entire revelation which is the Old Testament (**Lu. 4:21, 24:25-27, 32, 44-45; John 5:39**). After an examination of the evidence, R. T. France concluded, “I have found no instance where Jesus expects a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy other than through his own ministry” (Tyndale Bulletin, p.58). Peter seems to agree. **1 Peter 1:10-12** ... *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of God within them was indicating as he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in*

these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look.

Third, the true Israel is now Christ and all who are in Him. In Christ we enjoy the privileges, are heirs of the promises, and fulfill the purposes that God intended for His chosen people.

How is it that the Church assumes these titles in verse 9? Let's now examine the question **historically**. In Exodus 19 Israel entered into a covenant with God. **Exodus 19:1-8**, *In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. ³ And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. ⁵ 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."* ⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ And all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

"In making this covenant with Israel, God [reminds them] that he has redeemed them from Egypt; he has brought them on eagles' wings to himself at Mount Sinai. Now he claims them as his people, distinct from all the peoples of the

earth, to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests" (Clowney, p. 89). What a privilege – to be brought into such close fellowship with God; to have God Himself dwell among them; to be holy because He is holy. But the people of Israel broke God's covenant. They defiled themselves with immorality and idolatry. And because of their great sin suffered the consequences of God's judgment (see Clowney, p. 89). This judgment reached its climax when, in **Hosea 1:9** God declares, *"for you are not My people and I am not your God."* It is this declaration that is behind Peter's statement in **verse 10**, *for you once were NOT A PEOPLE.*

But this terrible declaration is not the end of the story in the Old Testament. God also promised a marvelous restoration. Israel would again be made holy; would again obey His voice; would again be all God intended her to be. Isaiah describes the marvel of God's restoration (see Clowney, p. 89-90). **Isaiah 43:19–21**, *"Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert."*²⁰ *"The beasts of the field will glorify Me; the jackals and the ostriches; because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people."*²¹ *"The people whom I formed for Myself, will declare My praise."*

Even Hosea spoke of this restoration. **Hosea 1:10, 2:23**, *Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it will come about that, in the place where it is said to them, "You are not My people," it will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God." ... "And I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' and they will say, 'Thou art my God!'"* We believe the Bible teaches that this restoration takes place

in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in all who are in Him. "Israel was chosen, but proved unfaithful to its calling. Jesus comes as the elect one, the beloved Son of the Father, and He fulfills the calling of Israel, the Servant of the Lord" (see Clowney, p. 93). France agrees. He says, "Where Israel failed Jesus proves to be the true Son of God. In Him Israel's promise is fulfilled" (Tyndale Bulletin, p.67). In Christ we enjoy the privileges, are heirs of the promises, and fulfill the purposes that God intended for His chosen people.

Now we come to the second question. **What are we to do?** Why has God so graciously singled us out as a people for His own possession? Why has God called us as a community into existence? Well, why did He call Israel? In **Isaiah 43:21** He explains, "*The people whom I have formed for Myself, will declare My praise.*" God's purpose for His people remains the same. Peter says that God has singled us out *that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* Beloved, ours is the dual duty of praise and proclamation - of worship and witness. God has called us to the great work of worship – to praise Him for who He is and for what He has done. In worship we praise God for His mighty deeds in creation, His works in history, and His work of salvation. In worship we also thank Him for these great works, especially the gracious work of calling us out of the darkness of spiritual ignorance (**1:14**) and unbelief (**2:7**). **Colossians 1:12-14**, *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.* ¹³ *For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* We exist to worship the one living and true God.

God has also called us to the great work of witness or proclamation. Of all the people on the planet this ministry of proclamation is given to us. What a privilege! But this proclamation was never intended to be the duty of an hour on the Lord's Day. Indeed, we proclaim, we announce, we witness in and by our daily lives. Peter is setting us up for a lengthy presentation of this very point in the rest of his letter. We proclaim the excellencies of God by our actual, real, audible, verbal communication of the gospel of God's grace (3:15); by our response to verbal criticisms and joking (1:12, 3:16); by the holy (1:15) and reverential (1:17) demeanor of our lives generally; by behavior, speech, and attitudes that are above reproach (2:12); by maintaining a clear conscience (3:16); by tenacious conformity to the will of God as revealed to us in the Bible (3:13, 4:2); by a separated life lived as a grateful and obedient bond-servant of the living God (1:14, 4:2); and by an obvious and sincere affection for other Christians (1:22). We exist to witness to the majesty of God in every dimension of our lives.

So, what difference does it make? To what end does Peter continue to stress our status, our standing, our position, our calling in the eyes of God? Let me tell you a little story.

Mark Twain wrote a book entitled *The Prince and the Pauper*. This book was the basis for a great old movie of the same title starring Errol Flynn. Two boys were born on the same day in the great city of London. One boy, Tom Canty, was the son of a poor and disagreeable man who lived in the slums of the city. The other boy was the son of the King of England himself. In appearance the two boys grew to look so much alike as to be indistinguishable from one another. At about the age of twelve, quite by accident, they met and in a boyhood game exchanged

clothes, each one pretending to be the other. Unaware of the switch the palace guards threw the beggar boy (the true Prince) out into the streets. Unaware of the switch the King and his court treated the Prince (the true beggar boy) as the future King. The book is about their experiences in these reversed roles. As you might expect, Tom Canty, the poor boy was treated royally. But the young Prince, claiming to be the future King of England, was treated harshly, ridiculed, pushed around, threatened, misunderstood. He was hungry and cold. He had but one loyal friend in the world, Miles Hendon. One of the remarkable features is how the Prince carried himself under such circumstances. His behavior was driven not by his hard situation, his ragged appearance, or by the attitude of the people around him but by the awareness of his position as the heir to the throne. So conscious was he of his true position (even as a ragged little boy) that he demanded of others the respect and deference rightly due the King of England.

Remember, we live in a world that is hard. Awareness of your true status, your true position in Christ will be a comfort and encouragement to you in time of suffering and hardship. A keen awareness of your primary identity; a keen awareness of God's grand purpose for you and for the Church ... these two things will enable you to maintain a righteous posture, demeanor, attitude, habit, conviction unaffected by temporal circumstances. These two assurances – the sure knowledge of who you are and what you are called to do - will foster a marvelous consistency and stability to your life. These two will clear up the ambiguities that so often plague us as to what this life is all about. These two will encourage you when others and appearances would suggest that you are nothing and that being a Christian is a foolish pursuit. In Christ we enjoy the privileges, are heirs of the promises, and fulfill the purposes that God intended for His chosen people.

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1 Peter 2:9-10 (692)

Regarding the first service in our new facility next Sunday please pray for:
A full house (450-500) ... that many lost/unchurched will attend ... that all necessary preparations will be accomplished ... that Christ will be exalted in every element of worship ... that visitors will be effectively followed-up ... for the "practice" service on June 16 ... for patience as we get used to a new building and new procedures

The Big Idea:

Because of *our* position (status) in Christ we enjoy the _____, are heirs of the _____, and fulfill the _____ that God intended for His chosen people.

1 Peter 2:9-10. *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Two most important questions:

I. Who are we?

Peter transfers to the Christian community a string of _____ that originally applied to Israel.

1 Peter 2:9, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.*

Exodus 19:5-6, " 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be **My own possession among all the peoples (2:9)**, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a **kingdom of priests** (royal priesthood, **2:9**) and a **holy nation (2:9)**. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.' "

Isaiah 43:20, "The beasts of the field will glorify Me; the jackals and the ostriches; because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My **chosen people**"
(chosen race, 2:9).

How is it that the Church assumes these titles?

Let's examine this question theologically

You need to remember three points:

The person and work of Jesus Christ is the _____ of the Old Testament.

Jesus saw Himself as the true _____ of God.

The true Israel is now Christ and all who are _____.

Let's examine the question historically

See **Exodus 19:1-8**.

Because of their great sin Israel suffered the consequences of God's _____.

This judgment reached its climax when, in **Hosea 1:9** God declares, "*for you are not My people and I am not your God.*"

God also promised a marvelous _____.

Isaiah 43:19—21, "*Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.*"²⁰ "*The beasts of the field will glorify Me; the jackals and the ostriches; because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people.*"²¹ "*The people whom I formed for Myself, will declare My praise.*"

See also **Hosea 1:10, 2:23**

We believe the Bible teaches that this restoration takes place in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in all who are in Him.

II. What are we to do?

Why has God singled us out as a people for His own possession?

Isaiah 43:21, "*The people whom I have formed for Myself, will declare My praise.*"

Peter says that God has singled us out *that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (2:9).*

Ours is the dual duty of _____ and proclamation - of worship and _____.

III. What difference does it make?

To what end does Peter continue to stress our status, our standing, our position,
our calling in the eyes of God?