

I PETER 2:4-10
FAITH IS BUILT UPON?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Peter chapter 2 as we continue our in-depth study of this letter that Peter wrote to Christians who were scattered for their faith.

Today we hear a lot about privilege, and it becomes a word that is associated with being male or white and that gives you some kind of privilege to do whatever you want. Which is not true, but it is what is being spoken of today.

But what about us as Christians, do we have some kind of privilege in our own lives?

Now some of you may be thinking, *“Of course not, we are a persecuted group of people, and what we believe many today are fighting against. So of course we are not privileged!”*

I think we are privileged.

Let me explain.

Look at all the blessings that we have in Christ because of our faith in Him! No other group of people can enjoy what we have unless they come to Christ and then they too will be privileged!

Think about what Peter wrote in I Peter 1:3-9. He wrote, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

As children of God, we have so much but I think we focus many times on what we don't have, and we miss out on all that God has given to us.

I remember growing up, and my parents were not rich, but we always had food, a house over our head, clothing and so much more. And yet, I would look at what others had and wish I had that.

In doing that, in reality, I was not thankful for what my parents provided for me. I missed out on that because I was looking at what others had.

And sometimes, as Christians, we see our life as a duty rather than a privilege of serving the King of kings and Lord of lords!

We let other things get in the way of what the Lord has done, is doing and will do in our lives.

We look at what others have, and we want that.

And as we do, we lose sight of the peace, the joy, the rest, the many things that God has for us.

As we will see this morning, Peter is going to speak of the blessings that we have, the privileges we have in Christ but for those who reject Christ, who are not children of God, they miss out on these blessings.

I am not saying that God does not bless the unjust or unbelievers, He does because He is gracious and merciful. But there are some things that are just the privileges of His children, of believers.

And then we will look at what our response should be to all that God has given to us. And let me also say this. If all that God has given us is salvation, eternal life with Him, that is a million times more than we deserve. In fact, you can't even put a number on it.

What I mean is that we have all that we need in this life, and yet, God blesses us with so much more and we should be able to praise Him and thank Him for all that He has given to us, especially the gift of eternal life with Him!

I have called our study – ***FAITH IS BUILT UPON?***

And that is very important because if your faith is not built upon the truth, upon something solid, something strong, it will crumble to the ground, it will not stand.

Thus, what are you willing to put your faith in?

That is an important question, and we will also be seeing that this morning in our study.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points.

They are,

CHIEF CORNERSTONE – I PETER 2:4-7a

A ROCK OF OFFENSE – I PETER 2:7b-8

THE RESULTS OF FAITH – I PETER 2:9-10

Now what Peter is going to speak of here in chapter 2 of I Peter is born out of his opening statements of this chapter.

Remember what he said, **“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”** I Peter 2:1-3.

Keep that in mind as we begin reading in I Peter chapter 2, beginning in verse 4 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***FAITH IS BUILT UPON?***

I PETER 2

VERSES 4-7a

This is important for us to remember.

When we come to Jesus, as Peter speaks of here in I Peter 2:4, and feeding on the Word of God, as Peter just spoke of, are one and the same.

Jesus is the Word, and He speaks to us through His Word!

Not only that. Peter speaks of us being a **“living stone”** and being built up into a **“spiritual house.”**

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 2:20-22, **“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”**

J. Vernon McGee put it like this, *“The church, the body of Christ, is ‘a habitation,’ a permanent temple, of God in the Spirit. When believers come together in a building to worship, the Holy Spirit is present. In that sense God is in that building. But when every believer has left the building, God has left it also. God is not in any church building anymore than He is in any barroom. Today God indwells believers, not buildings. We have previously stated that God has never dwelt in any building made with hands, and it is a pagan philosophy which places God in a human-made structure.”*

I like that and I think we can put this into perspective when we understand that as a Christian you are a living, breathing **“Holy of Holies”** and everywhere you go and any place you stand becomes **“holy ground!”**

Some of you may be thinking, ***“What in the world is he talking about? We are not the Temple of God!”***

First of all, remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 3:16, **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”**

Notice again that Paul said that we are not only the **“temple of God”**, but he also tells us that **“the Spirit of God dwells in you.”**

If the Holy Spirit indwells us, and He does, then God is with us wherever we go and thus, we are the **“Holy of Holies”** and everywhere you go and any place you stand becomes **“holy ground!”** like I have said.

And keep in mind that Peter is not saying that we come to the Lord one time and that is it, but it is a personal and continual relationship we have with Him.

For the Jew, this kind of intimate relationship with God was a foreign concept because they couldn't approach God in their sins.

In fact, it was the priests who offered the sacrifices before God and only the High priest could go into the presence of God and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement!

But Peter says that we are priests not by birth but by the new birth in Christ and thus, we have access to God any time of the day or night and we can point people to God.

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 2:18, "**For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**"

You see, through Christ we can boldly come into the throne room of God and lay our requests at His feet, His door is always open to us through Jesus! We will look at this more in a minute.

What I want to focus on now is this idea of being rejected by men and yet, we are chosen by God, and we are precious to Him!

When God became flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, He was rejected and as a follower of Jesus, we can expect the same rejection from the people of this world.

That is what Jesus has told us, or I should say warned us of what would happen if we followed Him.

Jesus said in John 15:18-21, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”**

We should not be surprised by this, but it is not easy when it does happen. The thing we need to remember is we need to keep shining the light of Christ and not hide our light because we don’t want anyone mad at us or reject us.

I am not saying we are obnoxious with people; we are to love them as Christ does, but we don’t compromise our faith or hide our faith because of the persecution we might face because of it.

Now we talked a little about this, but Peter is telling us that the Lord is building a spiritual temple not with stones or bricks, but living stones, you and me!

We are told in I Kings 6:7 as Solomon’s Temple was being built, **“And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.”**

Thus, as you are going through this life and you feel like you are getting hammered, you feel like there goes another chip off the old block, understand what the Lord is doing!

He is working on you down here in the quarry of life hammering and chipping away so that when you get to heaven there will be no sound of a hammer or chisel, you will fit in perfectly!

The next thing that Peter speaks of is that we are “**a holy priesthood.**”

Now for many of us, when we think of priests we tend to think of priests within the Roman Catholic Church.

That is not what Peter is speaking of here, not at all!

We are a holy priesthood because we have come to saving faith in Jesus, not because we have been ordained by some group of people.

I understand that some struggle with this because when you look at the Old Testament priesthood you see that it was very limited. In fact, it was limited to one family, the family of Aaron!

It was only Aaron and then his descendants who could serve as priests in the Old Covenant. They could serve in the Temple and offer the sacrifices and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

The Holy of Holies is where the presence of God dwelt, above the Mercy Seat that rested on the Ark of the Covenant and between the Cherubim!

They alone were worthy to do this, be the mediators that bridge the gap between God and man. And that gap was sin, it is what separated man from God!

But in the New Testament that all changed.

Remember when Jesus paid for our sins on the cross of Calvary, His last words were – ***TETELESTAI!***

It is a Greek word that means “***Paid in full***” or “***It is finished!***”

In other words, all of our sins have been paid for by the shed blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary. There is no further need for sacrifice because the perfect sacrifice was given, and the work was completed – ***IT IS FINISHED!***

And if you remember, when Jesus gave up His Spirit, around 3 pm, the time of the evening sacrifices in the Temple, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom.

That veil separated man from God and what God was showing the priests who were there to offer those sacrifices is that the door has been opened for man to approach God because the sins of man have been paid for in Christ! All believers can now approach God directly because we are now worthy, not because of what we have done, but what Jesus has done!

We don't need a formal priesthood made up from one family or any special group of men to be the mediator for us, because, as Paul has said, **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”** I Timothy 2:5-6.

That is what Paul said in Hebrews 10:19-22, **“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”**

Paul starts with the word **“Therefore”** and the idea here is based upon what Paul was just talking about. In other words, because of what Christ has done, what Paul has just said, the sacrifice He made, the finished work He accomplished, we can boldly come before God, enter into the Holy of Holies or the presence of God.

For the High Priest, as he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he did so with much fear, but we can approach with boldness because our sins have been forgiven!

This is a stark contrast from how the High Priest entered into the presence of God, and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to how we can approach God.

Clarke put it like this, *“He went with fear and trembling, because, if he had neglected the smallest item prescribed by the law, he could expect nothing but death. Genuine believers can come even to the throne of God with confidence, as they carry into the Divine presence the infinitely meritorious blood of the great atonement; and, being justified through that blood, they have a right to all the blessings of the eternal kingdom.”*

We talked about this a little already but to illustrate this Paul gives us a picture of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, man from God and Paul says that this veil is symbolic of the body of Christ, His flesh.

In Matthew 27:51 we are told, **“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.”**

As Jesus gave up His spirit, the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom opening the way to God through Christ!

The way to God the Father is open and Jesus has torn down that barrier of sin so that we can boldly approach His throne of grace!

You see, our hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience or the inner man has been cleansed.

And that inward cleansing affects our outward actions, the things we do, the things we say.

And as we read God’s Word, we will receive that daily cleansing in our lives to remove some of the dirt we have picked-up through the day in this world.

And the encouragement to these Jewish believers was to **“hold fast”** don’t let go, don’t lose hope because God is faithful and what He has promised He is more than able to bring to pass!

And Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is telling us to do the same – ***HOLD FAST!***

And now, our sacrifices are not that of animals, but Peter says that they are “**spiritual sacrifices**” and what he is speaking of is our lives. We offer our lives up to God as a spiritual sacrifice, all that we do is for Him or at least it should be! Not for salvation because Jesus alone saves, but for our identification with Him. We love Him and it is manifested in the things we do.

This is exactly what Paul said in Romans 12:1, “**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**”

God has given us gifts and we are to use them to bring glory to Him. We are to love the brethren, share our faith and see people come into the Kingdom of God, we are to help those in need.

And the reality is, we place our lives on the altar of sacrifice, and we say to the Lord, “***Here is my life Lord, I give it to you to use as a sacrifice for your glory!***”

And then, what this is all built upon, we see Peter quote out of Isaiah 28:16.

First of all, let me ask you this.

What was the occupation of Peter?

He was a fisherman!

And for the most part, many thought they were uneducated and untrained men.

And yet Peter keeps quoting out of the Old Testament Scriptures, and that means he had to memorize them.

Keep in mind that these books were in scrolls, and they were costly.

So to memorize them took time, it took effort and thus, Peter was able to not only know the Word of God but apply those Scriptures appropriately through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

In I Peter 3:15 Peter admonishes us to, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”**

We need to be men and women of the Word and as Paul said, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** II Timothy 2:15.

We are to not only know the Word of God, but we are to rightly divide it and apply it to our lives!

And notice what Peter is saying here. Peter is telling us that believers are living stones being built into a spiritual house, but there is a problem.

You just don't lay stones out; you need the cornerstone or in a sense the plumb line which will keep the building in line.

Jesus is not only the plumb line for this building but the support, the stone in which the rest of the structure rests upon for strength and stability, you and me, the living stones rest upon Jesus and He keeps us in line!

He is the – ***CHIEF CORNERSTONE!***

That is what Paul said in Ephesians 2:20-22, verses we have read this morning, that Jesus is the – ***CHIEF CORNERSTONE!***

All that we are, all that we do, our very being is based upon that fact.

Why is that so important?

Because if your faith is placed upon something that is not in line with the Word of God, then your structure will be off, and it will be unstable. We must build our faith upon the Rock, Jesus Christ!

Let me show you the importance of a strong foundation.

The tallest building in the world today is the Burj Khalifa building in Dubai. It stands at a height of 2,717 feet or just over a half a mile!

The weight of this building, unoccupied, is around 500,000 tons!

What supports this structure?

A firm, a strong foundation!

This foundation contains over 58,900 cubic yards of concrete, weighing more than 110,000 tons. Also, a steel foundation was placed that contained 192 piles that were buried more than 164 feet deep!

As you can see, this building has a massive foundation that had tons and tons and tons of concrete and all that steel rebar, and they had to do all the different stuff to make it work right in that particular geology.

What is my point?

My point is this!

We are told in Proverbs 18:10, **“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.”**

There is nothing that is stronger, nothing that is safer, nothing that is more restful, than coming to the Great *I AM*, and resting in Him!

Let me share some verses that show us that Jesus is our Rock that we can rest upon.

First of all, in I Corinthians 10:4 we are told, **“and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”**

This fountain of water that flowed from the Rock in the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel was Jesus. Keep that in mind because when the Scriptures speak of the Rock in the Old Testament, it is speaking of Jesus!

In Matthew 16:18, listen to what Jesus said, **“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”**

Now some like to argue, like the Roman Catholic Church, that it is Peter who is the Rock that the church is built upon.

Keep in mind that in the Old Testament, like I have said, when it is speaking of the Rock it is not speaking of a man but of God, specifically Jesus Christ.

And here in Matthew Jesus is saying that Peter is a little rock, but the church will be built upon a giant Rock, upon Jesus Christ and not upon a man!

In Psalm 61:2 we are told, **“From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”**

Have you ever been overwhelmed?

Of course you have, we all have been overwhelmed!

So what do you do to help in those difficult times?

Do you turn on CNN?

Of course not, but you pick up your Bible and you cry out to the Rock, to Jesus for help because He is higher than us all and He is the One that can bring comfort to our hearts during those difficult times.

Paul, in Romans 9:33 quotes this verse out of Isaiah 28:16, as he wrote, “**As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’**”

In Psalm 94:22 we are told, “**But the Lord has been my defense, And my God the rock of my refuge.**”

Again, the idea is that our God, Jesus Christ is where we can run to and rest upon, our Rock!

In Psalm 95:1 we are told, “**Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.**”

Absolutely! We should shout for joy; we should sing praises to our Rock for the salvation that He has brought to our lives!

It is as we are told in Deuteronomy 32:31, “**For their rock is not like our Rock . . .**”

There is no Rock like our Jesus!

Make no mistake about it, Jesus Christ is our – *CHIEF CORNERSTONE!*

Are we a privileged people?

Absolutely and unashamedly. We are privileged and it is not because we are so great, but because our Lord is so gracious and merciful to us. Look at all that He has given to us!

Listen again to what Peter tells us, “**Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious . . .**”

But what about those who reject Him?

That is what Peter speaks about next – *A ROCK OF OFFENSE!*

VERSES 7b-8

Keep in mind what was going on when Peter was writing this letter and when the church first began.

There was a problem, and the problem is that the Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus and the reason they rejected Him is because they rejected the Word of God and now are disobedient to God.

I find it interesting that the Jewish religious knew where the Messiah was to be born, they told Herod in Matthew 2:2, “**... ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’**” They did not go to see the birth of the Messiah, but they knew the truth, they just didn’t act upon the truth!

Not only that, but all that Jesus did the Old Testament prophets spoke of. In fact, John the Baptist, when he was placed in prison, asked his men to go and ask Jesus if He is the one or should they be looking for another.

And notice what Jesus told these men in Luke 7:22-23, “**Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’**”

Not only that, but the timeframe, in fact, the exact day that Daniel prophesied about the Messiah coming into Jerusalem as Messiah the King, took place in their day and they did not even recognize it because they were not looking!

Notice what we are told in Luke 19:41-44, **“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’”**

So it should have been very clear to these religious leaders but they refused to see, the refused to believe the Word of God!

How many people today are moving away from the Word of God and by doing so are being disobedient to God?

We need to learn the lesson that God says what He means and means what He says, and we need to obey Him if we love Him.

Now because they rejected the Rock, Jesus, instead of being their salvation He has become a Rock of offense to them and that is true of all who reject Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 21:44, **“And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”**

As one author said, ***“God has decreed that all who refuse to bow to the Lord Jesus will stumble. If a man insists on going on in unbelief, then he is appointed to stumble.”***

And another wrote, ***“Unwillingness to obey makes stumbling a foregone conclusion.”***

(J. B. Phillips)

Remember what Peter said in I Peter 2:6, “**. . . ‘Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’**”

In other words, if you believe in Him, in Jesus, you will never be put to shame and in the Greek, it is written in a double negative which means it can never happen, you are His and no one can take that away!

The tragedy here is that the evidence for the birth, death and resurrection is overwhelming. And people reject it for whatever foolish reason just as these Jewish religious leaders did!

Here’s the thing. God has given us a free gift of eternal life with Him and people have rejected the free gift to them.

It truly is a choice.

Now let me say this because there are those who read “**They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed**” and come to the conclusion that God has appointed some people to go to hell because He has withheld from them, through His sovereignty, the ability to believe the gospel. And that’s why they stumble and reject Christ - God appointed them to it.

The problem with that kind of teaching is it takes away our free will. Some even believe that Adam and Eve did not even have a choice to sin or not to sin in the Garden of Eden. God chose them to sin.

What is the problem with that kind of theology, besides not being Biblical?

It negates the fact that Adam sinned, and it places the blame on God. You see, God did not give them a choice, but He predestined them to sin and thus, Adam is not to blame.

That again is not Biblical.

Let me show you what I mean by that.

In Genesis 2:16-17 we are told, **“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”**

If Adam did not have a choice in the matter, what is the point of telling him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

It would be foolish!

And in the New Testament we are told in Romans 5:12, **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”**

Paul is speaking of Adam sinning and through his sin, sin entered the whole human race!

The Living Bible puts this verse like this, just in case you did not get it. We are told, **“When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die.”**

If Adam did not have a choice, how can God blame Adam, that makes no sense.

And throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament we see God give to man a choice to choose who he will serve, the living God or the gods of this world. We see God give man a choice to sin or not to sin.

This is called freewill and apart from free will, man would not be responsible for his actions, God would be responsible.

You see, God would predestine some for heaven and some for hell and you have no choice in the matter! That is totally wrong!

Then what is Peter saying here?

It is really simple. He is saying that ***“If you willfully reject the Gospel message, if you willfully reject the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior you will stumble because you are being disobedient to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit!”***

It is as one person said, ***“God has decreed that all who refuse to bow to the Lord Jesus will stumble. If a man insists on going on in unbelief, then he is appointed to stumble.”***

Why did Israel stumble?

Because they rejected to submit to the Word of God! That is what Peter says here in verse 8 of I Peter chapter 2, **“They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.”**

And so too will every person who rejects the Word of God which leads them to the Messiah! They have a choice to make and so do we!

In John 11:28-30 Jesus tells us, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

It is an invitation to – ***COME TO JESUS*** and that tells me we have a choice to make.

We are not forced to come but we freely come!

If we were forced to come, if we did not have a choice, then it would be like a shotgun wedding!

But it is not!

Here is the problem with this kind of thinking, where God only died for some, and it is called Reformed Theology or Calvinism.

We are told,

The Danger of Teaching that Christ Died Only for the Elect

This is commonly known as a belief in a “**limited atonement**” (some Reformed men prefer to call it “*definite atonement*”).

It is the teaching that Christ died on the cross and paid the penalty only for the sins of the elect. He did not die for the ones who eventually will be in the lake of fire.

Often it is worded as follows: “*Christ died for all men without distinction but He did not die for all men without exception.*”

This is a subtle game of semantics which makes it possible for them to say that He died for all without really meaning that He died for all. What they really mean is that Christ died for all kinds of people and all classes of people, but He did not die for every single person.

That is, He died for Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, slave and free, male and female, etc., but it is understood that He died for only elect Jews and Gentiles, only elect rich and poor, etc.

Dr. Paul Reiter has clearly and simply summarized the scriptural teaching on this issue.

For whom did Christ die? He died . . .

- *For all (1 Tim 2:6; Isa 53:6)*
- *For every man (Heb 2:9)*
- *For the world (John 3:16)*
- *For the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2)*
- *For the ungodly (Rom 5:6)*
- *For false teachers (2 Pet 2:1)*
- *For many (Matt 20:28)*

- *For Israel (John 11:50-51)*
- *For the Church (Eph 5:25)*
- *For “me” (Gal 2:20)*

It is evident that the extreme Calvinist must ignore the clear language and obvious sense of many passages and must force the Scriptures and make them fit into his own theological mold.

Limited atonement may seem logical and reasonable, but the real test is this: is it biblical? *“What saith the Scriptures?”* (Rom 4:3). In childlike faith we must simply allow the Bible to say what it says.

Those who promote this erroneous doctrine try to tell us that *“world”* does not really mean *“world”* and *“all”* does not really mean *“all”* and *“every man”* does not really mean *“every man”* and *“the whole world”* does not really mean *“the whole world”*.

We are told that simple verses such as John 3:16 and Isaiah 53:6 must be understood not as a child would understand them but as a theologian would understand them. That is, we must reinterpret such verses in light of our system of theology.

The true doctrine of the atonement could be stated as follows: the Scriptures teach that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God involved the sin of the world (John 1:29) and that the Savior’s work of redemption (1 Tim 2:6; 2 Pet 2:1), reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19) and propitiation (1 John 2:2) was for all men (1 Tim 4:10), but the cross-work of Christ is efficient, effectual and applicable only for those who believe (1 Tim 4:10; John 3:16). The cross-work of Christ is not limited, but the application of that cross-work through the work of the Holy Spirit is limited to believers only.

In other words, like Joshua said, **“Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”** Joshua 24:14-15.

Notice the choices that they had.

To serve the Lord in sincerity and truth!

To put away the gods that their fathers worshiped on the other side of the river and in Egypt!

To serve the Lord!

Choose for yourself who you will serve!

For Joshua, he has chosen to serve the Lord!

These are all choices that are based on freewill and if there was not any freewill, than man would not be responsible for his sin or where he was going. God chose him either for heaven or hell, and again, that is not Biblical!

Make no mistake about it, if you reject the Rock, Jesus Christ, then He will be to you – **A**

ROCK OF OFFENSE!

As we read on, we will look at – ***THE RESULTS OF THE TRUE FAITH!***

VERSES 9-10

By what Peter is saying here regarding the things that once exclusively belonged to Israel – their election (chosen), priesthood, and calling are now no longer the property of Israel alone.

These are now the property of every Christian, and we have them in a greater and spiritual sense. We are not Israel, please understand that. We are the Church, the Bride of Christ!

Because of this it seems that Peter is writing primarily to Gentile Christians, they were not God's people but now they are in Christ!

You see, these things that Peter is speaking of belonged to the children of Israel, but now they belong to all who receive Jesus, and in reality, it is speaking of both Jew and Gentile!

That is what Paul said in Ephesians 2:11-13, **“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”**

Keep in mind that the Jews were the children of God, entrusted with the Words of God, and they looked forward to the coming Messiah.

But, in speaking of the Gentiles before Christ came, before God became man and dwelt among us, the Gentiles had no Messiah, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel or they were on the outside looking in, they were strangers to the promises of God's covenants that He made to His people, and thus, they had no hope!

Spurgeon put it like this, *“Without Christ! If this be the description of some of you, we need not talk to you about the fires of hell; let this be enough to startle you, that you are in such a desperate state as to be without Christ. Oh! What terrible evils lie clustering thick within these two words!”*

You see, every person outside of Christ is in that condition, they don’t know where they are going and are grasping at things that don’t bring them life, but they don’t have to be.

Paul makes that very clear as he says here in Ephesians 2:13, **“But now in Christ . . .”**

And the point that Paul goes on to make is that we have been united together, Jews and Gentiles in Christ and we have been reconciled to God through Jesus!

And notice what Peter tells us here.

First of all – ***WE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION!***

Keep in mind that Peter is speaking of the Church. I know that Israel is called a chosen people in the Scriptures, but this is different. We are not united through ethnicity, but we are made of people from all over the world, different groups of people and we are the Church!

Did God know who the Church would be made of?

Absolutely because God knows the beginning from the end. But look at this relationship we have with God and thus, may we live accordingly as we are representing Him to this world that is in darkness.

Not only that but Peter goes on to say that we are – ***A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD!***

What does a priest do?

They serve God and thus, they must have access to God. They must be able to approach God and the only way we can approach God is through Jesus Christ.

Not only that, but we will also serve Jesus in His Kingdom when it is established. Yes, we serve Him now, but one day we will be there at His side serving Him!

Next, we are - ***A HOLY NATION!***

In other words, God has set us apart from the people of this world, those who have rejected Him. And the difference in our lives is that we are set apart, we are different because instead of going with the flow of this world, we have surrendered our lives to the Lord and we will live a life that reflects that or as Peter wrote, **“but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.”** I Peter 1:15.

To be a holy nation simply means that, as the Church, we have been set apart from the world to live exclusively to God.

One writer put it like this. He wrote, ***“Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), so we obey heaven’s laws and seek to please heaven’s Lord. Israel forgot that she was a holy nation and began to break down the walls of separation that made her special and distinct. God commanded them to put a “difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev. 10:10); but they ignored the differences and disobeyed God.”***

From there Peter speaks of us being – ***HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE!***

Why are we special to God?

Because He purchased us with the blood of His own Son. In Acts 20:28 we are told, **“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”**

That is what God has done and we, through the sacrifice for sin by Jesus, have a special place of blessings as we have become children of God!

Now you might be thinking, “*So what are we to do now?*”

Peter tells us here, that with all these privileges that God has given to us, we are to –

PROCLAIM THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT!

In other words, we are to share our faith!

You see, with all these privileges that God has given to us, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, having obtained the mercy of God, we are now to go out and proclaim what God has done in our lives, praise Him and let others see what God has done in us and through us so others may enter in!

Notice it doesn’t say, “*And we are to go out and complain about this and complain about that!*”

No, we are to ***PRO-CLAIM*** the goodness of God, the love of God to a world that is in darkness!

It is as Paul said in I Timothy 1:12-17, “**And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**”

We can all say that and should praise the Lord for taking us out of the kingdom of darkness and placing us into the Kingdom of Light through Jesus Christ!

I like the way that Warren Wiersbe summed this up for us. He wrote,

All of these privileges carry with them one big responsibility revealing the praises of God to a lost world. The verb translated “*show forth*” means “*to tell out to advertise.*”

Because the world is “*in the dark,*” people do not know the “*excellencies*” of God; but they should see them in our lives.

Each citizen of heaven is a living “*advertisement*” for the virtues of God and the blessings of the Christian life. Our lives should radiate the “*marvelous light*” into which God has graciously called us.

After all, we have obtained mercy from God! Were it not for His mercy, we would be lost and on the way to eternal judgment!

God reminded Israel many times that He had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt that they might glorify and serve Him, but the nation soon forgot and the people drifted back into their sinful ways.

We are God’s chosen people only because of His mercy, and it behooves us to be faithful to Him.

We are living in enemy territory, and the enemy is constantly watching us, looking for opportunities to move in and take over.

As citizens of heaven, we must be united. We must present to the world a united demonstration of what the grace and mercy of God can do.

As I write these words, the newspapers are reporting “*dissensions*” among the men who serve with the President of the United States.

These men are not presenting a united front, and the nation is a bit uneasy.

I wonder what the unsaved people think when they see the citizens of heaven and servants of God fighting among themselves.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 903

That is so important for us to understand. It is not about us; it is about the Lord and shinning forth the light of Christ to a dark and dismal world!

This is what should be seen in our lives – ***THE RESULTS OF TRUE FAITH!***

Make no mistake about it – ***JESUS IS THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE!***

But if you reject Him, then He will be to you – ***A ROCK OF OFFENSE!***

I will close with this.

Think about this for a minute. The world can argue with our theology, but they can't argue with the reality of a changed life.

One day Harry Ironside was confronted by an atheist while he was holding a meeting and preaching the Word.

The atheist tried to argue with Ironside against the truthfulness of God's Word while holding up the virtues of atheism as the only hope for the human race.

Ironside made the man a challenge - he said, ***“Next week you come to our meeting with 100 men whose lives have been radically transformed from drunkenness, sexual sin and crime to lives of virtue and morality by the doctrines of atheism and I will produce 100 men whose lives have been radically transformed from sin to righteousness by the gospel of Jesus Christ.”***

Ironside said the man never showed up the following week.

May we show up and let people see the living God working in us and through us!