

1 Peter Chapter 2 v 9 & 10

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[0 : 00] In the Church Bibles, it's on page 186. So, Deuteronomy, chapter 7, verse 1. It's my favorite Old Testament book, almost.

I think Jeremiah's probably my other one. But there are five times the Lord your God is repeated in this passage that we're going to read. In the whole of Deuteronomy, it's 287 times.

That's really sad, isn't it, that you want to count them up and see how many times. But 287 times the Lord your God is mentioned. And it just seems like it's a whole thrust of what Moses is reciting to the people.

But when we come to chapter 7, it's God saying, you're my people. And so we'll just read verse 1 to 11 on chapter 7.

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations, the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you, and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally.

[1 : 27] Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons.

For they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods. And the Lord's anger will burn against you and you will quickly destroy you.

This is what you are to do to them. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles, and burn their idols in the fire.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

The Lord did not set his affection on you and chose you because you were more numerous than other peoples. For you were the fewest of all peoples.

[2 : 32] But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God. He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who fear him and keep his commands.

But to those who hate him, he will repay to their face by destruction. He will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.

Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today. So hopefully, I'm glad to see that all of you have taken my advice and kept far away from me by sitting as far back as you possibly could.

It's not the smell, I hope, just the concern over this lurgy that I've got. But hopefully, we'll be shaken off soon.

[3 : 56] Well, we did read from Deuteronomy 7, but that's really helpful and we're going to come back to that. But our main passage is in 1 Peter 2, which may be hopefully what you were thinking.

Why is he reading from Deuteronomy 7? We're in 1 Peter. And I'd like to read simply verses 9 to 10, 9 and 10 of 2 Peter 2 and they're going to be the center of our thoughts this evening.

Remember, Peter's writing to believers, to Christians, people just like us. Therefore, his words are true of us too. 1 Peter 2, verse 9.

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.

[5 : 18] Words in English, and I'm sure it must be the case in other parts of the world too, but words have a habit of changing their meaning over time. This can be called because a younger generation grows up and determines to use words to mean the opposite of how their parents or grandparents understand them.

So, in the minds of young people today, words such as wicked, and if you're really up to date, sick, mean good and great.

Okay? So, if you speak to young people and say, you're really sick, then don't be worried about your health. Okay? They're just telling you that you're cool, you're great, you're excellent, whatever. Other words simply mutate over time to gain not a completely new meaning, but a different meaning, perhaps a negative slant upon a word which before meant something quite positive. And one word to which that has happened and undergone that change is the word peculiar. Now, it is used today in an almost entirely negative way.

If someone is peculiar, they're somebody who acts or speaks strangely, oddly, or dresses in that way. Peculiar is anything weird, which is unattractive, unappealing in some form.

[6 : 40] Whereas in the English in which the King James Version of the Bible was translated those 500 years, nearly, ago, the word peculiar is the word that we have here, God's special possession, God's peculiar people.

And in that sense, it is something very positive. That's how it's meant, that's how it's used, that's how it's translated. Peculiar is positive. And these peculiar people are those who, earlier in the chapter, have been called living stones.

there, verse 5, you also like living stones, who are being built into a spiritual house. Peter is seeking to encourage the church.

The church is really to whom he's writing, because we know there's several local churches, there are groups of believers scattered around these places, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

He's wanting to encourage them to live out who they are, to remind them who they are so that it may affect what they do.

[7 : 53] And his illustration has changed somewhat from the illustration we saw there in the first half of the chapter of stones being built into a temple, but really, the meaning is much the same.

We are to be imitators imitators of Christ. That is the key to the Christian life. As we thought back in chapter 1 and verse 15, here we have the very key verse, the central verse to the whole of the letter by which we may understand everything else that is written.

Just as he, that's God, who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. The whole letter is a practical application of this truth.

We are, God is holy, we are to be holy. We are to be like him because we are his people, his children, he is our father.

And last week in particular, we saw and noticed that this likeness to God, of course, is actually the same as the likeness of Christ, that we are to be like the Son as he is like the Father.

[9 : 03] And so we saw there in verse 4 that Jesus is the living stone, therefore we also like living stones. He's the cornerstone, we are those smaller stones that make up the building.

We saw there that he is the great high priest. Rather, we know that he is the great high priest and so we are to be a holy priesthood. He was the one who made that perfect, once for all, sacrifice for sin.

And so we are ourselves, those who are to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, not for sin, remember, because that was once and for all, but sacrifices of worship and praise, acceptable to God, which is our whole being.

And through these chapters, we've been thinking, of course, that in being conformed to the likeness of Christ, what will naturally happen is that we become less conformed to the world.

We are nonconformists in the world. We are not like the world. The world is different and we saw that here in the first part of chapter 2 in our reaction and our response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 11] We believe in him, verse 7, but the unbelieving world, of course, rejects him. Verse 7, the stone the builders rejected. We count him as precious, but the world counts him as a stumbling block over whom to fall.

Now, such a contrast in our lives has not always been apparent. The difference between the believer and the unbeliever, the Christian, the non-Christian, the one who loves Christ and the one

who rejects him has not always been the case.

We have not been born in that way, naturally. In fact, as we read here in chapter 2, verse 10, once you were not a people, now you are the people of God.

Once we were not God's people, once we were alienated from him, we were very much like the people of the world, very much unlike God himself. Here's Paul writing to the church at Corinth in his first letter, chapter 6.

He says this, don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

[11 : 36] And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

We were part of the world, we were like everyone else, we were those who went along the broad way, those who lived and acted and behaved just as the world continues to do so now.

So what happened? What made the difference? What transformed us? Well the simple answer of course is what we read here in verse 10, once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

The difference was that we received mercy from God. And what does that mean? What does it mean to receive mercy? Well it means that God not only felt mercy towards us, mercy is to have a concern, a care for those who are in a very sorry state.

It's to be moved, it's to be feel for those who are in distress, in danger, in trouble and so on, to have mercy upon them.

[12 : 48] But of course the Lord our God did not only feel mercy towards us but he acted in mercy and he gave us mercy. Now you have received mercy.

Not that God looked on us only in mercy but he has done something by which mercy has come to us. We've been affected by this mercy. That's how the change took place. And in these verses here, particularly verse nine, we see that what it means for us to receive mercy from God.

We see what it means. What has God done? 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.

Now hopefully those verses ring a little bell because they remind you of what we read back there in Deuteronomy chapter seven. Let's just read them again, particularly verses six and seven.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

[14 : 09] The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. So the first thing that God has done in showing mercy to us is that he has chosen us, just as he did the Old Testament people, the Hebrews, of whom he's referring there in Deuteronomy chapter seven.

That's not the only place where God speaks to them and reminds them that they are a chosen people. Later on in Deuteronomy in chapter 14 he says this, out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

And the reality that God had chosen Israel for himself and that they were his possession was something which they continued to rejoice in and was a cause for them singing praise and worship to him.

Here's just one of the Psalms, Psalm 33 verse 12, blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. And so, when we get to chapter two of 1 Peter, we see that that which is true of Old Testament Israel is true of God's people now, of us as well.

You are a chosen people. It's the same words, it's the same description. It's the same act of mercy on God's behalf. We too can rejoice in the truth that God has chosen us.

[15 : 38] Peter certainly, sorry, Paul certainly does as he writes to the Christians in Ephesus, chapter one. Praise be to the God and Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world. Be holy and blameless in his sight. If you're a Christian, if you're part of the church of Jesus Christ, if you have believed upon him and count him as precious, God has chosen you.

Chosen you, says Peter and Paul from before the world was made. But how are we to understand this choosing by God? This act of mercy with which he chose us even before we were born, as he chose Old Testament Israel.

Was it due to something in us that God should desire us? Was it something that deserved his choice? Remember when you were at school and you stood up to be picked for the football team, playing in the playground or whatever it may be.

And it would be always the sort of the best players would be chosen first, wouldn't they? Those who've proven themselves. And me, I would be last. I don't know why, but that was just the way it was.

[16:55] No, it's not because of anything in us. It's not because God looked on you and I and he said, well, you know, out of all the people they're pretty good, those people. I think they're pretty nice. I'd like to have them for myself.

No, not at all. In fact, that's exactly what God says to Israel, to the Hebrews. He said this, the Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than the other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

Especially, of course, we think of Abraham. God looked and chose Abraham and his children to be those who were his possession. There was nothing special about them. Abraham was not a godly man at that time.

He worshipped false gods, in fact, we're told, as his fathers did. There was nothing deserving in Israel that God should do anything for them, just like us.

There's nothing glorious or good in us that God should ever have chosen that we should belong to him. Like them, we were pitiful. Like them, we were feeble, ignoble.

[17:58] It was all due to his unconditional love. Verse 8, But it was because the Lord loved you. Kept the oath sworn to his forefathers.

Because the Lord loved you. Unconditional love. There's no such thing in the world, is there? Except in God. He loves you, dear friends, and loves me because of nothing in ourselves, purely because he loves us.

He loves us because he loves us because he loves us. God's choice of Israel and the church was so that we, like them, might be a royal priesthood.

Now, that doesn't appear in that Deuteronomy reading. It does appear in Exodus. Actually, in the chapter after we looked at this morning, Exodus chapter 19 and verse 6, where God tells them, Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

What does that mean, though, when we're told here that we are a royal priesthood? What does that mean? Well, it could mean, of course, and it does mean in one sense that we are a priesthood that is exclusively for the use of the king, the service of the royal one, the king of heaven and earth.

[19:20] Peter has already called the church a holy priesthood. Remember there, we looked at that last week and what that really meant in verse 5 of chapter 2. But now he says we're a royal priesthood.

There's something more. There's something added to that. Not just that we serve the king of kings, but I believe that it means that we also share in the rule and the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is described in the Bible as the great high priest. But he's a great high priest of a particular type of priesthood. He wasn't of the line of Aaron and of the Levites.

Hebrews tells us that he was of the line of Melchizedek, a very different type of priest. In chapter 5 and 6 and 7, in fact, Melchizedek is mentioned and Jesus is spoken of as one who has been appointed, in verse 10 of chapter 5, designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

What was so special about Melchizedek? Well, this. He was a priest and a king. In chapter 7 of Hebrews, verse 1, this Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God most high.

[20:36] And that's true of our Lord Jesus, isn't it? He is both king and priest. He is a royal one because he is God's son come upon the earth. He is the one who rules and reigns and has majesty.

But he is also the one who acts as the priest, the great high priest before God. So why is it that we are part of a royal priesthood?

Why is it that we are those who share in the royalty that is Christ's, so that we share in his reign on earth, and that we are also those who bring sacrifices and offerings to the king of kings?

It's because as that great high priest in the order of Melchizedek, that Christ offered himself once and for all as a sacrifice for his chosen ones, that he might do away with our sins.

Again, in Hebrews in chapter 10, in several places we're told of the sacrifice of Jesus, the uniqueness of the sacrifice. Hebrews 10, 14, for by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

[21 : 51] Jesus' sacrifice, notice there, is an exclusive sacrifice. It is for those who are being made holy. Well, who are those who are being made holy?

Well, we know who they are because here in 1 Peter chapter 2, you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. So Christ, the great high priest, the kingly priest, offered himself as a sacrifice, particularly and exclusively and specifically for those that he was going to make holy. Us, his church, as we are described, a holy nation. And remember that that nation that we're a part of is not made up of those who are ancestors, as it were, of a particular person.

It's not because we were all born in a particular country or a particular birthright, but rather, again, because God chose us. The Lord your God, Deuteronomy 7, has chosen you out of all the peoples of the face of the earth to be his people.

Out of all the peoples of the earth, he has set apart those who are his holy nation.

[23 : 11] Those that he redeemed are those who are holy. Again, that comes out there in that Deuteronomy passage. Verse 8, Redemption is involved.

Now, we've seen that, haven't we, here earlier on in chapter 1, where Peter speaks about this incredible redeeming work that God has done with a mighty hand. You know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver and gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your fathers.

We have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Lamb, we are told. A price has been paid. A price has been paid to set us free and to deliver us and to bring us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

That's what happens. When we become a Christian, when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we trust our trust in him, something amazing happens. We are taken out of the world, we are taken out of all the company and all the people of the world, and we are placed in the kingdom of God.

We are brought out of darkness and into light. And that's likened to, as Peter does here, being born again. Verse 23, And earlier on, in verse 3, of having new birth.

[24 : 42] In his great mercy, he's given us new birth. This is the work of God's Spirit. Because in verse 2, we're told that we have been sanctified, or through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

The sanctifying work, sanctification means be made holy, be set apart. The Holy Spirit has done that wonderful work in us and to us, so we've been taken from one place and placed into another. Be born again. And that same unstoppable power, that power that God exercised in delivering and redeeming his people Israel out of Egypt is the same power that we have experienced, each one of us, when we heard the gospel and obeyed the truth.

Then verse 22 of chapter 1, Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth. How did we obey the truth? Because we heard the gospel and the Spirit of God within us moved us, gave us faith and obedience and repentance.

So dear friends, once we were not a people, once we had not received mercy, once we were far from God, lost in our sins, in the empty way of life, handed down to us by our fathers, once we were nothing in one sense, but God chose us.

[25 : 58] God made us a royal priesthood as by purchasing us with the precious blood of his own son. And God set us apart and drew us to himself that we might be a holy nation separated from the people of the world to live for him.

But why did God do that? Why did God go to such lengths for you and I? Why did he go to such great expense for you and I? Well, the answer, of course, is here.

So that we might be God's special possession. There's a lovely description of that which is found in Deuteronomy 14, a little later on, where God, as we've already said, speaks to the people.

He says this, Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession. Exactly the same. His treasured possession.

The most precious thing in all of creation to God is you. And me. God values us so highly that there was no price that he was unwilling to pay.

[27 : 10] In Revelation 5 and verse 9, there is a hymn that is sung to Christ which says this, With your blood, you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And we know that that purchase price that was paid is an exclusive price for those who would believe upon him because immediately it follows, You made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they shall reign on the earth.

That's us. That's the Old Testament people of Hebrews and the believers in the New Testament. It's us. We are the people that were purchased at such a great price by the blood of Jesus that we might be God's treasured possession.

Now, as you know, this word in verse 9 which is translated God's special possession, peculiar people, it's translated in different ways in the English because, of course, often when we come to words in their original language which the New Testament is mainly in Greek are not words which immediately have a connotation that is for modern English.

But this word special possession has a sense particularly the word possession has a sense of something which is preserved, which is kept. We can see that and understand that when we think of possessions.

[28 : 32] They are those that we keep, the things that we hold on to. So that when we see, so that when we think about this phrase God's special possession and we think again of how God speaks of the Old Testament people in that way, we see a very strong link to God's ongoing protection and deliverance.

Right at the very end of the Old Testament, Malachi chapter 3, God promising his people, his faithful remnant, those who have believed upon him. He says, On that day when I act, says the Lord Almighty, they, those who have believed on him, will be my treasured possession.

And notice this, I will spare them just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

See the language of the Lord there is this, they are my special treasured possession and I will spare them. I will keep them. I will make a distinction between them and the rest of people, between the wicked and those who are the righteous in my sight.

Dear friends, you and I, as God's people, are his family silver. We're his heirlooms. We're the things from which he will never ever be parted.

[29 : 59] Even if God was to take his church, his people, to the Antiques Roadshow, to have us valued, no matter what they offered by way of price for us, he would never ever accept it.

He will not be parted from those who are his treasured possession. We belong to him. We belong to him now. We belong to him forever. And there is nothing that shall ever separate us from him.

Just read the end of Romans chapter 8. You'll know it very well when you read it. This is the wonderful truth that God is relating to the people here in this letter he's writing.

Throughout the whole of history, God has preserved one people for himself. They have all been his chosen ones. They have all been those he redeemed.

They have all been those he brought out of the world to be his holy nation and his precious possession. And we are part of that. We belong to that great line which the writer of the Hebrews in chapter 11 speaks about that great line and history of faith.

[31 : 10] We are one with those believers throughout time. And there's always been one purpose. There has always been just one mission that God's people throughout all of history have been given to carry out.

One purpose and mission which goes through every part of our lives now and will continue beyond life into eternity. And it's there.

That you may declare the praises of him. That you might make known the excellencies of God. That you might proclaim the wonderful God.

that you might cause the world to stand up and pay attention. That this God is a great God of mercy and grace. That was Israel's calling. That's what their mission was.

The one that they failed to do in the Old Testament. And they have cast onto us the very battle. It's been given to us to carry on this work.

[32 : 19] That they and all the church of Jesus Christ have begun and faithfully done in the world day by day. Year by year. Century by century.

Millennium by millennium. Psalm 145. Verse 10 to 12.

All your works praise you Lord. Your faithful people extol you. They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures through all generations. Are we being who we are?

Are we living who we are? Are we displaying who we are? We are God's often used phrase trophies of grace.

[33 : 36] Trophies of mercy. That he longs to lift up in the earth that men and women may see that he is the God who is king.

Let's sing hymn this evening. It reminds us again of what God has done for us.

Of his great mercy and loving kindness that surely must constrain us dear friends. If we really really knew if we really comprehend all that we are in Christ and all that he's done for us surely we cannot help but share it tell it live it proclaim it.

How vast the benefits divine which we in Christ possess. 494 For I'm convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.