

1 Peter Chapter 2 v 4 - 10

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[0 : 00] in 1 Peter and chapter 2. And I've entitled this evening, for reasons which will become obvious, What's in a Name?

Most of us have two names, a first name or several first names and a surname. And of course all those names have meanings.

And it's why, ladies and gentlemen, if they have a new baby, boy or girl, they spend a considerable amount of time poring over the names in various lists to decide which one would be appropriate for their child.

Because there's something in choosing that name that appears to be conducive to passing on the certain traits that you want. So presumably, if you christen your little girl Joy, you want Joy to be joyful.

If you christen somebody Faith, then you would want them to be faithful, etc. I've got some surnames as well.

[1 : 10] And surnames are different because they often tell you something about the profession or the abilities of the people that have those names. So if I mention just a few that you will know, and then maybe some that you don't, we'll see what we mean.

So if somebody's a Mason, then they literally, in the past, or maybe even now, are a Mason. Working in stone. Baker. Butcher.

They are things that are fairly obvious. Now there's one of these in here tonight, I think. And maybe the only person who knows what this one is. But it's Fletcher's as well.

So what does a Fletcher do, John? Arrowmaker. Arrowmaker, that's right. And there are some that are less obvious because, I wonder if anybody knows, if you've got the surname Holt, H-O-L-T, what that means.

It means you're a forest dweller. Why? I've got absolutely no idea. What about Ackerman? Ackerman. Well, an Ackerman is a ploughman.

[2 : 23] Because an Acker is a field. And obviously, a man is a man. Or an Acker, you might pronounce it. What about Bacchus?

If you've got the surname Bacchus, what would you be then? No, I didn't know either. But it's a Baker. A Baker.

A Baker. Chambers. Close. You'd be a butler in a large mansion, looking after the rooms in the middle.

Why in the middle? I've got no idea. There was a superb one, which I'm not going to read out, but to me it was very funny. If you could ask me afterwards. But, names mean something.

Of course, and the Bible's full of names. I looked at my name once, not that it's in the Bible, but it means spear thrower, which is rather inappropriate for me because I was useless at the javelin at school.

[3 : 25] My javelin used to disappear somewhere over in that direction, and it never quite stuck in the ground. So it was never measured, because I never got anywhere. But let me remind you of some that are in the Scriptures.

Elizabeth means consecrated to God. Abraham, the father of many. Joshua, the God of salvation.

David means beloved. Nehemiah, who we've been studying, means God's compassion. And finally, Jesus, whose name means God, will help.

So, when you are naming somebody, you are attributing to them certain characteristics, or things that you would want them to have.

And what I want to think about in this title, What is a Name Tonight, is that when you're given the name of Christian, what does that actually mean?

[4 : 28] And this passage tells us, there are other passages in Scripture which add to it, but I want to focus this evening on verses 9 and 10 of that passage that we read.

Where it says, 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. And when we come to the Lord's table later on, we'll see that principle being worked out in practice, because when we come to the Lord's table, remember the sacrifice He made for us on the cross.

I want you now to cast your minds back away for some of you, it will be a long way, back to school. And to think about that day when you first had a PE lesson or a sports lesson, and they were choosing teams.

Remember those days? Who has never, ever, ever been in that position where they've been picking teams and you've been there standing, waiting to be picked. I didn't think anybody would miss out on that uniquely blissful experience.

[5 : 54] Well, I just want you to imagine for a moment that scenario. And usually, if the teacher has got any intelligence, he or she will pick the teams and will know in advance who's to go in which team, who gets on, who doesn't, who's good, who's bad, try to balance the teams.

But if they're really lazy, which it appeared many of my teachers were, they would just say, you're captain, you're captain, you're first pick, go. And they would start to pick.

Somebody would get picked first. Let's talk about football. That's the only thing I know about really. Right. Who gets picked first? The best player in the school.

And so you go through the team and as people get picked, you say, I can see why I picked that player because, you know, he's good as well and it gradually gets down. And the line gets smaller and smaller until there are one or two left.

Let's get down to the one, the real business end of the picking. And at that point, you might know nothing else about football. You might know anything about those players that have been picked.

[7 : 07] But you know for certain what that last pick player is going to play in which position. Goalkeeper.

Right. He's useless at football, so we'll stick him in goal and the ball might hit him. That's about as close as he'll get to the ball. We've all had that scenario.

But just imagine that you have, as you're two people picking, and this happens to some people, they happen to be the two boys in the school who are real bullies who hate you and have been bullying you for years because they think you're a wimp.

And that's probably why you're going to get picked in goal. And you're standing there one day and they're picking the teams and you're waiting, not in anticipation, but in dread of being picked last.

And suddenly, one of them says, I want you. And that is a mighty miracle, isn't it?

[8 : 18] This person, this brilliant footballer, who also happens to be a bully, has picked the worst player in that group to be in his team.

First pick. Or in America, as they say, first draft choice for American football. How would he feel? He'd be a bit confused, wouldn't he? You'd think, why'd he pick me?

You know, he's never done that before. You know, we've had this every week for the last year and he's never picked me at all, ever, unless he had to and it was the last pick. Why has he picked me?

I want you to multiply that scenario by a thousand, ten thousand, a million times and realize that when the Lord came to us to speak to us, it was exactly like that moment because we were the worst possible person he could pick because we were sinful.

The Bible says we were enemies of God. We had nothing to commend us. There was no goodness in us. There was absolutely nothing that we could present to him that would make him pick us.

[9 : 35] and yet he did. He chose us. It says here we're a chosen people. It had absolutely nothing to do with us.

For those of us who are Christians here tonight, there would be a time when it was as if God spoke to us personally. I've heard it in many testimonies. I was sitting in a room there and somebody was talking, a preacher or somebody was saying something and it was as if he was just speaking to me and it was as if God said to me, you've got to come to me tonight.

How many times have we heard that? And that's right. We don't do the choosing. He chooses us. But what a fantastic privilege that is.

In any other circumstance, if you were chosen to go to Buckingham Palace to have a royal tea in the garden, you'd feel ten foot high, wouldn't you?

Maybe even twenty foot high. If you were chosen to go and make a presentation to somebody at a big event, you would be really moved by that.

[10 : 53] It would be something that you'd never forget. That's actually important as far as what I'm going to say as we go along because tonight, let's never ever forget.

The Lord's Supper will remind us anyway, but let's never forget that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it's because he chose us and we will never ever forget that.

Whatever the difficult times are that come up, we'll always remember, yes, but I'm chosen. Christ chose me. That's a tremendous thing, but he doesn't stop there.

He mentions four things here. He says there are chosen people, but he goes on to say a holy nation. Well, you know, if you've ever got into one of those conversations, perhaps you're away somewhere and you meet someone that you've not met before and you get into conversation and you say, where do you come from?

Where do you live? And they'll tell you and the conversation sometimes goes like this. It happens virtually every Sunday morning in the summer when we're on the door welcoming people and we say, where are you from?

[12 : 08] And they'll say something like, I'm from Liverpool. But, originally, I was from Birmingham. And I sometimes say, well, the accent's almost the same, but, and then they sometimes add to that, well, look, when I retire, I'm going to actually move back to Birmingham.

Is anybody from Birmingham here? No, I'm sorry, nobody ever wants to move back to Birmingham. Right? But let's get that out of the way. So, they'll always tell you where they originally came from and often they'll say, and when I retire, that's where I'm going to go back to because that's where my roots are.

And this says here that these chosen people, it says also that they're a holy nation. And you could argue that there's no nation called Christian because there are Christians in America, there are Christians in Africa, there are Christians in Australia, in Russia, wherever you go in the world, you'll find Christians.

And they are the nation. But this isn't their home either. They might say, well, I live in Whitby. They might say, I live in Timbuktu.

They might say anything. But then they'll say, but one day I'm going to be in heaven. Because heaven is the home of every Christian.

[13 : 45] That's where the race, if you like, of Christians, the nation of Christians will one day inhabit. It doesn't matter where they are now, but their greatest desire is that one day they're going to go home to be with God, to be with their brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that is something else that this passage tells us, that if you're a Christian, you're part of a holy nation. And if any of you have traveled around the world and you've met Christians, you'll know what I'm going to say next, because you can be speaking to them for five minutes and there's a bond there, because they believe in the same God that you believe in.

They believe in the same heaven that you believe in. They believe that their salvation is through Christ and immediately you've got a bond with them.

It's amazing, but it isn't so amazing, is it? But it's something that the Bible talks about. But I've missed out one other, a royal priesthood.

Well, interestingly, it says, not any old priesthood, it's a royal priesthood. And this royal priesthood is created by the king.

[15 : 18] And who does the Bible say the king is? Christ. He's the king of salvation. salvation. He's the king over all things.

He's the one. Let me just read you those first few verses of John's gospel. Because they tell us what our king is like.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Talking about Jesus. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made.

without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And it goes on to talk about Jesus coming. But I want to just move on a little way to verse 11. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

[16 : 24] Yet, to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right, not the ability, he gave the right to become children of God.

Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God. God, he gave us the right to become children of this royal priesthood.

And he being the king, he was the only one who could appoint a priest. What did a priest do in the Old Testament? Well, of course, he stood in the holy place praying to God for forgiveness for the sins of the people, and he would make sacrifices for them.

And that was the way in the Old Testament that people came before God. And they trusted the fact that when this priest interceded for them, that they would be forgiven.

But what is this saying? He says, we are a royal priesthood. We don't need a priest. You don't need me here tonight to contact God, to pray to him.

[17 : 46] to glorify his name because you, if you're a Christian, are already a priest. You can contact the Lord directly.

You can pray to him. You can bring your petitions before him, and the Bible tells us that he will hear us. What a tremendous thing.

And every Christian that I've met over the years said the same thing. you know, we've prayed so many times for such and such a thing, and God ultimately has always answered our prayers.

Not always in the way that we expected, but he's answered our prayers. God's special possession.

Now, just before I talk about that, I just want to cast you back to the beginning of this passage that I read.

[18 : 45] Because, see the connection between these words, that we are God's special possession, and go back to the first couple of verses. It says this, as you come to him, the living stone rejected by humans, but chosen by God, and precious to him.

I wonder, you know, when I read this, the first time when I was reading through it, again it's one of those verses that I've read a hundred times before, and it's excellent, but this thought never reached me, until yesterday.

So, this is new to me, it's probably not new to you, but you've got to hear it anyway. And it's this, if we are, as it says, God's special possession, but those first few verses say, but this man, Jesus, right, was his precious possession.

Why? Because it was his son. How much do you think God loved his son? How much does anyone love their son or their daughter?

And yet, it says here that we, as Christians, are God's special possession. In exactly the same way that Jesus is God's special possession.

[20 : 18] salvation. And there's a link right the way through there, and let me describe it in a very trivial example. I want to talk about teddy bears. Most children have a teddy bear of some kind, or some soft toy that accompanies them to bed every night.

and I was talking about this recently, I can't remember why, and I was just talking about what I'm going to tell you next, and this person, who was 45, and a gentleman, looked around the people in the room first to check nobody was listening, and he said, I've still got my teddy bear, and it's on my pillow every night.

And if you've had it for that long, for 45 years, or maybe a bit shorter, then that bear will be bald, it will have probably lost an ear, it will have been dragged through the mud 150 times, it will have been kicked across the yard, across the grass in the garden, all sorts of things will have happened to that teddy bear.

And when we think of this precious possession, I want you to think now about a modern film or a film in recent years, virtually everybody's seen Lord of the Rings, and in there, Gollum, right at the end, gets hold of the ring, he calls it my precious.

And he's so overjoyed to get it, that he gets too close to the edge of a precipice, and he falls down into some red, hot, steaming lather, and he's lost.

[22 : 01] He was willing to die for his precious. Do you know that Tolkien and C.S. Lewis were part of a group called Inklings, and they each set themselves the task of writing an allegorical story about Christianity.

And of course, C.S. Lewis wrote the Narnia books, Tolkien wrote the Lord of the Rings, and the other associated books. It's not a perfect illustration, but it shows that preciousness and what it can bring.

Gollum died, and he's willing to die for his precious. But the great good news of the gospel is that Jesus, for his precious possession, you and me, was willing to die on the cross.

But the even better news, if it had ended there, then we'd still have nothing to look forward to, no hope.

But because he was raised from the dead, unlike Gollum was, and came back to his father in heaven, now we, who are his precious possession, have a tremendous hope for the future, because he's given that to us.

[23 : 35] When we read that passage in John just recently, it said that God gave his son everything. Now, if you've been a mum or dad at some point, or looked after grandchildren, and they do have that special teddy, whatever it is, then they love that cuddly toy, don't they?

And sometimes mum or dad might, in a bad moment, think, I wish I could get rid of that teddy, because it's got lots of germs on it, it's filthy, it's horrible, I'll get a new one.

But, when you see your child cuddled up to that teddy, and loving it so much, you realise that you have to love that teddy as well.

And that's what God does with us. His son loves us with his precious possession, and God, who sees all our sins, who sees all our filth, who sees all the things that have fallen off us, and that we've done wrong.

And he loves us because his son loves us. That's the only reason that these things are true, because it's Christ who's chosen us.

[25 : 02] And this isn't a new thing. If you go back to the Old Testament, well, we've got an example in this particular passage that we read. Let's read it.

He 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. And that comes from Isaiah.

That was in the Old Testament. You can go back to Deuteronomy and find that God says that his people are going to be a treasured possession. His people are treasured possession.

possession. I challenge anyone to look at those four descriptions and not be touched by the fact that though we know and we understand our failures, nevertheless, because Christ and because God loved us, we became a treasured possession.

And all these things are given to us. None of these things we can pick for ourselves. We've been chosen by God. We've been made a royal priesthood so that we can be in contact with the Lord himself directly.

[26 : 21] we are a holy nation. We've been set aside by God and we're God's special possession. I find that absolutely amazing to be God's special possession.

If you've got anything even approaching that, you know how sometimes you just look at it and you think that's wonderful, that's beautiful, I'm really pleased that I've got that.

I'm going to really look after that. I'm going to value it. I'm going to keep it somewhere safe and at some point I'm going to put it on a pedestal where everybody can see it.

And God is treating us like that with his special possession. That's the good news. But it doesn't stop there, does it?

Having told these people if they're Christians what their position is, he then says that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[27 : 35] We have a job, we've been chosen for a particular reason. There's a rumor going around that if a couple go into Lidl that the lady goes down collecting the bread, the milk, the butter, the eggs, whatever they're collecting and the man goes to that aisle somewhere in the middle with plugs and screws and electric drills and things like that.

Yeah? And both of them are choosing things because they have a job that needs to be done.

I must have 350 screwdrivers and I've never got the right one to fit the screw that I'm trying to put in. But that's by the by. Here we're told why God chose us.

Yes, we've chosen to be his special possession but that's so that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

It's so that we can tell people what the gospel is and explain to them how it was that God spoke to us, how we came to understand that we needed salvation, that we needed to be part of this heavenly family.

[29 : 00] So that we could have this communion with God. So I think this passage, these verses should encourage all of us tonight and remind us of our position in Christ.

And it was only through his love for us, only through his shed blood, which in a moment we're going to be remembering that all these things are true. How fantastic is that?

How fantastic? It answers the question, why is it that when you've got people who sit in church year after year after year after year and seemingly nothing happens, think, how can they sit there and be reading things like that and not realise that they need to be Christians?

Christians? And it's the one obvious reason that when God wants you, he will come to you and he will choose you.

And there are people in here who were chosen when they were older. There are people who were chosen when they were younger. Christians, and some who sat here for years and years and years and everybody thought they had never become Christians, but they did.

[30 : 32] And whichever way you came, all are now in exactly this position. They're chosen, they're a royal priesthood, they're a holy nation, and most important, they're God's special possession.

I don't know how it feels to you, but it feels good to be God's special possession. And it's what holds us as the world throws everything it can at us.

So let's just rejoice that we're part of God's family, and we do have that living hope that one day we'll be with him in glory.