

## “Being the People of God - Chosen & Called”

Bulleen 10/7/2011

1 Peter 2:4-10

***[Place a large stone on the Communion table]***

Last week I introduced the theme of what it means to be the People of God, and, in particular, I focused on **WHO** are the People of God. This morning we will continue in this theme and focus on what it means to **BE** the People of God, and some of the implications for our lives.

Let us read **1 Peter 2:4-10**.

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In this passage we read some wonderful truths of what it means to BE the People of God.

In vss.4-5 we read that, just like the Lord Jesus, we are now as **living stones** - chosen by, and precious to, God.

It's an interesting word picture that Paul paints for us. Does it mean that we are like this stone - dull, hardened and like dead weight?

What do you think this description of 'living stones' means? [PAUSE]

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Yes, through our calling in Jesus we have been made sure and solid like stones/rocks, unlike sand that simply blows in the wind.

But this does not mean that we are to lie around like dead weight. We have a job to do and a life to live - for God.

In the Lord Jesus, our lives now have a dimension that speaks of steadfastness, dependability, reliability and vitality. Our life in Jesus is one that reflects the mind and purposes of God, ie. the qualities the Lord needs in us to build His church from generation to generation.

Also, in vs.5, we read that we are being **spiritually built up**, established by God, to be His holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices.

Being built up implies that we are purposed to be a part of something greater than ourselves, and this is the community of faith - the People of God.

Not only this, but because the Lord's hand is upon us, it is an ongoing process of building that is taking place. When we first became followers of the Lord Jesus, we had not arrived at anything.

It was only the end of the old life of self, not the end of our new life in Christ.

When we invited the Lord Jesus into our lives, it was the beginning of a process in which God commenced His work in our lives to fulfil his divine purposes in and through us.

When will this spiritual building finish? When we stand together before the Lord in glory, and not before!

Next we come to the spiritual sacrifices, mentioned in vs.5, that we are being trained/equipped to make. What are these spiritual sacrifices that God finds acceptable?

- \* They include our acts of faith when we enshrine God and the Lord Jesus as first in our lives;
- \* they include our daily worship and adoration of God as creator, giver and sustainer of all life;
- \* they include our acts of service, both within God's church, as well as in the wider community;
- \* they include times when we intercede for a lost, needy and suffering world;
- \* and they include making known the true nature and attributes of God in our everyday living and speech.

All this is an awesome task and responsibility, regardless of age, education or cultural background, and would be impossible, if not for God's Holy Spirit who equips and enables us moment by moment.

Also, one of the wonderful things about being '**living stones**' for the Lord is that we don't have to compare ourselves with anyone else, or live up to any one else's expectations of what it means to be a living stone for the Lord.

Each one of us only has to be obedient to the calling we have in Christ Jesus and seek to whole-heartedly live to His expectations of us. It is before Him, and Him alone, that we are accountable.

This is the freedom we have in Jesus, to be faithful and true; to be the people He has called, and is equipping, us to be.

Next, we come to that well known, and very beautiful, statement in vs.9: *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare/proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light ."*

What treasures of encouragement these words are for us. **YOU, yes YOU, are chosen by God.**

When you first became a follower of the Lord Jesus you made a decision, based on all of your life encounters and experiences to that time.

However, even before you made your decision for Jesus, **He made a decision for you**; to love, honour and respect you; to watch and guard over you; and to always seek your well being in every aspect of your life with Him. In Jesus, you are chosen for God's good pleasure. What a joy!

You are also a **Royal Priesthood**. As such, we have been called and chosen to intercede before God for all the people of the world. In this world, there is so much selfishness, sin, evil and corruption, and so our prayer for the people of this world is in the hope that, one day, lives will be transformed; every knee **will** bow, and every tongue **will** confess Jesus as both Lord and Saviour.

Thirdly, we have been called to be a **Holy Nation**; a special people that remains untainted by the rampant evils of the world, and un-covered by the forces of evil that seek to hinder and nullify the work of God, in and through His church.

As a Holy nation, God himself is our leader and we live according to His will and purposes for our lives. Consider Hebrews 10:16, "*This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them ..*"

We see in the world today so many examples of unholy living, and it is not just restricted to the lawless behaviour of individuals.

We also see so much abuse and corruption by governments and dictatorships, as they enact laws and brutally enforce their regimes upon defenceless people.

As God's Holy nation, we live out a visible and real alternative in life. In a world of hopelessness and suffering we don't just offer temporary band-aid programs. A new life in complete fellowship with the Lord Jesus is the real solution, because HE died on the cross to cancel our sin, and now freely offers us a new life in a relationship with God.

It is a new life that breaks through the hopelessness, the darkness, the unfulfilment and the despair of being alone and lost.

As John Newton, the notorious slave trader who became a committed follower of Jesus, penned in the first verse of his famous song, 'Amazing Grace':

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me....  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now, I see.

Finally, in 1 Peter 2:9 we read that we are **a people belonging to God.**

Yes, we belong to God!

We belong to Him, **not** as a possession to be ruled and plundered by heartless tyrants and ruthless dictatorships, as we are seeing in the middle east and parts of Africa today.

We belong to God, in that we are now part of His family and He has the care and responsibility for our lives and well-being. As such, nothing comes before us that He does not already know, and He has promised to never desert us to face life's challenges alone.

As we read in Deut.31:6, *“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.”*

What this all means is that, as the people of God, we now have a liberty and freedom, in our relationship with God, to praise and worship Him, any time we want. We are not constrained, or dictated to, by rituals and traditions that demand our mindless observance.

We also have freedom to praise and thank the Lord Jesus for now making us part of God's family, for this is what it means to be counted as The People of God.

It is in our relationship with the Lord Jesus that we now belong, have our being, and are truly free to explore the fullness of what it means to live as the chosen and called People of God

Hallelujah!







