

1Peter 11-02-18a

This is Friday, the 18th of February, 2011. We're in the book of 1 Peter, and we continue our study in Chapter 2 tonight. We'll take a moment as we begin to make sure we are ready, and use the opportunity to go before the Lord in prayer to ensure that God the Holy Spirit will be able to profitably instruct us through the things that we look at together in this portion of God's Word.

Shall we pray? Father, it is such an exciting thing to look in the pages of Your Word and see the truth come alive and revealed to us, and showing us the potentials and the features of Your plan and purpose as they are unfolding in our lives. We thank You for the deliverance that we have in the Lord Jesus. We thank You for the new life we have in Him and the challenges that face us.

We know that these are a part of Your plan. They are there for a reason. As we study this letter from Peter to people who were challenged in their own day and in unique ways from their culture and their environment and their time in history, we pray that we can glean from this inspired letter the truths that You provided to them and to us so that our lives will reflect Your glory and will manifest the power of the Lord Jesus Christ as it has been imparted to us.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's take a look at our passage in 1 Peter 2. We've reached an interesting juncture in this letter.

Of course, I'm not sure there are any uninteresting junctures, but we are at a juncture nonetheless. Remember that this chapter began by saying, Therefore, laying aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking. We went through what those things actually entail.

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. We've enhanced that translation a little bit as well. We recognize that it is a shifting of our interests.

It's a shifting of our desires. It's a shifting of our priorities. This is usually a conscious act.

It has a deliberate component. Some things are very passive. If you're going to develop love for the things of God, you can't just sit there and will yourself to love spiritual things more than what you do.

Or look at yourself and say, What is the matter with me? Why don't I love spiritual things more than I do? I've got to start loving them more. You can't really deliberate yourself into greater love. We know what engenders and what builds up love in our soul, and that is the Word of God.

We go to the Word of God, and we learn that. That is what reveals God, who is lovely and worthy of praise and worthy of respect and worthy of our love. By learning who He is, it's the same thing that people are always enamored with, the idea of love at first sight.

I think you can have a suspicion that there is going to be love at first sight. You can see something and right away think, You know what? I think I'm going to love that. But you have to

have information.

Nobody can truly fall in love with somebody else unless there is information. This is why we have dating. This is the whole idea.

I need some information about you. Are you as beautiful on the inside as you seem to be on the outside? Or does your inner beauty transcend the relative ordinariness and plainness of your exterior? What makes you tick? What are you like? This is why sane people date before they fall in love. They get to know one another.

If we are going to love God, we want to get to know Him. There is not a deliberative intentionality to love. Love develops as a result of getting information and finding things out that match our particular standards of appreciation and so on.

These attributes of malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and evil speaking are things that are naturally appealing to us and they are part of our normal operation in the fallen world. There is a conscious action to lay them aside. We don't just wait for them to drop away.

It says, having laid them aside, having taken them, and the tithemi aspect of this verb means I am going to place them somewhere else. I'm going to get them out of the way and off the table and out of my mind. In looking at this, we can profitably examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith.

We come to Him, and we talked about living stones last time. He is a living stone. He is not like a living stone.

Coming to Him is not like coming to a living stone. This is all in the realm of the unique. There is only one living stone to start with, and that is the Lord Jesus.

Through regeneration, we partake of His life, and we too become living stones. What is the sense of this? We are living, but we are not grass withering and flowers falling. We are now permanent.

We are partaking of eternal things. This is the root idea, I think, of this terminology. He is a living stone.

He is human flesh, but He is eternal. His humanity will never die again. When He imparts His life to us, we are humanity that will never die again.

We are living, permanent things. He is building something permanent out of us. And that is why He goes on to say, you are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, with a view toward, or for the purpose of, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The interesting thing about this is that there is both an individual and a collective idea here. He doesn't say, you people, you individuals, come to Him. He is an individual stone.

You are an individual stone. And in the same way that He offered Himself acceptable to God, you should offer yourself acceptable to God. What about this whole idea of building? You are being built together.

You are part of something bigger than yourself. And it is integral to the passage, Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. And I like the way that verse is constructed, because it doesn't say, don't stop going and being with other believers.

It says, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, because God is assembling us. How do we end up with the believers that we associate with and that we fellowship with? Well, God assembles them. Sometimes they are in our family.

Sometimes they are in our periphery at work, or at school, or in some other venue. We have gotten to know fellow believers, and it is God's arrangement. God pre-places us so that we are aware of and associated with certain believers.

Now He can do it via technology. People we haven't even seen have been worshipping with us literally for years. And it is a great thing.

But we are assembled. Don't forsake. It is like marriage.

What God has put together to let no man divide us under. Well, if God is assembling us into a house and a spiritual priesthood in order to offer sacrifices, and it is a collective thing, then we have got to pay attention to what God is doing. We have got young people.

They are going to be growing up and going out. And they will either attempt to retain ties and fellowship with us, or they are going to find a new form of fellowship, new believers with whom to assemble in the daily affairs of life, in the temporal plane. But there is always assembly.

God will provide in some form or fashion, not to say that there won't be Brooke Cherith moments, or weeks, or months, or even years, but the ideal, the objective. It is kind of like marriage. You can go a long time without being married.

Some people never do get married. It doesn't change the fact that the norm is a man leaves father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, and they too become one flesh. That is the idea.

Well, in the same way, we are designed to be built together into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. And this is a stone house. I just saw that three pigs thing I mentioned last time, and it's not temporary, it's permanent.

So, therefore, it is contained in scripture. I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect and precious. This is something God did in the past.

This design is of longstanding. Therefore, to you who believe he is precious, but to those who are

disobedient, he is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and so on. So we get down to where we are going to pick up tonight, and we saw this at the end of our study last time.

You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, who once were not a people, but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Now, here's my question. Who is being spoken to in this letter? Who did we see as the audience back in chapter 1? Peter writes to who? The diaspora.

Who are these people? Jews or Gentiles? They're Jews! Look at this. Who once were not a people, but are now the people of God. I thought the Jews had always been a people, as long as there's been Jews.

This is 1,800 years after Abraham. How can he tell them they're not a people? Now, here's a thought I want to attempt to float out there to see if it makes sense to you. He says, but you.

And we say, well, he's writing to these Jews of the diaspora. And he is. Peter did not write this letter to you and me.

Peter had no clue, no concept that there was a continent of North America or wherever we are. He's writing to these people. He's still got them in his mind.

You know how I know this? Look at verse 11. Beloved, I beg you as what? Sojourners and pilgrims. Pilgrim is the same word he used back at the beginning of chapter 1. To the pilgrims.

Not the pilgrims, capital P. The pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus and Cappadocia and Galatia and these other, Bithynia and so on. Now, what if you're not a pilgrim of the dispersion in Cappadocia and Pontus and Galatia, Bithynia and so on? Asia. What about that? Well, let me ask you this.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church. What if you're a woman? Wives, be submissive to your... What if you're not a woman? Or you're not a wife? Children, obey your... What if you're not a child? Slaves, be submissive... What if you're not a slave? Our tendency is to see a caption like that and say, Ah, children, obey your parents, that's for the child. Come here, child, let me show you what the scripture says about you.

Or, wife, come here, let me show you what this says about being submissive. Husband, what does it say about love? And we say, well, I'm off the hook if I don't fall under that you. But we know from long experience that when you look at these things, even if we are not the immediate you, there is our interpretive... Observe, interpret, apply, right? I say that to say this.

It is important when we are doing the interpretive triangle to know the difference between observation and application. I may not be a slave. I am probably not a slave.

I am certainly not a slave in the sense of those to whom these words were written on occasion in the New Testament. I am not a wife. I'm not a woman.

And it's been a while since I was a child in the sense of this term. So here's my question. Do I really kind of skip that over and say this is for someone else? And of course the answer is no.

At the same time, I recognize that even though I'm going to try to glean some truth from a wife or a child or a slave passage, I am not that thing. There's not some sense in which I am a wife. There's not maybe some sense in which I am a slave.

Everybody says, well, we're all slaves. Basically no. Basically not.

We're observing that. I'm not an Israelite. I'm not an Old Testament Jew.

Well, here's what happens in the New Testament. It's easy in the Old Testament. I'm not an Israelite.

But what people want to say is when Peter says you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, I say, oh, that's me. I'm a royal priest. I'm a holy nation.

I'm this and the other. Well, maybe we need to hold up and be a little bit more careful because we know who Peter is writing to. If he says, you know, you wives can win your husbands without a word, I don't say, well, I'm a wife and I'm going to, there's somebody I'm going to.

We have to back up and say that there are associations. We generalize it. I have relationships.

And there may be someone in my periphery that by not trying to browbeat them and not trying to verbalize the gospel to them constantly, God may be able to use some feature of my life in their observation to draw them toward Christ. And we generalize it, right? Well, it's kind of tricky sometimes to draw the line. And in the church age, we like to say, oh, well, this is all church.

I don't think so. And here's why. Look at these verses.

You are a chosen generation. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation.

You are his own special people for the purpose of proclaiming the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, who once were not a people, but now are the people of God who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. And we say, oh, well, you know, these are the, remember the Gentiles were aliens and enemies of God and didn't have the promises. These people aren't Gentiles.

These are the Jews. In what sense had they not obtained mercy, but now have? They've been under judgment for centuries. And then the Lord Jesus came.

I am sent to whom? The lost sheep of the house of Israel. He shall save his people from their

sins. That was the prophecy at his birth, right? You shall call his name Yeshua.

He will save his people from their sins. Look how this continues. Beloved, I beg of you as sojourners and pilgrims, you Jews of the dispersion in Asia, etc., abstain from fleshly lusts which war against your soul, having your conduct honorable among whom? What does it say? Say it out loud.

The Gentiles. The Gentiles. Well, what if I'm a Gentile? Well, just have your conduct among the Gentiles.

Well, what if there's a bunch of Jews around? Do I not have to have my conduct honorable around the Jews? It's clear from this context that these things he is saying are specific to the Jews of the dispersion. And we should be careful about claiming that we are all of these things. The Jewish Christians to whom Paul is writing are in a transitional time.

This is why we have to be careful about taking things that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount and applying them willy-nilly throughout the church age because he's talking to people who are Israel. He's in the Old Testament age. And things that he says to them do not necessarily carry forward into this age.

They always have an application, but that's where we get back to I must observe first, then interpret, then apply. So what is this actually saying here? In verse 9, we have a statement made here about status. A chosen generation.

Remember he told them that they were chosen back in chapter 1. You were chosen to be pilgrims of the dispersion. That's their generation. People before that weren't chosen to be scattered amongst the Gentiles.

People after that weren't necessarily chosen to be scattered amongst the Gentiles. These first century, first generation Christians were pioneers. They're kind of the first fruits of the apostles, the apostolic preaching.

And so Peter and Paul both have special words for these people. You are a chosen generation. You're in a particular, and this is a spiritual generation, you're the first to trust in Christ.

Remember Paul talks about that. We who were first to trust in Christ. You are a royal priesthood.

Why would they be a royal priesthood? Well, royal means there's a king somewhere, right? Who's the king? Not Elvis. In this context, Jesus is the king, right? He is the Messiah. Whose king is he? The Jews.

And I will take all kinds of vegetables flying in my direction for saying this, but Jesus is not the king of the church. The Bible never says that. So, royal priesthood, talking to people breathing air and walking around on the earth, these are Jewish Christians.

Their king has come. They recognized him. The nation missed out.

The door to the ark has shut for the nation of Israel to go into the millennial kingdom. But it doesn't mean there weren't Jewish Christians. That there weren't people who recognized the king.

But what are they going to do now? They are a royal priesthood. They are going to... Now, don't get nervous and say, Well, now, wait a minute. Are you saying that Melchizedek and all this? No.

Everything is the same. Don't panic. What I'm saying is this passage.

Start with the observation. We'll get to the application of what we are. But these people are a particular kind of royal priesthood.

They are a particular kind of chosen generation, right? They're unique. And what does a priest do? What do royal priests do? They are exercising their priesthood on behalf of, and under the auspices of, and with the blessing of, the king. They are first... This is transitional.

Peter is an apostle to the Jews, like the other 11 who were with Jesus after Judas' death. His target audience is the Jews. So he says, Look, you all are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

Many of these people were believers in God before they came to knowledge of Christ. They were Old Testament saints, and they partook. They were the first ones to convert to Christianity, so to speak.

But they're a holy nation. He's speaking to the Jews. We know this because they're contrasted with the Gentiles down in verse 12.

And why are they these things? Not just you happen to be born at the right time. You are these things so that you may proclaim. Why did Jesus choose the disciples to be apostles? Why did he choose Paul on the road to Damascus? To proclaim, You shall be witnesses unto me.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth, right? So this particular generation has a unique mission. The gospel needs to spread beyond the borders of Israel. God has apostell'd these pilgrims.

They're kind of a second wave of the apostles, right? The apostles were Jewish. These people are Jewish. The apostles, you'll be witnesses.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, you're going to witness to these Jews. These Jews are the ones who are going to go and be pilgrims and sojourners and witnesses. You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people to proclaim.

I believe the word is aretia, which is not so much praise as the wonderful attributes of a thing, the worth and beauty and fineness of something. To proclaim the characteristics, the worthiness of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. And even though they were Jews, they were in darkness.

Remember the song of Zacharias? Those sitting in darkness have seen a great light. Talking about the birth of Jesus. He called you out of those sitting in darkness have seen a great light.

That's the Jews of Jesus' generation in particular, who once were not a people, but now are the people of God. God hath not cast off his people whom he foreknew, but it sure looked like it for a long time. How is it that he has not cast them off? He has made a way for them to be his people again through Christ.

It's not enough to be Jewish. People always ask. I've heard this question for decades.

Well, but doesn't it mean something to be Jewish? No! You can be Jewish and be lost. You can be Jewish and go straight to the lake of fire. You were not a people.

Peter tells them right here. You Jewish pilgrims, you were not a people until you obtained mercy. And the mercy comes through Jesus Christ.

Without Jesus Christ, there is no mercy. Without relationship with Christ, there is no election. Without Jesus Christ, there is no chosenness of any kind.

The only destiny you have is judgment. So, now, having said that, and having defined these attributes as belonging specifically to the audience to whom Peter is writing, we observe that. Now we can interpret and apply it in the same way that as a man, I can look at child, slave, and wife passages and draw truth for myself.

And there may be analogs. I can look at the Old Testament where God talks about blessings that come to His people. If my people, which are called by my name, will seek my face and so on, I will bless them, I will heal their land, I will restore them, and so on.

Well, I can interpret and apply, and I know that my opportunity is the same. If I've gone astray and I repent, there is an analogy. God is consistent.

He works the same way. And in the same way that these who were far off were brought near, these who were not a people have been made a people, you and I, regardless of our ethnic extraction or anything else, coming to Christ are given special privileges and unique status. Not necessarily and specifically these things.

My question is, if you and I are a holy nation, what's the name of the nation? I'm an American, and I know the name of that nation. I know the Israelites are members of a holy nation, and the name of that nation is Israel. If believers in the church age are a holy nation, what's the name of

the nation? Let me know when you figure it out.

To my knowledge, the church per se is not ever called a holy nation. These people are part of a holy nation because Peter explicitly told us who he's writing to. Maybe there is one.

I could be wrong. Nobody would be happier than me if there's a nation of Christ-America or something, and we're all citizens of it. But you see my point.

We just want to be careful students of the word of God. Rightly divide the word of truth, and be sure that we're not arrogating to ourselves things that God actually gives to the Jews or to the apostles. Ye shall be witnesses unto me.

Oh, well, that's me. I'm going to be a witness unto him in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. And we're just not careful.

We're not careful. Okay, this is what he said about these people. Now what do I draw from that example? It's not me being that thing.

It's me looking at it and understanding what it means. Well, this is going to set us up now to talk about the specifics of what we are, because there's some terminology here that's important to understand. What does it mean to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation, his own special people, for the purpose of proclaiming his praise? Is there any part of that that wouldn't apply in some way to us? Because we are strangers and pilgrims in the world of unbelievers, and we have the opportunity and the privilege and the responsibility of somehow reflecting God in this same way.

So how exactly does that work? Well, we'll pause here and take our break, and when we come back, we'll do two things. We'll try to answer that question, and secondly, we're going to see some specific passages that I think are helpfully brought together to address these subjects. But let's pause here and take our break.