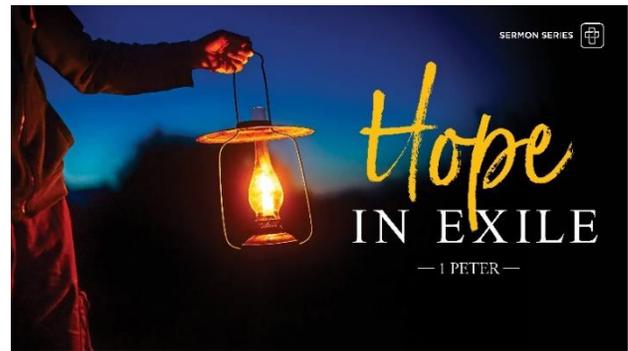


Chosen For a Glorious Purpose

1 Peter 2:4-10

David Sunday May 31, 2020



The passage before us this morning is one of the most encouraging descriptions of the people of God you can find in the whole Bible. So let's read with joy, beginning with 1 Peter 2:4:

⁴ As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—⁵ you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture:

*See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and honored cornerstone,
and the one who believes in him
will never be put to shame.*

⁷ So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving,

*The stone that the builders rejected—
this one has become the cornerstone,*

⁸ and

*A stone to stumble over,
and a rock to trip over.*

They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Holy Father, we ask for this additional mercy, that You will empower the preaching and hearing of Your Word now, that our lives would result in greater glory to You. May the words of my mouth and the mediations of all our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

It's easy, isn't it, for us to talk about the things that really excite us—your favorite football team, some new series you've been watching on Netflix, your newest Apple gadget, where you're going to go on vacation this summer, maybe your fiancé or your newest grandchild. The more we delight in something, the easier it is to talk about it, then as we talk about it, the more delight is stirred up.

That's the way Peter wants us to be with the goodness of God we've tasted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants us to be so filled with delight that we are unable not to talk about it, that our lips are overflowing with praise all the time. Peter is showing us what God is doing in this passage, how that changes our identity, then why God has included us in this glorious plan. The plan of God, the identity of God's people and the purpose of God in including us in this glorious plan.

What is God doing?

So first, the "what" question. What is God doing? The answer God is building a house to be filled with His glory and you can get in on this. In this section, there are two words that are repeated a lot: "stone" and "chosen."

That word stone is a very important word in the Old Testament. Remember young Daniel, the Hebrew boy who finds himself in exile in Babylon. He's taken to serve in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian ruler. One morning Daniel comes into the presence of King Nebuchadnezzar, who has had a very difficult night. A terrifying dream has kept him awake, so the king is very angry, ready to kill all his counselors because none of them can interpret the dream.

It's a dream about a great image whose appearance was terrifying. It was made up of different metals. Daniel is given the interpretation and tells the king, "The gold part of the image represents you and your kingdom." But in that dream there was a stone that was cut out of a mountain, not made with human hands, and this stone struck the image and broke it into pieces. Daniel said to the king, "That stone is the coming Kingdom of God that will stand forever and of its increase there shall be no end." So the stone represents God's Kingdom.

The prophet Isaiah also spoke of a stone in Isaiah 28:16: *"Therefore the Lord God said: 'Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be unshakeable.'*" We see it again in Psalm 118, this cornerstone will bring salvation to all who believe. But this stone will also be a stone of stumbling to those who reject

it. We read these words in 1 Peter 2:7: *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”*

With this backdrop of prophetic imagery, in comes Jesus, this young, impoverished carpenter turned itinerate preacher. He comes on to the scene and basically says, “I am that Stone. I am the Stone not made with hands.” Here is Jesus’ disciple Peter echoing that same thing. He’s identifying Jesus as the living Stone in verse four. The juxtaposition of those terms is striking, because usually we don’t think of stones as something living. We think of them as inert, as lifeless. But here the stone is alive, just like in 1 Peter 1:3 which says we’ve been born again into a living hope, through *“the living and enduring word of God”* (1:23).

Now in 1 Peter 2:4 we’re coming to a living stone who is *“rejected by people but chosen and honored by God.”* Here’s our second key word this morning, the word “chosen.” This means that Jesus is God’s preeminently elect one. Jesus is God’s chosen one. He is precious and honored in the sight of God, so much so that everything good and glorious God is building in this world centers on and hinges on His chosen, honored, precious Son.

That’s how you and I can get in on this glorious work God is building in the world, as we come to Jesus. Verse three says it’s because we *“have tasted that the Lord is good”*—our appetites have been whetted. We come to Jesus again and again, continually attracted to Him. We see Him as precious. As we do that, verse five says we ourselves are being built together as living stones to be a spiritual house, *“a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* We’re being built together into a house in which the glory of God dwells and in which God is worshiped as He should be worshiped.

That means if you want to experience the glory of God at full velocity in this world, you’ve got to come together with God’s people. You can’t be off on your own, separated from the people of God. You’ve got to be joined in an active way as a living stone to other living stones in order to experience God’s presence dwelling in our midst. It also means something very important for us in terms of how we think about the church.

Let me read just a little section from a blog post of Ray Ortlund that I found insightful:

We don’t come to church to be a church. We come to Christ, then we are built up as a church. If we come to church just to be with one another, one another is all we get—and it isn’t enough. Inevitably our hearts will grow empty and then angry. If we put community first, we will destroy community. But if we come to Christ first and submit ourselves to Him and draw life from Him, community gets traction.

That's what Peter is saying here. God is building something glorious—a house to fill with His glory. The Cornerstone of this house is a Living Stone named Jesus. Everything in this glorious house is connected to Him. As you come to Him, you become a living stone in this house. Peter wants us to know this is a place of dignity and honor, because in this world believers will not always be esteemed. We will be marginalized. We will sometimes be persecuted. But Peter wants us to know in verse six that the one who believes in Jesus, this chosen and honored Cornerstone, *“will never be put to shame.”* In fact, verse seven says, *“Honor will come to you who believe.”* I love that.

It was neat to see a humble pastor, Todd Tilghman, from Meridian, Mississippi win the title of champion in Season 18 of “The Voice” last week. He sang the song, “I Can Only Imagine.” He was honored for his faith in Jesus. There was something about his humility, demeanor and winsome witness for Christ that brought honor upon Todd Tilghman.

Peter wants us to know that one day, honor from God will be bestowed on believers before a watching universe. It is not a waste to build your life around this Cornerstone. But right now, not everyone believes. Right now God's chosen and precious Cornerstone is rejected and despised by many. Peter stresses that God is sovereign over this as well. Look at verse seven: *“The stone that the builders rejected—this one has become the cornerstone.”* This one. That word is emphatic. To reject Him is tragic and eternally devastating for those who do.

I can't urge you enough to not let your fate be that of rejecting Jesus. Listen, the worst condition you could possibly be in is to have no taste for Jesus, to have no esteem for Him as precious and honored. But the fact that Jesus would be rejected is no surprise to God. Peter wants us to know that the unbelief of many poses no obstacle to the glorious work God is building in this world. Peter hasn't forgotten the words Jesus spoke to him in Matthew 16:18: *“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”* He wants us to know that human choices to reject the Son, the Stone, will not destroy God's design for His temple. God triumphs even as people are rejecting Him.

When people stumble over the Stone, it's not because they didn't see it and just accidentally tripped. No, it's because they saw it and spurned it. They refused to cherish and honor God's Son and they will be held accountable. Verse eight: *“They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this.”*

Oh, what a gift of grace it is to be given taste buds for Jesus, to be given eyes that see His glory, ears that hear and love His voice and a heart that honors Him as God's chosen and precious Cornerstone. Oh, what a gift of grace it is to believe in Jesus!

How does God view His people and how should we view ourselves?

In verse nine, Peter gives us four distinctive identity markers that apply to all who believe in and cherish this chosen and precious Cornerstone. What he says about us is stunning because he takes all these titles and privileges and blessings that were previously given to the nation of Israel and he applies them to us, to the New Testament church.

He's saying essentially what Paul says in Galatians: we are the true Israel of God. We are the heirs of the promises God has made to Abraham, David and through all the prophets. All God has promised is now yes and amen in Christ, and it belongs to all who are in Christ. **We are a chosen race**, he says. That's what distinguishes us from those who are stumbling and disobeying the Word.

What makes the difference? God chose you. Jesus didn't just stumble upon you one day and think, "Oh, nuts, how did I end up with him?" He wasn't like Jacob on the morning after he married Leah, realizing, "I got the wrong wife." No, we are a chosen race, a race that's defined not by color, culture or ethnicity, but by faith in Jesus. The chosen race of God is black, brown, tan or white. It is not defined by anything about us; it is defined by the One to Whom we have come by grace. It is defined by our unity with Jesus Christ. We are one in Christ with every tribe, language, nation and people who have been called and formed as those who belong to Jesus. This means that for a Christian to be a racist is an abomination. For us to harbor any kind of prejudice in our hearts is not excusable and we should not condone it in ourselves or in one another. We must repent.

Notice that he doesn't say we are "choice people," as if we're a cut above the rest or that God chose the very best when He chose us. No, He chose us, not because of any intelligence, ingenuity, wisdom or attractiveness in us. Not because of our ethnicity, nationality or wealth. He chose us because He loved us and He loved us because He chose to love us. That should fill us with humility and comfort. We are a chosen race and God wants us also to know **we are a royal priesthood**.

A priest had the privilege of being able to enter into the place where sacrifices were offered and go into God's holy presence on behalf of the people who were waiting outside. But now in Christ, Peter says there's no one on the outside. There's no elite group who gets to go into the presence of God. We all can draw near now to God with true hearts and full assurance of faith, knowing that our hearts have been sprinkled clean, as he said back in 1 Peter 1:2. We've been "*sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ*." That perfect blood has been offered as a sacrifice once for all, to perfect those who believe in Him. So now the Old Testament word, "Do

not get any closer to the holy presence of God,” has been turned into, “Draw near. Come boldly. I want you to get close to Me. You are a royal priesthood.”

We are also a holy nation. This is what sets us apart as God’s chosen race. We are holy, as our Father is holy. We’ve been set apart for His service, called to represent Him before a watching world. We know there is still a lot of imperfection and impurity in us, but God is so committed to the completion of the work He began in us—and indeed, He did complete it when Jesus said “It is finished” on Calvary—that God can say that we who are in Christ are now a holy nation.

America is not a holy nation, and our citizenship in America is something we should honor and something we should cherish. But it is something that should come much, much, much lower than our citizenship in the holy nation that belongs to God. That is where our truest loyalties lie. That is the nationality that should demand everything from us, because we are a holy nation, a royal priesthood and a chosen race.

But not only that, finally, **we are God’s own possession**, Peter says. We are His precious treasure. Just like God said in Exodus 19, when He brought His people out of Egypt and had them at the foot of Mt. Sinai to receive His law and then to be led into the Promised Land, “You alone of all the peoples of the earth are My treasured possession.” He called them a nation of priests. That’s what we are, God is saying. We are His possession.

Sometimes after you’ve been in a church for a while you can start to think, “You know, I’ve spent a lot of time serving this place and giving my money here. I’ve done a lot for this church, so it’s my church. I want it to do what I want it to do.” God is saying to us here, “Oh, no. You’re a people for My own possession. You’re not here because of how great you are, but because I chose you.”

It’s not your job to live for yourself or to serve your own interests. You, God’s people, are called to be a royal priesthood, serving God, offering yourself up as a living sacrifice to God. Everything you have and everything you are and all God thinks of you is because of the grace He has shown you in Christ. That’s how you should view yourself.

Why has God included us in this glorious plan?

That brings us finally to the “why” question this morning: Why has God included us in this glorious plan? This is really the main point of the whole passage. This is what all of this is leading toward. Let me give you this third point through a quote from John Piper: “God made us who we are so that we can make known Who He is.”

It's there in verse nine and it's emphatic. He doesn't say, "Here's your identity, and by the way, why don't you tell some other people how great God is once in a while." No, he says, "God has done all this for you. He has given you this identity *"so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* That's why you exist. That's why you belong to this house God is building. That's why you're a living stone in this temple.

Now, we've been hearing a lot lately about essential and non-essential businesses, then the President declared about a week ago that churches are essential businesses. That was nice, but we already knew that, didn't we? We know we are essential, not on the level of a Costco or a Home Depot. We are the only institution on the face of this earth that exists to declare and show forth to a watching world the glories of God, the excellencies of Christ. That is essential.

We exist, not just to keep a religious organization afloat, but to bring glory to God through Spirit-transformed lives by the beauty and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God made us who we are so that we could make known Who He is. We need to apply this in three different ways. First, in order to fulfill this purpose, you need, and I need, to be converted. We must be someone who has been brought out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It's been a while since I've been to the museum at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, but when I went years ago, I remember going through a display that was kind of dark. It portrayed the sublimity of the gospel in various scenes. Finally it got to the resurrection of Jesus. We were brought into this bright, light-filled room, then suddenly the "Hallelujah Chorus" played. That's what it means to be converted. It's to be brought out of darkness into this glorious light.

Tim Keller said that one of the ways you can discern whether you've really been converted is this experience of light. If you were to ask a person who's just religious, moral and nice, "Why do you read your Bible, why do you pray and why do you go to church?" they would answer something like this: "Well, I'm trying to be a better person and it helps me to do these things."

That's the life of a religious but unconverted person. They speak in the gray zone. They're trying hard to do certain things. For a person who's religious but unconverted, everything is kind of gray. There's no darkness, there's no light, there's no glory and there's no wonder. There's just this gray religious life, trying to be good.

But someone who's been converted will tell you, "I know there is within me a heart of darkness, then God has shown into this dark heart the light of the knowledge of His glory in the

face of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the light of the world, has transferred me from the dominion of darkness into His light.”

I once was lost in darkest night
Yet thought I knew the way
The sin that promised joy and life
Had led me to the grave
I had no hope that You would own
A rebel to Your will
And if You had not loved me first
I would refuse You still

But as I ran my hell-bound race
Indifferent to the cost
You looked upon my helpless state
And led me to the cross
And I beheld God’s love displayed
You suffered in my place
You bore the wrath reserved for me
Now all I know is grace

Hallelujah! All I have is Christ
Hallelujah! Jesus is my life

[From “All I Have Is Christ” by Jordan Kauflin]

That’s the song of a converted person. If you don’t know that song ringing in your heart, if that is not your experience yet, don’t settle for the gray zone. Say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Show me the darkness of my heart and bring me into the glorious light of Jesus.”

Then let’s apply this in terms of our mission as God’s people. What’s the most important element of an effective evangelist? What if you asked Peter that question? I think Peter would say, “Well, let’s remember the Day of Pentecost and let me tell you how, when the Holy Spirit invaded my life, I was so filled with the sight of the glory of the risen Christ I could not help but proclaim Him to all who were gathered there.

As you go through the book of Acts, you’ll notice there’s no training seminars on how to be an effective evangelist. There are just people who are delighted in Jesus telling the gospel to others. That’s not to say we shouldn’t train people to be better evangelists. But it’s to say the most important element of an effective sharer of the gospel is to be filled with wonder at what God has done for you in Christ.

An evangelist isn't someone who comes to people with the attitude, "I'm right, you're wrong and I'd love to tell you about it." An evangelist is someone who says, "I am amazed at what God my Savior has done for me and I cannot keep from telling it to others." In that sense, every worship service we have at New Covenant is evangelism training, because every worship we have is designed to reignite in our hearts a passion and delight for what God has done for us in Christ.

That brings us to the last practical application. How do you get this wonder if you've lost it? Ravi Zacharias, whose funeral was this past week, once said, "The older you get, the more it takes to fill your heart with wonder." If you doubt that, just go to the Brookfield Zoo and look at the difference between a five-year-old and a 25-year-old in the zoo. The older you get, the harder it is to fill your heart with wonder.

If you've lost the wonder, or if you're losing the wonder, Peter wants you to get it back. He shows you where in verse ten. He is someone who knows his Old Testament well. He's been ransacking the Old Testament in this passage. He's taken us to Psalms, Exodus, Daniel and Isaiah. You can hear all of that in these verses.

But now in verse ten, he goes to Hosea, saying, "*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*" Peter is thinking of that prophet in the Old Testament, Hosea, to whom God said in Hosea 1:2, "*Go and take for yourself a wife of prostitution, and have children of prostitution, for the land is committing blatant acts of prostitution by abandoning the Lord.*"

So Hosea obeys this difficult command. He marries a woman named Gomer and it starts out okay. She bears to Hosea a son and they name him Jezreel, which means "God scatters." Then more children come to Gomer, but it doesn't say any more that she bore them to Hosea because they're not his children. As they come, God says, "Name them certain names that speak of the situation between Me and My people."

So Hosea gives them names like Lo-ammi, "Not My people," or Lo-ruhamah, "Not pitied" or "No mercy." As this drama is unfolding, Gomer's unfaithfulness deepens. As she goes from man to man, some of them start abusing her and beating her. Finally, she is sold into sex slavery by one of these men, but God says, "Hosea, I want you to go into the marketplace and buy her back. Bring back your wife of unfaithfulness." And at great cost to himself, Hosea buys her back.

God says, "That's what I'm going to do for My people. I'm going to go down into the marketplace of this world where they're sold into bondage to their sin, so at great cost to Myself,

I'm going to ransom them. I'm going to buy them back." Peter is telling us, "That's what God has done for you. That picture of Hosea and Gomer is a picture of God's grace to you, His people."

Look back at 1 Peter 1:18-19: *"For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb."* That's what He's done for you. The way to recapture the wonder is to remember the ransom price, to remember what it cost for Him to redeem you.

If there's any good thing in this life that excites you more than this—like some new gadget you've gotten, some vacation you're taking or some person in your life whom you treasure—if there's anything in your life that you treasure more than this, today, Pentecost Sunday, would be a great time to ask the Holy Spirit of God to detonate in your heart a fresh wonder and amazement at what God has done for you in Christ. Ask Him for increasing fervor, faithfulness and fruitfulness, so you can fulfill the purpose for which He has chosen you, so that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who brought you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

[4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175](https://www.newcbc.org)

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.com ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.com