

5. Learning to Live as the People of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to love with a pure heart. We saw that such love only happens as we learn to follow the example of Christ and put away such things as malice, envy and hypocrisy. As we help our children learn to love with pure hearts, we will then be able to help them learn to live as the people of God. That will be the focus in this topic as we look at Biblical principles that will help them to live as the people of God.

As we come to 1 Peter 2:4-5 we read, “Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that we are to come to Christ and remain with Him *as to* a living stone. When we come to Christ, we are to learn to abide in Him. John 15:5 says, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” He is able to make it possible for us to bear much fruit because He is the living stone. The word that is translated “living” is the word used in John 4:10 where we read, “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, “Give Me a drink,” you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’” Christ is the One who has life and gives life.

As the living stone that fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament, Christ was rejected by men. Isaiah had predicted that rejection when he said in Isaiah 53:3b, “A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” Although He was rejected by the leaders of His day, Christ was certainly the chosen of the Father. The Father revealed that choice to the people when He said in Matthew 3:17, “And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” The Father made that choice very clear by raising Christ from the dead. Acts 4:10 says, “‘Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.’” The resurrection showed that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ had made.

We also see that Christ has made us living stones. The resurrection life that the Father has given to Christ also means that we have resurrection life and are living stones. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’” As living stones, God has built us into a spiritual house. Ephesians 2:19-20 says, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*.” Here, we see that we have become part of the household of God. Our bodies have become the temple of God.

God has also made us a holy priesthood. This means that each Christian has the privilege of offering up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God because we come to God through Christ.

As the priests of God, we have the privilege to speak to God for people. This means that we have the privilege to speak to God in prayer for both Christians and for those who are not yet Christians. Paul asked other Christians to pray for him when he said in Ephesians 6:19, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.” As we pray for those who are not Christians, although it is in a different context, we can use the words of Paul in Acts 26:18 where we read, “‘To open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’” We can pray that Christ will do these five things in the lives of those who are not Christians as we pray for them.

As the priests of God, we also have the privilege to speak to people for God. The last spoken words of Christ before He returned to heaven are recorded in Acts 1:8 where we read, “‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” Paul summarized the message that we are to share with those who are not yet Christians when he said in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.” The first two verses of that chapter tell us that this is the message by which people are saved. We will only be faithful priests of God as we faithfully share this message in the strength that He gives us.

1 Peter 2:6-8 goes on to say, “Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.” Christ is the chief cornerstone. He is the chosen of God. He is precious in the sight of Father. Those who believe and place their faith in Him will no longer be filled with shame. Peter made it clear that those who believe this promise will experience the fact that Christ is precious.

In contrast, those who are disobedient and reject Christ as the chief cornerstone are compared to the builders who rejected the chief cornerstone in the building of the temple in the Old Testament. Even though Christ is the chief cornerstone, He is a stone of stumbling to those who reject. Such individuals stumble over the message of the Gospel. Instead of coming to the rock that is the foundation for their lives, those who reject find that Christ has become for them a rock of offense. 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 says, “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The message of the crucifixion is either the message of salvation or the stumbling block over which those who reject stumble. They stumble and receive eternal judgment because they choose to reject and be disobedient to the Word of God.

Since we are a part of the group who have responded to the Gospel and placed our faith in Christ, 1 Peter 2:9-10 says, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, 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 *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” Here, we see that the Lord used Peter to write several things about what it means to live as the people of God.

First, we are a chosen generation. In John 15:16 Christ said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Peter had been in the upper room on the night when Christ spoke these words. He repeated them here to remind every Christian that we have been chosen by God to be a part of His spiritual family.

Second, we are a royal priesthood. We also saw what it means to be priests of God. Here, we see that we are a royal priesthood. The word translated “royal” means “*that which belongs to a king.*” Since Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords, we are His priests and invite people to become a part of His kingdom. Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” As a royal priesthood, we are to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

Third, we are a holy nation. God set aside the nation of Israel for a period of time and called the church to be His people. There is still a future for Israel because Romans 11:25-26 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.’” God will again use Israel in the future but at the present we are His holy nation.

Fourth, we are His own special people. As His special people, we are to, “Proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Here, we are reminded again that we have been called to speak for God because He called us out of darkness. We are to share the message that will not be known unless we share it as His special people. We now also live in His marvelous light. In the past, we were not even a particular nation of people. However, in the present we are now the people of God. Ephesians 2:13-14 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.” We had not obtained mercy but have now received that mercy.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand these special privileges that we have been given, we help them understand that we can now live as the people of God. This is a very great privilege. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to live as the people of God.