

THE SAVIOUR'S INVITATION

And Other Evangelistic Sermons

by

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SERMON FIFTEEN

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles . . . Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake . . . For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully . . . For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”
(I Peter 2:9-13, 19, 21).

Thank God there are myriads of Christians everywhere showing forth the praises of God, living in the will of God. a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. The Holy Spirit who gives them the power so to live is available for every other Christian in the world. We may all be Christians whose lives prove an apt illustration of Peter’s great appeal. The same holy, shining, burning, victorious testimony is available for each of us. The price is high but it is not beyond our ability to pay. Churches are composed of individual Christians.

An effective church demands a consecrated membership. Each of us must be a professing, possessing, Christ-partaking, Christ-following child of God.

Without a single exception, throughout the ages of Christianity, the churches which have achieved this high position in God have had two things in common: a spiritual leadership and, at least in some measure, a spiritual membership.

When I first started out to preach, not so very long ago, I had the idea that to have a great revival it was necessary for all the church members to be set on fire for Jesus. Experience has proved the fallacy of this belief. I say it out of a broken, aching heart. It seems utterly impossible in these last days for any church to be completely revived. Thank God, however, in almost every church there is a Master’s minority which God can and does use for the advancement and upbuilding of His kingdom. The leaders of the church should always be from that minority.

The effectiveness of the church is determined by the devotion of those in official positions. It will be a terrible day when our backslidden, world-conforming, modernistic, prayerless, barren, fruitless leaders will have to give an accounting to the Lord Jesus Christ for the sheep of His pasture. If we have leaders whose lives are on the altar, just as surely as there is a God in heaven they will inspire other members who are willing to go the limit for Christ and the souls of men. Power attracts power. Zeal begets zeal. Compassion kindles compassion.

True, in the very best of our churches there are only small Gideon bands. The history of Christianity has abundantly proved that a sacrificial leadership plus this Master's minority are more than sufficient to win the mightiest victories. The apostles were few in number. The Reformers were not many. The Wesleys and Whitefield could count their followers by the tens. Moody called out small prayer groups wherever he went. It seems that the Lord specializes in using the few to discomfit the many.

In these verses Peter gives us the secret of mighty Christian victory. They are eminently worthy of study, meditation and appropriation. The Holy Spirit indited these words in this burning testimony of the prince of the apostles. You will find three simple, definite thoughts for our consideration. These verses speak first of derivation; second, of designation; third, of destination.

Our derivation is: **“Ye are a chosen generation.** The word *“derivation”* refers to our beginning, our origin. Clearly, our derivation is from God. Scripture specifically states this. Our Christian experience bears witness to this fact. It cannot come from below. It must come from above, through the exalted channel of the new birth.

Our derivation was purposed of God: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved”** (Ephesians 1:3-6).

God in His infinite wisdom and bountiful mercy purposed in Himself, before the foundations of the world were laid, that we were to be a chosen generation. God planned it before we were born, before time began, before the earth swung in space.

Our derivation was provided from above.

- We had nothing to do with the promise of redemption.
- We had nothing to do with the provision of salvation.
- We had nothing to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.
- We had nothing to do with the Passion of Calvary's Cross, with the emptying of Joseph's tomb, with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

God provided this. Justification, adoption, sanctification were and are given us from above. Salvation is a gift, but it cost God the blood of His Son. Eternal life is the free gift of God's love, but it cost God the greatest treasure of time and eternity.

Just as utterly as we are dependent upon God for the initiation of our salvation, just so completely are we dependent upon Him for the sustenance of our saved lives. Christ is the key to all the bounties of God.

- There is just one way to become a great Christian: to be in Christ.
- There is just one way to keep on being a great Christian: to continue in Christ.
- There is just one way to be effective in the service of the Lord: to be in Christ.
- There is just one way to win victory over sin, and Satan, and self: to be in Christ.
- There is just one way to be used of God in the greatest business of all the world, that of winning the souls of men: to be in Christ.

Many of our people are insipid, indifferent, barren, fruitless because they have lost their connection with Christ. Power comes from God through the Holy Spirit. It is in Christ. The power of God that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think is available to us only in Christ.

Our designation beggars human language. **“Ye are . . . a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”** There is no human position, no human pedestal, no human prestige that can elevate us to the honor and the glory contained in these words. We are a royal priesthood, called out, appointed, ordained, anointed, empowered by God to administer the mysteries of the Gospel and the sacrifices of God.

A royal priesthood implies, first of all, separation.

The Levites were separated unto God. From their group Moses was directed to call out the family of Aaron for the priesthood. Just as Jesus was a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, even so are we priests after the order of Aaron. Our separation is in Christ, physically, mentally, morally, most of all spiritually. We are to be separated from the world, regardless of its attractions or affections. We are to be above all compromise. There must never be an unconfessed or unforgiven sin on our souls. In constant, unceasing penitence and confession we must seek and receive the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A royal priesthood implies fellowship with God.

We are invited by God to come into the holy of holies, to be in constant communion with Him. Were the President of the United States to choose one of us to be his continual companion, the honor would be great. But the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the God of the universe, the Lord God Himself, invites us to abide in His presence in sweet converse with Him. It is a wonderful thing to be a ruler of men, a great educator, a great scientist, a great physician, a great preacher, but the humblest Christian in unbroken fellowship with God has an infinitely more exalted position than all these combined.

A royal priesthood implies intercession before God.

This is undoubtedly the greatest task, the loftiest duty, the mightiest privilege we Christians have. The lowliest Christian on his knees before God interceding for a lost world is doing a work that the angels covet. We do not properly emphasize intercessory prayer. It is our chief prerogative, our most definite responsibility, our most superlative opportunity, our most honorable work. A royal priesthood implies that by day and night we are to lift up the needs of a sin-driven world, the souls of a Devil-cursed universe, to the throne of God's compassionate grace. We serve God and our fellow men best on our bended knees.

“Ye are . . . an holy nation”—different from all the nations, kingdoms, principalities and ethnic groups of the world. God is our King. Christ is our Sovereign. The Holy Spirit is our Governor. We are ambassadors, not of the Court of Saint James, but of the Court of Eternal Glory. Our lives reflect credit or discredit, honor or dishonor on our heavenly citizenship.

For example, if a group of Americans become drunk in Mexico, the Mexicans draw a distorted picture of all Americans. If a group of foolish Americans behave like swine in Paris, the French immediately conclude that all Americans are of that type. Someone has well said that the greatest argument for Christianity and the greatest argument against Christianity is a Christian life. If a minority of Christians in every church, in every denomination, would make concrete the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we would be in deed as well as in theory a holy nation; we would make such an impression upon our communities that revival fires would break out everywhere and people would cry out to us as they cried out to Peter and the other disciples, **“Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?”**

We are a peculiar people. That word **“peculiar”** puzzled me for some time. I thought it designated an “odd” people. The Greek explains it. My tie clasp is peculiar to me. It belongs to me. My watch is peculiar to me. It belongs to me. We are a peculiar people, peculiar to God, because we belong to God. The more literal translation indicates “a peculiar possession,” rather than “a peculiar people.” We are God's possession. We are not our own. We have been purchased with a price beyond man's computation.

All that we are, all that we have, our money, our talents, our time, our homes, our loved ones, our ambitions belong to God. Just as the Jews of old brought to God sacrifices of cattle and birds on the flaming, bleeding altars of the Temple, even so are we completely, totally, entirely to be burnt offerings at the feet of Jesus. That we are God's possession is a comforting thought. It means that we are under His care, in His will, sustained by His Word, provided for in His work. The world, the flesh and the Devil cannot overcome us. Satan had best leave us alone because of the punishment that God will wreak upon him for anything that he may do to us. We ourselves had better be exceedingly chary about what we do to each other, lest the wrath of God be kindled against us. If we are tempted to say aught against our pastors, our deacons, our fellow church members, it were best for us to speak in the secrecy of our closets on our knees before God. When we are tempted to criticize, to backbite, to gossip about our fellow Christians, we had better tell these things to the Lord when we kneel before Him, face to face, in the hour of devotion.

You will find our destination described in verses 11 through 21 of the passage which we are studying. Our destination refers to what God wants us to do, what we owe the Lord Jesus Christ, our church, our fellow men. First, we are to abstain from fleshly lusts. **“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”** **“To abstain”** means *to stay away from, to fight shy of, to struggle against*. Even the appearance of evil must be avoided. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you. We are to be spiritual athletes, buffeting our bodies, minds and souls, lest at any time we fall into the ways of the world and sin.

We are to have our conversation honest among the Gentiles. Our conduct with and before our fellow men must be crystal clear, unblotted, unstained, unblemished.

- Many preachers have hurt the cause of Christ by failing to pay their debts.
- Many deacons have cast evil aspersions upon the blessed Son of God by praying one way and living another.
- Many church members have gone to church on Sunday wearing an air of piety, then turned away to cheat and lie and steal during the weekdays.
- Some choir members sing like veritable angels in a cantata, then go out to carouse to the Devil’s piping.
- Some Sunday school teachers stand before their classes Sunday morning and sit in a theater Sunday night.

This will never do. This is not the way to have our conversation honest among the Gentiles.

We are to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man. Even small details are extremely important. We know that murder, thievery and adultery are wrong, but what about the laxity in the observance of other laws? A Christian is on constant parade.

The Devil and the world are eager to mock him. Watch yourselves each day, each hour, each minute. You bear the brand of Christ. Remember that you are high-priced men. You have no business, even in the slightest way, to violate knowingly any law of man, regardless of what it may be.

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” is to be the guide for our lives. We must follow this rule carefully and exactly.

The ultimate expression of all this, the climactic result, the superimposed capstone is in these words: **“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”**

Our derivation, our designation, our destination, the repression of ourselves, the expression of our religion, the impression of our love for God, of our passion for souls, the outcome of our service and activities—all are summed up in the command to be Christlike.

Oh, to be Christlike!

That should be the loftiest ambition, the constant hope, the abiding aspiration of every Christian. To magnify, to glorify, to gratify the Lord Jesus Christ must be the passionate yearning of every one of us who names the Name of Jesus as Christ and Lord. The Holy Spirit of God stands ready to spiritualize, energize, magnetize every one of us when and if we are willing to have Him use our lives, if we are willing to crown Jesus Lord of all.

One of these days we shall die. Our work will be over. Our possessions will be left behind. Our loved ones will be stopped at the gate that leads into the valley of the shadow of death. All of our efforts, all of our sacrifices, all of our trials, all of our achievements, all of our accomplishments, all of our possessions we shall leave behind.

There will be one thing left that will go with us beyond the grave, that will stand for us at the judgment, that will reward us in an endless eternity, and that is the Christlikeness of our lives.

~ end of sermon 15 ~

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