

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

1 Peter 02: 09-10

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 9 to 10.

After the resurrection, Jesus Christ became the chief cornerstone of the spiritual building. He is the first living stone, and every believer who comes to Him becomes like a living stone, being built into a spiritual house. However, for those who do not believe, Jesus Christ becomes a stumbling stone. And at the end of the age when Christ comes again, He will be a rock of offense. Jesus Christ extends great grace to those who believe, but for those who are willfully unbelieving, His judgment is severe. We pray for the Lord's mercy to remove unbelief from within us, enabling us to learn obedience to God's will in all things. The conclusion of this passage, in verses 9 and 10, emphasizes the need for us to learn to be holy as God is holy. Peter concludes this section by reminding every saved saint that as you embark on the path of sanctification and experience the salvation of your soul, you must know your identity, mission, and experiences.

Verse 9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

This passage about the identity and mission of New Testament saints is truly beautiful and profound. It is hoped that every saint can take it up and remind themselves of it frequently. It is so fitting that these words of encouragement to New Testament saints come from Peter, considering that Jesus entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven to him. In the history of the Church, Peter was the first to open the door of the gospel to the Jews, and then he opened it to the Gentiles. For New Testament saints, it was Peter who opened up the gospel of Jesus Christ to us,

and he himself became a leader sheep, guiding God's flock ahead on the path of sanctification.

For New Testament saints, Peter's role is akin to that of Moses for the Israelites in the Old Testament. In the past, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where he received God's words and proclaimed them to the Israelites, as recorded in Exodus 19:4-6. This passage became definitive for the Israelites. If you read this passage, you'll find some similarities with Peter's declaration to New Testament saints.

Exodus 19:4-6 says, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The Israelites were God's chosen people in the Old Covenant, God's earthly people. Similarly, New Testament saints are God's chosen people in the New Covenant, a heavenly people. Therefore, Peter's declaration here corresponds to Moses' declaration to the Israelites. Peter's declaration defines God's chosen people in the New Covenant, something that every New Testament saint should firmly remember.

First, Peter points out the fourfold identity of God's New Covenant saints. Here, Peter uses collective nouns referring to all believers in Jesus Christ. If we were to use Paul's terminology, it essentially refers to the church, but Peter seems to prefer not using the term "church." As we mentioned earlier, Paul's ministry focuses on building the church, emphasizing that process. Therefore, today's church is still in this process. If you look at your own church, you will see many imperfections. The same is true for other churches, which have many flaws, spots, and wrinkles because Paul is the apostle of building.

Peter, on the other hand, is the apostle of hope. He leads us to the endpoint, showing us the condition that all saints will eventually reach. He lets us see hope, which should become our goal and encourage us to continue running on this path of sanctification.

Now let's look at these fourfold identities. The first one: you are a chosen race. The Greek word for "race" here is "genos," which means offspring or race. The translation in the Chinese Union Version (CUV) is very good—it's "族類" (zúlèi), which means race or kindred. The Israelites were descendants of Jacob, and they had a blood relationship that defined the Israelite nation as God's chosen people in the Old Covenant. However, New Covenant saints are not based on blood lineage, yet Peter still uses the term "race." This emphasizes that we all share one life that comes from God; we belong to God's race, we are the people of God's kingdom.

From our perspective, we may recall a specific day and month in a certain year when we chose to believe in Jesus Christ and experienced rebirth. But from God's perspective, He chose us even before the creation of the world, and we were born anew together in the new creation on the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Because the new creation is eternal and exists outside of time, our choice to believe is a response within time to God's eternal election. Therefore, we must recognize that our first identity is being a chosen race.

The second identity is that of a royal priesthood. God has chosen us to be holy priests to serve Him. In Moses' declaration to Israel, they were called a kingdom of priests, meaning each person was to be a priest to teach others to serve God. But for New Testament saints, Peter tells us that we are a royal priesthood, a status higher than that of Old Testament Israelites. Beyond our role as priests, we also have the identity of kings, thus we are a royal priesthood.

In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus tells a parable about a nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. This nobleman represents Jesus Christ Himself. He gave ten servants each a mina, which represents every New Testament saint. Upon His return, these servants must give an account to the nobleman. Those who earned ten minas will rule over ten cities with Him, and those who earned five minas will rule over five cities with Him. Therefore, when Christ returns, the overcoming saints will reign with Him. Paul also tells us in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." This means that as we walk the path of sanctification, experiencing soul salvation, when Christ returns, we will reign

with Him. We possess a royal identity and are called to be royal priests to serve the God who is the King of kings.

Dear brothers and sisters, never underestimate your identity. You are a royal priest, called to serve God and offer spiritual sacrifices to Him. Remember what we discussed yesterday about the four types of sacrifices we are to learn today to offer to God? First, offer your body as a living sacrifice. Second, use your lips to offer prayers, praise, and thanksgiving to God. Third, use your resources to help others or support the work of the Gospel—these are acts of kindness and giving. Fourth, be a priest of the Gospel, helping those you serve grow and mature, then present them to God. This is the identity every saint possesses. We must understand that the role of pastors, or more accurately shepherds and teachers mentioned in the New Testament, is different from that of priests in the Old Testament. This is a gift given to the church to assist every saint in fulfilling their priestly duties. They stand in a helping role, not a replacement role. Therefore, every New Testament saint should learn to offer the four sacrifices we just discussed.

The third identity is a holy nation. A kingdom refers to sovereignty, and God's holy kingdom signifies that His holy will can flow freely within this kingdom. When Jesus Christ was judged by Pilate, He said in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Therefore, this holy kingdom is completely different from earthly kingdoms.

The kingdoms of this world trace their origins back to the descendants of Cain, the second generation of human race. In the Bible, two lines develop from Cain: one representing the line of life and the other the line of knowledge of good and evil, to which Cain belonged. From Cain's descendants emerged three figures: Jabal, the ancestor of those who live in tents and raise livestock, representing the beginnings of all industry and economics today; Jubal, the ancestor of those who play the harp and flute, marking the beginnings of music and culture; and Tubal-Cain, the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron, representing military beginnings. Today, every nation is built upon economics, culture, and military strength. This forms the kingdoms of the world, and Satan is the ruler of this world. Therefore, worldly

kingdoms cannot become holy kingdoms. Only when Jesus Christ returns can a righteous and just kingdom be established on earth, which will be the holy kingdom. If we desire to taste this holy kingdom today, it can only be experienced within the church. Therefore, the church must separate itself from the world and maintain purity in Jesus Christ. This is essential to creating a healthy environment for saints to learn to obey God, obey the truth, experience soul salvation, and purify their souls. This is a foretaste of the holy kingdom, and God's holy kingdom can only be fully realized when Jesus Christ appears.

The fourth identity is that of God's own people. Every saint in the church, through the precious blood of Jesus, has been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They all become God's own people. This is an objective status, and it's crucial, but it's only the first step. A saved saint must stand in this objective position to experience the salvation of his soul, allowing the Holy Spirit to truly reign within his soul so that his life, conduct, and character can align with the truth. This is how one can truly be God's own people.

Dear brothers and sisters, remember this well: you have these fourfold identities—you are the chosen race of God, you are a royal priesthood, you belong to God's holy kingdom, and you are God's own people. After recognizing these four identities, Peter then tells us the common mission we share: to "proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." Ephesians 5:8 says, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." This tells us that before we were saved, we were all children of darkness. Now that we have received grace and been saved, we are all children of light in the Lord. Every saint's salvation is a journey from darkness into light.

Paul testified in Acts 26:18 about his apostleship to the Gentiles, stating that his mission was "to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." When we were under the power of Satan, we were children of darkness. Now that our eyes have been opened, we are turning toward the light, turning toward God. In Colossians 1:13, Paul says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Originally, we were all in Satan's kingdom, under the power of

darkness. Through grace and salvation, we have moved, we have relocated into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Every saint experiences a journey from darkness into light.

Peter added the adjective "marvelous" to describe this light—it's a light that is truly marvelous, surrounding us from all sides without any darkness. How can we "turn from darkness to light" and enter this marvelous light? It's through a calling from someone—that someone is Jesus Christ, who calls us "out of darkness into His marvelous light." Therefore, Peter here tells us that our mission is to proclaim the virtues of Jesus Christ, because He has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

How do we proclaim this? First, we proclaim it with our words. We use our language to proclaim the virtues of Jesus Christ. Experienced evangelists know that listing out the virtues of Jesus Christ like a set of rules isn't effective. This kind of teaching doesn't help people, as worldly ethical teachings are similar. Despite thousands of years of moral instruction under Confucianism, Chinese morality hasn't necessarily been elevated. Therefore, the best way to proclaim the virtues of Jesus Christ with words is to recount His life, conduct, actions, and words as recorded in the Gospels. Use the examples from the Gospels to proclaim the virtues of the Lord Jesus Christ—this is how we proclaim with our words.

However, the more effective method is the second one: to embody the virtues of Jesus Christ through our experience of soul salvation, organizing these virtues within us. When we interact with unbelievers and they see the virtues of Jesus Christ manifested in us, this is the best and most moving way to proclaim His virtues.

Dear brothers and sisters, you must pay attention to this. Don't become like the Pharisees of Jesus Christ's time—speaking well with their mouths but having lives, actions, and conduct that do not align. If others interact with us and see that our lives do not reflect the virtues of Jesus Christ, then we cannot effectively "proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." May God have mercy on us.

Verse 10: "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Having understood our fourfold identity and mission, Peter urges us to reflect on our experiences. Following Peter's custom, at the conclusion of a passage, he likes to quote scripture. Here, he quotes from Hosea 2:23, "I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!'" Hosea was referring to the Jews, and Paul also references this passage in Romans 9:25, "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved."

When Paul quotes this passage, he tells us that it applies not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. Peter's letter is addressed to those residing in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, including Jewish and Gentile saints. Today, this is especially true of our experiences. We were not originally God's people, but now we are; we were once children of darkness, not shown mercy, but now we have received mercy.

Let us treasure even more the fourfold identity God has given us: chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, and His own special people. We must be more faithful in fulfilling the mission entrusted to us by God, which is to "proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Let us pray together: Lord, how blessed we are, chosen by the Father before creation and brought to the gospel through people in time, making us a chosen race and giving us the status of royal priests to serve You and offer spiritual sacrifices. Help us to truly become Your people subjectively in our experience, allowing the Holy Spirit to reign in us, so that when you come again, we may share in this holy nation. Help me in my daily life to proclaim the praises of You, not just with my words but also with my life, actions, and character. I entrust each day of my life to Your grace, helping me to be a good witness for You. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!