

THE BIRTH RIGHTS OF THE TWICE-BORN

I Peter 2:9

“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.”

What is a “birthright”? It is: “A right that you have because you were born into a particular position, family, place; a right, privilege, or possession to which a person is entitled by birth, such as a bequest, inheritance, heritage, legacy, etc.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

In 1 Peter 2:9 and 10 are what I refer to as the spiritual Birth Rights of the Twice Born. The spiritual birth rights that we have, by virtue of being born again into the family of God, are more valuable than any birth rights that we could attain as the result of being born into earth’s most noble families.

In the Old Testament the birthright of the physically born was of very great importance. In Genesis 25:31 Jacob said to Esau, “Sell me this day your birthright,” that is, the rights and privileges which Esau had as the first-born son.

“The birthright consisted of a double portion of the father's inheritance (Deut. 21:17); but with the patriarchs it embraced the chieftainship, the rule over the brethren and the entire family (Gen. 27:29), and the title to the blessing of the promise (Gen. 27:4, Gen. 27:27-29), which included the future possession of Canaan and of covenant fellowship with Jehovah (Gen. 28:4).” (Keil and Delitzsch)

While Esau bargained away his birthright to Jacob, we cannot bargain for our birthright in God’s family. Neither can it be bought, for it is freely bestowed by God. It is a grace-gift, giving equal status to every child born into the family of God.

What are our birth rights according to 1 Peter 2:9? We are part of:

- > a chosen generation,
- > a royal priesthood,
- > a holy nation,
- > a special people.

There are at the very least, three major emphasis that we need to glean from verse 9. They are: the Description of the Twice-born, the Designation of the Twice-born and the Duty of the Twice-born. Let us meditate upon of each in their order.

THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TWICE-BORN

“chosen,” “holy,” “royal” “special”

There are four descriptive words used in verse 9 to describe the birth rights of the twice-born. These words, as they are used in verse 9, are adjectives. Adjectives describe. Believers are

described here as “chosen,” “holy,” “royal” and “special.” They apply to every Christian in the world without exception.

A. “Chosen.”

This is not the first time that Peter has used this word. In chapter 1 and verse 2 he wrote, “...who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...” (NASB). The Greek word translated “chosen” is “eklektos” and means “to make choice, to choose out from, to elect.”

Jesus declared, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (John 15:16), “I chose you out of the world” (John 15:19) and “many are called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16). The basis for God choosing us was not because of anything worthy within us or anything that we did to merit God’s favor. His choice was entirely because of His sovereign grace.

As God chose the people of Israel He has chosen His born-again ones: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you...” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8a).

Why are we, the born again ones, “chosen”? Because God loves us! We cannot go beyond that in explaining God’s electing grace; we cannot go higher than that and find a greater answer; we cannot delve deeper than that in searching for another reason. Why is it so hard for some of God’s children to accept the truth that they have been loved into the loving arms of God by the love of His loving heart? We’re loved! Praise and enjoy the Lover!

B. “Royal.”

Twice-born ones are royalty! “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6).

Again, Peter draws upon the Old Testament and God’s words to Israel: “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:6).

Why is it that many professing Christians live so far below their status in the eyes of God? Is it that they are ignorant of the heights to which they have been raised in Christ Jesus, or do they prefer to live as paupers?

C. “Holy.”

The word “holy” is the Greek word “hagios” which means “to be set apart from sin unto God; pure, blameless.” From this word we get the words “saint” and “sanctify.” God set us apart for Himself when we were born into His family. We were declared by God to be “holy.” We have been set apart from sinner-hood to saint-hood.

Peter wrote on this subject in chapter one and said, “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” Who is our standard, our pattern, our model of holiness? It is God Himself! “Be holy, for I am holy” (verses 15-16).

David Brainerd, (1718-1747) American missionary to the native Americans, wrote in his diary, “When I really enjoy God, I feel my desires of him the more insatiable, and my thirstings after holiness the more unquenchable; oh, for holiness! Oh, for more of God in my soul! Oh, this pleasing pain! It makes my soul press after God ... Oh, that I might not loiter on my heavenly journey!” (Biography of David Brainerd, p.186).

Holiness is the quality of life that should be reflected in everything we do—it is our new nature, it is who we are saints, holy ones! Robert Murray McCheyne said, “The greatest need of those around me is my personal holiness.”

D. “**Special.**”

The phrase, “His own special people” (NKJV) is variously translated: “God’s special possession” (NIV); “a people for God’s own possession” (NASB) and the King James Version of this verse is: “a peculiar people.” Some have taken the phrase “peculiar people” to mean that Christians are “odd.” However, “a peculiar people” does not mean that Christians are strange or funny, etc. Although, some Christians, I must admit, are a bit odd, that is not the meaning of the word “peculiar” as it is used in the King James Version.

The word is “peculium” in the Latin and means “a personal, purchased, private possession.” We are God’s own “peculium,” His own personal property. This is God’s claim upon us. Paul reminds us that, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Isn’t it wonderful news that we are God’s special property—His responsibility? We are His to take care of, to provide for, to lead us through the labyrinthine paths of this world and then to safely deliver us to the Father’s House where we shall dwell forevermore!

Of course I do not know how you are feeling on the day that you read this material, but I say to you, that if you are “down in the dumps” that you read the following words, “chosen,” “holy,” “royal” and “special,” which describe how God sees you, and lift up your head and praise the Lord that you are somebody in the sight of God!

These words are meant to describe us. Do we fit that description? Would anyone recognize your uniqueness as a child of God if they observed your lifestyle for a week? Some persons have much to live down; Christians have much to live up to—let’s live up to our description in these words.

THE DESIGNATIONS OF THE TWICE-BORN “generation,” “priesthood,” “nation,” “people”

Verse 9 reflects Peter’s Jewishness and knowledge of the Old Testament, for Exodus 19:5,6 reads, “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.”

What Israel was in the Old Testament, born-again children of God are in the New Testament. Christians collectively are called many things in the Bible: the Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2); God’s garden (1 Corinthians 3:9a); God’s building (1 Corinthians 3:9b); the Lamb’s Wife (Revelation 21:9); salt (Matthew 5:13) and light (Matthew 5:14); “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5), etc. Here in 1 Peter 1:9 are four more names: “a generation,” “a priesthood,” “a nation,” “a people.” Each designation emphasizes a different aspect of our mission in the world.

Let us concentrate on each of the four designations:

A. “Generation.”

This word “generation,” in the New King James Version, is difficult to translate, as in seen by the attempts of the translators to convey the idea of the original: “a chosen people” (NIV); “a choice race” (Young’s Literal Translation); “a chosen kin” (Wycliffe Bible).

The word in the Greek is “genos” and means, “ken, born, kind, offspring.” We can sum up these thoughts by saying that we are God’s family—His chosen family. What glorious privileges are ours!

B. “Priesthood.”

The designation of a “royal priesthood,” pertains to worship. Our first and foremost activity, as believer-priests is “...that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12) and that, “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).

What one word can we use to describe the primary focus of priests? The word “worship” circumscribes the responsibilities and privileges of priests. We who have come to Jesus Christ, the Living Stone, have been designated Living Stones—we are alive in Christ and are designated a “holy priesthood,” verse 5, and a “royal priesthood,” verse 9.

In the New Testament an individual believer is never referred to, in the singular, as a priest. We are part of a “priesthood.” It is our collective privilege to engage in worship. Worship is the most sublime and sacred activity in which believer priests, individually and corporately, can be engaged while upon earth, and it will be the most exhilarating activity to occupy us in eternity. Therefore, worship is of primary and paramount importance to the church.

It is my observation, that although some believers assemble in buildings called “Worship Centers,” and that is what the true church should be, in some instances, those places have become “Entertainment Centers.” Platform Christianity has become very popular with the untaught crowd that assembles to watch a performance on a stage, with all the lights, graphics, sounds and smoke that one would find in a worldly venue. Yes, I said “smoke.”

While traveling, I visited a “church” on a Sunday morning, where the only lights were on the platform. The worshipers sat in the dark. I observed what I thought was “smoke” drifting across the platform. Mrs. J and I were sitting in the back and when the “smoke” kept getting thicker, I motioned to an usher who came to me from the back of the audience, and I said to

him: "Something is on fire on the platform." He smiled accommodatingly at me and said, "That is the fog machine." I remarked to my wife afterward that, "When you think you have seen it all, you see something new!"

I don't have the foggiest idea why there would be fog machines in a worship service. From scripture I get the impression that scriptural worship clears away the fogs of earth and enables us to see God as He is, the Light of the world.

People want to "do their own thing" in the worship of the church. What the Bible has to say about worship for many people is of little consequence as long as they are happy and feel good. We must be concerned with what God says on how He is to be worshipped. The idea that many have about worship is to "get something out of the service," rather than going to church to give our worship to God. We seem to have forgotten our worship service is to bring glory and honor to God, and not to entertain ourselves.

And, while I am at it, may I ask: "What place does applause have in a worship service? Is the applause for God? No, it is for the humans who have performed. Because the spectators have been entertained with a spectacular show they respond with applause. Worship is God-centered not man-centered. When our worship is to please God instead of ourselves, then and only then will our worship be much more meaningful and spiritually uplifting to us and acceptable to God.

The priority of the "royal priesthood" is worship and the scriptures are clear about how that worship is to be conducted. The object of our worship determines how we worship.

C. "Nation."

As Israel was a chosen nation set apart by God, so the church is similarly a "nation." How would you define a "nation"? I turned to the dictionary for a correct and concise answer. This is what the dictionary says, "A stable community of people with a territory, history, culture, and language in common; people under a common government." (Webster's New World Dictionary)

I do not remember ever looking up the definition of the word "nation" before. After reading the above definition and thinking about the church of Jesus Christ as a "nation," I said aloud, "Wow! That is exactly what we are!"

That is what Paul is saying in Ephesians 2:19—" Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," and in Philippians 3:20—"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."

D. "His Own Special (or Peculiar) People."

I have already commented on this terminology earlier. However, I will add that there are several times in the New Testament where the phrase, "people of God," is used.

1. We once were not God's people.

We “once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9c). Have we forgotten what we were like before we were the people of God?

2. Moses identified himself with the people of God.

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...” (Hebrews 11:24, 25).

That leads me to ask, “Are any of us ashamed or too timid to identify with the people of God, especially if doing so would bring suffering?”

3. The future is bright for the people of God.

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9). Contrast our future as the people of God with that of those who are not God’s people: “The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night...” (Revelation 14:9).

My soul! Bow before the Lord Your God, Your Maker and Redeemer, and praise Him for His sovereign grace that sought, bought and brought you to Himself and made you His very own personal, private, special possession!

We are God's people, the chosen of the Lord,
Born of His Spirit, established by His Word;
Our cornerstone is Christ alone,
And strong in Him we stand:
O let us live transparently
And walk heart to heart and hand in hand.

We are God’s loved ones, the Bride of Christ our Lord,
For we have known it, the love of God outpoured;
Now let us learn how to return
The gift of love once given:
O let us share each joy and care,
And live with a zeal that pleases Heaven.

We are the Body of which the Lord is Head,
Called to obey Him, now risen from the dead;
He wills us be a family,
Diverse yet truly one:
O let us give our gifts to God,
And so shall his work on earth be done.

We are a temple, the Spirit’s dwelling place,
Formed in great weakness, a cup to hold God’s grace;
We die alone, for on its own
Each ember loses fire:
Yet joined in one the flame burns on
To give warmth and light, and to inspire.

- David Haas

THE DOXOLOGY OF THE TWICE-BORN

“...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...” (1 Peter 2:9b).

The word “doxology” is a good word with which to end this study and it is entirely fitting, for that is what the words, “proclaim the praises of Him who called you...” mean! The dictionary defines “doxology” as: “A hymn of praise to God.” The word is from two Greek words, “doxa,” which means “praise,” and “logia,” which is “logy,” therefore, “doxology.”

The main emphasis here is that the Twice-Born are to live doxologically—that is, we are not only to sing the doxology, but our lives are to be a continuous paean of praise to Him “who called you (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Our birth rights bring responsibilities. Verse 9 tells us that one of our responsibilities, as children of the Most High God, is to praise Him.

Note the various translations of verse 9:

“...that you may **proclaim the praises** of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (NKJV).

“...that ye should **shew forth the praises** of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (KJV).

“...so that you may **proclaim the excellencies** of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (NASB).

“...that you may **declare the praises** of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (NIV).

“...**show others the goodness of God**, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light” (NLT).

“...to **do his work and speak out for him**, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you” (*The Message*).

“...that ye **tell the virtues** of him, that called you from darkneses into his wonderful light” (Wycliffe).

“...It is for you now to **demonstrate the goodness** of him who has called you out of darkness into his amazing light” (Phillips).

Why the differences in the translations? Because the words “proclaim, show forth, declare, show others and speak out, tell, demonstrate,” as in the above translations, are all from the one Greek word, “exaggellō,” which means: “To publish, to celebrate, to show forth.” There are many ways to “publish, celebrate, show forth,” and each translator conveyed the basic meaning of the Greek.

What are we to “publish, celebrate, show forth”? Here again the translations are different, yet convey the same meaning. The Greek word from which the words, “praises,” “excellencies,” “goodness” and “virtues” are derived, is “arête,” which means “excellences or virtues.”

Albert Barnes comments on verse 9 as follows: “It means here the excellences of God - His goodness, His wondrous deeds, or those things which make it proper to praise Him.”

In our doxological lifestyle we are to publish, celebrate, show forth, proclaim, declare, show others, speak out, tell and demonstrate, the praises, excellencies, goodness and virtues “of Him who called you (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

C. H. Spurgeon said, “God’s grace has been bestowed upon you in order that you may show forth his praises, or, as the marginal reading puts it, his “virtues.” These are wonderful epithets that are here heaped upon believers. May we have the grace to be able to appropriate them, and to expound them in our lives! Oh, the dignity which Christ has put upon the meanest believer! What a high office, and, consequently, what a solemn responsibility is ours!”

The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is then given, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” How can we glorify God? Below are several scriptures that instruct us in the matter of glorifying God:

A. We Glorify God by Speaking of Him.

The Book of Psalms has much to say about verbally glorifying God. Some of the references are:

Psalms 9:14 – “That I may **tell** of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.”

Psalms 71:15 – “My mouth shall **tell** of Your righteousness, and Your salvation all the day.”

Psalms 73:28 – “I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may **declare** all Your works.”

Psalms 79:13 – “To all generations we will **tell** of Your praise.”

Psalms 107:22 – “Let them...**declare** His works with rejoicing.”

The recipients of redemption, in any age, should be sounding out “the praises of Him who called you (them) out of darkness into His marvelous light”!

B. We Glorify God by What We Are.

“You are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14 & 16).

C. We Glorify God in Our Bodies.

“You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20, NASB).

D. We Glorify God by How We Live.

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

E. We Glorify God by What We Give.

“...they glorify God...for your liberal sharing with them...” (2 Corinthians 9:13).

F. We Glorify God by Our Good Deeds.

“...they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

G. We Glorify God by Patient Suffering.

“If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:16).

We have much for which to glorify God, according to 1 Peter 2:9 and 10. All we have to do is reflect upon where God found us—and what He has done for us:

Our past – “darkness”; “not a people”; “not obtained mercy.”

Our present – “chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, special people.”

Our future – “that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

I believe it would be fitting to end this trilogy of messages with the Doxology:

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

– Thomas Ken, 1674

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