

Lesson 10: Spiritual Privileges—Part 2: Security in Christ, Affection for Christ, Election by Christ, and Dominion with Christ

1 Peter 2:6-9b, **“For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood.”**

Our text this morning begins with Peter quoting from Isaiah 28:16, **“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’”** The apostle Paul likewise referenced Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 9:33. It’s a passage that all, or most of us in this room know quite well. That OT prophecy by Isaiah prophesied that a Messiah would come, and when He did, He would be the cornerstone of the household of God, a building that is constructed of nothing but believers in Him.

Jesus, speaking in Matthew 21:42, quotes Psalm 118:22-23, **“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.’”** When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.”

There is a stone that people have seen and rejected. And yet there are some who see that same stone and receive it, bearing much fruit. They are those who are built upon the cornerstone, and there is no other stone worthy to be built upon. Listen to Peter in Acts 4:8-12, **“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”** For even further insight, let’s read Ephesians 2:11-22 to glean from Paul.

Peter in our text speaks of a choice stone that is laid in Zion. What is Zion? The Old Testament teaches us in multiple places where Zion is. For example, 2 Samuel 5:7, **“David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.”** 1 Kings 8:1, **“Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers’ houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.”** Psalm 48:1-2, **“Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.”** There are dozens of other verses that speak of Zion, but the scripture clearly teaches us that Zion is Israel. More specifically, it is the mountain in Jerusalem. This is (and was) the place where the Messiah came in the flesh and established his spiritual kingdom amongst those who believed in Him. As John teaches us in the first chapter of his gospel, John 1:11-13, **“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the**

right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

There is only one name given amongst men by which we must be saved. There is only One who is worthy enough to open the scroll and its seven seals. (Rev. 5:5) That One is Jesus Christ, who Peter calls the chosen cornerstone. The cornerstone was the most important stone of the building. The structural integrity of the building hinged upon the cornerstone, so it was very important choose the stone carefully. In fact every stone that would be laid upon it throughout the duration of the build was chosen and shaped accordingly so that the entire building fit together perfectly for optimal strength and purpose.

The word from Peter is analogous to God's choosing Christ to be Messiah from before the foundation of the world. And as the text from John 1 alluded, we are chosen by God to be stones too. Every believer is shaped by the Holy Spirit into use, to be a stone in the building of Christ's Kingdom. All of us are being shaved, and chiseled and polished into the precise shape needed to be fit in the building where God sees fit. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 3:9, **"For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building."** Then a few verses later in 16-17 he wrote, **"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."** Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Tim. 3:15, **"If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."** Every believer is a stone in the household of God, built upon Christ, the chosen cornerstone. We are shaped by the Spirit, we are informed by the Word of God with hearts that have been illumined by the Holy Spirit. And together we stand strong, upholding the Word of God like a mighty oak through the damaging winds of this sin-cursed world.

Not only does Peter write that Christ is chosen, but he writes that Christ is precious in our text. We understand the meaning of the term precious. Ladies wear precious gems on their fingers to symbolize the unity and vows of the marriage bond. Jewelers don't fuse gravel pebbles to plastic rings. They take rare and expensive gems like diamonds and set them carefully into gold. If you want to find out just how precious a wedding ring is, wait until your wife loses it, and see how upset she gets. You can always replace a diamond, or gold, but you cannot replace THAT ring. That was the precious ring. And this is the idea of the meaning of the word Peter is driving at. There is only one Jesus Christ. There is none like Him. No one matched Him before, or after, or forever to come. He is completely unequaled in value. All of the money from all the world, throughout all of human history combined couldn't replace the endless value of Jesus Christ. This is the precious stone that everything else must be built upon. Without Christ, the entire building is warped, and crooked, and would topple over at a moments notice.

And so this knowledge that we're built upon the chosen and precious cornerstone gives us our first Spiritual Privilege of this lesson: We have security in Christ. In Christ, who can possibly come against us? Who is strong enough to crumble the building that is expertly constructed upon the most precious stone that the world has ever known? Peter says that if we place our trust in Christ, we **"will not be put to shame."** We've all at some point in our lives trusted in someone who let us down. Maybe we confided in them something personal, and they passed that information along. Maybe we trusted them to accomplish an important task, and they failed to do it. Maybe we looked to them for comfort and nourishment, and they instead abused us. Peter is telling us in our text that there will be no shame in putting our belief in Christ! We will never be disappointed with being in Christ. Rather than be put to shame, we will feel the security in being in the One who provides for us all that we will ever need for life and godliness. The prophet Jeremiah wrote in 17:7-8, **"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,**

whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.” What a remarkable truth to reflect on! We would do well to memorize this verse, so that we might recall it quickly when trials and temptation come. We’re privileged to have that security in our Lord. Persecution may come, danger may come, our body may fail, but in Christ we are eternally unmovable. I am reminded of the confidence of Paul in that famous chapter of Romans 8. Here Paul recalls every possible reason that we could fall out of the Father’s hand, and he underscores our eternal security, Romans 8:28-39.

The next spiritual privilege that we find in our text is our affection for Christ. 1 Peter 2:7-8, **“So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”** Have you ever considered that your affection for Christ is a privilege that you have? Being secure in Christ is foundational. There is no such thing as a believer who is insecure, they may feel insecure because of poor theology, but all those truly in Christ are held tightly. That privilege of security, however, ought to never be alone. When we meditate on the truth that our great God sought us, and saved us, and secured us when we were sinners, our response to that ought to be affection – displayed in obedience. Children many times view obedience as something they must do to appease the authority above them. They’d rather not be doing these chores, but if they don’t, they’ll suffer consequences. I use the analogy of children, because as adults, we always work to our full potential for the joy of pleasing our boss! For the one in Christ, all things are made new, including how we think about obedience. We don’t see obeying Christ as living a dry, boring life robbed of all satisfaction. The longer that we are in Christ, I think we see how unsatisfying everything outside of Christ truly is! Being secure in Christ, and obeying Him out of our affection for Him, are inseparable privileges. Jesus said in John 8:42-47, **“Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”** The Apostle John wrote in his first epistle, 1 John 5:1-5, **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”**

This love of Christ manifest in obedience, is only shared by those who believe according to our text in Peter. Those who may profess belief in God, but have no desire to know His word (let alone make an effort to obey it) are not true believers in Christ. Peter quotes in our text verse 7, **“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”** The builders that he refers to are the Jews. They had the Word of God, they ought to have understood the prophetic writings about the coming Christ, and yet they rejected the Saviour when He came. The Jews had expected a different Messiah. They were looking for something else, something mighty and powerful. They wanted a lion, and in Christ they saw something worthless, someone that needed to be exterminated. According to Peter writing, the Jews

rejected the cornerstone. They tried to remove it, meanwhile tripping over it, and being crushed by it in judgment.

Verse 8 of our text makes clear **“They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”** We want to be very careful how we reason through this verse. At first glance, you might conclude that God is predestining some people to disobedience, and ultimately final judgment. In order to rightly divide the Word, it’s always beneficial to stack scripture up against itself in order to verify that our understanding of the Bible is correct. We must also remember that no one translation of the Bible is the inspired text. What do I mean by that? We know that all scripture is inspired by God, but we also know that not the ESV, or the NASB, or the KJV is the word for word inspired message. People throughout history have laboured intensely to bring the inspired Word into every language. We can therefore benefit greatly from comparing many versions of the Bible against themselves to gain better clarity. Surely some versions, by history of their coming about, carry greater weight and influence than others.

So how do we interpret this destination to disobedience dilemma in verse 8? I’ll start with my interpretation, and then I’ll walk you through how I get it. God sovereignly allows those that He has not chosen to life to operate in the freedom of their sinful desires that will ultimately end in their eternal judgement, something God takes no pleasure in. The end of sin is always death, sin has no other destination. What other Bible verses can we draw on to help underscore that conclusion? James 1:13-5 speaks to the heart of this interpretation, **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”** Clearly here, we read that God is never the author, or instigator of sin. Everyone, according to James (according to God) is operating freely when they sin, and sin when it is fully grown with be destined to death. We learn from God’s unchangeable character in Ezekiel 33:11, **“Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”** God takes no pleasure in judging people for their stubborn, outright disobedience to Him, but that does not mean that He’ll let sin go unpunished.

And so how to we balance the Biblical truths that God chooses to elect some to life, and yet allows many to stumble and fall to their eternal damnation? I think an important thing to remember as we think, is that God is never bound by any moral standard to save anyone. If God had to save us, then that would mean that we deserved saving, and that would negate grace altogether. Some are saved by grace, most others are judged in the sin that they love. Some are Spirit-changed, repentant, and saved, and other would go to Hell one-hundred times in a row before they’d follow Christ. Paul sought to instruct us well in our thinking concerning this issue in Romans 9:19-26, **“You will say to me then, ‘Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?’ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use. What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, ‘Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”**

This conversation regarding the those who disobey meeting their destination of death doesn't end at verse 8. Peter continues by contrasting their destination with those that are in Christ. Verse 9, **"But you are a chosen race."** Those that are in Christ are a chosen race. This thought is drawn from Deuteronomy 7:6-9, **"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations."**

Peter identifies believers in Christ as being chosen by God, in the exact same way as the people of Israel were chosen by God. This is a difficult concept for many Christians to deal with, yet nevertheless, election language it is recorded in scripture from cover-to-cover, and it is very important to grasp. Must a person understand and cherish the doctrine of election to be saved? I would say absolutely not, but I would stress that there is much joy that is lost, and worship opportunities that are missed when the doctrine is not understood. The greatest reason (in my opinion) as to why the doctrine of election is resisted—often violently, is because it goes straight against the prideful heart of humanity. Proud people (which is all people) want to see the best in themselves first. People want to see their accolades, their accomplishments, their good deeds. Most of all, they want God to see those things. When it comes to the issue of salvation, people are most willing to admit their sins, but they also want to credit themselves for finding and believing on Christ. The doctrine of election turns every ounce of self-worth upside-down, it empties the barrel of goodness clean dry. The doctrine of election speaks of a God who finds a corpse, and out of nothing but sheer grace breaths new life into it, a justifiable action only because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ imputed to the sinner. This message of grace is that Paul spoke about in Ephesians 1:5-7. Listen to the electing, sovereign plan of God from eternity past, applied to sinner's accounts by His grace, and His grace alone, **"In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."**

One of the biggest objections to the doctrine of election is that it allows people licence to sin. To be clearer, the objection is that if God elects certain people to life, while passing over others to their death, than how can anything we do change or reverse that decision? So, if we can't lose our salvation, sin away! There is plenty in scripture written to promote an attitude of gratitude for what Christ has done for us. Paul speaks about what ought to be our hearts desire, now that we've been freed from the life of sin and slavery, and we've been brought into the family of God. Romans 9:17-22, **"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that**

you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”

The doctrine of election, rather than prompting reckless sin habits, ought to instead anchor our faith in the unchanging nature of God. The doctrine of election is a bedrock doctrine. Jesus said, in John 10:28, **“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”** Jesus said that no one can snatch us out of His hand. He said that no one is able to snatch us out of the Father’s hand. (That “No one” includes yourself by the way!) Read Paul in Romans 8:35-39, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Could a reckless person use and abuse this doctrine to fall into sin? Of course, and that would be gross sin. But what strength and confidence this doctrine ought to provide those who believe with great conviction that they are safe in the arms of the God who holds them!!! This is a true spiritual privilege of every single true believer in Christ! And this truth is true for us in every circumstance, especially those difficult circumstances that we find ourselves in. The economy may deplete our finances, disease and illness may cripple our health, persecution may threaten our physical life and freedom, but nothing can touch our eternal security in Christ.

Not only should our election spark a concrete stand in Christ, but it should also be producing tremendous joy in our hearts. In a world that is thirsting for satisfaction and finding none of it. In a world that is making every effort to find happiness and lasting contentment, but constantly missing the mark. In that world, there ought to shine the joy of a contented Christian. It’s not that the Christian gets their every hearts’ desire, but we have everything that we’ll ever need secured in Christ. What we desire, and long for, and work for, is an eternity with Christ, without sin. That is the great hope that is laid up for us in Heaven. (Eph 1:5)

Not only does Peter proclaim our great privilege of being a chosen race, but he next goes on in our text to tell us of our next privilege: That we are a royal priesthood. Depending upon how long you’ve known the Lord and been exposed to His Word, this privilege may come as a shock to you. Growing up in the Roman Catholic religion, Priests were those ordained ministers who took personal holiness to an un-call-for level. They were those who lived un-necessarily spiritual, and were either admired, or avoided. I remember my confusion at the thought that all believers then were priests, until I understood what a priest was. But in this instance, were not just called priests, but royal priests! What is that all about?

The Apostle John wrote the song that the four living creatures sang when he was taken up to Heaven and given a glimpse of the throne of God. They sang in Revelation 5:9-10, **“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”** All believers have been made into the kingdom of Christ and have become priests to our God. So as royal priests, what is our privilege?

The priest in the OT was the only one appointed the privilege of entering into service before God to offer sacrifices. As believers, we too are priests, because we also have been given the reconciled ability to not only come before the Lord's throne at any moment in prayer, but we are also privileged to give our lives as living sacrifices to Him.

So, our being chosen in Christ also places us into a privileged position as a priest fit for service, and with granted access. But Peter amplifies things by calling us a royal priesthood. What Peter is painting here is a picture of the ruling and reigning that we will enjoy with our King in His Kingdom. We know that we're not just adopted children of God, but heirs. Let's read Paul in Galatians 4:1-7, **"I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."** It is true that every believer in God, though once an enemy of His, is now not only forgiven, not only brought into safety with Him, but called a son and accounted as an heir to all the royal treasures. What a privilege it is for us to be called like this! John recounts the immense blessing it is in Revelation 20:6, **"Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years."**

The only one who can establish such a royal house is Jesus Christ Himself. He is both King and Priest. The writer of Hebrews sets forth the uniqueness of Christ's royal priesthood in Hebrews 7:14-17, **"For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, 'You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.'"**

Melchizedek was the model for the royal priest in the OT, he was both King and High priest simultaneously. He foreshadowed Christ, who would be the ultimate and perfect priest. Just like Melchizedek, Jesus did not inherit the priesthood through the priestly line; but rather God appointed Christ as the sinless royal priest who transcended the Levitical system, fulfilled the old covenant law and offered Himself as the new covenant sacrifice for sin, and because we're in Christ, we're royal priests.

As we think about our privileges this lesson, as well as in the next lesson to come, whether we contemplate our union with Christ, to our security in Him, to our dominion with Him, we ought to be propelled into praise and adoration! Anything less than worshipping God for these gracious privileges is sin.