

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

1 Peter 2:1-10

Key verse 2:9

„But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.“

Praise be to God who sits on His high and lofty throne even in this time, and that even in the time of persecution and corona and many challenges, the past year has been full of the glory of God. God continues his work through the holy stumps. The first Christians were also holy stumps. Apostle Peter referred to them as "living stones." He wrote a letter to encourage them not to live as persecuted or refugees, but with the spiritual identity as the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, and the people of ownership proclaiming the benefits of God. God bless us to hold on to this spiritual identity in the new year 2021, to live an influential life of faith, and to be used as the main agents of spiritual revival.

1. Come to Him, the living Stone (1-8)

Apostle Peter wrote his letter to the Christians who were scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia and Bithynia. They were living in persecution and as strangers. They probably had all kinds of problems. But Apostle Peter did not help them humanly, but encouraged them spiritually. What was his encouragement to them?

1. Crave pure spiritual milk

Let's look at verse 1: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind ..." Deceit and hypocrisy is the sin of thinking you are serving God but really serving yourself. Envy is the sin of seeking blame from God or in others instead of struggling to please God through repentant faith and getting God's approval. Such sins we may put away first. In this lockdown pe-

riod, many people also habitually or because of despair spend their time aimlessly, for example, through unrestrained Internet consumption. Instead, we may use this time in a very precious way. How?

Let's look at verse 2: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." Apostle Peter instructed Christians that they could be eager for "the pure spiritual milk" like the newborn babies. For the babies, drinking milk is not an option, but absolutely necessary. The babies drink to the death. With such an attitude, we may drink the reasonable pure milk of God's word through, for example, the deep Bible study, factual study and early morning prayer. The goal is spiritual growth: "that by it you may increase to your salvation." For the newborn babies, gaining weight is absolutely necessary. At birth, a baby may weigh 3.5 kg. After just one year, it has tripled its weight. Pediatricians carefully monitor growth using charts and tables. If a baby does not gain weight, but stays that way or even loses weight, the parents and doctors have a lot of stress and the baby has to go to the hospital or even to the intensive care unit. Many Christians think that the grace of salvation and forgiveness is already everything. But that is just the beginning, just like giving birth. Just like gaining weight for a baby, gaining weight spiritually is absolutely necessary and normal for Christians. If a Christian does not gain spiritually, then it is not normal and he needs spiritual help.

Thanks be to God that our baptized people keep on gaining spiritually through the pure spiritual milk of inductive Bible study and spiritual training. They are not only saved, but they love and investigate God's word with zeal. They

have chosen, instead of indulging in the lusts of youth, to participate in the suffering of Jesus. They are growing very beautifully as Bible teachers and future global spiritual leaders, and also continue to increase in their practical school studies to glorify God. I thank God that I too may continue to grow spiritually. In the past year, I was allowed to grow spiritually through the Jeremiah Factual Study and see vision to be used as a prophet to the nations. May God bless His servant's biblical research and in return bless our Factual Studies, Leadership Seminars and lectures on the ancestors of the faith as well as Christian theology and philosophy. God bless you to drink abundantly the pure and spiritual milk of God's Word this year and to grow spiritually and practically infinitely!

2. Build yourselves up as living stones into the spiritual house

Let's look at verses 4 and 5: "As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him -- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Jesus called Apostle Peter a rock of faith and the church. Therefore, Apostle Peter had deep understanding of stones. He referred to Christ as a living stone. That Christ is a living stone means that he is a rejected stone. The world did not accept him even though he came into its possession, but rejected him and finally crucified him. But when he was rejected by men, he became alive with God, chosen and very precious. In the same way, Christians also become alive, chosen and very precious with God through the rejection of the world. Humanly speaking, the rejection was very painful for the Christians. But spiritually, it was very good for them, because through it they could build themselves into a spiritual house and become the holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God.

Thanks be to God for persecution. Persecution time is a probation time, time of cleansing and purification, as a vine is cleansed to bear more fruit. Through rejection, living stones and sacrifices pleasing to God are produced. During the time of persecution, Sh. John was able to graduate from high school with the highest grade and glorify God. By the grace of God, we may experience this story again. In the time of rejection,

Sh. Peter Ryu went from being a stone of stumbling to a living stone, offering pleasing spiritual sacrifices to God through holding on to grace and through his servanthood to Inductive Bible Study and the next generation. Through the time of rejection, the spiritual house also comes into being. Thanks be to God for blessing us in this time of rejection to form the spiritual house through early morning prayer, spiritual life fellowship, and to make offerings pleasing to God of forming 10,000 one-on-one Bible study teams, mobilizing the Next Generation, and establishing three mission bases.

3. The Cornerstone

When we look at verses 6-8, we realize that God raised up Christ not only as a living stone, but also as the cornerstone of salvation. In a building, the cornerstone has a supporting function. It is against it that the other stones find their support. If you remove the cornerstone, the other stones no longer have a hold and can easily lose their cohesion.

Let's look at verse 6: "For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." This is a quote from the prophet Isaiah. Against false doctrine, Isaiah promised that God has raised up a cornerstone in Zion as a rock of salvation. This is the promise of the Christ. The rejected stone Jesus Christ became the cornerstone of salvation for the whole world, for the one who believes in Him.... In the time of rejection we may hold on to the cornerstone Jesus. Then we will not be crushed. Martin Luther, when he pointed out in 95 theses the deviations of the church from the word of God, was persecuted and finally rejected by the emperor and the pope and declared outlawed. In human terms, he was a dead man. But he did not fear worldly power, but held to the true cornerstone, Jesus. He composed a song, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." When he held on to the true cornerstone Jesus, he could overcome his fear and be used himself as a cornerstone for the spiritual reformation of a continent. God bless you to come to the cornerstone of Jesus in the time of persecution and temptation, to stand on it rock solid, and to be used as cornerstones for spiritual revival through the spiritual heritage of early morning prayer, the formation of one-on-one Bible study teams, and the making of disciples through spiritual life fellowship.

2. But you are the royal priesthood (9-10)

Let's look at verse 9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." In this verse, Apostle Peter reminds Christians of their spiritual identity. It was easy for Christians to see themselves only as strangers and persecuted, and to be concerned only with survival or many problems. It is always easy to let one's identity be determined by external conditions or problems. But spiritual identity (from Latin *idem*, "the same") always remains the same. In the spiritual insight of Apostle Peter, Christians were, are, and will be the royal priesthood through whom God will proclaim His benefits in this dark world and fulfill His plan of world redemption through world mission. Nowadays, there is much confusion about what Christian identity means. Some understand it to mean living in a particularly moral way. Others associate it with social commitment, with welcoming all people as they are. This has led to very strange blossoms like gender ideology with terrible consequences for individuals. Certainly there was much speculation and confusion about what being a Christian meant among the early Christians as well. But Apostle Peter was able to summarize in just one verse the key points of Christian identity: The chosen people. The royal priesthood. The holy nation. The people belonging to God. Let us reflect on these core points of Christian identity.

1. The chosen people

Christians are chosen by God, having received a personal and specific calling from God. God chose Isaiah to be God's messenger and a holy stump. God chose John the Baptist to be used as a forerunner of the Messiah. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Finally, God chose His Son, Jesus Christ, to give up His heavenly glory and die on the cross as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world and accomplish God's world salvation plan. God's election is always much greater than the small idea of a human being. God's election makes a person great. God chose the numerous martyrs among the early Christians and the Huguenots like Marie Durand, and likewise among the Korean Christians, to change the course of history of a country or a continent through their holy

sacrifice. God has chosen UBF to send out 100,000 missionaries to all the campuses of the earth by the year 2041 and raise up disciples of Jesus and spiritual leaders among the intellectual students there. God has chosen the Next Generation from youth to be used as the main people for spiritual revival. God chose Sh. Noah to be used as a 21st century Noah and as a mission director for the Istanbul Mission. God has chosen Sh. John to be used across churches as a global spiritual leader for world missions. God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29). Being chosen by God is the greatest grace a person can receive. God bless you to hold on to God's election in all circumstances and to live according to God's gift and calling.

2. The royal priesthood

This has nothing to do with studying theology. Every Christian is a priest. As priests, Christians intercede with God for people and for their country. They pass on God's Word to people and teach them how to live in right relationship with God. They are mediators between God and people. It is very important for a society to have such mediators and priests. Then a society has hope and vision. When there was a priest Ezra, a nation could experience reconstruction and spiritual revival after the Babylonian captivity. When there were two Bible teachers, Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon in Wittenberg, Europe could experience spiritual salvation and revival.

Christians are also kings. Being a king or not has nothing to do with being rich or powerful. Being a king means following the example of Jesus. Our missionaries were outwardly just guest workers and foreign students. In their home countries, they were the future leaders of their society and could have lived richly and with recognition like kings. But they were exercising incarnational grace. They followed the example of Jesus, the greatest King: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) My father gave up his doctorate and lives to this day in a single room in the Life Community, serving the Next Generation spiritually and working for the Middle East Mission. Sh. Jochen never graduated from university. He might have studied business administration. He may not be able to lecture on microeconomic theorems, but he has been trained at the elite spiritual university in Bonn UBF and is serving

and mobilizing the young people on campus and the Next Generation with the living Word of God and raising them up as the future spiritual leaders. You are the true kings.

May God bless you to live in all circumstances with the identity as royal priests and as Bible teachers, disciple makers and spiritual mobilizers. God raise up many priests and spiritual kings among the young people through the work of forming 10,000 one-on-one Bible study teams and mobilizing the next generation, and use our country as a priestly nation and our continent as a missionary-sending continent.

3. The holy people

God's hope and vision for Christians is to be the holy people. Apostle Peter himself quotes, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16) Holiness is God's absolute command. Holiness is God's privilege to no longer remain in the old life of lust, but to live a changed life as a holy offering (Romans 12:1) and to grow in the image of God as a weapon of righteousness (Romans 6:13). Holiness is God's privilege to experience the life-changing power and authority of the Word of God over all the evil and sick spirits that so torment people, through the obedience of faith, and to be filled with the surpassing Spirit of God. We can grow in the holiness of God by adhering to the Word of God daily. God bless the next generation to grow as a holy people of God in 2021 through early morning prayer and IBS.

4. The people belonging to God

Christians are God's property. Ownership has to do with belonging, relationship and love. In the Old Testament, the Israelites had once been the property of Pharaoh to their own death. But by the mighty hand of God, they were snatched from Pharaoh's grasp and became the precious and beloved property of God before all nations. In the same way, Jesus bought the Christians dearly with His blood through His death on the cross. That is why Apostle Peter writes, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious

blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18,19) The one who has accepted God's grace of salvation and forgiveness is no longer the property of Satan or the smart phone or fate, but has become God's property. The one who has become God's property loves Jesus with all his heart, soul and strength (Deut. 6:5) and desires to obey Him as Jesus obeyed His Father (Heb. 5:8,9). In right relationship as God's people belonging to God, we experience God's nurture, His care and His best guidance, blessing and protection. We may follow the good shepherd Jesus like the happy sheep in Psalm 23, in good times and in times of challenge. All things are for the best (Romans 8:28). To live as God's people is to be a blessed person.

5. Declaring the praises of God

By living as the chosen people, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, and as the people belonging to God, Christians experience countless benefits of God. They experience that God has called them out of darkness into His wonderful light. Christians are called not to fear, but to declare the praises of God, that is, to share them with this world. We may declare God's praises, for example, through our testimony. This is the first step. Joshua testifies again and again that God has saved him from his speechlessness, and he shares God's praises by forming the prayer circle with his classmates. We were allowed to declare the praises of God during the time of persecution through mustard seed concerts, testimonies, and guest servanthood. Through this, many were allowed to see God's hope and we were also allowed to serve as a spiritual headquarter for God's work. We are allowed to declare God's praises, especially in times of persecution, here in Bonn, in Koblenz, at 1700 universities in Europe, in the Middle East and as far as Cambodia, Kartagena and North Korea and in the online world.

I thank God that I may renew my spiritual identity here. I am the chosen generation because God has chosen me to be used as a rock of faith and as a spiritual leader and Bible teacher like Ezra for spiritual revival. I am a royal priest in that I am allowed to declare the praises of God through investigating, obeying and teaching the Word of God, and to serve and spiritually mobilize 120 medical people as a spiritual king. I am a holy people because God sanctified me through the blood of His Son Jesus and sanctified me through His word and made me

grow in His image as a living stone and cornerstone. I am God's people and a blessed person. I may proclaim God's praises, who has called me out of darkness into His wonderful light, through my testimony and my life, here and to the Middle East and in the online world.

In today's text, we have learned that in the time of persecution and temptation, Christians may grow infinitely spiritually through the pure and spiritual milk of the Word of God, and build up the spiritual house as living stones. Above all, the identity of Christians to be the chosen people, the royal priesthood, the holy nation and the people belonging to God to declare the praises of God to the end of the world. May God bless you to be used influentially in this new year 2021 with the spiritual identity for the rebuilding of the spiritual walls, the mobilization and installation of spiritual leaders and the spiritual revival. May God bless Germany and Europe with the spiritual identity to be used as a priestly nation and as a missionary sending continent.