

Our Heavenly Privileges

Introduction. Salvation gives us a living hope, a desire for a holy life and the terrific opportunity of fellowship with the people of God. We are “born again,” and whatever we do in obedience to the word of God will last forever, but whatever we do in the energy of the flesh will look beautiful for a time, but will then die.

In 1 Peter 2:1-10, which flows logically out of the previous section (1:22-25), Peter uses a variety of images to describe the Christian. He begins by speaking of “laying aside” sins like garments and then compares Christians to newborn babies. Next he likens them to stones in the temple and finally to a chosen, priestly people. We will examine one of the finest texts that teach us about our heavenly privileges in Christ.

I. ***We Are Children In God’s Family (vss. 1-3)***

- A. Peter’s readers have obeyed the truth of the gospel and were purified (1:22). They must “rid” themselves of various sins. This would naturally remind them of their baptism, the culminating point of their obedience to Christ, when they stripped off the old life and made a new beginning (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 2:11).
- B. The phrase “newborn babes” is the same as that used for the infant Jesus in Luke 2:16. A major characteristic of a healthy baby is its instinctive yearning for its mother’s milk.
 - 1. Just as the baby has a great appetite, so we should have a similar desire for God’s word, the “spiritual milk” (Psalm 19:10).
 - 2. It is sad when Christians have no appetite for God’s word, but must be “fed” religious entertainment instead.
- C. Continuous nourishment from this “milk” causes the newborn to grow in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Hebrews 5:11-14).
- D. The image of “tasting” the Lord goes back to Psalm 34:8. Those who have come to taste the graciousness or goodness of the Lord should have a continuing appetite for spiritual food and turning away from sin. It should never be under compulsion.

II. ***We Are Stones In God’s Temple (vss. 4-8)***

- A. The “rock-stone” imagery is common in scripture (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; 51:1-2; Psalm 118:22; Daniel 2:34; Zechariah 12:3). The “rock-stone” was a recognized Messianic title among Jews and Christians.
 - 1. Jesus Christ is identified as the “living stone,” which refers to His stability as the risen Lord. The “rejected” Christ is the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish nation (Matthew 26:14-15; Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15; 4:10-11), as well as the current rejection of Him by the disobedient everywhere.

2. Jesus' great prophecy to Peter concerned the building of His church (Matthew 16:18-19). Peter sees, in the coming of individuals to Jesus the rock, the building of a new spiritual edifice (cf. 1 Kings 8:27).
- B. When someone obeys Christ, a new stone is added to the "spiritual house." In fact, Peter wrote this letter to Christians living in five different provinces (1 Peter 1:1), yet he said that they all belonged to one "spiritual house."
1. The temple and its associated sacrifices were shadows of the reality to come and are now superseded.
 - a) The Old Testament spoke of the offerings of prayer, thanksgiving, praise and righteousness (Psalm 50:14; 51:19; 107:22; 141:2) in addition to material sacrifices and offerings (Leviticus 17:1-16; 22:17-33; et al.).
 - b) The New Testament speaks of the "offering on the sacrifice" of faith (Philippians 2:17), material gifts as "a fragrant offering" (Philippians 4:18), your bodies as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1), "a sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15), the conversion of the Gentiles as "an offering acceptable to God" (Romans 15:16) and Paul's coming death as "a drink offering" (2 Timothy 4:6).
 2. All Christians have the privilege of coming into the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-23). Our lives should reflect the privilege we have to serve as priests in a temple (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- C. The quotation of Isaiah 28:16 refers to God's foundation stone, carefully chosen and very costly, placed in position in Zion.
1. Isaiah uses this figure to encourage his people to build on the Lord Himself, the one who is immovable and unchangeable.
 2. Whoever builds on this foundation will be established and will never be ashamed (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).
 3. It may look to us that the church on earth is a pile of rubble and ruins, but God sees the total structure as it grows (Ephesians 2:19-22).
- D. As Christ is honored by God, so will all who participate in Christ; but for unbelievers, two other "stone" citations from the Old Testament are strong warnings.
1. The first is from Psalm 118:22, where the builders rejected a building block that later turned out to be the final stone (the capstone) in the building (Mark 12:10-12). In the same way, Jesus, who was rejected by human beings, has been exalted by God.
 2. The second warning is from Isaiah 8:14, where the disobedient are portrayed as stumbling over the stone. Human disobedience is

within the plan of God (Romans 11:8, 11, 30-32), but one does not become less blameworthy (Acts 2:23).

III. ***We Are Citizens In A New Nation (vss. 9-10)***

- A. Peter applies various terms originally spoken concerning Israel to the church (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; Isaiah 43:20-21).
 - 1. The title "chosen generation" stresses God's love in bringing sinners to Himself (1 Peter 1:2). God did not choose Israel because they were a great people, but because He loved them (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).
 - 2. "Royal priesthood" may be understood as "a royal house" and "a body of priests." Both titles stress the dignity of the church because of its union with Christ. Jesus is King, and all in His "house" belong to a royal house.
 - 3. Calling the church a "priesthood" emphasizes that we are a kingdom of priests in which all the subjects, not just a portion, are engaged in offering sacrifices (cf. Isaiah 61:6; Revelation 1:6).
- B. "Holy nation" shows that God has "set apart" the church for His use (Leviticus 10:10). Warren Wiersbe wrote, "Separation is not isolation; it is contact without contamination." The title "peculiar people" stresses ownership (Titus 2:14). We are a people who He has secured as a possession. Therefore, we belong to Him, and to no other.
- C. "That ye should shew forth the praises" reveals the purpose of God's grace to people.
 - 1. "The praises" means His self-declarations or manifestations to mankind.
 - a) We have no reason to magnify ourselves above others because we once were in the same darkness (Ephesians 2:1-3).
 - b) The church is to advertise or publish the noble acts of God in history and thus make Him known (Acts 26:18).
 - c) Practically, this means that we exhibit a holy life, being transformed into the image of God and walking as Christ Himself walked (1 John 2:3-6).
 - 2. Sadly, instead of being a positive influence on the godless nations around them, Israel imitated those nations and adopted their practices.
- D. Peter closes this section with another use of the Old Testament; this time from Hosea (1:6, 9-10; 2:23).
 - 1. In their original context the verses describe God's rejection of disobedient Israel. Here Peter applies them to the salvation that has come to the Gentiles.
 - 2. Once they were "not a people" (the special word used for Israel); now they are "the people of God."

Conclusion. We are living in enemy territory, and the enemy is constantly watching us, looking for opportunities to move in and take over! We need to live up to our responsibilities. God will judge us as to how well we have abided in His word (John 12:48). If we truly love the Lord, we will recognize that these responsibilities are not difficult (1 John 5:3). Furthermore, we will show our love to the Lord by fulfilling His commandments (John 14:15).