

Remember Who You Are

Introduction. The night that the apostle Peter denied the Lord, he was unwilling to admit who he was. The voices of the forces of evil came to him saying, “You were one of them.” Peter would answer, “I don’t know what you’re talking about” but his failure of faith resulted in bitter regret (Luke 22:54-62).

Educated by the experiences of his temptation and failure, Peter, in his first epistle, wrote to God’s people with a clear and powerful message: Remember who you are! He wanted his readers to know who they were, value who they were, and live consistently with who they were. In that way, they would find strength to remain true to the Lord while they lived in a hostile world. Consequently, in the first two chapters of his letter, Peter reminded his readers of who they were with an encouraging series of “you are” statements.

I. Who We Are

- A. In the opening chapter Peter reminded his readers that they had been born again by incorruptible seed — by the living and abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:3, 23).
 - 1. Implicitly he was saying to them, “You’re the true family of God.” As God’s true family, they had been blessed with a living and joyful hope of an inheritance from their Father (1 Peter 1:4).
 - 2. While sojourning here on earth, they experienced His fatherly protection through faith, His loving discipline through trials, and the privilege of a sharing relationship with His son Jesus, the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy (vv. 5-12).
- B. In addition, Peter reminded his readers that they were the fulfillment of God’s Old Testament administration in three distinct ways:
 - 1. They were God’s true temple.
 - a) Peter wrote, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house ...” (1 Peter 2:5). It was an important and significant description of God’s people; for in Peter’s world, a temple was regarded as a house for a deity in which his image was displayed.
 - (1) Throughout the Gentile world, great temples were built to honor the Greco-Roman pantheon with their images proudly on display.
 - (2) Likewise, the Jewish temple, though without a physical image of the Lord, was God’s dwelling among His covenant people. To them, it was the most special building in God’s world. Yet, Peter had come to understand that the Old Testament temple was a foreshadowing of a far greater one, a spiritual house made — not of physical stones — but of living stones.
 - b) So then, just as the tabernacle/temple had been the dwelling of God among His people, so Peter affirms that Christians are the spiritual temple in which God’s image is now displayed (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

2. They were God's true spiritual priesthood.
 - a) Again Peter wrote, "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).
 - (1) If you could've asked the ancient Jew who were the most privileged people in Israel, he would have answered, "The priests."
 - (2) Why? Because they were those closest to God; they alone could enter the holy place and serve on behalf of the people.
 - b) Yet Peter wanted the saints to see that they had stepped into that privileged position! In fact, though the priests were still serving at the temple, it would become clear in time, when the Herodian temple was destroyed (Matthew 24:2-3), that the physical temple and its priesthood had given place to a spiritual temple and spiritual priesthood. Christians are the true temple and priesthood of God!
3. They were the true covenant people.
 - a) Ironically, people today continue to believe that physical Jews are the "chosen people" and that, as Jews, they're saved in that relationship. However, Peter, as a Jew, makes it clear that God's new covenant people are those who have put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and not those who have rejected Him.
 - b) With prophetic insight, he uses the words of Isaiah (28:8; 8:14) and the psalmist (118:22) to contrast two groups: (1) one which trusts in the stone that God had laid in Zion; and, (2) the other which had stumbled over that stone (1 Peter 2:6-8).
 - c) Consequently Peter takes the language spoken to God's old covenant people at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6) in 1 Peter 2:9 and makes a new application of it to those who had believed in Jesus: Christians are God's true covenant people now.
- C. Each of these descriptions underscores the special relationship and role that Christians have in this age. If you've placed your faith in Jesus as the Christ through obedience to the truth, you're a member of God's true family, a living stone in His spiritual temple, a holy priest in His priesthood, and one of His new covenant people.

II. How We Became Who We Are

- A. If it's important to remember who we are, it's equally important to remember how we were made who we are!
 1. Peter affirmed that it wasn't on the basis of human merit but upon the basis of God's compassion that the saved occupy their unique place in the world.
 2. Once more, Peter marshals the prophecies of the Old Testament in 1 Peter 2:10 to make his point.
 - a) Hosea's symbolic naming of his son, Lo-Ammi ("not my people") and his daughter Lo-Ruhamah ("not having obtained mercy") declared in Hosea's time God's rejection of Israel because of their sin (Hosea 1:6, 9).
 - b) However, the prophet anticipated a day when those disowned by God would once more be His people (Hosea 1:10), and that those upon whom

he had no compassion would become the beneficiaries of His compassion (Hosea 1:7).

- B. Peter explains that these prophetic promises find their fulfillment in those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah.
 - 1. They're those who have been selected by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:1-2). Through a faith that submits to Him, they've become God's family, God's temple, God's priesthood, and God's covenant people. They are spiritual Israel (Galatians 6:16).
 - 2. To know who we are is to realize that we've become all this because of His compassion and grace. Though we may humbly and gratefully glory in what God has made of us, His grace and compassion eliminate all arrogance about our place in the world (Ephesians 2:8-9).

III. Why It Matters

- A. As Christians, we must own this identity and not be ashamed of who we are. More than this, we must realize that knowing who we are affects how we live. Each of these "you are" statements implies a new way of life for us.
- B. As His children, we must behave as good children behave. We must obey the Father's will, imitate the Father's holiness, respect the Father's name, love the Father's other children, and develop and grow in the Father's word (1 Peter 1:14-2:3).
- C. As His temple, we must bear His image (Colossians 3:10), bringing glory to Him by partaking of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- D. As His holy priesthood, we must offer up continually the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give praise to His name, and doing good and sharing with others (Hebrews 13:15-16). We will want to spread His word (Philippians 4:18).
- E. As His covenant people, we must remain faithful to our agreement with Him to love and serve Him. We've made a vow, and we have to remember that we exist to "proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Conclusion. I once knew of a preacher who ended his lessons, particularly the ones aimed at younger people, with the exhortation to remember who they are. Remembering who you are means not being ashamed to confess Jesus to others, and it means letting it shape how you live.

God hasn't chosen or elected us individually. He has, however, chosen people to be saved through knowledge and obedience to Jesus Christ. He has planned a special role for you and wants you to fulfill it. Come and take the offer because nothing the world has will compare to what you can be in Him.

I am deeply indebted to Johnny Felker for the use of his material.