

Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020



## THE CANDLESTICK

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (*I Peter 2:9*)

How fashionable is it being a Christian? ... Or do you sometimes find yourself 'at odds' with what other folk consider 'normal'? You genuinely make every effort to accommodate their point of view, but you simply cannot approve of some of the notions and approaches prevalent today!

Why is that? It's not because you are trying to be obstreperous or awkward. Nevertheless, that is how some might perceive your unwillingness to adopt the modern 'progressive' values.

However, the Bible teaches us we *ought* to be different. In fact, it specifically says we are *peculiar* ... and the word literally means we are a 'prized possession belonging to' God. He has 'set us apart' unto Himself by making us a new creation in Christ. The old things we used to do, - which were contrary to His holiness, - we have stopped doing them because they are contrary to our new nature in the Lord Jesus. We don't do them anymore because we are a new creation in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) ... We have been made alive in Him through grace (Eph. 2:1,5), or as John describes, we have been 'born again' (Jn. 3:3,7).

That means when Jesus saved us, the Holy Spirit *breathed* into us and we received new spiritual life and membership in God's family, again as John describes, we were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (Jn. 1:13). As the chorus says,

I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,  
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!  
Joint-heirs with Jesus as we travel this road,  
For I'm part of the Family of God.

This isn't a matter of signing up to a church membership. Neither is it something inherited from our parents. Becoming a Christian requires the person to consciously repent of their sins and to turn to God, believing in what the Lord Jesus has done for us on the cross of Calvary. He died for us there, His blood was

shed for us there, He was sacrificed as a lamb on the altar to take away our sins. ... And that is how we are saved, and how we now belong to the Family of God.

But is everyone saved? Is everyone going to Heaven? Sadly, no, for if everyone was going to Heaven without turning to Christ for salvation, Heaven would be no different to this sinful world! ... We are born in sin (Ps. 51:5), we all have sinned, (Rom. 3:23), there is none righteous (Rom 3:10), there is no fear of God for there is no thought of eternity (Rom. 3:18) ... It is the most serious predicament for as Jesus explained to Nicodemus, he that believeth not is *condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:18) ... Strong words from the lips of God Who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18)!

What does it mean to be 'saved'? What does it mean to be 'born again'? What does it mean to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be a member of the 'chosen generation', the 'royal priesthood', the 'holy nation', the 'peculiar people', the prized possession of God? ... What it means is that when God looks inside you, He sees your heart wiped clean of sin and cleansed to His holy standards. Using a Biblical term, He has '*justified*' us, and what that simply describes is how He looks upon me '*just-as-if-I'd*' never sinned ... and that is what makes God's grace towards undeserving sinners so amazing!

Therefore, we are 'peculiar' in the sense we have been set apart for God's glory for He has credited us with His righteousness, and we belong to Him. We have been granted this privilege not because we are worthy, or we entitled to it but solely because of His eternal mercy and grace towards us, "He sought me and bought me with His redeeming love. He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him".

Why did He love me, and why does He continue to love me? No matter how clever you are, you will never find the complete answer to that question for God does not love us because we are loveable or because we deserve His love. If anything, the opposite is true for He loves us *in spite of* who and what we are ... undeserving and unworthy ... and yet, He loved us long before we loved Him (I Jn. 4:19).

He loved us so we would glorify His name which is the highest, the best, and the noblest of all acts we can achieve, as the catechism says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever". For it to happen, He sent His Son to Calvary to pay the penalty for our sin, to draw us to Himself, to forgive us of our rebellion against Him, and by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell within us. We did not deserve it, and neither could we have earned it, But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

That's how powerful God's redeeming love is ... to break down every barrier to finding and saving us! "Oh, wonder of all wonders, that through Thy death for me, my open sins, my secret sins, can all forgiven be ... O make me understand it, help me to take it in what it meant to Thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin". ... His love is not only powerful, but it is also personal for "Jesus loves even *me*". Jesus died for *me* and for *you*, and He loves us with the love which has no beginning nor end, For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us (Ps. 103:11,12).

How privileged we are then, that He has included us in His 'chosen generation', His 'royal priesthood', His 'holy nation', and His special and 'peculiar people' set aside unto Himself through His grace! And therefore, as long as He carries, and as long as He keeps us here on this earth, our sole purpose is to shew forth the praises of him who hath called *[us]* out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Peter 2:9).

There's a peace in my heart that the world never gave,  
A peace it cannot take away;  
Though the trials of life may surround like a cloud,  
I've a peace that has come here to stay!

*Constantly abiding, Jesus is mine;  
Constantly abiding, rapture divine;  
He never leaves me lonely, whispers, oh, so kind:  
"I will never leave thee"—Jesus is mine.*

This treasure I have in a temple of clay,  
While here on His footstool I roam;  
But He's coming to take me some glorious day,  
Over there to my heavenly home!

*Constantly abiding, Jesus is mine;  
Constantly abiding, rapture divine;  
He never leaves me lonely, whispers, oh, so kind:  
"I will never leave thee"—Jesus is mine.*