

1 Peter 2:9 But You . . . (Part 1)

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[0 : 0 0] Now as you may remember we've been recently over the past number of weeks looking at some New Testament verses which hinge on the little word but. We first of all looked at Romans 3:21 but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law although the law and the prophets bear witness to it the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. A great verse emphasising the fact that although the world has rejected God and has provoked God's wrath and continues to do so God has not given up and we have reached a point in time but now where God has revealed his righteousness in a new way through faith in Jesus Christ. That was the first verse that we looked at. The second one which we looked at it was before our own communion weekend now so it's a few weeks ago we looked at Ephesians 2 forward where it says but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with

Christ by grace you have been saved. A marvelous verse reminding us of the fact that although even though we are dead in trespasses and sins we're under pressure from the world from the devil and from our own flesh yet God has intervened and God has made us who were dead alive again and he has united us to Christ and he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

So Ephesians 2 forward but God. Tonight we come to I suppose which is the final part of this I suppose if you want to call it a little series we come to one more verse that hinges on this little word but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Now when we look at the message of the gospel and when you look at the theology of scripture we see that our salvation is is very very much the work of God. It is initiated by God the Father, it's accomplished by God the Son and it's applied by the Holy Spirit. God the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit working together in perfect harmony to initiate, accomplish and apply salvation. So in so many ways it's all about God but this verse here is a reminder of the fact that that great work of salvation results in an astounding transformation in us and that's what's captured in Peter's words but you and it's reminding us that because of all that Jesus has done we are now gloriously different or we can be gloriously different if we put our faith in Jesus Christ. Something amazing has happened to us if our faith is in Jesus and Peter lists four things and they're four big things and so we're going to look at them in turn and we're going to have to spend two weeks on it so we'll do two this week and two next week because there is a lot of wonderful teaching in this little verse. So what's the first thing that Peter tells us that we are? He says but you are a chosen race. So what's Peter saying? Well first of all he's telling us that as Christians we are a race. Now the Greek word here for race is the word *genos* which is where we get words like generation or genocide and even genus which although that's not a very common word and it's all echoing the same thing. Now the authorized version indeed translates this verse a chosen generation and so you may have that in the Bible in front of you and it's a very familiar it's a familiar text to many of us so but the ESV has a chosen race now and whilst I absolutely love the authorized version the word generation is not the best translation because when we use the term generation especially today we tend to think about the people who are living now don't we?

So we'll say this generation or this generation is technological or this generation is the generation of social media whatever we tend to refer to a group of people living at a particular time that's certainly what comes into my mind with that word generation and the reason it's not an ideal translation to use the word generation is because the emphasis of this word is actually the opposite of what comes into mind with the word generation because it is not saying that you here and now are an isolated generation it's actually telling us and reminding us that you as Christians are part of a heritage you are part of a common ancestry you are part of a race of people which stretches back into the past and so when Peter says that you are a race he's not highlighting an individual generation at the moment when he was writing or for us in the present day he's actually connecting us to the people of God across the generations he's emphasizing that as Christians we are all fellow members of this one race of this one people of God and so that word it's really a family term we are a race we share the same ancestry the same heritage we are offspring together we are part of God's family so as I said Peter's not highlighting isolating one generation he's rather connecting everyone together across the long history of God's people and one of the great truths that Peter is highlighting when he does that is that he's connecting us and his readers with the people of God in the Old Testament this race stretches right back to Israel indeed

Isaiah 40 20 uses the same terms to describe Israel it calls Israel a chosen people a chosen race and Peter is saying his readers are part of that and we are also part of that part of this great race of God's people now why on earth is that important well one of the reasons that it's incredibly important is that it reminds us that our faith in Jesus Christ today makes us participants in the covenant promises that were given to Abraham all the way back in the early chapter of Genesis Genesis 12 1 to 3 summarizes it now the Lord said to Abraham go from your country and from your kindred and from your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonours you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed you see the emphasis there on a great people a great nation and a great family Peter is reminding us that faith in Jesus Christ brings us into that race and as we think of Israel in the Old Testament we must always always remember that the word Israel is a family term long before it is a political one we tend to think of Israel as a political term to do with a nation you tend to think of Israel in the Old Testament as a nation and a lot of people place huge emphasis on the nation of Israel today and I think that that emphasis is slightly misplaced because the main thing that the word Israel means in the Bible is a family Israel is just Jacob and his descendants it's a family term and God's great plan is to bring together a great family of people and by faith in Jesus Christ we are now part of this common race that means that we are the chosen race the true Israel God's family God's people and in Christ God is restoring a new humanity back to everything that we were intended to be and this has wonderful implications for us because it is a statement of the beautiful togetherness that we have in Jesus I'm sure many of you have maybe gone away to the mainland or even gone abroad or maybe you've gone offshore to work or whatever and you've met Al-Yosoch and when you meet Al-Yosoch it might be somebody that you don't know but because there are Al-Yosoch and you're Al-Yosoch there's this connection and there is this bond well if that's true for people from Lewis or from wherever you're from it is even more true as Christians we share a common bond a common ancestry a common heritage so when you think of great figures in the history of God's people when you think of people like Moses David Elijah

[10:06] Peter Paul John when you think of the reformers the Covenanters the great missionaries the church fathers when you think of all of these Christians you are part of that race as well and it's reminding us that as Christians our core identity is now in Jesus Christ now it's important to think about this we often ask the simple question who are you don't we that's a very common question and should it's a question that you've answered many times in your life people say who are you often we reply with our name don't we I'm Thomas or you say whatever you sometimes in certain contexts we might reply in terms of our job so I would as an engineer I would go to to to look at a job and I would arrive and the I would say I'm from Gordon Deasles and so I would identify myself on the basis of my job and maybe somebody would phone and say hello this is your child's teacher or I'm phoning from the health centre I'm phoning from whatever we tend to associate our identity in terms of our work sometimes we might do geographically who are you I'm Scottish and British

I'm European whatever sometimes we might answer that in terms of our relationship to other people so I think for about the first 20 years of my life I was Dr Davis's son to a huge proportion of the people in Lewis my identity people identified me because of my relation to my father and it's the same with with with lots of things I'm Tom and John and Annie's dad or Eunice husband and you are all the same as well often in our in our island culture we identify people in terms of who their father was max so and so me and so on so something like that but if you really stop and think about it now I mean really stop and really think who are you who are you what is your core identity what is the most important thing about you who are you well the Christian has the astonishing privilege of saying I am Christ

I am in Christ I am part of that special race I'm a member of the family of God and if any of you are not yet a Christian or not sure then ask yourself that question who are you what is the most important thing about you have you ever have you ever asked that question who are you and yet is there anything more important to think about it if you put your faith in Jesus then you are now identified and you will be forever identified as one of God's as one of God's very own and that brings an extraordinary specialness with it and it's emphasised by the fact that Peter describes this race as a chosen race that's what he says but you are a chosen race now the Greek word here is basically the word elect this race is an elected race a chosen race now the word elect can maybe send shiver down her spine it can make us all a little bit uncomfortable and the doctrine of election is not necessarily the easiest doctrine for us to grasp indeed the Westminster Confession of Faith tells us that the doctrine of election must be handled with special prudence and care so if we're thinking a bit about election

Westminster Confession says handle it carefully but often it is handled very carelessly by lots of people in various ways so how should we handle it Peter when he says you're a chosen race he's immediately pointing us to the doctrine of election and so we must think about it what do we say what are we learning well when you think about the doctrine of election the very first thought that should be on your minds is the fact that as a Christian you are in this race because God has chosen you and that's because God wants you the sovereign God has set his love upon you you didn't choose him he chose you and that means that you are his in a glorious way you are part of his chosen race now that should give every single believer immense reassurance because it tells you that you are safe it tells you that you are relying on God it tells you that you are secure and it tells you that you are so dearly dearly loved by God you're his because he wants you and he chose you and that should fill our hearts with just wonder and thanksgiving and praise and hope because God has been so good to us now that is the primary emphasis of the doctrine of election the assured in fact that God does not save anyone because he's forced to but because he lovingly and willingly chooses to if you're a Christian you are God's very own choice now we have to remember here that we are talking about the infinite God the God of all the universe the God who is the highest authority who is the pinnacle of majesty who is the almighty of all the holy holy holy God the absolute supremacy of being the one who is beyond the greatest of our thoughts or our description or our understanding that's the God we are talking about and we are talking about you and me in all of our weakness in all of our insignificance in all of our worthlessness in all of our feebleness we are so tiny and yet you are God's very own choice and that should take your breath away that the God would set his love upon you and so if the devil tries to make you doubt whether

God is really there or whether he really cares about you or whether you're really saved remember Peter's words but you are a chosen race but as I said election is got to be handled carefully and there's a couple of reasons for that first of all sometimes Christians can use election as as a bit of an excuse for idleness and even as an excuse to sin because people tend to say well God will bring in his elect no point witnessing we don't need to do anything God will bring in his elect and sometimes people are of that mind but that attitude is not biblical in fact that attitude is sinful and the reason it is sinful is because it is disobeying a command of God that's all sin is disobeying God's commands and when it comes to witnessing and evangelizing and proclaiming the good news it is not about sitting down trying to reconcile the free offer of the gospel and our understanding of election witnessing is not about that witnessing is about obedience because Jesus has said go go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation that's a command from Jesus and who are we to answer back to God so we must be careful not to mishandle election in that regard but also and perhaps I think more relevant to everyone here we have to be careful because the thought will no doubt enter minds what if I'm not elect and maybe that very thought is in your mind right now what if I'm not elect well we have to think about this because we have to get an answer to that question people tend to make a basic mistake when it comes to this because people tend to be very simplistic in their approach to election they think to themselves if elections through some people are chosen some people are not chosen that's that and it's a very simplistic very fatalistic approach to it and it's really a careless handling of the doctrine simply because that's not what the bible presents to us in terms of election the biblical teaching in terms of election is not symmetrical it's not some are chosen for salvation others are chosen for condemnation it's not uh uh some people would say this but I wouldn't say this at all I don't think it's a double predestination in that kind of regard the biblical teaching in regard to the lost is that some people are left to themselves the Westminster Confession describes that as a passing by some people are passed by and they're left to their own ways and Peter uh as described us to us in the verses before this some people look at Jesus and they see him as a stone that is to be rejected it stands in slip to behold I'm 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 that 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 therefore those who are condemned are condemned not as a result of their non-election but because of disobedience they disobey the word and when we come to that question am I elect we have to make sure we are careful that's what the Westminster Confession says be

[22 : 10] careful in answering that question as I said some people use it as a fatalistic excuse they say I'm not one of the elect what can I do and without sounding critical I think there's almost a bit of a childishness about that kind of attitude because if you stop and think about it and think about God and think about you the words I am not elect should never ever come out of somebody's mouth ever because it is quite simply a logical impossibility for anyone living on this earth to know if that is true and some people might say I am not elect with almost a resigned sense of humility but in in reality anybody who says that is putting themselves above God if somebody says I'm not elect they're saying I know the mind of God do you know the mind of God of course you don't and so a fatalistic I am not elect is is is careless foolish and and illogical totally illogical but if we are serious about asking that question rather than being sort of fatalistic and using it as an excuse if we really want to know the answer to that question are you elect how are we going to answer that question well the way to answer that question is to ask another question what are the signs that you might be elect what are the signs of being among God's chosen what's the sign well I can tell you there is one clear biblical sign the chosen are called it's exactly what Peter says in this verse you are a chosen race that you may proclaim the essence of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light

God's chosen are called now not all who are called are chosen but all who are chosen are called therefore it is a very very clear sign so therefore the vital question is not am I elect the vital question is is God calling you well surely that's the whole reason he's brought you here tonight and all you have to say is God be merciful to me as in it now some things about the doctrine of election will always be a mystery and we acknowledge that but there's two things that are absolutely clear for the Christian it is a reminder of your security and safety and assurance of God's love for any who are not a Christian it is reminding us that

God is calling you right now into his chosen race he's calling you you are a chosen race the second thing that Peter teaches us and this is the last thing that we look at tonight is he says that you are a royal priesthood as Christians you're a priesthood now what does that mean what does earth does that mean you're all priests did you know that you're all priests if you are Christians well the word priest should bring two things to your minds two key words access and sacrifice a priest is one who has access to God and if you think about the old testament that was the role the priests played they're the ones who have access into the temple to worship God as Christians we have the extraordinary privilege of having free access into the presence of God Hebrews teaches us a lot in this regard Hebrews 10 19 therefore brother since we have confidence to enter the holy places that's a priest's job that's describing priestly activity since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain that is through his flesh and since we have a great high priest over the house of

God let us draw near that's again priestly activity let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water now we have been reminded here that our access as priests is entirely dependent on the fact that we have a greater great high priest Jesus Christ who has opened up the way and because of what Jesus has done we can come into the presence of God now we might think to ourselves well that's great for those times when we feel good when we feel strong when our faith is as it should be we can draw near into the presence of God but the New Testament reminds us of the even more glorious truth that we can draw near to God even when we are at rock bottom and even when we are at our weakest that's what Hebrews 4 tells us since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast our confession for we do not have us have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who was in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find help grace to help in time of need an amazing verse reminding us in time of need draw near when you're low when you're weak when you're struggling no matter how in need you are you're a priest who can draw near to God and in order to grasp the amazingness of this we have to think about all the restrictions that were existent in the Old Testament remember in the Old Testament the priests who'd they served in the temple but it was so restricted access to God was incredibly limited according to strict ceremonial procedures limited to certain times of the year and to certain people getting anywhere near God was incredibly difficult there was a big curtain in the temple keeping everybody away access was immensely restricted but what happened to that curtain when Jesus died it was torn into and the way was opened and that's why every one of us can draw near to God through Jesus Christ and that's why we talk about the priesthood of all believers it's not the privileged of some it's not for the few good ones or for the the the special minority it is for all we can all draw near every Christian has access to the king which is why it's a royal priesthood and so as priests we have access to God which is such a wonderful truth because is it not the case that one of the hardest things we face in life is rejection rejection is horrible rejection from our friends rejection from our colleagues rejection from people that we love and sometimes we've maybe done nothing wrong but yet we are caught up in things that aren't our doing and we are excluded and it can happen at school at home at work in communities in in the things that we're interested even in churches and if you have experienced that if you've experienced the pain of rejection remember that the doctrine of the priesthood of

all believers tells you that you will never be rejected by God no matter how weak you are so you might have been hammered at work but you can put your head on your pillow at night and you can talk to the Almighty about everything that happened that day you might be feeling incredibly weak you might be feeling ashamed of yourself but no matter how you feel every approach that you make to God is warmly welcomed and life might not turn out the way you wanted to or it might not have turned out the way you thought it would maybe there was doors you wanted to go through that are now firmly shut but in terms of seeking help in terms of finding somewhere to pour out your heart in terms of finding grace to help in time of need God's door is always open for you and the world might exclude you from many things but you are a royal priesthood you have access to God and what a glorious privilege that is so that's the first word when we think a priest think access a priest has access to God you have access to God and sometimes I'm trying to think of an example of this but sometimes you know you know you get certain privileges where you can you can get access into something so maybe there's a restricted area sometimes I can remember maybe as an engineer you'd go and work somewhere and there would be you'd go and there'd be a big maybe a big area of fuel tanks or something restricted area no one's allowed in but I have access because of the status that I have I'm able to go in because I'm in there to fix it and it may be the same with you whatever it is maybe at work there's certain maybe there's certain filing cabinets or whatever nobody's allowed to see except you and a few others you have access because of your status well in terms of God your status gives you access you are allowed in to his presence we have this glorious access but the second word that comes to mind in terms of priesthood is the word sacrifice because a priest offers sacrifices to God so that means that if we're priests we offer sacrifices to God now how on earth is that the case well if you think back to the Old Testament a priest was somebody who took the sacrifice and they offered it to God in worship and Peter has just told us that we do exactly the same thing as Christians verse five you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ now what does Peter mean what sacrifices are we offering well in the Old Covenant in the Old Testament the model of priesthood was as follows the priest would serve in the temple and sacrifices were brought to him somebody would come with something from their flock or for their crops or a bird or whatever it would be that in terms of their income they would bring their sacrifice the priest would take it and he would offer the sacrifice on behalf of somebody else that was the basic model in the Old Testament in the New Covenant in the New Testament we have Jesus and he is the culmination of all that the Old Covenant

[35 : 26] had anticipated so in one sense he fulfills it and he too functions as a priest and he too offers a sacrifice but there is one very very very important difference in the Old Covenant in the Old Testament the priest took the sacrifice and he offered it in the New Covenant Jesus the priest is the sacrifice and he offers himself again back to Hebrews but when Christ appeared as high priest of the good things that have come so see the good things fulfillment New Covenant then through the greater more perfect tent not made with hands that is not of this creation again culmination better version of everything he entered once for all into the holy places not by means of blood of bulls and calves but by means of his own blood thus securing an eternal redemption now at one level that is teaching us that Jesus's sacrifice means that all other sacrifices are no longer necessary the Old Covenant dispensation has come to an end Jesus's sacrifice was once and for all which is why as Christians we do not offer any animal sacrifices in any way shape or form because Christ's sacrifice is sufficient but there is also another vital truth that we are being taught here because not only is Jesus's sacrifice the fulfillment of the priesthood that went before him not only is Jesus fulfilling the priesthood that preceded him

Jesus's sacrifice is also the model for the priesthood that comes after him in other words our priesthood follows the model that Jesus gave that means that not only do we make the offering it means that we are the offering and that's the vital truth emphasized in Romans 12 1 and 2 I appeal to you brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God what is good and acceptable and perfect you read those words and ask the question what is our sacrifice to God it's our whole life every moment that we live as Christians every moment that we live is being offered to God in worship that's really important to remember because often we come together on a Sunday for worship and often we can start our services by saying let us begin our worship and we come to the closing sound we say we'll include our worship by singing to God's praise but really it's not 100% theologically accurate to use that kind of language because when you go to work tomorrow morning you're still worshiping God you go for a walk around this village tonight on a beautiful evening you're worshiping God you play with your family with your children or your grandchildren you are worshiping God you spend your money you're worshiping God you eat your dinner you are worshiping God now you will be forgiven if you are thinking to yourselves hang on Thomas that's a bit much but let me ask you the question what is a sacrifice a sacrifice is something devoted to God and please God grant that you and I would go through every day of our lives devoted to God may our prayer be every day God I am living this day for you that's how God wants us to live our lives now that does not mean that we go through life as hermits and as some people have done nor does it mean that we are to go through life with a sort of awkward external show of of piety it's nothing like that it means rather that we remember that the whole world is God's creation and everything that is good in this world is to be enjoyed and savoured and lived to the glory and honour of God and as we obey God as you live in God's way as your life at work this week tomorrow and Tuesday and Wednesday and in the days ahead as your life is shaped according to God's standards it means that the kingdom of God is one step closer to fully coming and things are returning to the way that they were always meant to be and it's a glorious reminder that your daily life is never pointless it's never boring it's never insignificant it is a

precious precious sacrifice of spiritual worship to God and that brings an extraordinary meaning and purpose to everything that we do because the New Testament applies this to everything so whatever it is you are doing it to God's glory do you like gardening if you like gardening or crofting go out into your garden and praise the God who clothes the lilies of the field in splendor you like singing sing and make music to the God who has created sound waves and who has created order and coherence so that certain frequencies fit together to make chords and sound nice and praise the God who gives us hearing and voice and music and all of these things if you like exercise then go go go out and savor the beauty of a day like today and praise the God who made this glorious world and has blessed us with good health to be out and about every day maybe you like peace and quiet well if you do go and enjoy the peace of sitting by the fire or gazing at God's creation and praise the one in whom we live and move and have our being what is your life for or it's for God to be devoted to him and a life lived for God is not a boring life or a life that's lacking it is a life of immense privilege because the psalmist reminds us oh how abundant is your goodness which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you in the sight of the children of mankind God's goodness is abundant and though the world brings a monumental amount of sorrow and difficulty for so many of you and I know it does

God still wants to bless you with his abundant goodness and so for the Christian our worship never ends all of life is all for Jesus all of life is all for Jesus now the world will tell you the opposite and the world might say to you live for the moment eat drink be merry the world might say live for your career make sure you get to the top and make sure you get the glory the world might say live for your hobby and make sure you master golf or sheep or sport or politics or whatever it may be and perhaps more than anything else the world will say live for yourself because that seems to be the message that pervades society at every level the world is living for all of these things but Peter says but you are a royal priesthood you are living for God you are devoted to him and that gives your life so much purpose and so much meaning you're serving in the priesthood of

God when you go to work tomorrow or whatever it is you do tomorrow you're living for him you are where he has placed you and he can do great things through you so whether you're at the loom tomorrow morning or at the desk or on the craft or in the shop or wherever you are it's for God and it's pleasing to God and it honors him but one final point I want to notice is that Peter says you are a priesthood and that's very important it doesn't say you are priests it says you are a priesthood and the importance of that lies in the fact that a priesthood is a body of people serving together so Peter emphasises in verse five you yourselves are like living stones being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ you hear what Peter is saying you're saying you're all stones built together you serve together we are being joined as one building and it reminds us of the wonderful fact that the priesthoods did not work alone they shared the work among themselves and they all did their bit and that's exactly what we are to be as a church it's not about individuals doing their own thing it's not about one or two people trying to do everything it's about a priesthood sharing together working together serving together and it's a great reminder that in the gospel we are 100% together we are serving together we share the load together we bear one another's burdens we contribute what we can together and together we have access to God and it's a reminder of the fact that this togetherness is at the very very heart of Christianity and you might often hear people say I am living for Jesus and in many ways that's a great thing to say but even better and even more theologically true is if you say we are living for Jesus because everything that we are as individual Christians we are as a collective priesthood and a body who are serving our Savior and that's what you are if you are a Christian and that's what you can be if you become one so Peter is telling us two great precious things first of all he's telling us that God's people are a people a great family of race and that race is a priesthood that serve and worship together and live every day for God and that's us only halfway through the verse there's still two more glorious things to study God willing next week it's a reminder of just the amazing transformation that Jesus brings in our lives he makes us one of his own and he makes our whole life just a glorious act of service and devotion to him and so it means that as a Christian you are special because Jesus has chosen you and loves you and you are special because Jesus has a job for you and you can live for him the privileges of being a Christian are immense and if any of you are not yet sure whether you are a Christian or not I promise you

[48 : 39] that you can be part of all this that's what the gospel is good news for you a glorious invitation where God calls and calls and calls and calls and patiently waits and says come to me trust in me and I will bring you into this chosen race and I will make you part of this holy priesthood and I will bless you with the immeasurable riches of my kindness in grace toward you in Christ Jesus God has got so much for you he's got so much for you and all you have to do is say yes lord I am your and God granted that we believe us all amen let's pray