

A Glimpse of Glory

by

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A Chosen Generation

Chapter 1

*“But 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:”*

~*~

1 Peter 2:9

The Word of God declares that the Church of Jesus Christ is glorious. Despite its faults and failures the Church is essentially glorious. The Church can be nothing less than marvelous because the glory of God dwells in the midst of His people. Moreover, the love of God is manifested towards the Church who in turn responds to tender affection. The Psalmist exulted that *“The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of Thee, O city of God”* (Psalm 87:2,3). Unfortunately, many within the sphere of Christendom do not think of the Church as being glorious. The critics of the Church unite from within and from without to belittle, degrade, and strip from the Church its essential glory. Dispensational theology, for example, teaches the Church is an apostate organization. Nevertheless, the Church remains strong and stable and set apart for the Master’s use. Consider what makes the Church unique and glorious.

First, there is the matter of sound doctrine. In the midst of a people that live on images and symbols the Church has the substance of the gospel which is rooted in reality. The Church alone can and does set forth basic Bible doctrine which tells of the ruin of man, the redemption of sinners brought by Christ at the Cross, and the regenerating work of God the Holy Spirit. Those who are not interested in sound doctrine might find themselves wishing they had been interested. In March of 1992 I spoke to a lady in Dallas, Texas. Her twenty-year-old daughter wanted to be baptized into the Mormon religion and the mother was suddenly alarmed. She was frantically searching to find out what the Bible had to say about sin, salvation, heaven, and hell. God’s people should be very concerned about knowing sound doctrine. The Psalmist was hungry for the Word of God and said, *“I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments”* (Psa. 119:131).

Second, there is the matter of worldliness. The Bible commands Christians to love neither the world nor the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15). A missionary once wrote, *“I looked for the world, and found it in the Church. Then I looked for the Church and found it in the world.”* It is difficult to provide a comprehensive and universal definition of worldliness. To some the word *“worldliness”* is associated with certain forms of amusements which are to be avoided such as bowling, shooting pool, playing cards, going to the movies, dancing, or mixed swimming. Others associate *“worldliness”* with a specific style of music such as rock or rap. For some, *“worldliness”* is associated with dressing in a sensual manner or in such a way as to reflect rebellion against parental authority. On the way home from church one time I saw a young man with orange hair that was spiked. I do not think he was going to a costume party.

Let me suggest that inappropriate entertainment, certain forms of music, provocative dress, and acts of rebellion are the fruits of worldliness which is in itself a philosophy of life contrary to the will of God. Professor R. B. Kuiper makes this observation. *“The most outstanding sin of ancient Israel was that, instead of upholding its distinctiveness as Jehovah’s chosen people, it was ever and anon imitating its heathen neighbors. That sin is rampant in the world today.”* It is a matter of statistical surveys that Church members are not found to be different from those outside the sphere of professing Christendom. The same movies are watched, the same books are read, the same schools are attended, the same language is used, and all the rest. However, there is a chance for the Church to be different. If the world is characterized by greed and violence, pride and prejudice, anger and willfulness, then let the Church be characterized by giving and grace, humility and holiness, peace and preferring others better than ourselves. In matchless and marvelous grace God has chosen a generation of people to be different. The Church exists to be a trophy of redeeming grace. The Church is the supreme purpose of creation, redemption, and ultimate glorification. In the Garden of Eden a gospel promise was made. *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15).

In the centuries to follow individuals looked backward to the promise given and forward to the promise being fulfilled. And so it was that by faith Abel offered unto God an acceptable sacrifice (Heb. 11:4), by faith Enoch walked with God and pleased Him (Heb. 11:5), by faith Noah became a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5), by faith Abraham believed God and it was charged to his account for righteousness *“and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise”* (Gal. 3:29). God does have a people, a chosen generation made up of the redeemed of all the ages that Christ loves and for whom He died. Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse the Church with the washing of water and the Word. *“That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph. 5:25-27).

Here then is a tremendous truth. If you know Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, if you have confessed yourself a sinner and called upon the name of Jesus, if you have been obedient to the Lord in baptism and are following Him, then you are part of that chosen generation. God has chosen you to be different. God is calling you not to love the world. And God is commanding you to repent if there is love for the world in your heart. For those who want to repent, for those who want to be converted anew, for those who want to get back to the narrow path of righteousness, then take the steps towards spiritual recovery.

The Royal Priesthood of the Believer

Chapter 2

*“But ye are a chosen generation,
a royal priesthood,
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1 Peter 2:9

In order to appreciate the force of these words written by Peter, it must be understood that the early church saw itself as the true spiritual Israel. A number of passages reveal this truth.

- *Romans 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: [29] But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*
- *Romans 9:6-7 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: [7] Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*
- *Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- *James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*
- *Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Heb 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:*

Not only did the early church see itself as the true spiritual Israel, thereby inheriting the position and privileges of God's ancient people, but that has been the consistent teaching down through the ages. The exception is Dispensational theology which appeared in the 19th century. This truth is reflected in part in the hymns that the Church sings, such as All Hail the Power. The second verse of this song says,

*“Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all.”*

When Peter wrote to the saints scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia and told the believers in the Church they were a royal priesthood, the people would have understood. Once, God told national Israel the same thing. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: [6] And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex 19:5-6). Unfortunately national Israel did not keep their covenant with God. Therefore, in the providence of the Lord a new and more spiritual Israel was created composed of Jew and Gentile and given priestly functions. Three elements are associated with the priesthood.

First, there is the element of being chosen or set apart for God as His own. One of the great truths of the Bible is the doctrine of election. There are over six billion people on planet earth at the present. The Christian community makes up a very small percentage of all the religions in the world. Jesus spoke of His disciples as being “*a little flock*” (Luke 12:32). A question arises. “*Who are those chosen by God?*” The divine answer is, “*Not many.*” God does not choose many for salvation.

- *Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.*

Those chosen by God are called the “*elect*”.

- *Mark 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.*

Christ is the one who chooses. John 6:70

- *John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*
- *John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

Saul of Tarsus came to faith because God chose him unto salvation.

- *Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*
- *Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.*

Like Saul of Tarsus, Rufus was chosen in the Lord.

- *Romans 16:13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*

The divine selection was made before the foundation of the world.

- *Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

Note. The elect are those who have been chosen to salvation, sanctification, and to service.

- *2 Thes. 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

It is God who chooses who will be saved, not men.

- *1 Peter 2:3-4 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. [4] To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,*

The purpose of the divine undertaking is to bring glory to Christ.

- *1 Peter 2:9 But 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:*

Those who are chosen will be with Christ forever and ever to serve with Him and to help defeat His enemies.

- *Rev. 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

If you are a Christian then you are one because God has chosen you to salvation and beyond that to service in the royal priesthood.

The second element associated with the priesthood is that of holiness. In the Old Testament the priests were to be holy, which means they were to be without physical or moral defilement. One of the great scandals in Israel was how the priests became corrupted. Malachi the prophet had strong words of condemnation for the priests. He accused them as a class of being greedy. *“Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand”* (Mal. 1:10). So corrupt had the priesthood become in the days of Christ that one day the Lord took a cord of whips and drove the money changers from His Father’s house. *“My house shall be called a house of prayer,” Christ shouted, “but you have made it a den of thieves.”* The greatest strength of the Church has been her moral integrity and

when that has failed, her willingness to repent. Holiness is essential to the function of a priest, for a priest becomes a representative before God. Christians are called to be holy.

There is a third element of the priesthood, and that is the privilege of drawing near to God by faith. In recent years more and more barriers have been placed around the White House to insulate the President from the people. The average person has an awful time of getting to see the President up close, let alone speaking to him. It does not matter how urgent the situation might be, the President is isolated and insulated. Of course most of those who have been allowed a private session with the President consider it a great honor because of the exalted position he holds. Nevertheless, the honor a person might enjoy speaking to the President pales into insignificance with the privilege of being part of a royal priesthood that is allowed to draw near to the Sovereign of the Universe. If you are a Christian you have been chosen by God, called to be holy, and are allowed to come near to the Lord as a believer priest with great dignity.

When do Christians function as priests? We function as priests when we read the Scriptures. We function as priests when we pray in private or public. We function as priests when we meet for worship. When we read and meditate on the Scriptures, when we pray, when we meet for worship, these are not insignificant acts. These are not activities born out of time and tradition. Rather they are the functions of the priesthood of the believer that must be taken seriously. Of particular concern is the matter of prayer. Church history confirms that no local assembly has been any stronger than the prayer life of the people. No great revival has ever existed apart from prayer. The power of Pentecost came upon a praying Church.

- *Acts 2:1-4 “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. [2] And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. [3] And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

The year was 1912. The place was Stellenbosch, South Africa. During the month of April a conference for Dutch Reformed ministers was held. The men had gathered to search out the reason for the lack of spiritual power in their respective churches. After a period of self-examination and judgment day honesty, the men were gradually led to the conclusion that the sin of prayerlessness was one of the deepest roots of evil. The truth of the matter is that in spiritual work everything depends upon prayer. God is the Helper of those who wait before Him. The priests of God, the people of God, must draw nearer to Him afresh by faith. With earnest hearts and fervent spirits the saints must seek the Lord with this promise held in hope: *“Those that seek me early shall find me”* (Prov. 8:17).

There is something else Peter has to say about the priesthood of the believer. It is a royal priesthood. Under the Law of Moses there was a specialized priesthood of the house of Aaron. But it was not a royal priesthood. There were no kingly or royal overtones. However, the Scripture does speak of a royal priesthood prior to Moses, prior to Aaron, and prior to the law. Psalm 110:4 provides an excellent starting point in understanding what is in view. Psalm 110 as a whole is a Messianic psalm part of which is quoted in Matthew 22 and again in Hebrews 5. The Psalmist declared, *“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

According to Genesis 14, Melchizedek was the king of Salem (Jerusalem) during the days of Abraham. Melchizedek is first introduced in Scripture when he came forth to congratulate Abraham on his victory over Chedorlaomer and his allies. Abraham made war on Chedorlaomer in order to rescue his nephew Lot. Freedom came through military victory. Apparently Melchizedek brought to the exhausted warriors bread and wine. And upon Abraham, the king of Salem bestowed a blessing for he was the priest of the Most High God. By these actions we find a royal priesthood, for Melchizedek was a king who acted as a priest. In Hebrews 5:6 Jesus Christ is declared to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. *“As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”* Jesus is not declared to be a priest after the order of Aaron, for that order was temporal and without royal dignity. Rather, Jesus is set forth as a priest after the pattern of Melchizedek who was both royal and eternal in nature, in that he is *“Without [recorded] father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually”* (Heb. 7:3). As Christians our own priesthood is patterned after that of Christ.

Like the Melchizedek priesthood there is a kingly, a royal dimension to our priesthood which speaks of sharing in the Sovereign’s power. It is more than a cliché to say *“there is power in prayer.”* A royal priesthood assumes and assures it. In as far as the Church remembers the exalted position she has in Christ there is new power in prayer. There is more. When the royal priesthood is exercised there is a season of spiritual refreshment that comes. The Bible says Melchizedek brought to the weary warriors bread and wine. After a hard battle the men needed refreshing. Today, as the Church combats the world, the flesh of inward corruption, and the assaults of Satan, she needs spiritual refreshing. It is a comforting thought to know that someone is praying for the sick, for the salvation of the lost, for homes to be happy, for Christ to be exalted, for the release of the Spirit, for the theocracy of God to be manifested, and for the gospel to reach the ends of the earth. Perhaps more Christians would pray more earnestly if they were touched by a glimpse of glory. During his ministry Dr. Bob Jones Sr. told students some of the great lessons he had learned in life, one of which concerned success. *“Every successful person I have met,”* he said, *“had come at some time in his life under the dominating power of some great truth.”*

- For Martin Luther the great truth was that the just shall live by faith.
- For Billy Graham the great truth was that the Bible is the Word of God and is to be received by faith and simplicity.
- For George Muller the great truth was that God could supply needs by faith.
- For Hudson Taylor the great truth was the doctrine of divine election. God has souls throughout the world He will save. The gospel must be preached unto the ends of the earth.

Here is a great truth for Christians. Here is a great truth for local congregations. The Church is composed of a priesthood of believers. Therefore Christians must not fail to pray. Believers must not leave the responsibility of prayer to others who allegedly have more time, more experience, or more knowledge.

There is one other facet of the priesthood of the believer. Not only must Christians pray but believers must also proclaim the good news of the gospel to those nearby. Every believer priest must make a conscious effort to share faith in Christ. Some can witness by leaving a gospel tract. Others can witness by engaging in direct soul winning efforts. But every Christian is

under a royal mandate to share the gospel. There should be no fear of failure. God has promised to honor those who honor Him. Fear must not be allowed to hinder the great work God has entrusted to the Church. So let the Church go forth, stronger than ever and with a new understanding of the touch of glory it has received. Come now ye priests of the Lord. Let us labor together to learn, persevere in passionate prayer, engage in acts of witnessing, worship together, and build a kingdom in which Jesus Christ may be glorified for time and eternity. Amen.

A Holy Nation

Chapter 3

*“But ye are a chosen generation,
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1 Peter 2:9

By declaring the Church to be a nation the apostle Peter states something that is profound, for he teaches that among the nations of the earth, there is a spiritual nation of which select individuals are citizens. By declaring the Church to be a *holy* nation the apostle states a distinctive element of the people of God. It is easily recognized that the various nations of earth have distinctive features. A certain style of dress, a peculiar accent, an unusual mannerism reveals the nation a person is from. God has ordained holiness to be the distinctive characteristic of the Church as a nation. Holiness marks the people of God in dress, speech, attitude, and actions. The specific details of how Christians should be in these matters are given throughout the New Testament by way of precepts and examples.

Take the matter of dress. What a Christian wears or does not wear is related to their state of spirituality. Every Christian should submit their wardrobe to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian young person should subject themselves to the teaching of the Scriptures – and then to parental guidance. Christian young people as well as adults should be familiar with 1 Tim 2:9-10, which teaches Christians to be modest in their apparel. God is interested in the way His children dress, for statements are made as to who we are and whose we are. It is possible to communicate the wrong message in the way we dress. It is possible to communicate a positive message in the way we dress. Not everyone seems to understand the importance of the biblical concern. A man by the name of Mike Holcomb speaks for many when he writes, *“I hope we’ve gotten past the point where smoking a pipe makes you a theologian, growing a beard makes you a counselor, or wearing pinstripes makes you authoritative.”* Others of us hope that our Christian young people in particular can get past the point they have to identify with the latest rock star or movie celebrity. A guiding Christian principle in dress should be modesty.

As God has something to say about how His people dress, so He has something to say about how they should talk. Colossians 4:6 *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”* Knowing that words can hurt, Christians are to be careful not to be critical without concern for reality, non judgmental without objective justice, or emotional without engaging in a search for the truth. To be specific, Christians can learn not to assume an intimate knowledge of why others do something and so assign an unworthy motive to an action. Christians can be gracious by not charging individuals with the most base and vile offenses when there is no evidence.

A person who honestly misspeaks does not need to be branded a liar. A person who seeks to help others should not be accused of cruelty or charged with inappropriate behavior. There is room for temperance on the tongue of the Christian and for several good reasons. Others are listening. Others will believe what is said. Others will become angry without a cause and take up the offense. Christians are instructed by the Lord to be gracious in their comments. When He was reviled He bore the reproach in silence. Matthew 5:3-12 illustrates how radically different citizens in the holy nation of God are meant to be in attitude and actions. Jesus said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. [5] Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. [6] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. [7] Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. [8] Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. [10] Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*”

Unfortunately, though the Church is designed to be a holy nation, there is much unholiness among the citizens of the kingdom. The Bible is realistic and recognizes that a chasm exists between the rhetoric and the reality. The state of the believer is that of a citizen in the kingdom of God. The standing of the average Christian is not so glorious. From the letters of Paul to the Church that was at Corinth comes a shocking list of incredible behavior by the saints who were hurting themselves and each other. Paul was specific in listing the sins of the saints.

- Petty quarrels 1 Cor 1:11
- Open hostility 1 Cor 3:1-3
- A judgmental spirit 1 Cor 4:18
- Pride concerning immorality 1 Cor 5:1-2
- Legal actions in courts 1 Cor 6:1
- Desertion of the marriage vows 1 Cor 7:10
- Intellectual spiritual pride 1 Cor 8:1-2
- Selfishness at the Lord’s Table 1 Cor 11:21
- Covetousness 1 Cor 12:29-31

What is to be said about the sins of the saints in light of the fact that God has designed His people to be a *holy* nation? **The first comment that must be confessed is that it is true; there is sin in the sanctuary because there is still residual sin in the soul of every believer.** For whatever reason, God has not seen fit to eradicate the sin nature from the soul in time, which means that Christians are destined to struggle with a dual dimension in the heart. A new will is not a perfect will. A new mind is not without memory of former days. The apostle Paul spoke of his own internal struggles in Rom 7:15 “*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do*” (NIV). Theologians debate whether Paul had in mind his unconverted state or his struggles as a believer. While the debate rages most Christians would confess to being in the throes of a struggle with sin. Sin is a great mystery. Though it brings shame and guilt, though it produces fear on one level and hardening of the heart on another, Christians are capable of persisting in self destructive and other destructive behavior.

The second comment that must be made about sin in the lives of the saints is that no sin is too great for the grace of God. The sin of murder did not keep God from giving to Moses His holy Law which includes the commandment, *“Thou shalt not kill.”* The sin of lying did not keep the Lord from calling Abraham the *“Friend of God”* or *“Lover of God.”* The sin of drunkenness did not stop the Lord from making a covenant with Noah. The sins of David associated with his inappropriate relationship with Bathsheba did not prohibit the Sweet Singer of Israel from writing a large portion of the Word of God which shall live and abide forever. The blasphemy of Peter and his denial of Christ did not prevent the Holy Spirit from filling him with power so that souls were converted at Pentecost. The explosive temper of Paul against John Mark did not slow him down from his missionary journeys. Where sin abounds grace does much more abound. As a child I was taught that the bird with a broken pinion can never fly again, and so the Christian that sins grievously can never be used of God again. I have heard this concept even as an adult. But that is not true and so hope lives for all who have known some sort of moral failure in a dramatic way. God is a God of infinite grace and mercy. Is sin therefore to be justified in the lives of the saints? *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!”* (Rom. 6:2). But let no one despair either. There is no sin too great for the grace of God. The blood of Jesus Christ still cleanses from all sin. The Bible is very specific about how to deal with lingering sin in the soul according to Galatians 6:1-3.

First, those who are found to commit a wrong doing that has come to the public’s attention must be treated graciously and generously. Only he who is without sin is allowed to cast the first stone of reproach. The Biblical mandate is for the spiritually mature to restore such a one. Without question, the restoration to fellowship and the basis for divine and human forgiveness is based upon confession, genuine sorrow, and a forsaking of that which caused the transgression. In the military there is a term called *“Friendly Fire”*. The words refer to the military killing its own soldiers in the field through neglect or ignorance. The Church can kill its own with self-righteousness, unkindness, and pouring shame upon shame to a wounded soul.

The second command in the process of dealing with sin in the sanctuary is to remember. The apostle writes, *“consider thyself lest thou also be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1). It is well within human nature to be kind to self and cruel to others. There is a perverse delight at being shocked by certain actions when the dark dungeon of one’s own heart conceals even greater filth of the flesh. The world is not impressed when the Church protests evil and then practices something just as bad. The world might be more impressed with tears instead of taunts at picket lines, sobs of concern instead of slogans of hatred, and humility rather than self-righteous haughtiness. The sobering truth is that only a divine compulsion can motivate a thinking person to preach or teach or witness in light of the depths of depravity to which sin has dragged the heart prior to salvation and restoration. Really, who is worthy to stand in the place of judge—and yet, at times, a righteous judgment has to be rendered. But the verdict is to be given in a gentle spirit and a fearful heart that remembers and considers itself.

There is a third instruction to the people of God. There is to be restoration, remembrance, and a shared responsibility. Gal 6:2 *“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”* Hardly a week goes by that I do not hear about a broken relationship, shattered hopes and dreams, or fears of the future. I do not mind because the Bible tells us to bear one another’s burdens. Sin brings a heavy burden. Despite the fact the Church is not perfect, the Scriptural focus of attention is still on what it should be. Despite its flaws and failures the Lord still puts in the hearts of His people a longing to cease from sinning and to be different. Spiritual minded Christians want to be holy. Sincere Christians want to break the secret habits

that enslave and bring shame and self-loathing. Most Christians do long to be good citizens in a holy nation. If that is the desire of your heart then consider the Doctrine of Sanctification.

Doctrine of Sanctification

1. Sanctification is a supernatural work of God in the heart that produces holiness of life.

- *1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. Just as God must save the soul, He is the One who must sanctify it.

- *John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

There is much talk today about having better self-esteem through self-help programs. Popular psychology and the New Age movement have much to say about behavior problems and how to be a better person—and yet society grows progressively worse. Only the Potter can change the vessel and make it new.

3. Sanctification is a continuous process. Regeneration is instantaneous while sanctification takes time. How much time depends upon the individual. It is possible to grow quickly in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. It is possible to accelerate the inner cross work and enjoy a greater degree of holiness, but it does take time.

Many years ago a student asked the president of Obelin Bible College whether he could not take a shorter course than the one prescribed. “*Oh yes,*” replied the president, “*but then it depends on what you want to make of yourself. When God wants to make an oak, he takes a hundred years, but when he wants to make a squash he takes six months.*”

4. God will sanctify His people. Christian, you who are struggling with secret chains of bondage, take heart.

- *Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

5. The process of sanctification requires the intelligent and voluntary activity of the believer in the discovery and mortification of sinful desires. While Jesus prayed in John 17:17 that the Father would sanctify believers in the sphere of truth, Paul pleaded with believers to be responsible by “*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Cor 10:5).

6. Philippians 2:12-13 unites the Divine activity and human responsibility. *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. [13] For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*
7. To be very practical, a large part of holiness consists in the formation of simple spiritual habits.
 - **Scripture reading.** *2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
 - **Scripture meditation.** *Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*
 - **Scripture memorization.** *Psalms 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*
 - **Secret prayer.** *Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*
 - **Faithfulness to Church.** *Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*
 - **Soul winning efforts.** *Luke 14:23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*
 - **Acts of charity.** *James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*
8. In all of these activities there is a voluntary and intellectual assent. In the process of sanctifying His people, the Agent whom God uses is the Holy Spirit. *John 14:17-18 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [18] I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*
9. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit can be arrested by sins committed against Him.
 - **The Spirit can be grieved.** *Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*
 - **The Spirit can be quenched.** *1 Thessalonians 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.*

- **The Spirit can be resisted.** *Acts 7:51 Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*
- **The Spirit can be lied to.** *Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*
- **The Spirit can be blasphemed.** *Mark 3:29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:*

10. It is the will of the Lord that the Spirit be not sinned against but released in the life.

11. The Spirit is released when we confess our utter helplessness before the Lord and our failure to be good in His sight.

12. The Spirit is released by faith that Christ will indeed come to us as He has promised. The object of saving faith is Christ and the object of sanctifying faith is Christ. Sanctification does not begin with self but with the Saviour. *2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Is this not true? In the moment of potential temptation when the lusts of the flesh are strong and sin seems to come in like a flood, there is the tendency to suppress the truth and violate the conscience. A Scripture passage comes to mind or a spiritual thought of prohibition, but all that is dismissed so that inappropriate behavior can take place. *“Sin makes a person become self-justifying”* (John MacArthur). It is true. The antidote for such behavior is a fresh look at the Crucified One not only for salvation but also for sanctification. Keep the Cross before your heart.

*“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His marvelous face.
And the things of this world will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.”*

A Glimpse of Glory

Chapter 4

*“But 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
unto his marvellous light.”*

~*~

1 Peter 2:9

There is an alternative translation of the phrase that speaks of Christians being “*a peculiar people*”. It is possible to translate the words to mean the Church is “*a people for possession*,” or “*God’s own people*.” The focus of attention is upon the prized possession. Here is a marvelous thought. In the sight of God the Church is like a pearl of great price. The Church is like the Crown of Jewels of England or the Peacock Throne of Iran studded with sparkling emeralds, diamonds, rubies, and precious stones. But how is it possible to regard the Church in such an exalted manner? Does the Lord not look down from heaven and witness the sins of the saints? Is the behavior of men so secret that God cannot see their childish behavior or hear their emotional outbursts of unjustified anger? Does the Lord not hear the unkind words His people whisper to one another without apology? Is God blinded to the bloodshed and violence that is done in His name? Is the Lord less informed than secular historians who gladly record the controversies of the Church? There is, for example, what took place in the Church in the years AD 342-343. A great religious debate was raging in Christendom. A man by the name of Athanasius was defending the doctrine of the deity of Christ against the Arians who were denying that Jesus was very God. To Athanasius the Church owes her doctrinal defense of the Trinity.

Five times Athanasius was forced to flee from his Alexandrian congregation that turned against him. Five times all the powers of the State rose to oppose him. Still Athanasius stood firm and through half a century (AD 323-373) he fought with patience for the articles now found in the Nicene Creed. When the chance came, Athanasius laid his case before Pope Julius I (AD 340). Julius restored him to his congregation, but a council of eastern bishops at Antioch (AD 341) denied the jurisdiction of the pope and named Gregory, an Arian, as bishop of Alexandria. When Gregory reached the city a murderous riot erupted, killing many. Athanasius, to end the bloodshed, withdrew (AD 342). Historian Will Durant commented on this controversy by noting that “*Probably more Christians were slaughtered by Christians in these two years (AD 342-343) than by all the persecutions of Christians by the pagans in the history of Rome.*” Does God not know what is going on in the lives of professing Christians? If He does then how can God consider the Church to be a prized possession?

The answer, in part, is that God looks at the Church through the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin. God begins with an ideal of what the Church should be and on that basis declares the Church to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for possession. Perhaps the concept of idealization being reality can be comprehended through the

story of the enchanted portrait. Once upon a time, in a land of leaden skies and creeping fogs and flat, barren countryside, there lived a boy. His name was Dietz Edzard. The place was Bremen, Germany. In keeping with the traditions of his hometown, Dietz entered the export trade. But even then, at sixteen, his heart was elsewhere. Dietz longed to be an artist. And so it was, in the sparkling Mecca for artists everywhere, that Dietz Edzard came to paint a portrait some say is enchanted.

May 31, 1961. Paris burst into bloom. The streets, more radiant with excitement than usual. It was on that day, that the youngest ever United States President and his glamorous wife of French extraction would charm and be charmed by the city of Napoleon and Renoir and Claude Debussy...and Dietz Edzard. A million Parisians would cheer as President Kennedy and Charles DeGaulle embraced. Not since Lafayette visited America was there such festivity between the two peoples. Paris burst into bloom. And that's the way another visitor saw it...an art-gallery director from the United States. The more he saw, the more inspired he became. If only Edzard were here to paint it, he thought, to commemorate this spectacular occasion. But the artist was nearly seventy now. Perhaps battling the crowd would be too great an inconvenience for him.

The gallery director learned differently a few days later during a meeting with the painter himself. In Edzard's Paris studio they were chatting about art and changing times when the director noticed the painting he had wished for. It was all there...the French and American flags, the excitement of the crowd...and something else he had not counted on. Standing to the right, so prominent in the painting that it was almost a portrait of her, was a beautiful dark haired girl in her mid-twenties. Her eyebrows were arched in an expression too knowing for one so young and her eyes too innocent for one so old. Her complexion was softly blushed cream, and her lips were pink and full. There was a ribbon in her hair and one around her neck, and her dress was the most delicate blue. Gathered in her arms, so lovely yet so diminished by her loveliness, an array of fragile flowers. And the ethereal scent they gave took the gallery director's breath away. "Who is she?" he asked. Edzard followed his visitor's gaze to the painting in the corner. "Oh, yes. Of course. I think, of all of them, my favorite model." Then the artist's eyes twinkled. "My wife."

The director raised a knowing eyebrow himself. "Such a young girl!" he thought. And Edzard had married her. Would his guest like to meet the girl in the painting? It was no sooner said then she entered the studio from the next room, smiled, and kissed her husband. It might have taken a moment for the artist's visitor to recover from his surprise. Maybe he hasn't yet. But if the portrait of Edzard's wife is enchanted, then is the love they shared also. The flower girl and the painter's bride were the same. So lovely was she that her presence eclipsed the beauty of the grandeur of national affairs. Her beauty, if gone from the eyes of men, was safe in the heart of Dietz Edzard. For he painted her as he saw her, a girl with the complexion of softly brushed cream, when they'd met...in 1927.

In the sight of God the Church is lovely and is a beautiful bride of Christ. The glory of the Church causes the angels to marvel and moves the Bridegroom to guard His beloved, to cleanse Her with the washing of water by the word. The Lord moves to sanctify His own so "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be whole and without blemish." The apostle Peter was anxious that the Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia understand the idealized status they held in the sight of God for several reasons.

First, Peter understood that how the Christian community viewed itself would have a profound impact on the way it acted. Let a person find self-respect and dignity in redemption and there is a transformation of character and conduct. Patrick Morely is the author of *The Man in the Mirror*. He shares in his great work about a time he took a taxi. The cab driver said, *“Here is a receipt. Fill in any amount you want.”* *“I can’t do that,”* replied Morely, *“I am a Christian.”* The cab driver looked puzzled. He did not understand that being a Christian can and should make a difference in conduct and character. The Christian is transformed by the renewing of the mind. Paul writes about the transforming of the mind in Romans 12:1-2. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

The transformed mind is that mind that believes the truth can be spoken in love, kindness is better than cruelty, obedience is better than disobedience, seeking to help is better than making demands, hard work is better than laziness, orderliness is better than chaos, education is better than ignorance, and holiness is better than sinfulness. The renewed mind is convinced that it is better to give than to receive; that confession of sins is better than any cover up; and that humility with apologies is more pleasing to God than pretending no harm has been done,

The renewed mind accepts the proposition that restitution is right and individuals should be held accountable for their attitude and actions. The renewed mind seeks out biblical and pastoral authority and seeks to submit to it as unto the Lord. But there is more. Not only does Peter know that the idealized way a person believes will transform behavior, but how Christians view others will also transform behavior. If a person sees the Church as a place of contention and conflict, if focus of attention is diverted from Christ, then there will be unwillingness to worship. That is why the Word of God exhorts the local assembly to maintain a measure of accountability.

- *1 Thessalonians 5:14 “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”*
- *2 Thessalonians 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”*
- *2 Timothy 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”*

A divinely ordained responsibility is for the Church to challenge attitudes and actions that destroy the soul and mar the beauty of holiness. Peter exercised his pastoral authority in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Peter responded to correction when Paul spoke to him about his misconduct with the Gentile believers. Peter was in a position to remind the saints of their glorious status in Christ, because the great apostle realized how Christians view each other determines how they treat one another. Perception becomes reality. The question comes, *“How do you view the church?”* Are other Christians viewed as prized possessions? Is there a longing and a joy to be around fellow believers? Has the Lord given you a love for His Word? In the Day of Judgment it may be that each person will be asked as Peter was asked, *“What think ye*

of Christ?” And beyond that, “*What think ye of the Church?*” If there is to be any hope of improved relationships and sustained spiritual strength within the body of Christ, there must first come a renewed idealism. Idealism is what spurs the heart on to more noble achievements. Idealism looks at things as they could be and asks, “*Why not?*” Why not put away unjustified anger? Why not seek to serve others? Why not look for opportunities to witness? Why not come to the prayer meetings? Why not study the Bible? Why not start a personal Bible study? Why not memorize passages of Scripture? Why not show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light?

Every Christian can live as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, Rebecca and Deborah and all the other saints. Every Christian can live in faithful idealism. Peter wanted the early Church to realize that salvation makes the redeemed a people for God’s possession. When the Holy Spirit fully possesses the soul, love will replace hatred, joy will replace unhappiness, peace will remove turbulence, and long suffering will be a substitute for impatience. Gentleness will triumph over harshness, goodness will chase away evil, faith will remove mountains, and meekness will subdue willfulness. By considering the Church according to gospel terms the heart receives a touch of divine glory and the ideal will become the reality.