

The People of God

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 1 Peter 1:1-9

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My message for you today is taken from 1 Peter chapter two. I am going to go verse by verse through the first nine verses of 1 Peter chapter two ... or chapter one, 1 Peter chapter one.

Now there is a phrase that is used over and over again in the book of Acts referring to the people of God, referring to the people who believe God, who believe the Scriptures, who love our Lord Jesus Christ. They are called in the book of Acts the people of the way. This is used six times in the book of Acts, the people of the way or the people of this way or that way.

Let me give you just two or three places where it is ... the people of God are referred to as that way. In Acts nine verse two Paul desired letters to Damascus that if he found any people of this way he might arrest them and bring them bound to Jerusalem to be put in prison, if he found any people of this way. And then in Acts 19 verse nine the Scripture says, "Many were hardened and they didn't believe the message preached, but they spoke evil of this way, the way of grace, the way of Christ, the way of the gospel."

In Acts 22 Paul, giving his own testimony about how he used to feel about the people of the way, he said, "I persecuted this way unto death, the people of the way." That is how they referred to in the book of Acts about six times.

And then the apostle Peter in chapter two of 1 Peter, he gave a wonderful description of the people of the way. He said, "You are a chosen generation, the elect of God." He said, "You are a royal priesthood, king priests." He said, "You are a holy nation." He said, "You are a purchased people. You are not your own. You are bought with a price, a purchased people." He said, "You are a called people. God has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. In times past you were not a people, but you are now the people of God. You have obtained mercy, didn't earn it, didn't deserve it, didn't work for it, didn't buy it. We obtained it." And he says, "And you are strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

You will find these people of the way, this way, these people of God, these peculiar people, you will find them in every nation. You will find them, as John wrote in Revelation, "In every tongue, tribe and kindred on earth." You will find that they are male and female, they are old and young, some are rich and some are poor, some are wise, some are

unwise, but the Lord Jesus calls them “my sheep.” “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me and I give them eternal life.”

The Lord Jesus called them “my brethren.” He said at the judgment, “In as much as you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you have done it to me.” He calls them, “My Church.” He told Peter and the apostles. “I’ll build my Church. On this rock I’ll build my Church.” And then he calls them, “My jewels.”

I gave this Scripture a few services ago in our church worship service. In Malachi three verse 17 the Lord said, “And they shall be mine, these people of the way, these people of God, these believers. They shall be mine saith the Lord of hosts in that day when I make up my jewels. I will spare them as a man spares his only son.”

Well I have selected this passage in 1 Peter chapter one in which Peter writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives such a full and rich definition of the people of God, the people of the way, the people of that way that I want to give you these marks, these characteristics of the people of the way.

First of all in verse one. If you have your Bible, look at it. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia.”

Peter calls the people of God “scattered strangers.” Why would he call them strangers? Well, they are not strangers to God. I just quoted. Our Lord said, “I know my sheep and they know me. I call them by name.” They are not strangers to God. And, secondly, they are not strangers in heaven. Our Lord said their angels. These people have angels. They have guardian angels. He will give his angels charge over you lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Also the angels, Hebrews 1:14, the angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. Did you know that? Angels minister to God’s people right here on this earth. That’s what they said. The angels of God are ministering spirits sent to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation. So they are not strangers in heaven. And they are not strangers to one another. The Lord Jesus said, concerning the believers, he said, “Who is my mother? Who are my brethren? Who is my ... who are my sisters? These who do the will of God, the same are my mother, my brothers, my sisters, my people.”

I tell you why he called them strangers. Now listen. I’ll tell you why. They are strangers in this world. The world knows them not, esteems them not, regards them not. Most cases love the not, the people of God. They are strangers in the world. Their master was a stranger. He said, “The world hated me before it hated you.”

In John chapter one verse 10, “He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.”

He said in John 1:11, "He came to his own, his own nation, his own people, his own synagogue, his own temple and his own received him not."

He is called in one song "the stranger of Galilee." He is not a stranger to his people, but he is a stranger in this world. That's right. And believers, God's people, can expect opposition from the people of the world because, you see, the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them. They are spiritually understood. And he says there in 1 Corinthians chapter two, verse seven, "If the leaders of this world had known who Jesus Christ is, they would not have crucified him. But eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man the things God has prepared for them that love him in this man Christ Jesus."

They didn't know him. He is a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. They hid, as it were, their faces from it. Everybody that was anybody turned thumbs down on Jesus Christ when he was on this earth. They spit in his face. And they nailed him to a cross. They crucified him.

Strangers, strangers.

Our fathers in the Old Testament days, the Scripture says, "They all died in faith, but while they were walking this earth they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth." This world is not the friend of God. And this world will not be your friend if you walk with God and if you believe God and if you love the gospel of God.

Our Lord said to his disciples before he went back to glory, sent them out to a hostile world, sent them out to preach, sent them out to preach the gospel. And he said, "Now listen." He said, "They will persecute you. They will harass you. They will eat you out of the synagogue. And there will come a time when a man who kills you will think he does God a service. But they will do this to you because they neither know me nor my Father. If you," listen. "If you were of the world, the world would love you, but because you are not of the world ..."

Now, listen. This is the master talking. It is not brother Mahan. This is the Lord Jesus. "If you were of the world, the ways of the world, the behavior of the world, the unbelief of the world, the rebellion of the world, the world would love you. But because you are not of the world I have chosen you out of the world. Therefore the world hates you and they will cast you out."

So Peter said, "They are ... the people of God are scattered strangers. I am writing to the scattered strangers, strangers to the world."

And then in verse two the people of God dare called his elect. Let me read verse two. You follow as I read. It says, he is writing to the strangers, "Elect, elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you and peace be multiplied. The elect."

Do you know the first one called the elect is Christ. In Isaiah 42 verse one Christ Jesus is called God's elect. Listen. Let me read it. "God says, "Behold my servant, my servant." Christ as called the servant of the Father. "Whom I uphold, mine elect, mine elect. Christ be my first elect," God said. And then chose us in our head. "He is mine elect in whom my soul delighteth."

God has never said that about a man except Christ. "This is my beloved Son in whom my soul delighteth in whom I am well pleased. This is mine elect. I put my Spirit upon him without measure. He shall bring forth judgment. Christ is mine elect."

And then the people of Israel were called God's elect in Isaiah 45 verse four. "Jacob, my servant ... For my servant Jacob's sake and for Israel, mine elect's sake I have called thee by my name."

And then in Colossians three verse 12. Now, "Christ," God says, "is mine elect. Israel, mine elect." Now in Colossians three verse 12 all believer are called the elect of God. Here is what Paul says. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God holy and beloved, put on mercy, kindness humility meekness, patience and forgive one another as Christ forgave you, mine elect."

What is the cause of our election? What does that verse two say? "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God." What is the cause of our election? Is it because we know him? No. It is because he knows us. We are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. We didn't know him, he knew us.

He said, "Jeremiah, before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee. I knew thee."

He said to those people at the judgment that tried to gain entrance to heaven by their works, he said, "I never knew you."

With Jeremiah he said, "I knew you before I formed you in the belly, before you came out of your mother's womb."

We didn't choose him. He chose us. We are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. We didn't love him. He loved us. We love him because he first loved us. That is what the Scriptures says.

What's the means by which we know our election? We are called "mine elect." We are called "God's elect." And the reason we are God's elect, the cause is the foreknowledge of God. And then he says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit, through sanctification." So setting apart of the Spirit. The Spirit of God set us apart. The Spirit of God. Sanctification is God setting apart something common, ordinary, for his glory, for his use. God sanctified the sabbath day. That is one day out of seven, sanctified it, set it apart. God sanctified the first born son in all the homes of Israel, set him apart. God sanctified the

vessels of the temple from the other vessels, set them apart. God sanctified ... the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I sanctify myself for your sake. I set myself apart to be your Redeemer."

And you are sanctified by the Spirit.

Listen to 2 Thessalonians two. "We are bound to give thanks for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, setting apart by the Spirit and belief of the truth."

The Holy Spirit set us apart. God the Father sanctified us from all eternity. Christ the Son sanctified us on the cross. "Sanctify them by your blood."

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us by setting us apart and we hear the gospel, in whom you trusted after you heard the Word of truth, after you heard the gospel of your salvation. And then you were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, yes. God's elect. The cause of it, the foreknowledge of God. The means of it, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. And the end of it, listen. Unto obedience.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit, belief of the truth, unto obedience. He hath created us unto good works, unto obedience."

Faith in Christ brings obedience to Christ. And the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, obedience, righteousness, justification ... and this is what he says about us. "You are washed. You are sanctified. You are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of God."

One more question on this verse. What is the evidence that we are God's elect? He gives us grace and peace multiplied. Elect, scattered strangers he said. And elect according to the foreknowledge of God through the power and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit unto obedience, unto the sprinkling of the blood by which we are washed and purified and justified and sanctified.

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you. He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater. His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power has no boundaries known unto men. Out of the infinite riches of God in Jesus, he giveth, giveth, giveth, giveth more grace every day. We know it, grace multiplied, grace multiplied.

All right. The people of God, verse three. They are born of God. It says in verse two, "Well, blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us."

Now you know what begotten means. He begat Jacob begat Esau and Esau begat this one and Jacob begat Isaac and or Abraham begat Isaac. We are born of God. He hath begotten us again. We are born of God. We are born from above. We are born in the

Spirit of God. And hath begotten us to a living hope, to a living hope of eternal, divine life by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Did you read that? Did you listen? Begotten of God. Our first birth was of man. Our second birth is by the power of God. Our first birth was the flesh. Our second birth was the Spirit. Our first birth ends up in death. Our second birth, a living hope, life everlasting. He hath begotten us again, again.

The first birth made me a son of my daddy. My second birth made me a son of God, a son of God. Think of it. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God. And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when he appears we will be like him. But we shall see him as he is.

And you know what the next verse says, verse four? We are not only sons of God, but we are heirs of God.

Now think about this. We are rich. He hath begotten us again unto an inheritance, an inheritance. Everybody knows that an inheritance is. But our inheritance is incorruptible. And undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

Now if you are a son of God, you are an heir of God. Our sons are our heirs. Nobody doubts that. The Scripture says in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God, sons of God. And if we are children of God then we are heirs of God. And not only that, but joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What he has we have."

He said, "Father, you have loved them as you love me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them."

We are heirs of God. Think about the riches of his kingdom. Think about the riches of his grace. Think about the riches of his glory. That is our inheritance. It is incorruptible. It is unchanging. Years have no effect on this inheritance. It is undefiled. It is untouched by sin or decay. It fadeth not away. All of your earthly joys are fading away. Fade, fade, each earthly joy. But, my friends, swift to its close ebbs out life's little day. Earth's joys grow dim and its pleasures fade away. Change and decay in all around me I see. But, oh, thou who changest not, abide with me." My inheritance is incorruptible, unchangeable, undefiled and it fadeth not away.

And watch this. And it is reserved in heaven. It is reserved in heaven for you. For whom? For you who are sons of God. It is not for anybody else. It is reserved for you, you scattered strangers, you elect, you folks that are born again, who are children of God, who are heirs of God. This inheritance is reserved for you.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. And if they are sons of God then they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Now watch the fifth verse. They are kept people. They are secure. They are scattered strangers, strangers in this world, strangers and pilgrims, scattered. They are the elect of God. And they are born of God, sons of God. They are the heirs of God.

Now, listen. And they are secure people. Notice how these verses are written. And notice there is not a period. We need to learn to read the Word of God and watch the punctuations. There is no period here.

He hath begotten us as sons to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. There is not a period there. For you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. That is one sentence.

In other words, all who are born of God are sons of God. And all who are sons of God are heirs of God and all who are heirs of God are kept by God, kept secure. They will never fail. They'll never fall. They will never perish. Born sons, heirs and kept.

Now, listen. A son of God born of God can no more cease to be a child of God than my children who are born to me and carry my name can cease to be my child. I have three sons and a daughter. They will never cease to be my sons and daughters. They are my children. And God's children are forever his children, born of God, heirs of God, loved of God and kept by God. His children are born by power. His children are given life by power. His children are made new creatures by power and his children are kept by the power of God.

Who saved you?

You say, "God did."

Did God save you on purpose, or was it an accident?

"He saved me on purpose."

It took the power of God to save you, didn't it? What kind of power? The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the power that made you a Son of God. It took the same power to make Jesus Christ the Son of man. It takes the same power to make you a Son of God. And that is not going to change. It took the power of God to make Christ a son of man. It takes the power of God to make a son of man a son of God. And that power will keep him through faith, not apart from faith, not without faith. We believe. And we are going to believe tomorrow if we believe today.

John said, "If they had been of us they would have no doubt continued with us." If we repented we are going to ... we repent now and we will report. If we believe, we believe now and we will believe and we will keep on believing because God keeps us by his power through faith.

He that hath begun a good work in you, did he begin it? He'll finish it.

Verse six and seven says God's people are tried people. Let me read this to you. "You are sons of God and heirs of God wherein you rejoice though now," verse seven, verse six and seven, "in this world you are in heaviness, you are in distress, you are in sorrow because of many trials."

God sends us trials. He gave Paul a trial, a thorn in the flesh, he said, "Lest ye be exalted above measure." But he said, "My grace is sufficient for you."

And our faith is tried to prove the genuineness of it, to strengthen it, to give us patience and to enable us to help others. And our Lord told his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you that you might have peace. In this world you will have trials and tribulations. But be of god cheer. I have overcome the world."

Now here is the last point, verse eight. The people of God love the Lord Jesus Christ. They are strangers. They are God's elect. They are born of God. They are sons of God. They are secure people. They are tried people. But they are people who love Christ. They believe on his name and they rejoice in his salvation whom having not seen ... I have never seen Christ with these eyes. I have seen in his Word. I have seen him in creation. I have seen him in his people. But though I haven't seen him, I love him. Though we see him not, we believe. And we rejoice with joy unspeakable and fully of glory.

God's people are rejoicing people.

Now if you want this tape, it has one side "The Book." And it has on the this side, "The People of God." If you will send two dollars we will mail you these two messages on the same tape, "The Book," "The people of God."

Until we meet again, may the Lord bless you.