

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

There are many folks who consider themselves God's people, regardless of what religion they adhere to— whether they call themselves Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Unitarians, or something else.

Nevertheless, just considering one's self one of God's people, does not make it so. Oh, it's true that the one true God has created all people, for we read in Revelation 4:11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." And, we learn in Proverbs 16:4, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

But, the fact that the one true God has created all people, does not make all people children of God, in the spiritual and proper sense of the term, for Galatians 3:26-28 clearly states, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Hence, **ONLY** those people with **GOD-GIVEN FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST** are God's people, in the spiritual and proper sense of the term.

Our Scripture selection supplies us with additional facts, as it informs us concerning:

"THE PEOPLE OF GOD"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Who are the people of God
- 2) What the people of God do in service to Him, and why

The epistle from which our sermon text is taken opens with the following words: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 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." (1 Peter 1:1-2) Thus, the epistle is chiefly addressed to believers in Jesus Christ, the elect of God, those who are, as we learn in 1 Peter 1:23, "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Yes, genuine Christians are born again by the Word of the living God, for we are informed in Romans 1:16-17 and Romans 10:17, "the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Thus, it's plainly evident from Holy Scripture that **THE PEOPLE OF GOD** are **ONLY** the genuine Christians.

The opening verses of our sermon text further emphasize the fact, as we shall presently consider.

Verses 1-3, ----. (1 Peter 2:1-3)

Note well that genuine Christians, **THE PEOPLE OF GOD**, desire the sincere milk – the pure milk – of God's Word, even as babies desire sincere milk. And the reason? For growth! Indeed, the people of God heed what Jesus said in John 8:31-32 "to those Jews which believed on him," that being, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The people of God do not desire the sour milk of man's so-called wisdom and science falsely-so-called, nor the sour milk of perverted bibles put forth by the so-called higher-critics of Holy Scripture. No, as mentioned moments ago, genuine Christians, **THE PEOPLE OF**

GOD, desire the sincere milk – the pure milk – of God’s Word, even as babies desire sincere milk, pure milk, that they may grow thereby.

Sadly, weaker Christians are often misled by false prophets who push false bibles upon those who are not firmly rooted in the pure preserved Word of God. Nevertheless, ALL Christians are to heed the directive found in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” ALL Christians are to be like the early Christians at Berea whom Acts 17:11 reports, “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

The people of God have tasted God’s grace as shown to them in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. The people of God know that they would be lost and damned if not for the atoning work of Jesus Christ, for the people of God know that Holy Writ relates: “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 3:23-26; 6:23) Accordingly, since the people of God *have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, they truly desire *the sincere milk of the Word*, that they might grow in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, let us never forget that only genuine Christians are THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

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As we continue to ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see what the people of God do in

service to Him, and why.

Again, verses 1-3, ----- (1 Peter 2:1-3)

The people of God are to be found, *laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings*. Hence, sinful, depraved behaviors, sneakiness and pretense, hatred and envy, running people down with the mouth and the like; all such things genuine Christians will strive to lay aside, to cease from such behaviors, with the help of God. Instead, the people of God – which is us, fellow Christians – will rather, *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby: If so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious*.

Think about it, fellow Christians. We have to work at stifling the sins of the tongue and to rather spend more time studying the pure, preserved, Holy Bible, that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

James 3:2-10 states the case, where we read, “in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” Thus, as the

people of God, we've all got work to do in curbing the misuse of our tongue, for we have been blessed in tasting that the Lord is gracious.

Verses 4 & 5, ----- (1 Peter 2:4-5)

Jesus Christ is *a living stone* in that He is ever-living and is the chief corner stone of the Holy Christian Church, "Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." — as Ephesians 1:23 informs us. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:19-22 says to all genuine Christians, all the people of God, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Oh, the unbelievers of all times *disallow*, disapprove of and reject, Jesus Christ, while the people of God know Jesus Christ is chosen of God and precious, since He is God's only begotten Son who was made flesh to redeem us, for 1 Peter 1:18-21 relates, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

So, the people of God, being built upon Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone of the Holy Christian Church, are *also, as lively stones ...built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Accordingly, the people of God, being the members of the Holy Christian Church, are to be fruitful in the faith of Jesus Christ, doing truly good

works — thoughts, words and deeds done in full accord with God's Word — which are *spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Fellow Christians, realize that our best works are in themselves unacceptable to God, since we who do the works still dwell in sinful flesh while living in this world, for Isaiah 64:6 plainly states, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Nevertheless, our works which are done in full accord with God's Word, our truly good works, are *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, because we believe on Him; and consequently, Jesus' perfect righteousness is imputed to us and our works are therefore accounted as truly good in God's sight for Jesus' sake.

My friends in Christ, as the people of God we are to strive to be fruitful in the faith in service to the Lord, doing only such works as are in full accord with His Holy Word, for we read in Psalm 119:104-105 followed by Romans 14:23, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Verse 6, ----- (1 Peter 2:6)

Heavenly Zion is a descriptive term of the Holy Christian Church, the sum total of all true believers in Jesus Christ, in other words, the people of God, for Galatians 4:26 reports, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

Now, Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone; Jesus Christ is elect and precious — yea, priceless — because He is true God and true man, but one Christ, the ONLY SAVIOR! In Isaiah 28:16 it is written: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Yes, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, will not need to

run away from God because of their sins; those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will not be confounded, will not be put to shame because of their sins, because their sins are fully forgiven them for Jesus' sake! Indeed, John 3:36 clearly states, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And, to the people of God, Hebrews 12:22-24 says, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Thus, in gratitude to our Savior, we, the people of God, are to gladly serve Him now by striving to live in full accord with His Holy Word.

Verses 7 & 8, -----. (1 Peter 2:7-8)

To all who truly believe in Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord – that is, to all the people of God – Jesus Christ is indeed precious, truly infinitely valuable, since we genuine Christians know that we would be lost and damned without Jesus Christ's atoning work.

On the other hand, to those who have stubbornly rejected Jesus Christ in unbelief, to *them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

Oh, when people continually harden themselves against the Lord and His Word, He finally leaves them in their unbelief, hardening them in it permanently, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that

runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."— relates Romans 9:15-18. The people of God know that it's foolish and sinful to push God; the people of God are grateful to God for His grace and mercy shown to them in Christ Jesus, because God has called them to faith through His Holy Word, the Gospel of Christ in particular. Indeed, the people of God know, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."— so it is appointed by God in Mark 16:16.

Verses 9 & 10, -----. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Think about the closing words of our sermon text, for they are addressed to genuine Christians, the people of God and only the people of God, for God in His Word says in contradistinction *to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed— 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: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

Fellow Christians, note well that we *are a chosen generation*: God chose us; we did not choose Him, nor can anyone choose Him. It's as we read in Ephesians 1:3-7, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his

blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Fellow Christians, all thanks and praise be to our gracious God who has made us His people!

We Christians, the people of God, are *a royal priesthood, an holy nation*, for we learn from Revelation 1:5-6, “Jesus Christ... loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” We can never thank and praise the Lord enough for all that He has done and still does for us undeserving sinners!

Observe that EVERY true Christian is a priest unto God; hence, the supposed exclusive priesthood of those appointed by the pope is just one more proof that the pope is the very antichrist, “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” — as 2 Thessalonians 2:4 states.

We Christians, the people of God, are *a peculiar people*— not strange, but a special purchased possession, since Jesus Christ bought us with His own holy and precious blood. Yes, Titus 2:14 informs us that our Savior Jesus Christ, is He, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Indeed, we Christians, the people of God, are to, *shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light: for we, in time past were not a people, but we are now the people of God: we, in time past, had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

Fellow Christians, we, the people of God, must never forget how blessed we are by God’s grace and mercy, for the Lord has chosen us and called us to faith, out of the darkness of sin and unbelief, and into the marvelous light of Jesus Christ who is the Light of the world— the ONLY SAVIOR of sinners, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to

give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6) Yes, regarding the faith in Jesus Christ that saves, Ephesians 2:8-9 states in no uncertain terms, “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The Lord God does the saving, all of it!

Therefore, let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward striving to be truly fruitful in the faith, doing those works which are in full accord with God’s Word, endeavoring to show we are the people of God. Amen.

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