

You Are A Royal Priesthood
1 Peter 2:4-12
Key Verse: 2:9-10

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

We give thanks to God that he established UBF in 1961, for the last 50 years, and now around 2,000 missionaries in 93 countries serve world campus evangelism.

Today's passage is a letter for the Christians who were scattered in Asia Minor due to the persecution of the Roman Emperor, Nero (AD54-68). They were treated as a bunch of pagans, despised, hidden like wanderers under the public order of arrest. According to today's passage, what is our spiritual identity?

What is our mission for the next 50 years?

Part I. The Lord made us a holy nation, a people belonging to God (9a,c)

What did the Apostle Peter say about the spiritual identity of the believers who were scattered like wanderers? The Apostle Peter clearly talked about the spiritual identity and privilege of the seemingly pathetic believers. Humanly, they were despised wanderers of low class scattered in remote foreign countries. Yet, spiritually, they were a chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God for the whole world.

What then is the spiritual identity of believers in the world?

First, they are a chosen people, a people belonging to God (9a, b).

God chose the Israelites as his own people in the time of the Old Testament (Isa 43:20).

In the time of the Apostle Peter, it was very difficult for the Israelites, a people of a Roman colony, to receive Roman citizenship. Unless they paid a huge amount of money, or achieved distinguished services for the Empire, to secure a Roman citizenship was practically impossible (Ac 22:28). But in the time of the New Testament, we have become the people of God through the redemption by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, and through God's gracious calling (Eph 2:18,19). God declares that we are a people of God chosen by him. Therefore, we must be sure of his calling by the blood of Jesus and live as people of God. A North Korean escaped from North Korea and entered China. He could come to America by a Pastor's help. These days the North Koreans' biggest dream is to receive U.S. citizenship. Yet how much more glorious it is to become God's people and God's citizens rather than U.S. citizens! We are citizens in the kingdom of God through faith of Jesus Christ. We must have this confidence each day and live in this world as those worthy to be called the people of God.

Second, A holy nation (9c, Ex 19:6b)

What is our spiritual identity in the world?

Look at verse 9c. "But you are... a holy nation". In this world each nation has its own nature, unique culture, and national idea. God's nation also has its own nature and character.

American people's unique characters are "generosity", "can do spirit", "individualism", and "pleasure seeking".

The character of God's people is holiness and purity. God's people have been cleansed of their sins by the blood of Jesus. They have to live holy and pure lives unlike secular people in the world. In Exodus 19:5,6a God said "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." As we can see from these verses the characteristic of the people in the kingdom of God is holiness.

This characteristic is common to all the believers even though they are scattered around the world. Some believers being tempted by sin fail to live holy lives and end up being the object of criticism. Some live as shameful and secular people rather than as a holy nation. In particular, these days in the USA, many believers being influenced by the world live disgraceful and dirty lives and are criticized by non-believers. Most spiritual leaders deplore this with one voice.

Part II. The Lord appointed us as a royal priesthood (9b)

What does the Lord say our spiritual identity in God is?

Look at verse 9b. "But you are ... a royal priesthood." This verse tells us that our identity is king and priest like Melchizedek the king of Salem (Ge 14:18). Through spiritual union with Christ, believers reign over the whole world and, at the same time, serve God as priests like Christ (Rev 5:10). What does the Lord say our spiritual identity is?

Look again at verse 9b. "But you are a royal priesthood." In this verse the verb 'are' is present tense. This means we are a chosen people right now and continue to be so. This means we are a royal priesthood now. Even though we are smelly sinners and possibly despised people in the world, from God's point of view, we are a royal priesthood. Do you accept and believe that you are a royal priest? Even though we may be rejected or scattered like the early Christians, God appointed us as a royal priests.

At first I accepted this word only theoretically. I was on top of the world like taking a first class flight. Yet I found that I did not live as a royal priest in my actual life and deeply repented. The Lord appointed our UBF brothers and sisters, shepherds and missionaries as royal priests. This was not just a flattery to make us feel good. This verse is the certificate of appointment of the King of kings and of the sovereign God. We must renew our spiritual identity every morning and be faithful to the task of a priest.

What then is the task of a priest?

In the time of the Old Testament, priests offered sacrifices for the sins of the people (Lev 1:1-17). Yet in the time of the New Testament, Jesus became the atoning sacrifice once and for all, and therefore, we no longer need any other sacrifice.

Their second task was to teach the word (Lev 10:11) and third, was to make intercessory prayer for the people (1Sam 7:5-9, Ex 32:11-18). Yet in the time of the New Testament we can learn about the task of a priest through Jesus who is both King and Priest. In the time of the New Testament what is the real task of a priest?

First, the task of a priest is to deliver the gospel of salvation (9c)

What did the Lord say is his purpose of appointing us as his chosen people, a royal priesthood? Look at verse 9c. "that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Once in the region of the Gerasenes, when Jesus healed a man possessed by an evil spirit, the man wanted to follow Jesus. At that time Jesus said to him, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed and believed. (Mk 5:19, 20)

As High priest, Jesus taught the word. The task of a priest is to faithfully spread the life giving gospel. When we were in college, most of us received the grace of salvation through the gospel. Even though today's situation is tough, we must actively teach the word of God one to one to young students. The people in this generation worship post-modernism and materialism as their god. This generation ridicules the gospel and despises believers, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did (Ge 19:14). But we must have confidence in the gospel and boldly preach the life giving gospel like Apostle Paul did.

Second, the task of a priest is to make intercessory prayer (1 Sam 7:5-9, Ex28:29).

1Sam 7:9 says, "Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him."

The Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle while all the Israelites assembled at Mizpah. Samuel, the judge and priest, sacrificing the burnt offering to the Lord, made earnest intercessory prayer for the Israelites. God answered his prayer and routed the Philistines. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines (1Sam 7:10, 11).

In this 21st century, we can clearly see the signs of the end of the age. This generation worships all kinds of idols: materialism, hedonism, and high technology. It is like the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. There are earthquakes and disasters. In particular, about three months ago, a tsunami struck Japan which was believed to have been fully ready for all kinds of natural disasters. Therefore, despite the claim that they are fully reinforced by modern technology, Japanese people wander with the fear of nuclear radiation and earthquakes. This is not just the problem of Japan. It is a warning of God for all people in the world (Mt 11:24). Like Samuel, we must make an earnest intercessory prayer for the campus students of the world.

At the last Middle East directors' New Year conference, I had a talk with a missionary. The missionary said that he felt helpless when he realized that he and his wife could not do anything for the Muslim country he lived in, which has one of the biggest populations in the Middle East. But through studying and writing a testimony on 1Samuel chapter 7, he learned that he could make an earnest intercessory prayer for the people every morning.

I could see the Lord would surely cause political earthquakes through his prayers and they would preach the gospel. The Lord says in 1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

When one missionary in the Middle East continued to make earnest intercessory prayers for the Middle East people, God accepted his prayers and his labor in the Lord was not in vain.

We, UBF brothers and sisters have been praying for pioneering Muslim countries in the Middle East constantly until now (since the early 1990s). Even though we have sent out missionaries there, Middle East mission is difficult and seems to be as hard as iron walls. However, demonstrations have begun to occur among the Middle Eastern countries. There were political earthquakes that took place in two countries. Democracy then came to those countries and a chain reaction occurred in other Middle Eastern countries.

This shows that our God is working hard in the Middle East for us. When Jesus healed the man who had been an invalid for 38 years, the religious leaders criticized Jesus. Therefore, Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." (Jn 5:17) But we are just watching what is happening in the Middle East. We should repent our poor attitude and participate in what God is doing there by prayer.

God has used Korea as a royal priesthood for the last 50 years.

The founder of UBF, Dr. Samuel C. Lee, sent around 350 missionaries to South East Asia, Germany and to the U.S.A. as soon as UBF was born. He gave all the UBF members the direction to make earnest intercessory prayers for Korea and the world. By faith, he sent UBF brothers and sisters as missionaries for world mission.

From 1970 to 2010, UBF sent out 3,300 missionaries. God used these missionaries to pioneer and raise disciples in North America, Europe, CIS, South America, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East. God used American brothers and sisters as royal priests. And God still does. We UBF brothers and sisters have worked hard to be used by God as a royal priesthood for 50 years. Now should we pass this mission as royal priests over to other countries and we retire? As I said, the Lord appoints us as a royal priesthood. He does not want us to retire from the priestly duty. Look at 1Peter 2:9. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

UBF shepherds should continue to devote themselves to the task of a royal priesthood. I pray that we may renew the certificate of appointment from the Lord that we are a royal priesthood and faithfully fulfill our responsibility. I

thank and praise the Lord who saved smelly sinners with the word and the Holy Spirit and appointed them as a royal priesthood. I praise the Lord that he has been using America as a kingdom of priests for the whole world.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." -- (1Pe2:9)