

Canticle in 4/4 Time – I Peter 2:9

I. Introduction:

- A. Not very long ago, I preached a series of messages from **verses 9** and **10**.
1. At least it doesn't seem very long ago to me, because they were such a blessing to my heart.
 2. I have no idea whether or not you remember them.
 3. I hope you do, but forty months can seem like a relatively long time.
 4. And there is the fact that several of you were not here when I last spent time on these verses.
 5. So I am asking the Lord for direction in regard to pulling those outlines out, editing them & reissuing them.
- B. While awaiting the Lord, tonight I'd like to summarize **verse 9**.
1. I am giving this message the title "*Canticle in 4/4 Time.*"
 2. The word "*canticle*" doesn't come from the Bible or from Greek. It is Latin and means simply: "*song.*"
 3. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that it is in the Latin Vulgate Bible in **Colossians 3:16**: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*"
- C. Why have I made this my title? I'm glad you asked.
1. Have you ever given any consideration to the lyrical beauty of this verse?
 2. Peter gives us several couplets, or pairs, which beat out a rhythm in 4/4 time.
 3. Many of the hymns we sing have 3 beats to a measure; some have 6 and others 2, but many have 4 beats.
 4. Return to Hymn 2 which we sang a few minutes ago; "*Holy, holy, holy.*"
 - a. Do you see at the beginning of the first line the two 4s on top of each other? It means this is 4/4 time.
 - b. Now, look at the notes above the first two "*holy, holy,*" and notice that they end with a vertical line.
 - c. This is called a "*measure,*" and in this case there are four notes, four beats, in that measure.
 - d. Then in the second measure there is the third "*holy*" which some people sing with two notes, but others sing with four.
 - e. "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. Early in the morning my song will rise to thee.*"
- D. Peter sings **his** canticle in a similar sort of 4/4 time, with a couple of introductory, pick-up, notes.
1. "*But ye are – a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...*"
 2. And then comes the chorus: "*That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*"
- E. All Christians were once sinners – "*dead men walking.*"
1. We come into this world without spiritual life, because our first father chose to drink the poison of sin, polluting and killing all his descendants.
 2. But, praise God, some sinners "*have been born again by the word of God which liveth & abideth for ever.*"
 3. "*You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.*"
 4. Now, you are not only children of God, but "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...*"

II. Let's begin by briefly considering the words "**generation,**" "**priesthood,**" "**nation**" and "**people.**"

- A. Remember, Peter is speaking about **us** – you and me. "*YE are a chosen generation... an holy nation...*"
1. But this is not the way in which he started this epistle.
 2. **I Peter 1:1** addresses people whom he called "*strangers scattered*" across Asia Minor.
 3. We are God's "*diaspora*" – people disbursed or sprinkled like salt across a tasteless, sinful wilderness.
 4. And despite what many people are saying today, we are not supposed to feel comfortable in this world.
 5. "*This world is not our home, we're just a passing through.*"
 6. "*Our (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*"
 7. And it is to this new citizenship that the Holy Spirit, through Peter, refers.

- B. One of our great privileges is that we have been made **priests** after the order of Christ, our Melchizedec.
1. Which means that we don't need other priests of any kind – Catholic, Jewish, Baptist or whatever.
 2. We all may come *“boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*
 3. We may open the scriptures to hear the voice of God without the necessary intervention of any other man.
 4. Any of us can offer the sweet incense of prayer – and even the thank offerings of our grateful hearts.
 5. The only priest above us is our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, *“who has passed into the heavens, making intercession for us.”*
- C. Another of the blessings to which Peter refers is that we are part of a **royal priesthood**.
1. Not only are we priests under Christ, but we are **kingly** priests, just as He is, but to a lesser degree.
 2. Whereas we grew up slaves to the world, the flesh and the devil, we have, in Christ, been given authority over our hearts and lives.
 3. And some day soon, during the Millennium, we shall be given even more regal authority.
- D. I am not going to say that these two things are at the pinnacle of God's blessings to us, but if they were all we have as Christians, they should make our stay here in this world worth our time.
1. The reality is – these are just a couple of the sprinkles on the top of the great dessert of God's grace.
 2. One of my theology books states that there are 33 fantastic blessings contained within our salvation.
 3. We could spend a year examining them all, and I am convinced they would be a tremendous blessing.
- E. After telling us that we are *“a royal priesthood,”* the Holy Spirit declares the opposite – we are His *“laity.”*
1. In corrupt religious thinking there are two kinds of people – the *“priests”* and *“laity.”*
 - a. But God says that His saints are both *“priests”* and *“laity.”*
 2. Originally, the word *“laos”* spoke of a specific race of people with the same customs and language.
 3. Without getting into the adjectives describing them at this point – Peter says that we are **God's** people.
 - a. And it is better to be one of **God's** people than to be listed in the pages of *“Forbe's Magazine.”*
 - b. Rhode's scholar? What is that? Member of Mensa? Who will care a thousand years from now?
 4. You, brother or sister in Christ, as lowly as you might picture yourself to be, are one of **God's** people.
- F. We are also people of **Jehovah's particular nation**.
1. Once again, this Greek word is quite well-known; it is *“ethnos.”*
 2. God's saints all have the same ethnicity – leaning more to the idea of **race** than of country.
 - a. Saved Canadians are of the same race as redeemed Japanese.
 - b. And born again Indians are of the same ethnicity as born again Native Americans.
 3. With Peter's ethnicity, he may have immediately thought about Israel when he penned that word.
 - a. Like hundreds of other cultures, Israelites considered themselves to be **THE people**.
 - b. Perhaps at one point they were, but now God says, *“YE (Christian saints) are my chosen generation; my holy nation.”*
 4. The Christian is not a sanctified Israelite – we are not spiritual Hebrews.
 5. The redeemed of the Lord belong to a **NEW** nation – an holy nation – unlike any other race the world has ever known.
- G. Peter says that we are a special people and ethnicity.
1. And we also belong to a **new generation**, speaking of the same sort of thing but just a bit differently.
 2. Peter's use of the word *“generation”* is not the way it is commonly used today.
 3. Many of us here today are said to be of the Baby Boomer generation.
 - a. Some of you are of the Millennial Generation, and then there is Generation X, and Y.
 - b. My parents were of the *“Greatest Generation”* – people who grew up during the Depression and WW2.
 4. Generally speaking, parents are one generation, grandparents are another, and children are a third.
 5. Roughly speaking a new generation starts every 40 years.

- H. But that is not to what Peter refers.
1. He was saying simply that Christians are all children of God.
 2. They have been **generated** by the same Father, Jehovah, and they have one elder brother – Jesus Christ.
 3. In other words, Christians are all of one family, whether they were born in 1900, 1600 or the year 2000.
 4. You and I are kin to the greatest people in human history – and I am not referring to Alexander the Great, Thomas Jefferson or Benjamin Franklin.
 5. All of God's New Testament saints are a part of a single glorious generation.
 6. *“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:*
 7. *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.”*
- I. Peter's references to *“generation,” “nation”* and *“people”* speak essentially about the same thing.
1. The words are instructive and blessed when applied to us.
 2. But it is their respective adjectives which make them outstanding – spectacular.

III. So let's consider those adjectives.

- A. *“Ye are a **CHOSEN** generation”* – an *“eklektos” (ek-lek-tos)* *“genos” (ghen'-os)*.
1. In 1939, my father & mother – both young people – volunteered for military duty & fought in World War II.
 2. That same year my grandfather volunteered to fight again – after earlier serving in the First World War.
 3. My parents were each a part of Tom Brokaw's *“The Greatest Generation.”*
 4. But there is a sense in which they were a part of that generation, because everyone at that time was a part.
 - a. They were born between the designated years. They survived the Depression and the war.
 - b. They may have **volunteered** for **duty**, but they were **drafted** into that **generation**.
- B. Similarly, you and I did not volunteer to become a part of **GOD'S** chosen generation.
1. We were *“chosen”* by God and invited to join this special generation of people.
 2. The Greek word *“chosen”* in this verse is translated *“elect”* in **Peter's first chapter**.
 3. Though we are strangers scattered across the world we are *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”*
 4. Grace has been given unto us – and as a result *“peace has been multiplied unto us.”*
- C. As a Christian, you are part of a chosen generation – you are a chosen child – adopted into God's family.
1. Out of the millions of souls in this world, you are among the few God has chosen.
 2. Don't be ashamed of that when the unbeliever sneers at the subject of election.
 3. Of course, there is no room for any of us to be proud of that election, because it was entirely of God.
 4. And yet, we can and should rejoice to high Heaven.
 - a. *“I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God; I've been washed in the fountain, Cleansed by His blood.*
 - b. *Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod; For I'm part of the family, the family of God.”*
- D. Peter's third couplet describes us as part of an **HOLY** nation – *“hagios” (hag'-ee-os)* *“ethnos” (eth'-nos)*.
1. God's saints are members of a race of people **sanctified unto** God and **by** God.
 2. I cannot understand why so many Protestants want to be some form of a New Testament Israel.
 3. Peter was making a distinction between Old Testament Israel, which was sinful and rebellious, and God's **new** holy nation or race.
 4. Israel should be used to prove man's inability to be holy in God's sight.
 5. On the other hand, *“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.”*

- E. The holiness which we enjoy – our sanctification – doesn't come from within us, or by anything we propose or try to do.
1. Paul describes us as *“sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”* – *“holy”* – *1 Corinthians 1:2*.
 2. We were born and grew up just as wicked as Israel – *“BUT we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*
 3. Again, Peter began this letter to the scattered strangers by calling us, *“Elect (chosen) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”*
- F. Let this thought cover you like a warm blanket – we are sanctified – we are holy in the sight of God.
1. This comes through our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; it is not something we must create ourselves.
 2. Is there a greater blessing than to know that we are exactly what God requires of us – holy?
 3. It is done – *“Ye ARE a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation.”*
- G. And also we are *“a peculiar people; that we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.”*
1. *“Peculiar”* is one of those English words that has radically evolved during the last 400 years.
 2. Today, to most people it means *“weird,” “odd,” “unusual”* and formerly even *“queer.”*
 3. But when the King James Bible was written it meant *“unique”* in a good way – or simply *“special.”*
 4. If you study the word – it's etymology – you'll see it comes from the French word for *“private property.”*
- H. Christian, you are uniquely the private property of the sovereign God.
1. You are *“peculiar”* – but that is not something about which to be ashamed or disturbed.
 2. We are not God's chattel or slaves; we are His chosen and adopted children.
 3. Contained in that thought is the power of the Almighty God to protect what belongs to Him.
 4. The redeemed soul can never be lost or stolen. We might be distressed, but we can not be deserted.
 5. *“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”*
- I. In these four relationships are bounties and gifts greater than we will ever understand in this world – maybe than we ever will.
1. Who would not want to be a part of God's chosen generation?
 2. Who would not rejoice in being one of God's royal priests?
 3. Christian, rejoice in these blessings from God.