

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Reading: 1 Peter 2:1-10

6. I WOULD LOVE TO TELL YOU WHAT I THINK OF JESUS

Several years ago there was a medical missionary in China. Whenever someone came to him for treatment he would always tell them the story of Jesus. One morning before the clinic doors were opened, there came to the missionary an old woman stooped with age. He could tell by the dust on her feet and clothing that she had come a long way. That morning he treated her and as always, told her about his wonderful Saviour. The medical missionary said, *“As the rose opens to receive the rays of the noon day sun, so her heart opened to receive the Saviour. Her tears made little rivulets down her dusty cheeks as she opened her heart to Christ.”* Several weeks later, there was a knock at the missionary’s door, and there he found the same old woman that had come to him several weeks before. She said, *“Sir, He has saved me, and I know He lives within my heart. He has made my life so happy. But Sir, I have forgotten His name. Could you please tell me His name again?”* The missionary repeated over and over again the name **“Jesus,”** and each time the little old lady echoed that name **“Jesus.”**

Lela Long heard that story and she wrote these words.

*There have been names that I have loved to hear
But never has there been a name so dear
To this heart of mine as the name divine
The precious, precious, name of Jesus*

*Jesus is the sweetest name I know
And He’s just the same, as His lovely name
And that’s the reason why I love Him so
For Jesus is the sweetest name I know*

There were several things that were *“precious,”* to Peter.

- In (1 Peter 1:7) trials are precious
- In (1 Peter 1:18) the blood is precious
- In (2 Peter 1:1) our faith is precious
- In (2 Peter 1:4) the promises of God are precious

But here in this passage we see that the Lord Jesus is *“precious.”* In fact 3 times Peter speaks of Christ as *“precious.”* In (2:4, 2:6, 2:7) It was like Peter was saying *“I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus.”* The Greek word (entimon) here means *“unequaled in value,” “costly,”* or *“irreplaceable.”* I think of the Sunday School teacher who had been talking to her class about this very passage. The teacher said, *“You have been reading that Christ is precious, what does that mean?”* The children were silent for a few moments, then at last one boy replied, *“Father said the other day that mother was precious,”* for *“whatever should we do without her.”* My Christ is precious for whatever should we do without Him. Now did you notice how Peter couches this phrase? *“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”* The word *“therefore,”* prompts us to

ask, wherefore ? It shows us that this statement is an inference from what went before. We have a “ *therefore,*” for our valuation of Christ. Trying to set this lovely phrase in its context this I want to say that Christ is precious because of,

(1) THE PRIVILEGES WE HAVE

The dictionary defines privilege as “ *a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage or favour,*” which may be “ *attached specifically to a position or an office.*” It is a blessing or freedom enjoyed by some people, but which most people cannot take advantage of. Believers are a special class of people who enjoy unique and eternal favours because of their unique position in Christ. Now there are many believers who look at the Christian life more from the standpoint of spiritual duty rather than spiritual privilege. They tend to be occupied with what they view as obligations and they do not cherish the lasting privileges that the Lord has given them to enjoy. Peter here underscores two privileges. He says,

(a) WE ARE STONES IN THE SAME BUILDING:

I did not know that the Blarney Castle is located in Co. Cork. And it has a stone built into the southern wall called the Blarney Stone. According to tradition the castle was once saved from attack by the use of flattery and just plain “ *sweet talk.*” Now those who kiss the stone are supposed to be endowed with the gift of eloquence. The Blarney Stone is a stone of some importance, but it pales into insignificance compared with Christ. He is a living stone

because He was raised from the dead in victory. He is the chosen stone of the Father and precious. (Is 28:16 Ps118:22) Moreover, Christ is the chief cornerstone of the church binding the building together. Do you recall Paul’s words ? “ *And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple unto the Lord.*” (Eph 2:20-21) In His first mention of the church, the Lord Jesus compared it to a building. He said, “ *I will build my church.*” (Matt 16:18) Believers are living stones in his building. Each time someone trusts Christ, another stone is quarried out of the pit of sin and cemented by grace into the building. It may look to us that the church on earth is a pile of rubble and ruins, but God sees the whole structure as it grows. What a privilege we have to be part of His church “ *an habitation of God through the Spirit.*”

Now remember Peter is writing to Christians living in five difference provinces yet he said that they all belong to one spiritual house. There is a unity of God’s people that transcends all local and individual churches. My we belong to each other because we belong to Christ. There are some individualistic Christians who say yes to Christ and no to the church. Yet how foreign that is to the teaching of the New Testament. For just as a brick lying by itself is useless, so for believers isolation is impossible and unity is essential. (a) Now some believers want to be rolling stones. They just kind of want to do their own thing, so they have their own thing going, but you’ll not find that emphasis in the Scriptures. (a) Individual

believers are like stones in a building. All have a different part to play. Some stones are used as pillars, and some will be pillars in the assembly. Some stones are used as a doorway, and there will be those who will be used to bring others into the fellowship. Some stones in the building cannot be seen, and many work quietly behind the scenes. Tell me, what role are you playing in this church? What ministry are you exercising? What ability are you using for His glory? (a)

(b) WE ARE PRIESTS IN THE SAME TEMPLE:

We are a “*holy priesthood*,” and a “*royal priesthood*.” This corresponds to the heavenly priesthood of our Lord Jesus for He is both King and Priest. (Heb 7:3) Now in the Old Testament period God’s people had a priesthood (Heb 7:11) but today, God’s people are a priesthood, and in the Christian church all enter the priesthood. You see, under the Law the priesthood was restricted to the tribe of Levi and to the family of Aaron. Do you recall that only the High Priest could approach a holy God on the Day of Atonement each year to atone for the sins of the people? Now, because of Calvary the Lord Jesus has opened up a new and living way. As believers we have direct access to God in and through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. My do you see here the function of the church? It is as believer priests to “offer up spiritual sacrifices.” We today don’t bring animal sacrifices as they did in the Old Testament, but we do have our sacrifices to present to the Lord. There is the sacrifice of,

- **Praise:** The writer to the Hebrews reminds us,

“*By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.*” (Heb 13:15)

- **Body:** which Paul calls “*a living sacrifice.*” (Rom 12:1)
- **Good Works:** with which “*God is well pleased.*” (Heb 13:16) What about the sacrifice of
- **Giving:** For which Paul commended the Philippian church. (Phil 4:18)
- **Converts:** sinners who have been reconciled to the Lord (Rom 15:15)
- **Prayer:** (Rev 8:3-4)

We are quick to point out that there are no other priests recognized in the New Testament, for believers are the only priests what we are not so quick at doing is fulfilling our priestly duties. Do you know what **dumb** priests are? Brethren, who never lift their hearts to God in prayer and praise. Do you know what **disobedient** priests are? Believers who have never taken seriously their responsibility to gave to the work of God? Do you know what **dull** priests are? Christians who have lost their vitality to do anything worthwhile for the Lord. My We are priests in the same temple. The fact that each one of us can go to the Lord personally and offer “*spiritual sacrifices*,” should not encourage “*individualism*,” on our part. We are priests together serving the same High

Priest, ministering in the same spiritual temple. The fact that there is but one High Priest and heavenly Mediator indicates unity among the people of God. And while we must maintain our personal walk with God, we must not do it at the expense of ignoring other believers. Christ is precious because of (1) But, Christ is precious because of,

(2) THE POSITION WE HOLD

The description of the church in this passage parallels God's description of Israel in (Ex Ch 19 & Deut Ch 7) In contrast to the disobedient and rebellious nation of Israel, God's people today are His chosen and holy nation. This does not suggest that God is through with Israel, that God is through with the Jew for I believe that Israel has a great future in the purposes of God. He will fulfill His promises and His covenants and will establish the promised kingdom. But it does mean that the church today is to God and the world what Israel was meant to be. Do you see how Peter describes us ? We are,

(a) A CHOSEN GENERATION:

Literally it means “ *an elect race.* ” Our heads might tend to swell at being chosen to be on God's team, so it's wise for us to take a quick glance at why God chose the Hebrews to be His people. This will help us put the whole idea of being chosen by God into perspective. Here Moses is addressing the nation of Israel, preparing them to enter the Promised land. He says, “ *The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people for ye were the fewest of all*

people. But because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers. ” (Deut 7:7-8) Why did God choose Israel ? Because of their strength ? No ? Because of their numbers ? Because of their mental or moral superiority ? No. He chose them not because they deserved it, but simply because of His grace. Simply because “ *the Lord loved you.* ” A little boy at the dog shelter tried to choose his future pet. There were dogs of all sizes and he could have pick of any dog. There were little dogs, big dogs, and dogs that were in between. Most of the dogs were barking as if to say, “ *choose me.* ” He went from cage to cage examining each doggy face. In one cage there was a little dog that was not very pretty. He patted the dog's nose and announced that he wanted this dog. His parents tried to change his mind. They pointed that were other dogs that looked better, brighter, sharper, but the boy did not listen. “ *I want him anyway.* ”

Why did God choose us ? Not because we looked good. Not because we did anything that impressed Him. It wasn't the size of our faith or sincerity. It wasn't the goodness of our heart, the greatness of our intellect. It was entirely by grace. Grace prompted by love. Do you know something ? We won't walk around heaven with our heads in the air, instead we will be absolutely amazed that we are privileged to be there. (a)

(b) A CROWNED PRIESTHOOD:

“ *A royal priesthood,* ” (2:9) This comes from

(Ex Ch 19) where God said to Israel “ *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests.* ” (Ex 19:6) Sadly because of sin and rebellion that did not happen, (Jn 12:37-48 Rom 11:7-10) but all those who are in Christ receive the privilege of becoming royal priests. This means that we must always think, feel, speak, and act as those who live in the holy place. In other words, our whole life is to be an act of worship. Paul put it like this, “ *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.* ” (Col 3:17)

(c) A CONSECRATED NATION:

Peter says “ *an holy nation.* ” (2:9) Before giving the law at Sinai God said to Israel “ *Ye shall be unto Me an holy nation.* ” (Ex 19:6) That is, they were to be separate from the surrounding idolatrous nations, and were to be faithful to the only true God. The word “ *nation,* ” here in the Greek (ethnos) gives us the word “ *ethnic.* ” It emphasizes the community of believers. Christians have closer ties than any ethnic group may have on account of colour or culture. And the distinguishing mark of believers is holiness. (1:15-16) My are you living a life of separation from sin and consecration to God ? Are you separate from all that is ungodly, are you set apart exclusively to the Lord. God commanded Israel to put a “ *a difference between holy and unholy and between unclean and clean,* ” (Lev 10:10) but they ignored the differences and disobeyed God. Is this not what is happening in the church today ? The line of demarcation between the world and the believer has all but gone.

Professing Christians today use the world’s language, sup the world’s wine, adopt the world’s standards, frequent the world’s pleasures, accept the world’s practices, fellowship with the world’s people. The result ? They lose their power, their testimony, and their joy. Is this you ? Could it be said of you as was said of Demas ? “ *Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world.* ” (2 Tim 4:10) A jewelry salesman noticing his hands to be somewhat soiled said to himself, “ *Of all persons I should have clean hands. I cannot offer diamonds, pearls, or jewels of any sort to customers with hands that are not clean.* ” Are you presenting the treasure of Christ to others with clean hands ? But there’s more. You see, we are,

(d) A CAPTIVATED PEOPLE:

“ *A peculiar people.* ” Do you know any peculiar people ? You say, “ *Preacher I know a lot of peculiar Christians,* ” Well, when Peter uses the word “ *peculiar,* ” he is not talking about being odd. Rather we are “ *God’s own special people.* ” The same word is used in the Book of Malachi where God speaks of “ *my jewels.* ” (3:17) My we are the Lord’s own special treasure. We are His purchased possession. Possessions of the powerful, wealthy or famous, no matter how common can become extremely valuable, even priceless. Do you know how much Napoleon’s toothbrush sold for ? \$21,000 ! At the Sotheby’s auction of Jackie Kennedy Onassis’s personal belongings, her fake pearls sold for \$211,500, and John Kennedy’s wood golf clubs went for £772,500. Not because the items themselves are worthy but because they once belonged to someone famous. Are you ready for a

surprise ? We fit that bill too. Think of the value of something that is owned by God. What incredible worth that bestows on us, what dignity. We belong to Him. We are God's special treasure. Owned by the living God and the price paid for us was terribly high the blood of Jesus Christ. Is that not enough to bring a smile to your face this ? My " *Unto you which believe He is precious.* " Precious, because of (1) (2)

(3) THE PERSON WE HERALD

You see, it is Christ Himself who is precious. You know, there are some believers who glory in their denomination, others who glory in their local church, still others who glory in their service. It so easy to imagine that we are occupied for Him and not to be occupied with Him. Speaking of the preciousness of Christ, Spurgeon says

" He is precious in Himself," He cannot be bought for He cannot be priced. He cannot be matched. He cannot be lost. He cannot be destroyed. He is precious in the things He brings to us, life, light, love, liberty." Now this says Peter is the person we herald. Did you notice here there is,

(a) **PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST:**

My how can we repay Him for all that He has done for us ? When we compare what we are with what we were. Once in darkness now in marvelous light (2:9) once not included among God's people (Eph 2:1-3) but now accounted as part of them. Once without hope of mercy

now the happy recipients of abundant mercy. What shall we say ? How shall we respond ? Is it not our duty to praise Him ? " *to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* " (2:9) The verb translated " *show forth,* " means " *to tell out, to advertise, to proclaim the excellencies of Christ.* " My there is no greater privilege than to be a herald for the gospel. To proclaim through our worship and witness the excellencies of Christ.

***Happy if with my latest breath
I may but speak His name
Preach Him in life
And cry in death
Behold, behold the Lamb***

In that office block, on that factory floor, in that hospital world, are you proclaiming Christ ? Are you exalting Him ? Are you lifting Him high ? (a)

(b) **MOTIVATION BY CHRIST:**

For He has called out of darkness, spiritual darkness, moral darkness, intellectual darkness into His marvelous light. (Col 1:13) The story is told of a poor couple who had got saved through the ministry of the Salvation Army. Neither one could read or write. But both were so happy that they had been saved. A meeting was going on one night and when the husband got home he seemed so depressed. His wife asked him what was wrong. He said, " *Everyone at the meeting has a coat with nice letters on it. I wish I had a coat like that.* " His wife said, " *I believe*

I can do something about that. I will put some letters on your coat. Since she couldn't read or write she wondered what she would do. She looked out the window and saw a sign in the store across the street. She copied the letters on that sign and sewed them on her husband's coat. The next night her husband came home so happy. She asked, "How did everyone like the letters in your coat?" He said, "They said I had the best coat of them all." The wife had sewed the letters on the coat that read, "**Under new management.**" Why should you witness for Christ? Why should you proclaim the excellencies of your Saviour? Because you are under new management. (a) (b)

(c) COMPASSION FROM CHRIST:

Look at (2:10) if you will. Have you lived so long in the family of God that your memory has become blurred? Have you forgotten what it was when you weren't? My we were lost. We couldn't see where we were going. Then Jesus came.

*He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace
Emptied Himself of all but love
And bled for Adam's helpless race
Tis mercy all, immense and free
For, O my God it found out me*

"Unto therefore which believe He is precious." Or we could read like this, "Unto you therefore which believe He is preciousness." The word carries the meaning of exceptional distinction, to the extent that if removed,

replacement is an absolute impossibility. No wonder Peter said "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." Precious, because of (1) (2) (3) I would love to tell what I think of Jesus.

**To His omniscience there is no orbit
To His excellence there is no end
To His sovereignty there is no shoreline
To His lordship there is no limitation
To His dominion there is no demarcation
To His compassion there is no circumference
To His blessing there is no border
To His glory there is no grave**

**Mightiest in majesty
Strongest in sovereignty
Ablest in authority
Choicest in constancy
Chiefest in capability
Greatest in generosity
Stateliest in supremacy**

"Unto therefore which believe He is precious."

