

## God's treasured possession

Have we ever had something that we treasured? It might not be anything that has any monetary value at all. In fact to other people it might seem to be a worthless piece of junk. But we treasure it for its sentimental value. Whether it has any other value or not we take care of it, we look after it, we watch over it. If we lose it we mourn its loss. If we find it again we rejoice.

God calls His people His treasured possession. But what does that mean for us?

Exodus 19: 1 – 6

1 Peter 2: 9 – 10

### 1) God's treasured possession

- God had Israel in His heart and mind long before He delivered them from Egypt
- In Genesis 12: 2 He promised Abraham that He would make Him into a great nation and bless Him.
  - Israel is the natural offspring of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.
- God promised that Israel would be in bondage for 400 years.
  - Genesis 15: 13 Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there."
- It might seem strange that God would promise His treasured people hundreds of years of hardship.
  - The Hebrew word for treasured possession, *segula*, does not merely mean that His people will only receive good things. It also means that a greater level of responsibility and higher standards are placed on them, besides many hardships.
  - We have already seen God's promise of hardship even before Israel was formed as a nation.
  - This isn't the type of promise that we normally like to hold on to when we're encouraged to stand on the promises of God.
- God has never promised His people all the luxuries of this world although He sometimes blesses His people with material possessions.
- He has never promised that He would keep His people from hardships but, on the contrary, often orchestrates hardships for His people. However He has also always promised His sustaining grace within those hardships.
  - Isaiah 43: 1 – 2 But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."
- God has called, chosen and set aside His people for a purpose and forms His people in the furnace to be the people He intends them to be.
  - We often think that God despises or has forgotten us when we go through difficulties. On the contrary many of our life's hardships are because we are His treasured possession.
  - We are a chosen people who were once not a people but are now the people of God.
  - We can be sure that He will take care of what belongs to Him.

### 2) A kingdom of priests

- The Jews were called a kingdom of priests. Peter calls Christians a royal priesthood.
  - Kingdom and royalty can be used interchangeably.
- The word for priest is the active participle of the Hebrew word that means to mediate.

- Priests are therefore intermediaries and in this case between man and God.
- God intended the whole nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests. It was only later after the sin of making the golden calf that God set aside the Levites to be priests after they stood up for the honour of God against their own family.
- God wants us to be the royal priesthood who will stand up for His honour in this world of sin.
- We are commissioned by Him, the King – hence us being a royal priesthood – to be mediators between sinful man and Himself, a Holy God.
  - This is only in the sense of introducing sinful mankind to the only mediator between God and man – Jesus Christ
  - 1 Timothy 2: 5 – 6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.
  - We are the priesthood but He is the High priest. Only the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of holies on behalf of the people. Entering the holy of holies was tantamount to entering the presence of God. A sacrifice had to be made in order for the high priest to enter the holy of holies.
  - Jesus entered heaven itself, not by the blood of animals but by His own blood and so became the eternal High priest making intercession for us.
  - The priests served in other ways in the temple but ultimately the main service was assisting the high priest as mediation in the holy of holies was the prime purpose of the temple.
- As a royal priesthood it is our duty to bring sinful mankind to Jesus, the high priest that through Him they can be brought into the presence of God and into a living relationship with Him.

### 3) A Holy nation

- We are called a holy nation
- The word used here for nations is ethnos which is a tribe or ethnic group not a political nation.
- It's the same as a certain ethnic group of people living in various places.
- The church is one body scattered throughout the world.
- God expects His people to resemble Himself in character – holiness.
  - Leviticus 11: 44 I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. (This command is reiterated by Peter in 1 Peter 1: 16)
- God wants to reveal Himself to the world through His people
  - We, the people of God, have a great responsibility to demonstrate to the world who God is through our lives.

### 4) Purpose: to declare God's praises

- This last aspect of God's purpose isn't mentioned in the Exodus account but Peter adds it in for the church.
- We are to recognise the grace of God upon our lives in that:
  - He chose us – we didn't choose ourselves
  - We were called out of darkness into His wonderful light
  - We belong to God whereas before we weren't a people
  - We hadn't received mercy and now we have received mercy
- We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation belonging to God to declare His praises
- He is to get all the praise and glory amongst all people through us.