

Seven precious things about the people of God

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Luke, chapter 1, verse 17, Luke 1, verse 17.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

And in 2 Corinthians, this is perhaps one of the reasons why I turn to this, because our dear brother Daniel mentioned that 2 Corinthians seems to be a closed book, 2 Corinthians, chapter 6, and verse 16, 2 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 16.

[00:01:04] And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And into Hebrews, chapter 12, sorry, Hebrews, chapter 11, Hebrews, chapter 11, and verse 24, Hebrews 11, verse 24, By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God [00:02:04] than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

And in Peter's first epistle, chapter 2, 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 9, 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 9, But we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. And finally, in Revelation, chapter 21, Revelation, chapter 21, John speaking, And I heard a great [00:03:04] voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. I felt, dearly beloved, it was just wondering how to follow the word that's been before us, and where our strength lies. And I thought perhaps, in looking at some of the features of the people of God, there might be encouragement also for us, in these days, to see where in our strength lies, as we consider the people of God. And what brought it to me is, yesterday, [00:04:01] we had about a peculiar people, didn't we, in the reading? We had a peculiar people. And when I was a young believer, the saints didn't like to be called peculiar, you see. They didn't like to be called peculiar, but we can't avoid it. That word there does mean peculiar, means we're something out of the ordinary.

We're not just ordinary people. So remember that, that we're not just ordinary people. We're not to be proud about it, we've got to be completely humble, that God has set us out, completely out of the ordinary. So we are a peculiar people. Now, the first one that we read about in Luke's Gospel, was a prepared people, a prepared people. And verse 17, there wasn't it, chapter 1 and verse 17, John Baptist was going to go forward in this great work, going before the Lord Jesus [00:05:08] in the spirit and power of Elijah. Isn't that remarkable? That man, Elijah, who along with Moses, we've had Moses brought before us, Elijah, along with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. A strong man, Elijah. And John Baptist was to go in the spirit and power of Elijah. He seemed to be the great prophet, the archetypal one indeed, that was always raised. And John Baptist was to go in that same spirit and power, Elijah, who called the people back to God. How long hold you between two opinions? Yes, how long hold you between two opinions? But they had the whole of Israel before them, didn't they? It was 12 rows, 12 rows. Oh no, he didn't just keep it one row for a little circle, they had 12 rows before him. Oh dear [00:06:05] brethren, let us have expansive hearts, like Elijah. Anyway, he was to go before him in the spirit and power, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Isn't there a breakdown today, isn't there, in society of the parental care? You read about it so much, don't you, these care workers going in, and children in nappies, and paper around them, and fathers drunk, and all the rest of it. I was just listening, reading, coming up of a social worker saying the trouble in these homes is just because there's drink, and drunkenness, and satellites, and all the rest of it. He says it's a complete breakdown. To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. What a great and wonderful transformation. But what I really wanted to stress was a people prepared for the Lord, a people prepared for [00:07:01] the Lord. Now of course, clearly, it has a dispensational setting, but dearly beloved saints of God, you know, there is the, as we're almost reminded, there is the actual exposition of the scripture, and then there's the application of it. And I want to bring home to our hearts today, are we in a condition prepared for the Lord? Are our hearts on fire for him? Are we ready for him? Let's get back to the simplicity, you know. When I was first converted, the dear brother used to say, when the Lord comes, don't be found in a place that you wouldn't like to be in, when the Lord comes. Yes, let's be, as Peter would say, what manner of men and women ought we to be, seeing these things are going to be a people prepared for the Lord. Are we ready? Are our hearts on fire for him? Are we, do we hear his footsteps on the threshold of the door? Is our heart beating after him? Our heart beating after him, you know, we have before us those that love his appearing. [00:08:01] Those that love his appearing. Dearly beloved, it's wonderful to love his appearing, but do we love him? Do we love him? Think of that great and wonderful epistle of Ephesians, highest truth, highest truth. How does it end? Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption, in incorruption. Only once does Paul mention the believer loving the Lord Jesus. Search John's writings. Do we see anything about the believer loving the Lord Jesus? Search them, dear brethren. Will you find the verse? Both pairs of it find it twice. Oh, that other one that we forget about. Oh, yes, he's pushed it in the background, James. James has it twice, hasn't he? James has it twice, the crown of life, the crown of life to those that love him. Oh, isn't that blessed? Yes, crown of life. [00:09:05] Verse, loving him, my people prepared for the Lord, conditions suitable to him. And you know, I'm sure many of you are acquainted, you could look through this early chapters, chapter one and two, start with Zacharias and Elizabeth and those who were there, and Mary herself and the shepherds. Then we come to that dear man Simeon, that dear man Simeon, isn't he? He was devout, devout, devout. We get thrice, don't we get that devoutness that marked, God fearingness that marked Simeon. In Acts chapter two, God saw to it that there were devout men there to hear a word on that day of Pentecost. And oh, what a wonderful blessing laid at the wrist of that dear man, Stephen, the very first martyr. Who was it [00:10:01] that laid him to his grave? A special category of men, men like Simeon, devout men, devout men laid Stephen to his burial. Now these pictures mark

us, dear saint of God. Are we prepared? Are people prepared for the Lord? Oh, indeed. I search my own heart, am I prepared for the Lord? Oh yes, you know, a dear brother used to say, you know, he says, you and your work, you're reading the times every morning, aren't you? And I said, look, dear brother, that means nothing to me. That means nothing to me, but go. I said, I'm waiting for the Lord. I'm waiting for the Lord. Oh, how precious to be waiting for him. Are we on fire? Are we in that condition of soul that's ready for him? How precious. People prepared for [00:11:01] the Lord. And then we moved on, didn't we, to 2 Corinthians chapter 6. Another one that searches us, doesn't it? Searches us. Because here we have a partitioned people, a separate people. Oh again, you know, that's another word that we're not very happy about, but the scripture says it, doesn't it? Of course, it's separated unto him. You see, we, we, we, we can't be anything else but separate because he has his planes upon us and his wonderful love is for us and he would have us for himself. But you know, there's a world around, a world around that's bidding, that's bidding for us. Young saint of God, this world is bidding for you. There was a dear brother starting off in his business career, starting [00:12:01] off in his business career and he was being given his annual appraisal, management by objectives, some of you may know about it. And his manager said to him, Mr. X, you're too unworldly to get on in business. Dear young saint of God, what are you going in for? Are you going in for the things of Christ? Is he everything to you? Yes, and I know, and the wife comes along, praise his name, and the children are there, and I know it's a struggle. But is the Lord Jesus Christ the one that's everything to you? In this world you want nothing to do with it, with all its elements. They want, they want to make a use of you and abuse you. Take nothing to do with it, just seek to go through this scene for him. And indeed the world is coming in, in all of its facetiousness, in all of its trappings, [00:13:02] in all of its captivating ways that there's never been before. A world that's hastening on to judgement and we're called upon to be clear of that world, to stand as a testimony for him in these closing days. And we'll know the blessedness of the God saying to them, I will be their God, they shall be my people. Dear Saint of God, how precious and blessed that is, and it's in that outside place. And you know that's what's characterising us, even though I don't want to say too much in this line, but do you remember a dear brother who was in the meeting with us down south and he's now with the Lord, and his nephew was in another part of the country and some matter came in or other and the nephew of course left the meeting and all the stories were going around about all the injustice and the wrongness and this, that, the next thing. This man, he was faithful, he told [00:14:03] me afterwards he visited his nephew and he said, it's the world, it's the world. Oh and we're bringing out this principle of being wrong and that principle of being wrong and this, but his uncle said it's the world. You should go and see that Hacienda he's got. Hacienda, not a baton men, it's a Hacienda. He says it's the world he's got in.

And you know that's what lies behind an awful lot of it, isn't it? In fact, I would humbly submit it's behind all of it. We need men, clear men to stand up with the Urim and the Thummim. Men that stand up with the Urim and the Thummim, they're not involved with this world. No, they're involved with the things of Christ and they're imbibing the scriptures of truth and sending it out in the wonderful grace and compassion and tenderness of mercy and love of that blessed man that walked this sea for the glory of God, passing yourself [00:15:03] on him.

A partitioned people, the temple of God, it says, has no agreement with idols, the temple of the living God. They're crowding in in all their sorts of ways. Recently, you know, I was travelling around, I saw them all with their great video cameras and things were doing and it's not enough now to wait for it to be developed. They've got other digital cameras and they're up there and all the way they go into it and what's occupying them and that's their whole life, their whole life and complaining because soldiers had spent this much and they couldn't use this and all the rest of it. It's coming in in every

sort of way, anything and everything that Christ has occupied them and taken them away. And dear saint of God, we've not to be occupied with idols because we are the temple of the living God and all the blessed holiness that characterises that blessed God. And then, [00:16:04] we come to Hebrews and there, Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Yes, I would submit here that we are a pressured people. We are under pressure, aren't we? Affliction is pressure, pressure from around, from the attacks that come upon us. They'll accept easy words and this, that and the next thing but they don't want a clear and uncertain and true gospel and they don't want us because we're not mixed up with their systems, their ideas, their ways of doing things at all. We stand out [00:17:01] for the Lord Jesus Christ in just in humility and simplicity before him. We're choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. You're almost as soon as you can, if you can even string a sentence together without some course expertive, you're an object of wonder and amazement. In any situation you find yourself in now, in your daily employment, among neighbours, friends, in the shops, wherever you go, to be able to show forth even the meanest of ways that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and so Moses could esteem the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Yes, he had. Daniel reminded us of the 40 years when he was learning to be everything. All the treasures of Egypt lay before him. Well, maybe perhaps you and I are not called to have this world in all of its fullness put before us but I will stress again, dearly beloved, young brethren and [00:18:03] sisters, this world is putting great things before us but we have to stand out for him in these days. There is a reproach associated with taking up a testimony for the Lord. There always has been and there still is today and it's getting greater and greater and how indeed that great man Moses, great as he was, he could see that his place was to be with the people of God and it was an afflicted people, a people under pressure and what a choice, isn't it? If everything had been going well for them, he might have thought, oh that's a great thing for him to do but no, there he had everything going well for him in a material way but he saw that poor, despised people but they were the people of God. God had designed them. He knew they were God's people and yet they were under pressure and he said, this is a definite choice. I want to be with the people of God. The saint of God, does that mark us? Are we purposely choosing to be identified with the people [00:19:05] of God, despised and in that way indeed set aside by this world, brushed aside with no care, no concern? Oh indeed how wonderful it is. I think of a city that we visited in Eastern Europe, a city now released from communism, barging in trying to get in the common market but there's four dear saints there, gathered together, meeting in that great burgeoning city. They choose to be with the people of God, the people of God. Oh indeed, do we know it? Well I feel the inadequacy of how we can express what it is to suffer affliction with the people of God. I know there are many in physical persecution in many parts of the world and we remember them in many ways, the affliction. But even today in this materialistic society that we have, we are standing out for the Lord Jesus Christ, we are pressurised, [00:20:05] we are set aside, we are set at naught. And maybe not all this physical persecution but there can be mental persecution. But dear saint of God, we have the treasures in Christ, the riches in Christ, the things that are his and the grasp of him keeping us to go on for him until we see his blessed face, that glorious hope before us of being with him and like him with his own heart's glory and satisfaction. So they were a pressured people. In 1 Peter chapter 2, although it says peculiar in the authorised version, here the word means purchased, it means peculiarly his own. So they are a purchased people or a people for a possession as it says in J. N. Darby's translation. A people for a possession. [00:21:02] They are really for him, for the Lord himself. We thought yesterday he has redeemed us, redeemed us from all iniquities, he has redeemed us for himself, he has paid the price and he is a man of patience now, he is waiting as it says in Ephesians chapter 1. The Lord Jesus is there, just let me get the words right again. In Ephesians chapter 1, it says there in whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of the truth of the gospel of your salvation. In whom also

after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise who is the earnest of our inheritance right up to the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory. Oh well might we give glory and praise to God to think of that great end that he has in view. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world a great and wonderful blessed hope. Divine persons are persons in the Godhead. Godhead [00:22:05] persons really, we haven't got a proper adjective to it. They are not only divine persons, they are Godhead persons, persons in the Godhead. There they are, father and son in that vast age of eternity. Oh father and son. Sad to have to mention that now somebody was saying about it being a shibboleth to say that there was a father and son in all eternity. Such words could be said. That is a shibboleth. That there was a father and son in all eternity. Anyway, father and son in all eternity and the company to be for that son. Like him, like him, oh grace supreme. Wonderful isn't it? Like him. Oh faithful, for his blessed praise. An eternal thought was an afterthought of God. Was the father's house an afterthought [00:23:02] hmm? Is that house the house of the one that we now know as father? Oh whose house was it in that past age of eternity? It was the father's house. The father's house. The father's heart. Yes. All that this planet has given. He now is the object of his love. He, he, our joy in heaven. There he is, that blessed one and we're going to be with him and like him as we had this afternoon dearly beloved saints of God. And we've got a guarantee, a sure and certain guarantee, the earnest of the spirit. And that word earnest you know, it's the engagement ring. It's the khrabon. We had a Greek girl who worked as a secretary for me and she confirmed that even in modern Greek she said she had a khrabon, an engagement ring. And dear indeed how precious that is isn't it? Dear saint of God, an engagement [00:24:05] ring you know. And it's a sure and permanent one. There's a sister who's gone through three engagement rings in her life because the gold always wears away doesn't it? And she always had an engagement ring. So she's had her husband's but a fee in the course but nothing like that with the Holy Spirit. Wonderful. Supreme. Was right through. No, he was connected to persons. God had persons and there's no dubiety about it. We've got the blessed spirit of God indwelling us, a divine person indwelling our hearts to make these things good to us. All the engagement ring of the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus is waiting with patience and he's coming very soon, perhaps tonight, to claim that precious possession. He delivered himself, he gave himself up for us. Went all the way to Calvary, all the way to Calvary he went for us. Yes. He's coming again, Jesus is coming, sing the glad word. Coming for [00:25:07] all those he's redeemed by his blood. Precious, blessed saviour he is. So we're peculiar in his own, we're a people of a possession. People for himself. And of course in the meantime you know we've not to just sit back as a holy huddle and rest in one word as that is, we've got to in the meantime be showing forth the praise of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Notice that fact again, this world of darkness, this world of darkness, be called out of it. You know I just was absolutely amazed in the four weeks that David Cummings and Paul Davis and I spent in the open air work at the mound during the Edinburgh festival, you know there, just to see you know. I'd seen it in London of course but I thought, I didn't think it was as bad in Edinburgh but it was as bad there in Edinburgh [00:26:04] as it was in London. What this world was getting mixed up with, tattooing itself and earring itself and plaiting its hair and being this way, that's what it was doing. This darkness that was around in this world. Yeah it was a great triumph, a great glorious privilege to preach in that world of darkness. The glorious message of the Jesus, the Christ of the cross. Darkness. And we've got to show these praises, the virtues, the honours, the glories, the majesty of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. And we were not a people at one time but we're now a people of God, isn't that blessed? Come on, we're a people of God. And so we're a possessed people, a people for a possession. And then in chapter 21 of Revelation, we're permanently the people, aren't we? We are permanently now. This shows our perpetuity in eternity. Verse 3, chapter 21 and verse 3. This is the [00:27:08] eternal state, isn't it? Eternal state. A new heaven and a new earth. First heaven and the first earth passed away and there was no more sea.

No more division, no more separation. Blessed and wonderful it is. No more trouble among the nations. Peace and equanimity and rest. And John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. The pair as a bride adorned for her husband. Adorned for her husband. Wonderful that. But you know it reminds me of an occasion in which I've been shown some pictures of a dear sister at her marriage you see. And I said well you look very nice on your wedding day. And she said yes but didn't, she mentioned the husband's name, didn't he look fine as well? Isn't that [00:28:06] wonderful? See she had her eyes on her husband. And you know we're not gazing at us ourselves not on the crown we give her but on the wonderful King of Grace. Her eyes will be on that blessed man. The man of Calvary. The pair as a bride adorned for her husband and he heard a great voice out of him. A great voice out of him saying behold the tabernacle of God is with men. With men. God has come down here, will come down in fact in a way that really there will be an abode. God will be having his abode now with men completely. No rest, no question, nothing to marriage at all. There will be complete equanimity. God will be there dwelling with men and will dwell with them. It had never been God's purpose hadn't it? In Exodus 25 verse 8 God had a desire to dwell among men but he was never really able to permanently be at rest in that place. But now God will dwell with them and they shall be his people. [00:29:07] And how precious that is. They shall be his people. And God is going to be with men and in Psalm 27 the psalmist could say one thing of our desire of the Lord and that when I seek after it I may dwell in the house of the Lord to inquire of him in his temple. And then it says and God himself shall be with them. God himself shall be with them and in Zechariah chapter 2 and 10, I won't rely on quoting it from memory, Zechariah chapter 2 and 10 it says, Sing rejoice the daughter of Zion for lo I come and I will dwell in the midst of thee saith the Lord. Oh how precious and blessed that is isn't it? Think of these things that are going on and it says they shall be his people. There will be an owning, an owning of that company, that saints, the bride of Christ we know it [00:30:03] is, it's the bride of Christ that he has purchased with his precious blood and they are going to be owned and known in all the age of eternity as his people. Oh how precious and wonderful that is. I could have mentioned of course because I like to have seven sweet peas, we've had six and the seventh one of course is into the Old Testament and that is in Deuteronomy 33 where it says Israel, happy is Israel, a people preserved by the law, saved by the law and it means preserved and we are a preserved people. Think of that wonderful bunch of sweet peas dear saint of God. Seven precious things about the people of God. Well maybe we found indeed that we have strength as we look for where our strength is to realise that the blessings and privileges that are ours and the responsibilities there are as we seek to be for him and we look on to that wonderful day when we shall be publicly owned as the people of God through all eternity. May it be so for his name's sake.