

In April 1607, after sailing for 4 ½ months the first English settlers of Jamestown sailed up the Chesapeake Bay and landed their ship on what they named Cape Henry. Rev. Robert Hunt, their chaplain asked everyone to fast and pray for 3 days as they examined their hearts and repented of their sins. Rev. Hunt wanted the people to be pure in heart and motive, as they stepped onto this new land. On April 29<sup>th</sup> 1607, Rev. Hunt led the group as they placed their feet on the sandy shoreline. He then planted a large wooden cross on the land and read a covenant prayer dedicating this land to God and pledging that the Gospel would go to all the people in this land and from this land to all the nations of the world.

Folks, this nation from the beginning was dedicated to God as a holy nation, but today we are in a crisis moment, a moment where the covenant that was made so long ago has been largely forgotten and God is calling us back to his plan for us to become a holy nation once again.

In our scripture reading this morning Peter tells us to rid ourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind and to crave pure spiritual milk, so that we may grow up in our salvation. When we look at the news reports they are often full of stories of deceit, hypocrisy, and slander but there are comparatively few stories about this being a holy nation. So, what clues can we glean from our scripture this morning that will shed light on our privilege and responsibility as God's covenant people, who are to help this nation turn back to God?

First, we must grow up in our salvation, which for Peter means that Christian believers have the privilege of being built into a spiritual house and the responsibility of being in the holy priesthood of all believers. That responsibility means we are to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. It can be a spiritual sacrifice of praise or some deed that we do that brings glory to God. I remember years ago we had a camping trailer along with a suburban to pull it, they were about 15 to 20 years old and on our vacation, we had a flat tire on the trailer. After changing it we headed to Tulsa, Ok. to see my sister. We were on one of the busy streets, a few blocks from her house, when the engine caught fire. We were stopped right in the middle of the street, blocking traffic. After getting the fire extinguished, we got help to move everything to my sister's place. Then the suburban went to the shop to get fixed. Instead of being mad, frustrated and out of control, all I could say was we need to give a sacrifice of praise to God. In the midst of all that had gone wrong on this trip, God had protected us, and our

response was praise. No matter what kind of shaking comes your way, if you are a Christian believer your spiritual house is built on a firm foundation and will not be destroyed.

The second privilege and responsibility Peter reveals is that Christian believers are a chosen people, a royal priesthood. What in the world does this mean? David Bartlett says “The issue for the people of 1 Peter is their status in the eyes of God versus their status in the eyes of the larger world in which they are despised exiles.” (*The New Interpreters Bible* pg. 267) The privilege of being a chosen people often created family troubles as many early Christians were from Jewish families who were still waiting for their Messiah to come. Even today many Messianic Jews face estrangement from their families when they become believers in Jesus as the Messiah. So being a chosen people by God is not an easy life.

In fact, the responsibility that comes with being a chosen people is being part of the royal priesthood. The word royal means kingly in nature and denotes that there must be a king and a kingdom. For believers we have a King in Jesus Christ and he rules over the kingdom of God, and he has given the keys of the kingdom to the church, the body of Christ here on earth. So, we have the responsibility to use the kingdom keys to unlock the kingdom of God here on the earth. One way to do that is through prayer. Rev. Dutch Sheets has a podcast on the difference between the priestly prayer and the kingly prayer. The priestly prayer is prayer that is prayed from earth to heaven. It is like our pastoral prayer that the pastor prays each service, it is likewise the type of prayer that we all pray when we petition God for what we need or want.

The kingly prayer, however, comes from heaven to earth. It is the prayer that comes when you spend time in spiritual oneness with the Lord. There is a point when you are in prayer and meditation that you enter into the holy place through the torn veil and experience the holy presence of the Lord. It is there in the silence that your inner being connects with the will of God and you are able to declare God’s word and decree God’s will upon this earth. This is the place where heaven invades the earth. This is what the royal priesthood is to do. It is exactly what the Lord’s prayer says, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” What an awesome opportunity Christian believers have to partner with heaven to bring God’s will into our nation and even into all the world.

The third privilege and responsibility is that of being a holy nation, God’s special possession, so that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

In today's world it is sometimes difficult to live in the light when so much darkness surrounds our nation. In the last 60 years God's Holy Spirit has been advancing the kingdom of God on the earth, but it seems that the spiritual forces of wickedness have also been advancing to a point where there is a major spiritual battle occurring right now in the heavenlies. The dark and evil forces have tried desperately to blot out the light of God but God's shekinah glory shines within his chosen people, bringing light to this nation and to the whole world.

It has been said by many that God chose Israel, but America chose God. In the past we were referred to as a Christian nation but today there has been a concentrated effort to stamp out the Christian belief and muzzle our speech, trying to snuff out God's light. We must take seriously our Christian responsibilities that Peter revealed so we can partner with God in being a holy nation once again.

In *Strong's Concordance*, the Greek word for Holy means sacred, being ceremonially consecrated, physically pure, and morally blameless or religious. Our nation is far from this ideal but there is one thing that gives us hope and that is that the covenant with God that Robert Hunt entered this land with—it still stands. God has not broken the covenant; God has not left this nation. So, on this Sunday before we celebrate the Fourth of July, our nation's Independence Day, let us rededicate this nation to God using Robert Hunt's covenant prayer.

**“We do hereby dedicate this Land, and ourselves, to reach the People within these shores with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to raise up Godly generations after us, and with these generations take the Kingdom of God to all the earth. May this Covenant of Dedication remain to all generations, as long as this earth remains, and may this Land, along with England, be Evangelist to the World. May all who see this Cross, remember what we have done here, and may those who come here to inhabit join us in this Covenant and in this most noble work that the Holy Scriptures may be fulfilled.”** [Amen]

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