1 Peter - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 5 (1857), Notes on 1 Peter 2:9.

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“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”—1 Pet. 2:9.

ISRAEL was a chosen people— “the seed of Abraham, Thy servant.” The children of God now are likewise a chosen generation—brought out of darkness into marvelous light. The Israelites were never Egyptians. They were in Egypt in the midst of those opposed to God; but this has not been the case with us. “Among whom we all had our conversation, and were the children of wrath.” “Ye were sometimes darkness.” There is a marvelous difference: external darkness surrounded them, they were maintained a peculiar people in the midst of Egypt, but we have formed part of the darkness which surrounds us. “They might have been spiritual when in Egypt, and many were carnal when out of it; but it cannot be so with us, our affections have been set on wrong objects—on ourselves. Self is the spring which has dictated our feelings, but we have been brought out of a condition of darkness into exactly the opposite; and the marvelous light spoken of here is no other than the life of Christ. We are a chosen generation, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, a peculiar people. God has distinguished us. He distinguished Israel from the surrounding nations, but our peculiarity is a very different one from that of Israel. They had customs and habits to distinguish them from surrounding nations—a fringe of blue to remind them that they were the people of God. The Lord Jesus when on earth was alone, singular; His ways and habits differed from others. He was a man strangely alone—one; and so ought we to be—different from others, but united in our peculiarity. What distinguishes one, distinguishes all. The character which attaches to the Lord Jesus Christ is theirs; not only reckoned to them, but His very nature is theirs, though it is often marred and obscured. A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is essentially different from all that exists on the face of the earth. God permits us to have intimacy with Himself in the secrets of His love. The royalty spoken of will be exhibited by and bye, and a marvelous honor and dignity it is which speaks of Christ being glorified and admired in all them that believe, not by them. Still there is a sense in which the royalty of priesthood is attached to the children of God now. “God who hath caused the light to shine out of darkness,” &c. We are called to show forth God; and this, through communion with Him, and acquaintance with things which are hidden from others, that as from a mirror God may shine forth in us. What a wonderful thought that we are made what is described here, (1 Peter 2) and that too for a purpose. When we think of what it really implies, it is almost overwhelming. And how is this purpose attained? All sends us to Jesus—to whom coming, &c. The more our souls learn our responsibility, the more we see what is expected from us; viz., to show forth the character of God, not merely to talk of it.

The way in which the heart is most comforted and strengthened when conscious of great failure, having become cold, formal, lifeless, is seeing the high position in which God has set us. It is never by lowering the standard that we can comfort ourselves; quite the contrary. If we lower the standard of what God calls us to be, we put ourselves on a par with what? Israel, angels, not children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. To speak of ourselves as being children of God, is to speak of ourselves as being followers of Jesus. Every man by calling himself a Christian is saying, “Look at me, and I will show you what Christ is.” A man who says, “I am a Christian,” says, “I am a member of Christ, a partaker of the divine nature; I exhibit God.” God has put us in a place of dignity. We are sent into the world as the Lord Jesus was. “As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you;” and they were not sent until united to Himself, and made partakers of the same Spirit. When we call ourselves Christians, what do we not say? You hear people talk of others making a high profession, but what does that mean? I know of no higher profession than that of a man professing to be a Christian. Nothing can be higher, it is everything that a creature can be; higher than angels, and all Christians make this high profession. What did the Lord Jesus Christ profess before Pontius Pilate? What every sinner called by grace is bound to profess; viz., that he is in the world, apart and separate from all that belongs to it. The Lord tells His disciples they are the light of the world. He has given us life, and it is the exercise of that life which is to skew forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

If I think of myself for one moment as under responsibility to be these things of myself, I shall have no moment of peace. I must see that I am wholly dependent from first to last on Him who works in us to will and to do. The more we think of ourselves as in the highest place, the more complete our rest and joy may be. Some may say, if you tell me how great my privileges are, you give me joy; but to hear of responsibility, casts me down. This is want of grace, for the only means of doing that which we are responsible for doing, and being that which we are responsible for being, is the blood of Jesus Christ. It is only as we are chewing forth the virtues of Him that we are living. There is not the action of life without this. A man may be asleep, and that is the next thing to death; it is a cessation from all activity. The joy of the saint is when he is occupied with God, and God only—called to eat of the hidden manna, and have the enjoyment of those who go no more out. The real enjoyment of the saint is in the exercise of that life, which, when exercised, spews forth “the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.”