

9* But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;10* for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.11* Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.12* Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

As we continue in Peter's letter we have the assurance that those who believe in the cornerstone, who is Christ, will not be disappointed.

So, now I will ask you again as we did in our last study in this letter, have you ever been disappointed in Christ? Not with your life, not with your circumstances, not with your children or your parents or your job, or your husband or your wife? If you have not been honestly disappointed at one time or another with any of these things then you must be the brother from another planet.

But have you ever been disappointed with Christ and the salvation He has made possible for you?

It is true that every one of us needs to learn more contentment in every circumstance of our lives, this is living obediently for Christ. But it should be a sickening thing in our hearts to even think that we might be disappointed in Christ Himself.

The Scripture says He that believes in Him will not be disappointed.

How can anyone be genuinely disappointed in Christ if we treasure Him as we should, if we have tasted of the kindness of God in salvation and in the word of God as we sincerely desire it.

We are secure in salvation and can never be forsaken by this living stone. There is no fault or weakness in the one who keeps us until the day of His appearing. In Him there is only truth, and life and every promise will be fulfilled regarding our salvation in Him.

There is no disappointment with or in Christ in the future we are promised here or in heaven. All is meant for the pleasure and purpose of God unto the praise of His glorious grace. We are chosen and precious in God's sight, and what encouragement that must

1 Peter 2:9-12 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier December 31 2006
have been for those who were on the verge of great persecution. And how it is a great encouragement to us, not knowing all of what is waiting for us.

2

But what is certain, is Christ and our place in Him and with Him, so we cannot be disappointed with Him if we are true believers.

In our text this morning Peter revisits a theme introduced early in the letter, who we are in Christ.

We are aliens who have been chosen and uniquely loved; we are set apart by the Spirit of God and sprinkled by His blood for the purpose of obedience to Christ.

Now Peter is telling us more of who we are in Christ. He is expanding the understanding of our identity in Christ.

First, 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE

We have been developed into a people or descendants, a kind of people, a race.

The determining factor is not physical characteristics of color or some other physical characteristic that would separate one human being from another according to some anthropological scheme and then attach some behavioral characteristics to the physical description such as "white men can't jump" or "we Scots are a bloodthirsty race then" or even "some male firefighters still considered women a race apart".

Peter is not describing a white race, a yellow race a brown race or anything of the like. Our identity as a race of people is made up of all kinds of people from many tribes, nations and ethnic groups and many cultures.

The chosen race of God in the New Covenant era is all aliens and strangers as a collective people and we are spread out all over the world. What gives us our identity is not color or culture, but being the chosen, the elect of God.

Look at verse 10, for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Now by identity, we are something we were not. We were dead in our trespasses and sins without hope in this present world. But now we are made alive in Christ Jesus we have been born again to a living hope and we shall not be disappointed.

This new identity has nothing to do with me. It is who I am by the grace and mercy of God. I did not merit or earn or do anything that could have caused God to show me such mercy. But He did, v.10 you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

God purposed it for me to have this identity before I ever existed.

God's mercy is an incredible thing. God sees me in my sin, my guilt, my condemnation and He has pity on me and as result He keeps me from everything thing I deserve as a sinner. My identity in Christ is what it is because God acted toward me and upon me, I did not get His mercy from my actions. So we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people of God's own possession because He has caused us to receive His mercy.

As a chosen people who have been acted upon by the mercy of God we are also a royal priesthood.

The point here is first that you have immediate access to God you don't need another human priest as a mediator. God himself provided the one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. You have direct access to God, through God. And, second, you have an exalted, active role in God's presence. You are not chosen just to waste away your time doing nothing. You are called now to minister in the presence of God. All your life is priestly service. You are never out of God's presence. You are always in the court of the temple. And your life is either a spiritual service of worship (Rom. 12:1-2), or it is out of character.

Christ our priest has mad us a kingdom of priests. As Christ is the temple of God and we are in him and He is ion us, then we are the temple of God. Our corporate gatherings make us a temple built of priests. This is imagery that is used through out the Scriptures that helps us to know who and what we are in Christ.

The Temple is the meeting place between God and man. It is where you find God. First you find God in Jesus Christ and thus he fulfills the temple

Imagery in John 2:19 "Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken." John 2:19-22, NAS95.

Then the church is the temple of God because that is where you find God manifesting himself. Thus you have 1 Cor. 3:16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16, NAS95;

Eph. 2:22 "in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."; Ephesians 2:22, NAS95 and in our text.

The consummation of Christ's kingdom also has temple imagery in the connection between Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 21:3 where the physical Temple in Jerusalem is fulfilled in Christ Himself, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them."

So as Christ's royal priesthood we serve in the temple of God our whole lives, individually and corporately.

We are also a holy nation.

We are what Israel never really was. Although they were the elect of God as an ethnic people and a nation with borders, they were loved by God as a nation but not loved salvifically as a nation, they as a people were set apart physically by God but were not made holy by their setting apart. They, as a nation died in unbelief and were meant to be a picture of a people who would truly be God's holy nation in the New Covenant era.

As obedient children we are to be holy for I am holy says our Father in heaven and we are able to be that in Christ as the ones who have been acted upon by the mercy of God.

We are not merely part of the world any more. We are set apart for God. We exist for

God. And since God is holy, we are holy. We share his character, because he chose us and we received his mercy. If we do not act in a holy way, we act out of character. We contradict our essence as a Christian. For our identity is holiness to the Lord: we are holy.

We are a nation among many nations. Our purpose in all we do is to glorify God. We do this because it was Jesus' purpose and therefore as we are in Him it is our purpose.

The nation we represent is a nation without borders. Geopolitical, sociopolitical and religio-political policies are not our main concern.

But we are engaged in legitimate nation building for we are commanded to go into all the world to preach the gospel and make disciples and to continue to instruct them and as we do so we see the holy nation grow and expand as God so desires it grow.

In this discourse, Peter finishes his traits of our identity by saying we are A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION

God owns everything as the creator. So in one sense everyone is God's possession. His owning us then has to mean something special. Just like saying God has a special love for his elect. God loving His elect is different from how he loves the world. We are God's inheritance. We are the ones he aims to spend eternity with. When God says (in 2 Cor. 6:16), "I will be their God and they will be my people (my possession)," what he means is that "I will dwell in them and walk among them." We are in personal relationship with God forever.

Now as we are all of these things, as these things define who we are in Christ as we see these things as the things that should characterize our lives in the world we live in we are also reminded that our purpose for having this new identity is so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The very language of our identity in this text necessitates that God be included as the one who acts. Our identity is not an end in itself, but for the sake of priestly

1 Peter 2:9-12 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier December 31 2006
service, which Peter defines as proclaiming the excellencies of the One who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

6

God made us who we are so that we might proclaim the excellency of his freedom in choosing us. The excellency of his grace in having mercy on us. The excellencies of his authority and power in possessing us. The excellencies of his worth and purity in making us holy.

In other words he has given us our identity in order that his identity might be proclaimed through us. God made us who we are so we could make known who he is. Our identity is for the sake of making known his identity. The meaning of our identity is that the excellency of God be seen in us.

Therefore being a Christian and making the greatness of God known are almost identical. We can do it in church services with preaching and singing and praying and reading. We can do it in our small groups as we tell each other what God has been for us, or what we need him to be for us. We can do it at work as we tell people what we love about God and why we think he is great. And we can do it in a thousand different ways of love as God places us in various places and circumstances.

The darkness that we were called out from is the very heart of what and who we were. People living in spiritual darkness ruled by a nature that loves darkness because our evil deeds relish the darkness of our souls and the darkness of our souls relish the darkness.

Therefore, we really do not, in our dark condition, see man as he really is.

Darkness is the inability to see: this may sound simple, but as a description of the human nature it has profound implications. Failing to see another human being means failing to understand that individual and not knowing what the real source of their difficulties are. In our darkness we cannot see it.

Our worldview, without Christ, is determined not by the light of absolute truth found in Christ but by the darkness of our own hearts and our depravity and our natural

condition as haters of the Light. Having eyes to see we cannot see, in the natural or the spiritual sense.

What did you know and what truth did you really see until God called you out of darkness and brought you into His marvelous light?

The only honest answer is that you saw nothing and knew nothing.

What ever you saw or knew of God was distorted and overshadowed by human reason and making gods in your own image until God called you from that domain of darkness with a heart of stone and placed you in his kingdom of light with a new heart.

You may have known much about God but knowing him is a completely different thing.

Peter says we once were not a people of God but since we have received mercy we are the people of God. We need to cherish more and more of what that means.

O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown.

I sighed for rest and happiness,
I yearned for them, not Thee;
But while I passed my Savior by,
His love laid hold of me.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

--Author unknown

As the people of God many will despise you and call you arrogant and call you bigoted and call you crazy to believe that you have some kind of right to be so exclusive about God.

But we have the sure word of God and a changed heart and the ministry of the Holy Spirit that proves who we are by God's grace and mercy. We do not merely know about God - we know him through Jesus Christ our Lord and we know He knows us, intimately

as his very own possession. To proclaim the excellency of our God should be the easiest and most joyous thing that we can do.

His name alone is excellent. We can speak of the excellencies of his grace, of his mercy, of his kindness, of his faithfulness and of his everlasting love.

Allow me to conclude this morning with a quote from Jonathan Edward's treatise on The Excellencies of Christ.

What is there that you can desire that should be in a Savior, that is not in Christ? Or, wherein should you desire a Savior should be otherwise than Christ is? What excellency is there wanting? What is there that is great or good; what is there that is venerable or winning; what is there that is adorable or endearing; or, what can you think of that would be encouraging, which is not to be found in the person of Christ? Would you have your Savior to be great and honorable, because you are not willing to be beholden to a mean person? And, is not Christ a person honorable enough to be worthy that you should be dependent on him? Is he not a person high enough to be appointed to so honorable a work as your salvation? Would you not only have a Savior of high degree, but would you have him, notwithstanding his exaltation and dignity, to be made also of low degree, that he might have experience of afflictions and trials, that he might learn by the things that he has suffered, to pity them that suffer and are tempted? And has not Christ been made low enough for you? and has he not suffered enough? Would you not only have him possess experience of the afflictions you now suffer, but also of that amazing wrath that you fear hereafter, that he may know how to pity those that are in danger, and afraid of it? This Christ has had experience of, which experience gave him a greater sense of it, a thousand times, than you have, or any man living has. Would you have your Savior to be one who is near to God, that so his mediation might be prevalent with him? And can you desire him to be nearer to God than Christ is, who is his only-begotten Son, of the same essence with the Father? And would you not only have him near to God, but also near to you, that you may have free access to him? And would you have him nearer to you than to be in the same nature, united to you by a

spiritual union, so close as to be fitly represented by the union of the wife to the husband, of the branch to the vine, of the member to the head; yea, so as to be one spirit? For so he will be united to you, if you accept of him. Would you have a Savior that has given some great and extraordinary testimony of mercy and love to sinners, by something that he has done, as well as by what he says? And can you think or conceive of greater things than Christ has done? Was it not a great thing for him, who was God, to take upon him human nature: to be not only God, but man thenceforward to all eternity? But would you look upon suffering for sinners to be a yet greater testimony of love to sinners, than merely doing, though it be ever so extraordinary a thing that he has done? And would you desire that a Savior should suffer more than Christ has suffered for sinners? What is there wanting, or what would you add if you could, to make him more fit to be your Savior?

Our text this morning says:

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10* for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Let us pray.