

What We Have In Christ

I Peter 2:9-12

Please turn in your Bible to **I Peter 2:9-12**.

Next week we will be concluding our short series on the church and our role as the body of Christ to the unsaved and the saved.

Let me just say in summary that to both groups we have the mandate to teach the Word of God.

To the unsaved we must teach that all are sinners and destined to an eternal separation from God. They must know that without repentance of sin and confession by faith in Jesus Christ who provided eternal life through His death burial and resurrection they are the recipients of His full wrath. Eternal life is only through Christ, not through a menagerie or compilation of various beliefs systems. Even if they believe that there is no God or nothing after death will not change their eternal destiny.

To the saved we must teach about knowing God intimately and how that relationship directly affects the kind of relationship we have with the rest of the body of Christ. Our understanding and obedience to God directly affects both the here and now and eternity to come. We need to understand from Scripture that we have a responsibility to the body of Christ to help and support it in whatever way we can so that it functions properly.

Our passage in Peter explains three very important truths about what we have in Christ.

We have a special calling – v. 9-10

We have a secure citizenship – v. 11a

We have a saving character – v. 11b-12

I. WE HAVE A SPECIAL CALLING – v. 9-10

In these two verses, Peter is not speaking about the individual believer but rather about the collective church, the universal church. It is the multiplicity

of congregations around the world encompassing all those who have placed their faith in Christ regardless of the era in which they have lived from Pentecost until Christ returns. It includes believers from every nation and tribe and tongue, every socio-economic background, young and old alike, rich and poor, male and female. The Church is everyone who has claimed or who will claim the name of Christ as Savior.

When we consider our special calling these two verses show us that we have three things.

We have a distinct identity.

We have a distinct responsibility.

We have a distinct relationship.

A. We Have a Distinct Identity – v. 9a

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...”

1. We are a chosen people

Let that truth sink in. **“You are a chosen people.”**

What we see in this passage is a parallel to the nation of Israel. Peter is not suggesting that because of Israel’s disobedience that they have now been displaced by the church. The church is not the new Israel. I believe that a repentant Israel will still receive the blessings and promises made by God to the nation in the covenant He made with them. A couple of weeks ago we spoke of the mystery that is the Church which is the union of Jewish and Gentile believers. Peter is drawing some similarities between Israel and the church. Like Israel, we who comprise the church, are chosen.

Deuteronomy 7:6-10

We choose something because we like it, it appeals in some way to us. But not God. He chooses out of His love by his grace. That God chose us speaks to His grace – God giving us what we don’t deserve. His choosing us was not based on any merit of our own doing. He didn’t choose us because we were

more gifted than others or had greater potential or were more redeemable. It is by His grace which stems from His love.

Salvation is all God. All we can do is call on the name of the Lord to be saved. There's nothing we can do to earn or merit it. Our identity as His chosen people puts us squarely in with Christ.

My Dad is here this morning. Like him I am a Wideman, just like his father, and his father's father and so on down the line. Those born to our family will likewise have the identity of being a Wideman. By virtue of my birth I am in my Father and my Father is in me. That's my identity. You don't have it because you weren't born into that identity. But let's say if sometime along the way, he and Mom would have adopted you into the family, his identity would now become yours.

Rebekah, I don't know if your Mom and Dad chose you from all the other kids at the orphanage in Romania or if the orphanage staff chose you for them. In any case you were chosen and given a new identity in your Mom and Dad.

Because of the spiritual new birth we experienced when we trusted in Christ as Savior we have been given a new identity. By virtue of our faith in Christ we have been adopted into the family of God and a new identity is now ours. We are the chosen people of God, chosen for a divine purpose. We will find in a few moments that as a chosen people, we are to no longer identify with this world because we have a new home.

That we have been chosen before the foundation of the world should be both a humbling and sobering thought that should elicit both acts of devotion in service to God out of love for His grace and passionate praise. We are a chosen people.

2. We are a royal priesthood

In the Old Testament from the twelve tribes, the tribe of Levi was selected to perform various priestly responsibilities. Some had responsibility for care of the tabernacle, some had responsibility to lead in worship as musicians, some had responsibility to offer the sacrifices. No one from the other tribes could perform those responsibilities because that was the role for the Levites. All that changed in Christ. We learned from **Ephesians 4** that every believer has been called to some ministry. As a royal priest we have direct access to God. In the Old Testament the worshiper had to go through the priest, he couldn't offer his sacrifice on his own. As a royal priest we can now go boldly into God's presence bringing our offering with us.

It has been said of President Lincoln that his son could have access to his father the President no matter who he was meeting with at the time. He had direct access to the President.

There is one thing that yet remains for us as a royal priest. We will one day reign with the King in His kingdom.

Revelation 3:21 "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

We are a royal priesthood.

3. We are a holy nation

Notice that first of all we are holy. That is a distinct quality that makes us uniquely qualified to belong to this nation and separates us from those who are unholy. Many people believe that everyone will get to heaven. God says only the holy will. The word holy means literally set apart. That we are holy is tied up in our salvation. At the moment in which we repented of sin and trusted Christ as Savior a most wonderful thing occurred in us. We became holy. In our position God no longer sees us as His enemies, He sees us through the righteousness of Christ that is now ours. We then take the initiative

in this life to become in practice what we are in position – holy, set apart for service to God. Paul describes it this way in **Romans 6:6** “**For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.**”

To the Corinthians Paul reminds us that we are a new Creation (**II Corinthians 5:17**) in a word, Holy. Through Christ, holiness is a characteristic that has been restored to man who lost it due to sin.

We are a holy nation. Our holiness fits us for another kingdom that is not of this world. Our King is God Himself. Our Declaration of Independence is found in such passages as **John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:9-10 and Ephesians 2:8-9**. Our Constitution is framed in the Word of God. Our Bill Of Rights are the precious promises that are ours because we belong to this holy nation.

4. We are a people belonging to God

We are His possession. A possession is something that you have purchased, acquired for a price. You go to the store and buy a new coat, it is your possession.

You go to a grocery store to buy groceries, they are your possession.

What you buy belongs to you. God paid a price for us. The price was the blood of His Son. We therefore belong to God.

Titus 2:13-14 “**While we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.**”

I Corinthians 6:20 “**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price.**

Therefore glorify God with your body.”

(Emphasis added)

Our freedom as a nation came with a cost, a cost younger generations don't fully understand or appreciate.

I wonder if we really understand the cost of our spiritual freedom. Do we understand the great sacrifice that Christ paid on the cross so you and I through faith in Him will never have to experience what Christ did on the cross? We will never know the wrath of God for the penalty of sin. We belong to God because He paid a great price for us. We are of great value to Him.

We have a distinct identity.

We have a distinct responsibility.

B. We Have A Distinct Responsibility – v. 9b

With privilege comes responsibility. **When David turned 8 we gave him some additional responsibilities as part of the family.** As part of God's family we have been given responsibility as well. Notice what the rest of verse 9 says. “**that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.**”

Now the KJV uses the word “**excellencies**” and the NIV uses the word “**praises.**” We would all agree that God is worthy of our worship for the gift of salvation He has given us, but Peter is not speaking about worship here. It is not the word we generally associate with giving God praise or adoration or glory. The word has the idea of moral worth. We might call them virtues. Because of our new identity in Christ we declare His moral worth or virtues.

Philippians 4:8

II Peter 1:3-9

What Peter is telling us in the passage is that because we belong to God and are declared to be a holy people we should live so that the qualities or virtues of God are evident in our lives. These qualities serve as witnesses of the glory and grace of God that is at work in us. It was this grace that

called us out of darkness and delivered us in the kingdom of light.

“Darkness” refers to the time we lived apart from God’s grace because we were ignorant of it or chose to ignore it. But once we believed and received this provision of salvation, we have been transferred into God’s kingdom. We have been called out of darkness into light.

Exodus 10:21-23

Of all the plagues other than the last plague of death, I think the plague of darkness would have been the worst. Darkness was an insult to the Egyptian’s sun god Ra. Imagine darkness so intense you could feel it. *I remember some late nights walking back from chapel where it was so dark you couldn’t see the trail in front of you. Each step brought a greater sense of fear because you couldn’t see a thing.*

Imagine darkness so intense you couldn’t see anyone else. Yet this passage says that Israel was not affected by the darkness. If you have Christ you have the light of God. Can the world see a difference in us? They ought to.

Take your index finger and point it up like this. Now repeat with me:

This little light of mine,
I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine,
I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine,
I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine.
Let it shine.
Let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel – NO.
I’m gonna let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel – NO.
I’m gonna let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel – NO.

I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine.
Let it shine.
Let it shine.

Don’t let Satan (phew) blow it out,
I’m gonna let it shine.
Don’t let Satan (phew) blow it out,
I’m gonna let it shine.
Don’t let Satan (phew) blow it out,
I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine.
Let it shine.
Let it shine.

How evident are the qualities of God in you?

If we have been called out of darkness, let’s leave it behind. The world should notice a difference because we are in the light and should walk by the light. But the world doesn’t like the light because it exposes the darkness they are involved in. Darkness symbolically speaks of ignorance and spiritual blindness along with the deeds of such individuals without Christ.

Isaiah 9:2 “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

John 1:5 “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

I John 2:8 “I am writing a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.”

As Jesus spoke what we have come to call the Sermon on the Mount He said **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”**
(Matthew 5:14-15)

There is a reason the shorelines of Michigan are dotted with lighthouses. There is a reason towers have a light fixed to them at the top. There is a reason we are the light of the world.

We have a distinct responsibility.

We have a distinct relationship.

C. We Have A Distinct Relationship – v. 10

v. 10 “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

In this passage Peter makes reference to **Hosea 2:23**. We were once God’s enemies. We didn’t belong to Him or His kingdom. Because of Christ we are called the “sons of the Living God.” We don’t deserve such a relationship, but because of Christ we are God’s children. We share a unique relationship with God. The promises He has given are ours. The inheritance that is available is ours. Nothing will be held back. Once we deserved God’s wrath and eternal punishment but now through Christ God’s mercy withholds what we deserve.

We have a special calling.

We have a secure citizenship.

II. WE HAVE A SECURE CITIZENSHIP – v. 11a

We know that a citizen is someone who is a member of a state or nation. Citizenship is the status or condition of a citizen and with citizenship there is conferred certain rights, duties, and privileges.

At home I have a Certificate of Birth Registration indicating that I was born on April 10, 1958 in Watertown, NY to Howard Everett Wideman and Elizabeth Anne Waters. There is a notary seal affixed to the document verifying the authenticity of my birth and citizenship.

On the back of the document it reads “This certificate is evidence that the birth of your child has been officially registered. You should preserve it because it is legal evidence of age and citizenship. The original record of your child’s birth will be permanently preserved in the office of the State Department of Health at Albany.

That document is proof of my citizenship. Such a document relating to my spiritual birth and rightful citizenship in heaven has also been permanently recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life. When I trusted Christ as my Savior, my citizenship was transferred from the world of darkness to heaven where it forever remains secure. If your name is not written down there, you have no part in that citizenship nor will you be able to enjoy the rights, duties, and privileges of such citizenship. Not only is my name written down there but I have official seal affixed to me. The seal guaranteeing my citizenship is none other than the Holy Spirit.

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14

Our citizenship speaks both to our heritage and to our home. Peter speaks first to our heritage. We are the “beloved”. It’s a word of endearment. It is a word that is used of God’s divine love and it speaks specifically to everyone who is part of His forever family that we are loved by Him. We don’t just belong to God, we are loved by God. When the prodigal son returned home after his time of wandering, the father restored to him all the rights and privileges and duties because he loved his son. He didn’t welcome home the son by telling him he had to sleep in the barn and eat with the servants. Everything was restored to him as if he had not left in the first place.

We have a secure citizenship and that Peter speaks of us as being strangers and aliens speaks to our need to recognize this is just a temporary place because our real home is in heaven. Don't get too comfortable here.

The word alien literally means someone living in a land that is not their own. The word pilgrim is someone who settles alongside of another. This is the description Peter uses of us to remind us of our position in this world. About Abraham, the author of Hebrews attests that he was just a stranger, an alien in a foreign country looking forward to the inheritance that God promised.

We sometimes sing

This world is not my home I'm just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue

The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore
Oh Lord you know I have no friend like you
If heaven's not my home then Lord what will I do
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

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Philippians 3:20 says, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body."

C.S. Lewis said, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next."

Peter is urging, pleading with us to remember that this is not our home. Don't get comfortable because it's only temporary. Our citizenship is secure in heaven.

We have a special calling.

We have a secure citizenship.

We have a saving character.

III. WE HAVE A SAVING CHARACTER – v. 11b-12

As citizens of heaven our character is to be different. Now when Scripture says that we are a peculiar people, it does not mean we are odd or weird. Now the world may look at us as being odd, because they just don't get it. Just because this isn't our home doesn't mean that we should take on the values and beliefs of where we are living. These verses tell first of all that we are to have a character that abstains from sin.

A. We Are To Have Character That Abstains From Sin – v. 11b

The word abstain literally means to hold oneself constantly back from. We are to resist what one author describes as the "sinward pull." In this world there will always be a struggle between the flesh and the devil. We are to abstain or restrain ourselves from sinful desires or fleshly lusts. The character of the old nature still pulls us.

The great preacher D.L. Moody once stated "I have more trouble with D.L. Moody, than any other man I know." He understood the pull of his old nature.

Lust is a craving or strong desire. It can be good or bad. I can lust after adventure and that is not necessarily bad, but on the other hand I can lust for greed or power that is bad. Lust is a powerful force and as the verses notes it wages war within us. War refers to carrying out a military campaign. The flesh is out to defeat us at every turn through whatever means necessary to win. That's why John urges us to **"Love not the world, neither the things, that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and pride of life are not of the Father but of the world."** I John 2:15-16

You may think that you don't have any lust in your heart, but let's take a look at one of Paul's laundry lists of things we should abstain from.

Galatians 5:17-21

We can read the first part of the list and think we're doing great, but how about the rest? Are we ever

angry or filled with hate, do we ever get jealous because someone has something we don't have but want? Do we have selfish ambition or do we create dissension? This is not a complete list because Paul ends it by saying **"and anything just like these"** in other words it's the "etc.", there's more that could be added to the list.

Paul will tell the Romans not to let the world squeeze you into it's mold (**Romans 12:2**).

Peter says we should abstain from them.
James 4:1 says that when we resist the devil he will flee.

Galatians 5:16 says that when we are filled with the Spirit, we won't gratify or give in to the desires of the sinful flesh.

John MacArthur writes "the word abstain signifies that saints have the ability by the new life and the indwelling Spirit to restrain the lustful flesh." Even in an immorally saturated culture such as our own we have the ability to abstain from sinful desires.

David would write about our path to victory in his opening Psalm.

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:1-2)

Later he would write that a way to combat the pull of sin is to hide God's Word in your heart (**Psalm 119:9-11**). I can't stress enough how important it is to memorize Scripture. That's why I put a memory verse in the bulletin each month. Even if you don't memorize it, meditate on it. Let it become part of the fabric of your life.

Paul adds that such godly discipline in striving for holiness should be out of reverence for God.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (II Corinthians 7:1)

But there is more to it than just abstaining from sinful desires. Living with godly character isn't just for us, it is also for the unsaved.

We are to have a character that abstains from sin.
We are to have a character that appeals to sinners.

B. We Are To Have A Character That Appeals to Sinners – v. 12

The evidence of God in us is in how we live daily through the trials and temptations and difficulties we face. Others watch us and how we respond and we are a witness to them. We are a witness by our actions and reactions to those things as to whether or not the faith we say we have is worth anything to us and whether or not it is worth their pursuing.

One author noted that "our conduct wins others to Christ, silences the tongue of the foolish, and brings condemnation from God."

Just like Daniel who faced the false accusations of his peers, they may eagerly talk against us but their accusations will be unfounded. We are to live good lives, godly lives as if we were in our heavenly home already. Our conduct should honor God. It should glorify God. Isn't that after all, the advice that Jesus gave? **"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."** (Matthew 5:16)

Our conduct casts an image of God to the unsaved.
What kind of image do they have of God because of you?

Blaise Pascall has said "The serene, silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God."

During WWII at a POW camp in the Philippines run by the Japanese, missionaries Herb and Ruth Clingen along with their son were held as prisoners for three years. His diary records how the feared commandant of the camp, Konishi, tortured, murdered and starved to death many of the inmates. He described one especially diabolical plan Konishi forced on the POW's including the Clingens. Here's what he writes: "Konishi found an inventive way to abuse us even more. He increased the food ration but gave us palay – unhusked rice. Eating rice with its razor-sharp outer shell would cause

intestinal bleeding that would kill us in hours. We had no tools to remove the husks, and doing the job manually, - pounding the grain or rolling it with a heavy stick – consumed more calories than the rice would supply. It was a death sentence for all internees.”

Through divine providence the prisoners were rescued in 1945 when Allied forces liberated the prison camp. The commandant was unable to carry out his plan. Many years later the Clingens learned that Konishi had been found working as a grounds keeper in Manila at a golf course. He was put on trial for his war crimes and hanged. Before his execution he professed conversion to Christianity, saying that he had been deeply affected by the testimony of the Christian missionaries he had persecuted.

When we live godly before others, they will see and come to know Christ. I think that’s what happened with my high school friend Mark that I shared with you about, writing to thank me for being an example of Christ.

Your character may be what either keeps someone from coming to Christ or compels them to trust Christ. That should be a very sobering thought. It ought to be sobering to think that our example may be the reason someone goes to heaven or to hell.

What kind of example are you to them?