

## 1 Peter 2:9-12

*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; <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup>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 make our way through 1 Peter, it is important to remember that this was originally a single letter written without chapter or verse separations and without section headings like we have today. It is helpful for us to have things broken up into smaller more manageable pieces like this, but the fact remains that each of these pieces is part of a greater whole. This is particularly evident with the passage for this session. Last session we talked about who Jesus is, a living stone and THE cornerstone. We also talked about who we are as believers, living stones and a royal priesthood. At the end of the last session we briefly touched on unbelievers and what Jesus being the cornerstone meant for them. This brings us to the passage for this session.

Peter continues to remind us who we (believers) are and juxtaposes that with implications of who and what non-believers are. Let's look at today's passage and see what descriptions are listed or are implied for both believers and non-believers.

- Believers: a chosen race, royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, in the light or out of darkness, the people of God, aliens or strangers or sojourners, have received mercy
- Non-believers: stumbling/struggling (from last session), in the darkness, not a people, have not received mercy, and basically the opposite of any description listed for the believer

As you can see, the descriptions for the believer are much more favorable than those that belong to the non-believer. We see that all of the descriptions of the believer are all things that set us apart from the rest of the world. I want to draw particular attention to "a people for God's own possession". The key word in this phrase is "own". We belong to God and are His alone. God does not have joint custody of His people/children. We belong to no one but Him. I

also want to point out that we are THE people of God not a people of God. God doesn't have an A & B team of people. We are all on the varsity squad and should take that seriously.

Verse 11 gives us another description of who believers are that further exemplifies the fact that we are set apart from the world. Peter refers to believers as aliens and strangers. Other translations render this as exiles, foreigners and sojourners. All of these terms basically mean a person or people that are in a place that is not their home. Our home is with God and will be realized when we die and go to heaven or when Christ comes back and creates the new heaven and earth.

At this point, Peter has told us who we are and is now giving insight on how we should behave. He tells us to abstain from the fleshly lusts. We have talked about this in past sessions. We must put aside or put away the things of the old self. These were things of our past and we have been born again as a new creation. We are to stay away from all of the selfish actions we did as unbelievers. Peter tells us that these things wage war against our souls. There is a spiritual battle that is very real and going on all around and within us. The Spirit of God within us tells us to do one thing and our flesh is tempted by Satan to do just the opposite. Let's look at a couple passages that talk this war and what we should do.

*Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*

*Romans 13:12-14 The night is almost gone and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup>Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

Our response should be to put on the armor of God, the armor of light or to put on Jesus to fight against the things of the flesh. There is an emphasis on the war that wages against our souls and acting properly. Why do you think Peter has given such special attention to acting as we should? Truth be told, there are many correct answers to this, but one that applies to the passage at hand is that people are watching you. To better understand verse 12, we must understand who Peter is talking about when he says gentiles. The word gentile comes from the Greek word *ethnos* which means a race or tribe, specifically a foreign one. In the time of Jesus' life, gentiles were anyone who wasn't a Jew. We can gather from the Old Testament that the Jews were God's people, a holy nation, a chosen race. Peter has just used these same terms to describe the believers that he is writing this letter to (both Jew and non-Jew). So what does Peter mean by gentile in verse 12? He is referring to anyone who is not a Christian. If you think about it, this makes perfect sense. In today's world, it is typically the non-believers that will slander believers. Peter tells us that though gentiles will slander us in the things we do, if we act

right, behave properly, or “keep our behavior excellent”, the gentiles will see the different reaction that we give compared to non-believers. Also, if we behave in the way God has called us to, any false accusations will not stick.

We must have a different response to those that slander us or treat us poorly. We must have a love for God and others that allows us to forgive and “turn the other cheek”. It is this kind of response that will point the non-believer to God.

#### Application Questions

- Where is your identity? Is it in your job? Your role as a parent? In the things you have? The people you know?
- Or have you firmly rooted your identity in God as His chosen?
- As God’s child, do you act in a way that reflects His glory and holiness?
- Think back on times when you have felt attacked. Did your response reflect God or the world?
- If it was the world, what could you have changed about your response?
- Do you love others in a way that you would lay aside yourself and your desires?

#### Final Remark

It is our duty as Christians to show God’s love to the world. One way that we can do this is by our interactions with others. When someone treats us poorly, do you respond with anger and a vengeful heart or with a heart that is filled with the love of God? We must in every situation allow God’s love to flow through us so that those who do not know God will be pointed to Him. We must respond properly and let God take care of the rest. We are His, and He will take care of His children. Submit to Him and allow Him to show His love to the world through you and by your actions.