

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## **Missional Identity**

*1 Peter 2:9-10*

**Keywords:** missional, gospel, missions, missionary, glory of God, identity

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Every believer is a missionary, but what is the message and why are we to do it? Evangelism is often done out of a sense of duty and not delight. But in 1 Peter we find the basis of evangelism, the rich mercy by which God moved us from darkness to light, making us His people and possession.

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. We all have something or someone in which we identify ourselves.
  - 1. These identities help define us and at times they are very important to us.
  - 2. We all have multiple identities as well.
    - a. I am an American. I am also a pastor and am white.
    - b. We have had men in the past who did Civil War re-enacting.
    - c. We have musicians who are mothers and fathers as well.
    - d. We have poets and VP's; people who served our country in the military and who are police officers.
- B. But if you are a Christian, then that identity is supreme.
  - 1. The bible is filled with passages that emphasize the believer's identity; and it emphasizes over and over how our lives are to be defined by that identity.
  - 2. I think of Jonah as an example: Jonah 1:8-9 Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" 9 And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."
  - 3. Notice how filled with identity questions those few verse have in them.

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- C. In our passage today we have one of the most densely packed passages in the bible regarding what the Church is defined as being...the Church's identity.
  - 1. Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.
  - 2. Our focus today however will only be on vss 9-10.
  - 3. The sermon shall be broken down into three points, our identity, our purpose and our foundation.
- D. Two introductory key points:
  - 1. These are not individualistic identities. They are corporate. We, meaning all who follow Jesus, are a chosen people, etc.
  - 2. Each point here is rich in Old Testament background.

## **II. Our Identity.**

- A. We are a chosen people.
  - 1. This flows out of Isaiah 43:1, 3-4, 19-25.
    - a. God is speaking to the people of Israel who will eventually be rescued from bondage and exile in Babylon.
    - b. They have sinned and yet even though they have not and do not come to God as He had commanded them, nonetheless God will blot out their sins!
    - c. Why? Because they remain his people. This must be understood in the corporate sense or you get confused. The nation/people are His Chosen people but individuals in that group are not, in fact many are not.
    - d. And notice in vs 19 that it is so that these redeemed people, these people saved and brought out of slavery would declare His praise—something Peter picks up as well in our passage.
  - 2. The whole idea of Israel as being God's chosen people is part of almost the entire Old Testament storyline.
    - a. Abraham is chosen by God to become a great nation.
    - b. And as you read through the first book of the bible this is all defined and explained.

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- (1) We see first that not all of Abraham's children are chosen by God, but only one, Isaac.
- (2) Then, out of the family of Isaac, we see not both sons being part of that nation, but only one, Jacob.
- (3) The whole idea of the nation of Israel is grounded on God's choice.
  - c. This is defined even more clearly in Deuteronomy 7 where God tells this nation before they enter into the land He is giving them, that they are His not because of who they are, but because of His choice. He loved them simply because He loved them.
3. And here in our passage Peter picks this imagery up and applies it to the Church of Jesus Christ.
  - a. Notice how it flows out of rejection of God in vss 7-8.
  - b. But the Church, they are the chosen race.
  - c. And there are no racial distinctions in this race. As the old children's song goes, red and yellow, black and white, all . . .
  - d. Just as God was going to gather back to himself all of the scatter Israelites out of the kingdom of Babylon, so too Christians are gathered by God from throughout the globe.
4. The word for "race" is used to speak of descendants from a common ancestor. They have the same blood line.
  - a. For the church, their common heritage is through the new birth in Christ Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.
  - b. It speaks of the fact that we really are a family in Christ. All believers are brothers and sisters.
- B. We are royal priesthood.
  1. Here Peter pulls out of the Old Testament another image and identity.
  2. Comes from Exodus 19:5-6.

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- a. The nation of Israel is being established formally as God's nation.
  - b. There is a covenant that is between them and God (e.g. Exodus 19:5).
3. But why would he call them a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood?
- a. Remember that even though Israel is being called this, within Israel there was a specific class of people—the Levites—who were uniquely the priests. Only they could be a priests, no other tribe.
  - b. Yet though that is true, God also sees the whole nation as a kingdom of priests.
    - (1) Priests are by definition a mediator between God and man.
      - (a) Priests take God's words and commands and rituals and brings them to the people.
      - (b) Priests also bring the needs and the sins of the people to God. They do this through the death of an innocent animal, through the shedding of blood.
    - (2) And this is picked up in the New Testament as well by Paul in Romans 15.
      - (a) In vs 16 he speaks of bringing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ alone to the people of the world as his priestly work.
      - (b) And here we see what the church is to be doing before the world. We are to be mediating the grace of God to those who are lost and broken and without hope.
      - (c) How? Romans 10:11-15.
      - (d) We also can mediate by our prayers for the non-believer.

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## C. We are a holy nation.

1. “Holy nation” also comes from Exodus 19:6.
  - a. “Nation” is the word *ethnos*. We get the word “ethnic.”
  - b. It does not refer to a nation like you and I think of when we hear it. We tend to see it geographical.
  - c. It refers to a group of people who are held together by the same values, customs, and beliefs.
  - d. Peter applies this to the church and shows us that we are a group of people who all have a common spiritual interest in Christ Jesus.
2. “Holy” speak of the fact that we have been made separate from the nations/people of the world and set apart for God. This is just another way of saying that we are strangers and aliens.
  - a. This idea of being “holy” is misunderstood often.
  - b. Concentric circles of meaning.
    - (1) At the very core of it we find it very hard to define it cleanly.
      - (a) People try to say it simple mean “separate” but that doesn’t quite make it.
      - (b) Others will see it primarily moral.
      - (c) But perhaps the best way to see it as simply a equivalent of God. God is holy and holy is God.
        - i) The true God.
        - ii) The Only God.
        - iii) And so you can see the angels in heaven before the throne of God crying out, “you are God, you are God, you are God.”
        - iv) Or as I say it, utterly other.

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- (2) Therefore, anything that is connected to God becomes holy.
  - (a) Again, it is not talking about morality here.
  - (b) Instruments used in the Temple of the Old Testament were considered holy.
  - (c) These things belonged to God for God and God alone.
- (3) Finally, morality comes into view.
  - (a) Here we begin to consider the idea of being a holy people.
  - (b) This reality affects how we think, our behavior, relationships, etc.
  - (c) And this is what we would call morality.
  - (d) It is an effort where we are attempting to reflect the person of God to others.
- c. And this holiness is not something that we create, but it is something that we are declared to be by God.
  - (1) And if that is true, God calls us a holy nation, then when you or I live in such a manner that contradicts it, we are actually slandering the name of God.
  - (2) And here we must again pause to consider how the world around us views us.
  - (3) To whom do we belong? And can you prove it by your dress, your words, your family, your actions, your money . . . . ?
- d. Very important for you to hear this.
  - (1) If we are identified as being a holy nation then there are some clear consequences to it.

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- (2) It must cause tension and challenges to all other identities that we have.
  - (3) And how we resolve those challenges will depend largely on the value we place upon these identities that God has placed us in.
- D. We are God's possession.
- 1. Comes from Exodus 19:5 again.
  - 2. Remember that in that passage God said that all the nations are His, yet in a unique manner, Israel was God's possession.
    - a. So don't make the error in your mind that only we belong to God and others do not.
    - b. All belong to God, for He is Lord over all.
    - c. But in some amazing and special way, we, the church, is God's own possession.
    - d. This is made all the more amazing when you realize that we are possessed by God, not by our doing, but God's!

## Transition

Such privileges! They must define us as a people. For there is a purpose behind all of this by God.

### III. Our Purpose.

- A. It is here that we see our calling as a holy nation, a people possessed by God, a kingdom of priests—proclamation of God!
  - 1. These titles, these possessions are not there for our personal gratification.
  - 2. They do not exist so that we can strengthen our failing self-esteem and get pumped up.
  - 3. We do not look at other religions with a spirit of superiority—for we have not earned any of these privileges! Pride has no place here.

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4. In fact, they are not there even so that we can glory in them.
  5. We are a people for God's possession, etc. so that we can direct glory not to ourselves, but to the Lord Himself!
- B. "Declare" speaks of proclaiming.
1. This is speaking of the evangelistic responsibility of the church.
  2. As a group, not only certain individuals, we are to be proclaiming to those outside the church, what has happened inside the church.
  3. It reminds me again that my salvation was not to keep me from going to hell. That is man-centered and certainly an incomplete understanding of salvation.
  4. Instead, my salvation was so that I could now properly proclaim God's glory, God's grace, God's goodness, God's holiness. In short, so that I could be a faithful spotlight of God.
  5. We do not exist as a church to have neat ministries that make people feel good. We exist as a people to be able to direct others to look upon God's glory.
  6. All of our ministries ought to be developed with that in mind. We need to ask ourselves, "how does this better equip me to proclaim God's excellencies?"
- C. We are reminded of the greatness of God.
1. How utterly God-centered it is and this is a point of stumbling for some. God seems a tad too much in love with himself.
  2. There are those who would think He needs to be a bit more humble.
    - a. But if you want to see His humility, you just need to go the Cross!
    - b. That was the ultimate humbling.
  3. Yet God is Holy! He alone is God, there is no other, and therefore there is no one else to share in that glory.



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- a. The only right thing for God to call us to do is to drink upon that infinite gloriousness.
- b. For Him to point us to anything else for our joy or purpose would be simple idolatry and utter folly.
4. Realize this—God is not calling us to glory in Him for His sake.
  - a. He needs nothing and no one.
  - b. For all eternity the Father, Son and Spirit were gloriously content.
  - c. The reason He calls us to glory in Him and love Him and delight in Him is because that is what every human on this planet so desperately needs.
  - d. It is an act of great love that He draws us to Himself that we might see Him.
- D. Peter reminds us that a wonderful miracle of grace occurred in our lives.
  1. We once were in the darkness of sin. We were content in it. We thought we were ok and that there was nothing to fear.
  2. But then God sovereignly called us. This speaks not of the general call of the gospel (which goes to elect and non-elect) but of the effectual calling where God draws us to himself through faith in Jesus Christ.
  3. So now we are taken from darkness into his marvelous light.
  4. And our job is to turn that light upon the glories of God for the world to see.
    - a. Some will reject it. But we should not despair. Christ was the perfect light the Gospel of John says, and many rejected him because they loved their sinful ways and hated that the light exposed them.
    - b. But others will come. God will use us as His tools to bring more of His sheep to Himself.

## **IV. One final comment before we look at the last point.**

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- A. There is a future sense to this idea of being called into God's marvelous light.
- B. We are looking eagerly for the day that our Lord comes, or when He takes us home.
- C. Because right now we are between two worlds, are we not?
  - 1. If you will, we live between the darkness of our old life of sin and rebellion and the light of God's glorious presence in heaven.
  - 2. There are times we glimpse the glories of heaven, but it is hard for we see only dimly, as Paul says.
  - 3. Truly we are aliens, truly we are strangers.

## **V. Our Foundation.**

- A. Peter is basically saying this: Before you were saved the best that you could be called was as a "no people."
  - (1) We were not distinct. We had no divine use in God's program.
  - (2) But now, by the grace of God, we are now "a people."
    - (a) We are distinct, we have a use, we have a purpose in the work of God.
    - (b) Beloved, the New Testament often calls us to remember who we were. It is good for the soul and strengthens our gratitude.
      - i) This is one of the reasons I love communion.
      - ii) It always brings us back to square one, the cross of Christ.
      - iii) If you are not saved, if you have not placed your faith in Jesus Christ alone, then you are simply a "no people."

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- b. Then secondly he reminds us of the mercy we have received.
  - (1) Before salvation each of us were in the constant state of not having the mercy of God.
  - (2) But now we have received it.
    - (a) A little detail here.
    - (b) Peter constructs this phrase, “have received mercy” in a unique way.
    - (c) He is not saying here that we are actively receiving God’s mercy, although that is seen in other passages.
    - (d) Here he is saying that at a definite time God acted to give each believer His mercy.
      - i) That was the time where our sinful condition became obvious to us.
      - ii) When we cried out to God to have mercy.
      - iii) And when we looked to Christ in faith for salvation.
      - iv) At that time, right then, our former state of not being a people and not having God’s mercy terminated.

## **VI. Conclusion.**

- A. Beloved we have rich privileges in Jesus Christ.
- B. But those privileges come with the responsibility to proclaim God to a dark world.
  - 1. If you find it hard to do so then I encourage you to spend some time meditating deeply on the mercy of God in your life.
  - 2. If it does not stir you to act, then may I say that it may be because you have never received it?

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## Small Group Questions

- What identity struck you the most and why?
- How do you think understanding our identity in Jesus helps us proclaim God's gloriousness?
- How as a group are these identities being expressed outward to the unbelieving world?