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Holy Advertisements

In Pursuit of Holiness, Part 9

1 Peter 2:9-10

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Jesus is a worthless stumbling block to those who refuse to believe but to those who obey the truth He is of infinite value and worth.

Discussion Points:

In verse 9 the Apostle Peter borrows from Old Testament terminology referring to the people of Israel (Ex 19:5,6) and applies it to the church. Here Peter describes the church as, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” and “God’s own possession.” The point simply is that in Christ we have a been given a new identity and, therefore, a new purpose.

- As “a chosen race” all of those identities that use to define us have been laid aside. Our racial identity, social status, economic standing, career field, or whatever else we could have used to define ourselves has been replaced with union in Christ. How should this change the way we see ourselves and others in Christ? How should this affect the way we “do” church? Give specific examples.
- Israel was called a kingdom of Priests. As Priests they were to represent their God to all the nations. In a very similar way we are today the representatives of God. This is why Peter calls us a “royal priesthood.” By watching your life how would others perceive your God? How have you displayed Him in those relationships that are the closest to you?
- As the church we are a unique, distinct people. This is what the word “holy” means. In what specific ways are you distinguished from the world? What distinguishes you in the world’s eyes from a moral, honest, anti-abortion, and anti-gay rights Republican that is lost?
- Peter calls the church “God’s own possession.” By implication we are the people that God has called His personal treasure. In your own words explain why this is an important truth for how we see ourselves and our role in the world?

Discussion Guide cont.

In the latter part of verse 9 we see that we have been given this new identity for a grand purpose. We are to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Verse 10 goes on to remind us of the wonderful work of salvation that has been accomplished on our behalf. These truths are meant to emphasize our role as “holy advertisements” of God’s greatness is salvation.

- Thinking back to how God delivered the people of Israel from Egypt, He wanted the entire world to see His wonderful works and as a result know who He is. We who belong to the church have also seen His wonderful works in how He has brought us from darkness to light. Would you say that your life exists to display God’s wonderful work of salvation? Why or why not?
- There are many different avenues and methods to sharing the gospel. What are some ways that you have seen that are unhelpful? Why were they not effective or hurtful? In your understanding what does it mean to share the gospel? In other words, what does healthy, God-honoring evangelism look like? Is it enough just to live out the gospel? Why or why not?

Gospel Connection:

God has redeemed the church and designated us as His people for this time. In our western culture we tend to think of ourselves first as individuals. However, Peter tells us that we are a “chosen race.” We are a people with a clear purpose to proclaim His excellencies to a world that does not know Him and does not want Him. We must first embrace our unity in Christ and live together in light of our new identity as one people. We then must passionately pursue our mission of making Him known. A church that is not living this way is a church that has forgotten who she is and who she belongs to.

Practical Implications:

Think: We need to think of ourselves not as individuals first but as part of the people of God.

Pray: Pray for clear unity in our church as His people. Pray also that God would give His church boldness to proclaim His excellencies to a lost world.

Do: Spend time looking for a way that you can proclaim the gospel this week. If you feel ill equipped then purpose to find some training and help to sharpen your witness.

Holy Advertisements

In Pursuit of Holiness, Part 9

1 Peter 2:9-10

In our last study, we began by looking at objects that were auctioned off and brought a lot of money. Beauty was obviously in the eye of the beholder.

There's actually another world out there of expensive objects – and they are valuable only because of the owner to whom they once belonged.

In fact, the more I looked into it, the more bizarre it became. I decided I really didn't want to show you any pictures. What people were willing to spend money on, simply because it was related to some celebrity was actually unbelievable.

I came across one such item – it was a mason jar that an actress breathed into, evidently during an awards ceremony; it was sold on eBay for hundreds of dollars.

Another item was a dented ping pong ball belonging to a famous celebrity; he was cleaning out his garage and found one of his old ping pong balls and for fun, really, he put it on EBay to see what would happen; and that dented old ping pong ball ended up selling for several thousand dollars. The winning bidder was just gushing with excitement over their purchase.

As crazy as those illustrations are, the truth is actually universal – ordinary things become special simply because they belong to someone or something you think is important.

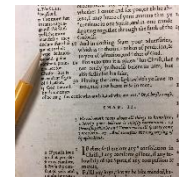
I have some pictures of a couple of items from my study upstairs and down the hall, which are important to me. They won't fetch as much money as a ping pong ball, but they are extremely significant. Both of these items were given to me over the past few years.



One of them is a page, taken from a Geneva Bible which was printed in 1572. The Geneva Bible

was significant for a number of reasons – it was one of the earliest English translations – in fact, the Geneva Bible was the Bible of the Pilgrims – they carried a Geneva Bible with them on the Mayflower.

Fifty years or so later, when the King James Bible was printed, it actually copied much of the Geneva Bible. The Geneva Bible was the first Bible to add verse numbers for easier location and study. And it was referred to as the first study Bible – and if you take a closer look, you'll see tiny commentary notes printed in the margins that were provided by some of the leading reformers like John Calvin and John Knox, and others.

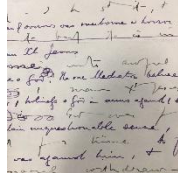


When King James authorized his translation, he insisted that the crown would cover the costs only – and only – if it did not include any of those distasteful study notes – and that was because the reformers (in layman's terminology) they didn't believe the King had the right from God to do whatever he wanted – and they included that in their commentary at key passages. And thus, the King James Bible was put into print.

For someone who loves the history of the English Bible and the reformers, this page out of a 1570 Geneva Bible is a special treasure.

The second item isn't inspired scripture, but it is inspiring to me as a pastor. This is a page from one of the sermon transcripts, belonging to Charles Spurgeon, from the late 1800's.

When he preached his sermon on Sunday morning, his assistant was in the audience, furiously writing down every word. Then, on the following Monday, before it was delivered to the newspapers for publication – Spurgeon took the pages and sat down in his study and personally edited them.



You can see words crossed out – and entire sentences deleted and other sentences added; which is very encouraging to me as a preacher to see that Spurgeon, on Monday, wasn't the only one who wished he'd said it better on Sunday.

But that isn't all. Whenever Spurgeon worked at his desk, he used purple ink. And he preferred to use purple ink because it was just one more way of reminding him of the royalty of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It's a tradition I've adopted myself.

So, if you take a closer look, you can see that this page is literally covered with Spurgeon's edits, in his own hand, written in purple ink, still preserved to this day.

Proving the truth once again, that ordinary things are made more valuable because of the person to whom they belonged.ⁱ

It struck me as I studied the description of the church, by the Apostle Peter, in his first letter.

Turn back there and as we pick up our study at **chapter 2 and verse 9**, it struck me that if we were to have the Lord visit us today and stand up here and display His treasures – He wouldn't point to a page from an old Bible or sermon notes by a famous preacher.

But He *would* come up here and point out something extremely valuable to Him – He would point out – you. *You*, believer, happen to be His special collection.

Just look at how the believer and the believing church is described in **1 Peter 2:9**. ***But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*** – you could translate that – *God's own treasured possession*. Jesus Christ would display *you*!

In fact, one day He will – as the splendid, glorified, redeemed objects of His glory (**1 Peter 5:4**)

Now, if an ordinary object is made special because of to whom it belongs, imagine what that makes you, now that you belong to Him.

The world was telling the first century Christians – and it's still saying the same thing to 21st century Christians – “you're unwanted . . . you're nobody . . . you're worthless . . .”

And that's because they view Christ in the same manner. Just a few verses earlier, we discovered that the world has ***rejected Christ, the corner stone (v. 7)*** – they trip over and stumble over Him (v. 8).

But although they have rejected Him, you have accepted Him. He was valued as precious to you (v. 4); and because of His saving grace – we learned – He quarried you out of the pit (v. 5); He excavated you from the pit of sin and death . . . and He fashioned you uniquely to fit into His prized collection of the redeemed, called the living church.ⁱⁱ

Listen, Peter effectively tells them – and us – you can't be worthless . . . because you belong to Him. You can't be insignificant . . . because we – ordinary people – have actually become special treasure . . . because we belong to Him.

Now let's take a closer look at how Jesus describes, through Peter, you and me, His special treasure.

The Treasure Described:

1. But you are a chosen race

Peter again highlights the redemption of the believer who owes his salvation to the covenant election of God's grace.

You're not random . . . you're chosen. And for thousands of years, before Peter wrote this statement, this was the language of the nation Israel as God's chosen people. And they still are, uniquely, God's covenant nation – awaiting the goodness of God which will lead them to repentance and, as we studied last time, they will be reconstituted as a nation who welcomes back the Messiah at the end of the Tribulation (**Romans 11 and Zechariah 12**).

And now here, Peter uses the phrase to describe the New Testament believer and the church. We belong to God too. We are His chosen race.

The word for ***race*** here in this phrase – translated perhaps in your Bibles as ***generation*** – is from a word that refers to people who belong to a common ancestor – they share a common origin.ⁱⁱⁱ

And so we *do*, don't we? We have been born again, into the family of God, having received Jesus as our Living Lord. (**John 1:12**). All of us happen to share the same origin of the new birth in Christ.

Juan Sanchez, a pastor in Texas who will be coming as a guest in this next summer series, writes in his commentary on this text that Peter is informing us then, that the gospel has created a new race – one race – made up of people from every

tongue, tribe, social and economic standing and cultural variety. God has chosen the un-alike and made them into one new family. And when the gospel is the only way to explain the assortment of people gathered in a room, worshipping together . . . the glory of God is displayed.^{iv}

How do you explain the church? We are all different – but we share a common ancestor – the Living Lord of the universe who brought us from death unto life.

And because of that, we happen to have the same family name – taken from the One who has given us new life – our new family name is, Christian.

What’s fascinating is that if you study the origin of that family name - it’s a term that the church didn’t come up with.

It was coined in the first century by combining the Greek name of the Messiah (Christos) and adding a Latin ending to create Christiani – or, Christian.

In Rome, people were often called by the name of leaders they adored and revered.

During the days of Peter, you had the Augustiani – who especially loved Augustus; you had the Herodiani – those who were devoted supporters and followers of Herod.^v

This term, Cristiani, was coined by the Roman citizens living in Antioch as a derogatory term for those following a crucified man claiming to be the Christos – the Messiah.

In fact, by the time you arrive in Antioch – in *Acts chapter 11* – where this designation was first given – Cristiani – wasn’t a compliment at all.

But we love the name, don’t we. We’re honored to wear it out in public as the name of the One we follow and revere. And we love it whenever we unexpectedly run into people out there who wear the same name too.

I was in the auto store the other day to pick up some stuff and the guy behind the counter recognized me and said, “Hey Reverend.” We had a great time catching up.

I had met him a year ago when I went in there the last time. I needed help with a battery and he came over to help me.

We had never met before, but the more we talked, the more I was convinced he was a Christian – his demeanor, his vocabulary. I was about to ask him where he went to church – which is my way of

shifting the conversation from auto parts to justification by faith in Christ alone.

I don’t know how you do it, but that’s usually my first line. But before I could ask him where he went to church, *he* stopped what *he* was saying and said, “Hey, are you a Christian?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I am too.” I said, “I knew it!” He said, “I knew it too.” I said, “I knew it before you did.”

And right there in the auto parts store, there’s a black man and a white man carrying on as if we’re brothers.

Why? Because we are! We happen to belong to the same race – the race of the redeemed – a chosen race belonging to the same ancestor . . . our Living Lord.

Peter goes on to tell us that we’re not only members of the same race, but, notice:

2. *We’re a royal priesthood*

Now the Jewish believers would have found this expression puzzling. And they would have puzzled over the offices of Jesus Christ as both kingly and priestly offices.

In Israel, the offices of priest and king were always kept separate.^{vi}

In fact, they would have been puzzled over Jesus, a descendant of David, from the tribe of Judah claiming to hold an office reserved for the descendants of Aaron and the priestly tribe of Levi?

The answer simply, was that Jesus Christ’s priesthood was derived, according to the Book of *Hebrews (chapters 5 & 6)* – not from Aaron, but from the superior order of Melchizedek who preceded Aaron.^{vii}

We don’t have time to track this down today, but Melchizedek was the Old Testament model for the royal priest; he shows up in Genesis 14; he didn’t inherit the role, he was simply appointed by God. And he will become a picture of the coming Messiah who would also be appointed by God the Father as a royal priest.^{viii}

So we, in union with Christ as children of God, have inherited the right to be royalty – and – priests.

We have royal blood flowing through our veins, so to speak, and we can fulfill the functions of New Testament priests, offering the sacrifices of praise and intercession and worship and evangelism and service and more. And the best is yet to come.

John the Apostle wrote in the Book of Revelation that we, the redeemed church, will be *priests of God*

... **and will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6).**

What that looks like exactly, we can barely imagine.

Peter goes on to add another descriptive phrase to the treasure of God in His children; Peter calls the church;

3. *A holy nation*

The word **nation** is *ethnos* in the original language; a word that refers to a community of people held together by the same laws, customs and mutual interests.^{ix}

Remember that the word **holy** – *hagios* – means separated unto God. More woodenly, it simply means *different*.

Peter is effectively saying, “As a nation of believers separated unto God, you happen to be a different from the nations around you.” And are we ever!

The laws and customs and interests of this holy nation – the church – are often at odds with the culture and customs and interests of the nation around us. And God expected that would be so.

The early Christians to whom Peter is writing would have openly violated many of cultural norms of their generation. They viewed marriage differently; the role of parenting differently; humility was valued, unlike the culture who viewed it as a weakness.

Many of the early believers reading this letter from Peter would have disobeyed one of the Twelve Tables of Roman Law that decreed – and I quote – deformed infants shall be killed. In other words, in order to keep the Roman bloodline as superior as possible, deformed infants weren’t given a chance to live.

Even Seneca, the brilliant tutor of several Caesars, who lived during the time of the Apostles, defended infanticide by writing, “We drown children who at birth are weak and abnormal.” This has been true around the world – it’s still true today in other cultures.^x

Obviously, the value of human life is raised by the presence of the Gospel and in its absence, human life becomes nearly worthless.

I found it interesting to discover in my study that in the latter part of the second century, a church leader named Clement from Alexandria wrote that the Roman government and its citizens were known

for saving and protecting young birds and other animals while lacking any moral regard about abandoning or aborting their own children.^{xi}

In fact, Plato argued that it should be the right of the state to force a woman to have an abortion in order to control the population.

Sounds like Plato and Planned Parenthood would have been close friends.

Aristotle argued the same thing; which effectively created an industry around abortion.

The early Christians were at odds with the devaluing of human life and the elevating of animal life just as many countries today, including our own.

Today, in America it is a violation of the law to knowingly crush the egg of a pre-born eaglet; but you can certainly crush a pre-born human being.

And listen to this – Alvin Schmidt cataloged this in his stunning book entitled, How Christianity Changed the World, published a few years ago; he writes, in A.D. 379 church leaders publically condemned the practice of selling aborted babies to the manufacturers of beauty cream.^{xii}

Listen, the gospel doesn’t just elevate the value of human life – it means that you’re going to be at odds with the culture and the customs and the laws that happen to reflect a way of life in Rome – and America.

Peter writes, you are a holy nation . . . which means, you’re going to be different.

And by the way, Peter didn’t write to the church, we are a successful nation; we are a powerful nation; a wealthy nation; a respected nation; a protected nation – no, the church is simply called to be a holy nation.

Finally, Peter adds, we are:

4. *A people for God’s own possession*

I like the Old King James translation of this phrase – *we are a peculiar people*. . . probably a good description of us.

The word *peculiar*, in Old English, simply means to be uniquely possessed by another.^{xiii}

You could read it this way: We are a people of God’s private possession.^{xiv} We’re His special treasure, on display.

And you happen to be a treasure He was willing to die for. He didn’t purchase you with a lot of money, or the right connections – Peter wrote earlier in this letter, ***you were not redeemed (you weren’t***

purchased) with perishable things like silver or gold . . . but with the precious blood . . . of Christ (1 Peter 1:18).

He died to make you a part of His private collection of treasures who owe everything of their significance and value to the fact that we are owned by Him.

The Treasure on Display:

So the final question is pretty simple. What are we going to do about it?

I mean, if we're all of this – and more – what should our response be?

Peter answers that question with a purpose statement. Notice *verse 9*, the latter part, *so that* – here's the purpose statement – *so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

The verb here for *proclaim* or declare is a compound word that only appears in this form, here in the New Testament. It means – to make widely known; to advertise.^{xv}

You see, you're not just His special treasure, you happen to be His special advertising campaign. You're not sitting on a shelf somewhere – you're out in public.

And you're advertising the fact that you – Paul wrote it this way – *rescued . . . from the domain of darkness, and transferred . . . to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).*

God in His grace threw on the light switch; and when the light of the glorious gospel came on, the darkness fled away (*2 Timothy 1:10*).

One of the mottos of the Reformation, who's 500th year anniversary is celebrated this year; one of their catch phrases – we would call it a motto, was – in Latin of course – *ex tenebras lux* – “out of the darkness, light.”

And that's because the darkness of false teaching had enshrouded the church for centuries – we didn't call it the dark ages for nothing – but the light of the true gospel was turned on by brave men and women who defied their culture and even their church – and courageously returned to the truth of sola scriptura – the scriptures alone – and the gospel light shone – and the face of the Europe changed as the darkness fled before the light.^{xvi}

Only God can do that – only He can call us out of the darkness – only He can give us light – and His light is what? – Peter writes – it is *marvelous*.

So what do we do about it?

Peter writes here – we delight and desire to advertise the *excellencies of Him* . . .

We talk about Him. We brag about Him. We exalt His glory.

In fact, the word here for *excellencies* is informative. Rienecker and Rogers in their linguistic key to the Greek New Testament, which I enjoy reading along with the text, write that this is a word which refers not only to God's virtues, but to His ability to do heroic deeds.^{xvii}

And I got a great demonstration of that recently as my wife and I babysat two of our grandchildren for a couple of days. Actually, I'm not sure who babysat whom – and I know Marsha did most of the work.

Nicholas is 3 years old and as he played and ran around, what he really wanted to do was change from one super hero to another. He had bits and pieces of outfits – a mask of Spider-Man and the helmet of Ironman.

Ironman was his favorite – and he would tell me, Poppa, Ironman can do this and that – and he has power to do this – he can run fast and jump and beat Lex Luther . . . he got his movies mixed up . . . and then he'd want me to pretend I was Ironman; which of course, was easy for me. That is, if Ironman can pretend while sitting in a rocking chair.

Listen, it was two days of superheroes. It was one super moment after another.

Now, lest you think my 4-year-old grandson is worldly – he also quoted the Ten Commandments in Hebrew and the Sermon on the Mount in Greek . . . that's what it sounded like to me.

One thing was obvious to me – there are many times when I am not nearly as excited about Jesus Christ as my grandson is about Ironman.

What kind of advertising campaign are we putting on? We're to reveal to the world around us the ability of our living Lord to do heroic deeds.

- *Oh God, you have taught me from my youth, and I still declare your wondrous deeds (Psalm 71:17);*
- *Let me tell you of all God's wonders (Psalm 9:1)*

Listen, if all that people in your sphere of influence knew about God was what you personally told them – would they know anything about Him . . . or would they be completely in the dark?

At this point, Peter evidently thinks it's a good idea to remind us of some pretty heroic deeds.

a. First, he wants us to remember that God has miraculously included us.

Notice *verse 10*. *For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God.*

How amazing is that?

You didn't belong . . . but now you do.

Peter evidently thinks it's a good idea for us to remember who we once were . . . and that evidently deepens our gratitude for who we are now.^{xviii}

Do you remember your life, B.C. – before Christ?

Peter wants you to . . . and it won't take long before you remember *why* you can echo the motto of the Reformation – out of the darkness, light.

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6)

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8)

And so we are *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light (Colossians 1:12)*.

He has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

We are living advertisements to His heroic deeds of grace and the gospel.

b. Secondly, Peter not only reminds us that God has miraculously included us, he wants us to remember that God has miraculously pardoned us.

Notice the latter part of *verse 10*, *you had not received mercy, but now (pointing to their conversion to Christ) you have received mercy.*

Do you remember? You were under judgement . . . your verdict hopeless. But then God called you out of hopelessness and into the mercy of God.

Mercy is that which rescues us from all that we deserve. We are a living advertisement campaign to our world that sins can be forgiven and we can be pardoned, forever.

We've watched the outgoing president of these United States end his tenure with the tradition of pardoning criminals who are serving time. Their crimes had been committed and their verdicts had been delivered and their sentences were underway . . . but then the only hope – the only way out – a presidential pardon. And 78 people, were released from prison. Obviously, their pardon had nothing to do with repentance . . . ours does.

But it's as if the Apostle Peter wants us to remember that the King of Heaven has included us – by grace – and pardoned us – by mercy. We are guilty of every crime imaginable – our eternal sentence and verdict already delivered. But Jesus, because of the office He holds, pardoned by His mercy as we repented and confessed our crimes to Him.

We did nothing to deserve it . . . it was all of grace and mercy.

A British commentator wrote here at this text how a widow once appealed to Napoleon for mercy for her son after he had fallen foul of the Emperor through some misdeed. Napoleon told her that her son did not deserve mercy. And she responded wisely, "If he deserved it, it would not be mercy, and mercy is all I ask." And her son was pardoned.^{xix}

A Puritan prayer puts it powerfully;

Mighty yet merciful, how could it be
The high king of Heaven extends grace to me
My sins were many, my merits were none
But you are the mighty, yet merciful one

Justice and power are held in your hand
But you stooped to shoulder the shame of man
This holy mystery is hard to believe
Forgiveness shown by royalty . . .

Mighty yet merciful, how could it be
The high king of Heaven extends grace to me
My sins were many, my merits were none
But you are the mighty, yet merciful one.

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