

*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. Today in our culture the issue of identity politics affects how we think, react and act.
  - 1. It is really merely a result of a far more dangerous thought process that is developing within our nation and it is creating large amounts of division and even violence.
  - 2. Too often we see people trying to define who another person is and it is based upon one race, gender, political position, education, or sexual identity.
  - 3. Currently we have people who are guilty of great sin in the eyes of others simply because they hold to capitalism or socialism as an economic model.
- B. This is affecting the Church in America as well. But as always, there is nothing new under the sun.
  - 1. We had a different term for it in times past but the idea of equal but separate was a popular idea in America in the late 1800's. At least for whites. The issue was what color was your skin.
  - 2. Today it is the polar opposite where one is now guilty of grave sins simply because you are white.
  - 3. In the 1500's one would never expect a wealthy landowner to worship with a peasant. Rich and poor do not mix.
  - 4. And go all the way back to the New Testament and the tensions between Jews and Gentiles in the Church was a constant point of stress.

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- C. But in all of this the answer and resolution to all things related to identity are resolved for a true Christian if he will simply submit to the clear teaching of the Scripture.
1. The Christian must repent of all forms of identity if any of them are more important than their identity as a follower of Jesus Christ.
  2. It is that simple. We must learn to think and decide about issues through the single lens of a proper understanding of the Bible.
  3. And once that happens you will find that so many issues that either distract you, annoy you, or derail you will be resolved.
- D. This is exactly what the Apostle Peter does in 1 Peter 2.
1. Give the theme of that letter.
  2. In light of this we are not going to live as we ought to live if we first identify with anything of this age that is passing away.
- E. 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 vs 9-10.
  3. The sermon shall be broken down into three points, our identity, our purpose and our foundation.
- F. 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.
    - a. Peter draws out several passages from Isaiah and Exodus where God makes certain declarations about Israel.
    - b. These statements were to be how this nation thought of itself in light of the other nations who did not know God.
    - c. And they were designed to show these people their highly favored status and how God would relate to them.

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## II. Our Identity.

- A. We are a chosen people.
  - 1. Notice how it flows out of humanity's rejection of God in vss 7-8.
    - a. Realize that this speaks of Jesus Christ and He is always and ever the great dividing line.
    - b. And in verse 8 it makes it clear that the rejection of God is something that people were appointed to.
  - 2. But the Church, they are the chosen race. Chosen to be lovers and followers of God.
  - 3. The word for "race" is used to speak of descendants from a common ancestor. They have the same blood line.
    - a. For the church, our 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.
    - c. Even now you should be able to see how this identity destroys any racial constructs that this world tries to put upon each other.
    - d. You do not look at another Christian and think they do not "belong" for you are all of one race. A race created in Jesus Christ for eternity.
- B. We are royal priesthood.
  - 1. Here Peter pulls out of the Old Testament another image and identity. 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.

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- (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.
- C. We are a holy nation.
1. "Nation" is the word *ethnos*. We get the word "ethnic."
    - a. It does not refer to a nation like you and I think of when we hear it. We tend to see it geographical.
    - b. It refers to a group of people who are held together by the same values, customs, and beliefs.
    - c. 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.

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2. “Holy” speaks 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.
    - (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.

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- (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.
  - (2) It must cause tension and challenges to all other identities that we have. Being an American is not your main, controlling identity.
  - (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. Here is a simple statement of ownership. We are not free to define ourselves in whatever way we wish.
  2. We are not free to live however we think is best.
  3. We are not free to value whatever we think we should.
  4. We are a possession of God. Bought with an infinite price of the blood of His Son.
  5. Therefore whatever we think and do we are to do it to glorify God.

## Transition

For the church, our common heritage is through the new birth in Christ Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

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We are to be mediating the grace of God to those who are lost and broken and without hope.

We are a group of people who all have a common spiritual interest in Christ Jesus.

We are not free to value whatever we think we should.

We are a possession of God. Bought with an infinite price of the blood of His Son.

### **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. 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.
  - 3. 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. Our salvation was so that we can now properly proclaim God's glory, God's grace, God's goodness, God's holiness. In short, so that we could be a faithful spotlight of God.
  - 4. 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.
- C. We are reminded of the greatness of God (9b).
  - 1. 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 think 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.
2. It is our responsibility and privilege to speak of the “excellencies” of God to a world that is content with shiny baubles that never satisfy.
- D. Peter reminds us that a wonderful miracle of grace occurred in our lives (9c).
  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.**

- 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?



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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 (10).**

- 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."
- 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.

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- (2) But now we have received it. Here he is saying that at a definite time God acted to give each believer His mercy.
  - (a) That was the time where our sinful condition became obvious to us.
  - (b) When we cried out to God to have mercy.
  - (c) And when we looked to Christ in faith for salvation.
  - (d) 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?

## **VII. Benediction.**

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## Small Group Questions

- What identity struck you the most and why?
- If we are to proclaim God's excellencies then spend time on identifying what they are. Then think through what are ways we might proclaim them in a way that is not unnatural.

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- How as a group are these identities being expressed outward to the unbelieving world?