

Lesson 5

1 Peter 2:9-12

God Has Given Believers a New Identity (v. 9)

One of the things that we should reflect on from time to time is what is our identity without Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-3

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

Romans 3:9-18

“What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

One of the things we should reflect on from time to time is what our identity would be apart from Christ. Scripture does not describe unbelievers as morally neutral people who simply need a little guidance. It describes us as people who were dead in our sin, following the desires of the flesh, unable to seek God, and standing under His judgment. Left to ourselves, we were not righteous and we were not pursuing God.

That is what makes Peter's description of believers so remarkable. God, in the richness of His grace, made us "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession." He had no external obligation to do this. We went from being unrighteous to being part of a holy nation. We went from being unable to seek God to serving as a royal priesthood. God made us what we never were and what we never could have become on our own. Through Christ, He gave us not only a new identity but also a new purpose.

Believers Exist to Proclaim God's Greatness (v. 9)

Peter does not stop after telling believers who they are. He immediately explains why God has made them these things. We are told that God has made us His people "that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." God did not save us merely so that we could avoid judgment someday. He saved us so that we would know Him, delight in Him, and tell others about Him. We are called to proclaim His excellencies because we have experienced them ourselves. Peter's goal is not merely that Christians talk about God. He wants believers to treasure God. We speak of His greatness because we have become convinced that He truly is great.

This means that wherever God has placed us, we have been given an opportunity to proclaim His excellencies. Our families, schools, jobs, friendships, activities, and even our hardships become opportunities to point people toward Christ. Sometimes God uses our successes to display His goodness. Other times He uses our trials. In either case, our purpose remains the same: to make much of the God who brought us from darkness into light.

God's People Are Called to Pursue Holiness (vv. 10-11)

Peter then reminds believers once again of what God has done for them. Once they were not a people, but now they are God's people. Once they had not received mercy, but now they have received mercy. Peter wants believers to remember that their relationship with God is built upon grace. Everything they have received has come because of God's mercy. Because this is true, Peter urges them to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against the soul. The language Peter uses is serious. Sin is not merely a bad habit or an unfortunate mistake. It is an enemy actively fighting against us.

This is especially important to remember because our culture constantly presents sinful desires as the pathway to happiness and fulfillment. We are often told that if something feels good, satisfies our desires, or makes life more comfortable, then it must be good. Peter tells us the exact opposite. Many of the desires that promise freedom are actually attacking our souls.

Choosing comfort over Christ ultimately leaves us with neither. The things that promise satisfaction apart from God eventually disappoint us, while holiness leads us into a deeper relationship with the One who truly satisfies.

Our Lives Should Point Others to Christ (v. 12)

Peter tells Christians to keep their conduct honorable among unbelievers. His goal is not simply that Christians maintain a good reputation. His goal is that unbelievers would see the reality of God's transforming work in the lives of His people.

One example of this can be seen in the life of John Newton. Before coming to faith in Christ, Newton lived a deeply sinful life and participated in the slave trade. Yet after encountering the grace of God, his life was radically transformed. The man who once pursued sin began displaying a love for God and a love for people that was evident to those around him.

Newton understood that gospel truth must be accompanied by gospel-shaped living. He believed that those who had experienced the love and mercy of Christ should naturally develop a love and compassion for others. He did not seek to win people merely by telling them what they wanted to hear. Rather, he sought to speak the truth while displaying the same mercy and grace that God had shown him. He is quoted as saying “Whoever . . . has tasted of the love Christ, and has known, by his own experience, the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, Yea, he is constrained, to love his fellow creatures. *He loves them at first sight*; and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel, and care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God, and even while he warns them by his terrors”.

Peter is calling believers to that same kind of life. The world should see something different in us. Our words, attitudes, actions, and relationships should all point beyond ourselves to Christ. Often one of the most powerful ways we proclaim the greatness of God is not simply through what we say, but through the way we live.

Big Idea

Because God has called believers out of darkness and made them His people, they are to proclaim His greatness, pursue holiness, and live in a way that points others to Him.

Application Questions

1. Where do people your age commonly look for identity besides Christ?
2. How does remembering God's mercy help us fight sin?
3. What does it look like to live honorably among unbelievers?
4. What is one practical way you can pursue holiness this week?
5. What area of your life would look different if you fully embraced your identity in Christ?
6. What does your daily life suggest you believe is most important?
7. What desires are currently competing with your desire for Christ?
8. Do you think more about your purpose or your comfort?
9. What would people who know you best say you are most passionate about?

10. If someone listened to your conversations for a week, what would they conclude you love most?
11. What do you think occupies more of your thoughts: God's glory or your own success?
12. Why is the approval of people often so attractive?
13. What does your response to temptation reveal about what you treasure?
14. If God has truly called you out of darkness, what evidence of that transformation can be seen in your life?
15. Would those around you describe your life as different from the world in a noticeable way?