

The People of God

I Peter 2:5-12

Introduction.

1. Recently we presented a lesson entitled "The Pursuit of Excellence," in which we had quite a bit to say about the meaning of "excellence" and the importance of our pursuing excellence.
2. This lesson, to some degree, is a follow-up. If we, as God's people, fully realized who we are as His people, that within itself should motivate us to pursue excellence with all our being. The point is, as we shall establish, God's people are truly special, and, when they live their lives in keeping with their real identity as New Testament Christians, people of the world recognize that they are both special and different.
3. The historian Tertullian, lived from 160 to 230 A.D., and wrote much concerning the people of God who lived during this time period.
 - a. "When pagans deserted their nearest relatives to a plague, Christians ministered to the sick and dying."
 - b. "When pagans left their dead unburied after a battle and cast their wounded into the streets, Christians hastened to relieve the suffering."
4. Impressive as the writings of Tertullian were, a man named Peter wrote regarding the people of God in language even more impressive.
5. As members of the church Jesus built, we claim to be the people of God, but as inhabitants of this present world, we tend to forget the characteristics of the people of God, and their responsibilities to God, to themselves, and to their fellow man.

Discussion:

I. What We are as Christians.

- A. Living Stones in a spiritual house, I Peter. 2:5.
 1. Jesus is "*the chief corner stone,*" I Peter 2:6, whereas His followers are "*living stones.*"
 2. As "*living stones,*" they are alive, Romans 6:3-5, whereas formerly they were "*dead in trespasses and sins,*" Eph. 2:1.
 3. "*Living stones built up a spiritual house.*"
 - a. "*Built*" is from *oikodomeisthe* (Greek), a present participle denoting action still going on.
 - b. God's "*spiritual house*" is the church, I Tim. 3:15, and "*living stones*" are Christians, people who upon obedience to the gospel are "*added*" to the church, Acts 2:47. This is an on-going work.
- B. A Holy Priesthood, I Peter 2:5.
 1. "*Holy*" is from *hagios* (Greek) which means "set apart for God to be, as it were, exclusively his," Thayer.
 - a. They are "his" because they have been purchased. Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:7.
 2. As a "*priesthood,*" they have access to God.
 - a. Thus they must offer sacrifices "*acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*"
- C. "*A Chosen Generation,*" I Pet. 2:9.
 1. Two words of significance, "*chosen*" and "*generation.*"
 - a. *Elektos*, "signifies chosen out, select;" "translated "*elect*" in R.V. Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Matt. 22:14.
 - b. "*Genos*" – denotes "kind," used with reference to "family" (Acts 4:6); offspring (Acts 17:28); nation (Mark 7:26).
 2. Illus. chosen and kind – "choosing up sides" for ball game. Boys going to Dyersburg, TN for try-outs before a St. Louis Cardinals scout.
- D. A Royal Priesthood, I Pet. 2:9.
 1. In the Old Testament the monarchy and the priesthood were separate. Cf. I Sam. 13:8-14; 2 Chron. 26:16-21.
 2. Two words:
 - a. *Basileus*, "*king,*" Luke 7:25. Denotes one possessed with royal dignity because he reigns with the Lord. Rev. 1:5-6.
 - b. Priesthood – a body of priests, not confined to a few select ones.
 3. Two ideas inferred.
 - a. Possessing royalty, his behavior should always be befitting his spiritual station. Cf. Edward VIII married Mrs. Ernest Simpson, a twice divorced American woman, on Dec. 10, 1936. He abdicated the throne. 2 Cor. 7:1.
 - b. Priesthood – the principle idea in mind is sacrifice.

(1) We offer up “*spiritual sacrifices*,” I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15.

(2) We present our body as a “*living sacrifice*,” Rom. 12:1-2.

4. Consider priests in the Old Testament.
 - a. Priests had a special relationship with God.
 - b. Priests would pray for the people. Cf. I Sam. 12:23.
 - c. Priests were called upon to teach the people. Ezra 7:10.

E. A Holy Nation, I Pet. 2:9.

1. “*Holy*” is from *hagios*. “In its moral and spiritual significance it meant separated from sin and therefore consecrated unto God.
2. God’s people are an:
 - a. Holy Priesthood, I Pet. 2:5.
 - b. Holy nation, I Pet. 2:9.
 - c. Holy temple, Eph. 2:21
3. As Christians we must be holy, I Pet. 1:15-16; James 1:27.

F. A Peculiar People, (“*His own special people*,” NKJV), I Pet. 2:9.

1. “As a peculiar people, they belong to God in a sense that no other people do,” Clinton Hamilton, Commentary on I Peter.
2. They are God’s possession or property, Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:20.

G. “*The People of God*,” I Peter 2:10

1. This is the opposite of their previous status. They have been called by the gospel, 2 Thess. 2:14; they now are God’s own people! Cf. Romans 9:25; Hos. 2:23.
2. A people who have now “*obtained mercy*.”
 - a. “Grace is when God gives us what we do not deserve.”
 - b. “Mercy is when God does not give us what we deserve.” Eph. 2:1-5.
3. It is important that we remember the depths of the sin we were in so as to be able to really appreciate His rich mercy.

H. “*Strangers*,” or “*sojourners*,” NKJV, I Pet. 2:11.

1. “*Strangers*” (from *paroikos*), in the Scriptures, a stranger, foreigner, one who lives in a place without the right of citizenship,” Thayer.
2. We are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), but this world is not our home. Cf. Heb. 13:14.
3. We are like Abraham’s seed; we live in a strange land, Acts 7:6. Cf. v. 29.

I. “*Pilgrims*,” I Pet. 2:11.

1. A so-journer in a strange land, one who is traveling through.

II. Application: Responsibilities which stem from who we are:

A. We must show forth His praises, I Pet. 2:9.

1. In worship. John 4:24; I Pet. 2:5.
2. In words, John 9:25,30,31,33.
3. In the way we live, Matt. 5:16.

B. We must abstain from fleshly lusts, I Pet. 2:11.

1. Why?
 - a. They are beneath the Christian’s royal dignity.
 - b. They war against the soul.
 - c. They encumber his travel as a so-journer.

C. Engage in good works.

1. The kind God ordained, Eph. 2:10.
2. Why?
 - a. You are a social creature with influence.
 - b. To glorify God.
 - c. To go to heaven.

Conclusion:

1. In view of who and what a Christian is, why would anyone choose not to be a Christian?
--Bobby Witherington, Oct. 18, 2015