

June 5, 2016  
Sunday Evening Service  
Communion  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
© 2016 David J. Whitcomb

*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from 1 Peter 2:9-12.

1. List four things God has done for Christians (according to this passage) to make us distinct.
2. Why does God desire for us to be distinct from the world?
3. What are some practical ways by which we can appear to be distinct from the world?
4. What is the greatest glory God can receive?
5. What is the difference between being distinct for God's glory and just being weird?

### **LIVING TESTIMONIES** **1 Peter 2:9-12**

All of us grew up having parents, grandparents, teachers, neighbors, and probably youth pastors or preachers who told us to do this and don't do that. Rules! Rules! Rules! My generation decided to change that as we rebelled against nearly all rules. We said that we were not going to conform to the expected norm. Now we are reaping what we sowed. We have a generation that lives as though they cannot grasp the ideas of rules. The fact that someone is an authority over them who has the right to create and enforce rules escapes them. From the president of the nation to the elementary school student, it

seems that there is no comprehension of the need and purpose for rules.

Even many Christians have fallen into this pit. A young generation of professing Christians appears to believe that it is good and necessary to dump anything that smacks of tradition. If the parents or grandparents held a tradition rooted in Christian teaching, the new generation assumes it needs to be rejected for something new.

So what is the new way that takes such precedence? The new way is for Christians to avoid any appearance of distinction from the world they claim they are trying to redeem. The new way is to try to appear just like the normal, typical people of the world. We are told we need to dress like them, act like them, talk like them, live like them, sing like them, drink like them, and be entertained like them.

That creates a bit of a problem. If we are indeed trying to build redemptive relationships with people of the world, shouldn't we indicate by our lifestyles that there is something from which they need redeeming? According to Peter's instruction to Christians who lived in a world very much like ours, it is not only "okay" but "good and right" for us to live distinctive lives. This is a means God has chosen to help sinners in our world to realize there is a better way to live. God expects us to live "missionary" kind of lives for a reason.

### **God Has Made Us Distinct (vv.9-10).**

That God has made His people distinct is obvious throughout the Bible and especially in this text. Notice the list of four specific traits that make us distinct. *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,*

First, we learn that God's people are a chosen race. How many different races are there in the world? That might be hard to pin down. But we know that all of the races in the world today grew out of Noah's three sons Ham, Shem, and Japhath. A further division of the races occurred when God confused the people who had united at Babel. The result was a scattering over the face of the earth, from which various races developed.

By the time of Abraham, there were many people groups represented in the world. But God chose Abraham, who was just

another descendant from Shem, who was living among the Chaldeans in Ur. God chose Abraham to make a new nation, a new race out of him that still exists to this day. The whole world recognizes the Jewish race as unique.

The question that comes up because of our text is: “Does the world recognize us Christians as a chosen race?” It is true that Christianity (people who are like Christ) is made up of every race of people. But we ought to be identifiable as a unique, distinct kind of people who have certain traits in common with each other and things not in common with every other people group.

We will be obviously distinct if we live as though we are also a royal priesthood. Again, there is a similarity here between Old Testament Israel and Christians. God also chose the people of the nation He created through Abraham to be a royal priesthood. Through Moses, God said, “*And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel*” (Exodus 19:6). The priesthood was very important in Israel’s history. The priest was responsible as the representative of the people to God and of God to the people. The high priest was the one and only person who was allowed to enter the presence of God in the Holy of Holies to present the blood of the sacrifice for the covering of the people’s sins once each year on the Day of Atonement. Without the priests, the people of Israel were no different than everyone else in the world.

God has chosen us in Christ to be not just a priesthood but a royal priesthood. We are like kings who will reign and rule with Christ in the eternal state. We are also priests who have the privilege to enter into the very presence of God to worship Him and to plead for help. That is why God has given us these amazing invitations: *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need* (Hebrews 4:16). *And, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus* (Hebrews 10:19). What a privilege it is to come into the very presence of God to lay down our burdens and requests.

Third, we are a holy nation. The word nation speaks of an ethnic group or people group. God chose Old Testament Israel to be an ethnic group set apart for Himself. We Christians are also a distinct

people group whom God has separated out of the world to serve and represent Him.

Fourth, we are a personal possession of God. Of Israel God said: “*They shall be mine,*” says the LORD of hosts, “*in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him*” (Malachi 3:17). He says the same thing about us who He purchased by Christ’s blood. Therefore, we can say with confidence, “I am His and He is mine.” That is the confidence of every believer.

One would think that such special favor from God, such unique expressions of love toward us would make us obviously different. Indeed it does. Why did God do that to us? God’s purpose in making us distinct is *that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light* (v.9b). How amazing is this? God Himself personally called us out of the darkness of sin. This was a critical action for us because we are all born in the condition of sin. It is a dark condition whereby we cannot see truth, cannot walk in light, and, therefore, stumble over the realities of God. In that darkened condition, we deserve God’s wrath.

But in love God miraculously drew us out of the darkness into His marvelous light. Because of His merciful act, one day we understood our pitiful sinful condition. Suddenly, we saw the marvelous light of God’s truth, His person, and character. We finally grasped the reality that He is perfect and we are not and that we needed a covering for our sins and offenses.

Because God washed away our sins and gave us a new heart, we now evangelize. That is one of the meanings of the word translated *proclaim*. The Greek word comes from *exangello* which means to declare, preach or proclaim. The root word is *angelo* which speaks of a messenger, an evangelist, a missionary. Because God made us distinct, we DO ALWAYS proclaim God’s excellencies. His excellencies speak of His moral excellence and His powerful acts.

How do we do that? We will consider that in a moment. First we need to consider more reasons **why** we do it. We declare, announce God’s excellence because God has been merciful. Because of His mercy, we are now a people. Peter encouraged us: *Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people* (v.10a). In our sinful condition, we were just part of the mass of people who deserve

God's wrath. In our past condition, we were no one special just like the heros, movie stars, and world leaders are no one special. Only God's excellent work of drawing us to Himself and giving us the light of truth makes us a special and distinct people.

We now have experienced mercy. *Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (v.10b)*. We are a special people only because God has poured out His mercy on us. God's mercy is the amazing benefit we do not deserve. Mercy is God having pity on us to the point that He withholds from us the eternal condemnation we deserve.

The more we contemplate the reality of these two verses, the greater God grows in our estimate. While we should be astonished and humbled because of the evidence of God's mercy on us who deserve His wrath, still we cannot comprehend the depth and breadth of that mercy. I will not grasp the full extent of God showing mercy as He chose to draw me to Himself, to enlighten me, to make me His own special possession, until I am with Him in the eternal state. In a small way, it is like viewing the largest building in the world. As we marvel at how big and high and magnificent it is, we must admit that we are really unaware of the magnitude of the building. When we delve into the specifications of the building and consider how much it weighs, how far it can sway without falling over, or how much wind it can withstand, then we really begin to marvel at the work of man's hands. The work of God's hands in our lives is infinitely greater. Then should there not be a particular kind of response on our part to the amazing grace of God?

### **God Has Made Us Distinct for a Purpose (vv.11-12).**

Sometimes, because we are distinct, God tells us through His word, "Don't do that." In order to understand why we don't do certain things, we need to remember that we are pilgrims and transients. *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles (v.11a)*. These words remind us that this world is not our home, we're just a passing through. We are like Abraham who lived in tents because he was looking for the city whose designer and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). We too have our eyes on eternity.

Because we are sojourners, the possessions and accomplishments of this world are not our ultimate goal and desire. Instead of investing in that which passes away, we are laying up treasure in heaven (Mt. 6:19; 19:21). Everything that we have, everything that we accomplish in this world is simply a tool or a means to do the greater thing. The greater thing is to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into light. If we proclaim God's excellence, then we are each missionaries all day, every day. That is what missionaries do. In fact, the best modern illustration of the spiritual gift called *evangelist* is the missionary.

But because we are made of flesh that loves sin and live in a world of sin, we must be exhorted. Peter calls us away from conformity to this world to stand alongside him (*parakaleo*). Where does he stand? He stands on and with the authority of God's instruction and will. Which is? Well, because we don't belong to this world we *abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul (v.11b)*. That is where Peter stands and he calls us to stand with him on that matter.

The challenge requires us to keep on holding ourselves aloof from the passions of the flesh. We generally think of the passions of the flesh as being sexual in nature. Such passions certainly are sexual and we must be aware of them. Christians whom God has set aside to declare His excellencies must be determined to hold themselves aloof from pornography, adultery, fornication, and all sensuality. This means also that we must not think one favorable thought about homosexuality or adultery or fornication. We must never under any circumstances watch any movies or read any books that hint at these things because it will stir up the passions of our flesh.

But sexual sins are not the totality of the passions of the flesh. Paul described the passions of the flesh by writing, *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21)*. Living according to these passions is the character of unsaved people. But the same passions war against us.

Therefore, we must always stop to think that these passions wage war against your eternal soul. Our souls will live in the presence of God for eternity. God has set our souls apart for His own glory and purposes. God intends for our souls (the real person) to manifest His holy character. Sin and Satan hate God and hate any expression of God's character. Therefore, we are at war with the passions of the flesh. It is daily and unceasing. Those passions are stirred, stimulated, and assisted by demonic powers at work in our world and sometimes directed against us individually. Paul also warned us, *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).*

Don't do those passions! Rather, do this. Live right. *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable (v.12a).* This is one of the main means for us to proclaim the excellencies of God who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We must remember that we are living among Gentiles. In this statement the word *Gentiles* is a reference to sinners. Sinners are always watching to see how we conduct ourselves. If we live according to the passions of the flesh just like they do, why should they change? If you can go to work and talk about the passions of the flesh you experience in your entertainment, how will you appear to be distinct? If you respond to trials or disappointments the same way sinners do, how will they understand that God has called you into the light?

Therefore, we must work to keep our conduct honorable. *Conduct* speaks of the simple, everyday details of life. How do we talk, dress, react, and what do we do? Practically speaking, this means that we just cannot get drunk—period! We must not lose our tempers. We must not gossip. We must not despise our authorities. The “Gentiles” at our workplace, neighborhoods, and schools are watching to see if we do these things.

There are various games on the market like *Trivial Pursuit*. These games require a certain amount of knowledge about what the “Gentiles” consider to be normal life. Pat and I do not do well at all with those games when the category is movies, movie stars or modern music. The reason is that we just don't watch many new movies and we don't listen to popular music. Why not? Isn't that kind of

backward, anti-social, and Amish-like? In our experience, we have discovered that most modern movies exalt *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these*. If those words sound familiar, they should. God just told us in Galatians 5:19-21 that those are the characteristics of the flesh-driven people contrasted to characteristics of Holy Spirit led people. That is why we don't watch those movies. That is why we don't listen to that kind of music. We work to keep our conduct honorable.

Honorable conduct is behaving in a way that God calls “good.” If you try to live like that expect a particular response. Expect criticism. We try to live right *so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they still have to see our good works (v.12b)*. Because sin is darkness and spiritual blindness, the people of this world don't understand why we don't do what we don't do and why we do what we do.

Spiritual blindness tends to call good evil and evil good. Therefore, a person who is clearly and plainly biologically a man, but who thinks he is a woman is considered to be good and acceptable. And the person who says that such foolish imagination is contrary to God's truth is guilty of hate speech and should be punished. In spite of such twisted thinking, God's standard still stands: *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20)*. Missionaries who proclaim the excellencies of the merciful God in a sin-darkened culture by the way they live will be criticized.

Do this too: Let good works shine. Even when sinners criticize us, we must live so *they may see your good deeds (v.12c)*. Words that tell of God's mercy are great. Actions that speak of God's mercy are great also. Jesus taught: *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16)*. The greatest way to give glory to God the Father is to trust Him, to believe what He says in His Word.

And do this: Expect God to use your testimony to bring others to Christ. The sinners watch our good deeds *and glorify God on the day of visitation (v.12d)*. The day of visitation is the day God draws

a sinner to Himself and saves him or her from sin. God uses our testimonies to affirm His truth. When God opens the sinner's eyes to see truth and grants that person salvation, he or she will be eternally grateful for the distinct life you lived before him or her.

We are each missionaries. While we hold missionaries past and present in high esteem for their selfless sacrifices to go and tell the wonderful story of God's salvation, we often forget that we are to be doing the same thing. Missionaries are simply evangelists who proclaim the excellencies of God who calls us from darkness to the light of His truth. We are supposed to be living our lives in such a way that all day, every day, we are proclaiming (evangelizing) His excellencies.