

Good morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2: 9-12.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

This is the Word of the Lord. Let us pray.

This morning I am going to draw a picture of what it is like for a Christian to be a part of this “chosen people” that has just been spoken of. I have three points, and after those points have been established I will end by making a contrast between what the “day of visitation” (or day of judgment) spoken of by Peter will be like for those included in this “chosen people”, and what it will be like for those who are not part of this “holy nation”.

My first point this morning is that for God’s people, it is the utmost glory to belong to God, a chosen race to Him, though we be exiles and sojourners on this earth.

What do I mean by this? I mean that there is nothing better in this life, on this earth, in our imaginations, in Lausanne, Switzerland, Lusaka, Zambia, Washington D.C. or Hollywood, California, than to be called a son, or a daughter, of the perfect God.

Why is this such a glorious thing? It’s a glorious thing because of what there is in us by nature, what we are really like, on the inside. We like to think ourselves something better than we are. We are wise. We are benevolent. We are cool. We have this view of ourselves that at times even makes it seem that it’s cool to be a Christian because of us, because of the kinds of people we are rather than because of our adoption into the family of GOD. But what does Scripture tell us? Scripture tells us that by nature we’re opposed to God, it’s as if we’re rebels fighting against him. In fact it goes so far as to say we hate God. By nature we do nothing that is good. By nature we are “dead in our sins. Romans tells us plainly:

“...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.’”

We need to understand this message first if we are to get what Peter is talking about here. Peter knew that he was like this. He knew what it was to be a rebel, to

deny Jesus, to choose to save himself harassment and even physical pain rather than glorify God.

In Romans 7, Paul proclaims, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Peter knows the tragic reality of what Paul writes. He is the man who turned from his Saviour. He’s the wretched man who, knowing that Jesus had said he would betray him three times, knowing that he had said he would never do so, still went ahead and did what he had said he would never do. A wretched man... A man like you and me, because this is our state without the Lord’s intervention. Apply your minds to this fact, that you were nothing, and you are nothing now, apart from the grace of God, which has reached down and grabbed you in the swamp of sin you were drowning in, pulled you up, ripped you free from all the spindly, oozing vines of sin that were wrapping themselves so tightly around you, and yanked you up out of that into, as we read, His marvelous light. God has seen fit--for reasons unknown to us, other than for His own glory--to reach out in His mercy, and give us everlasting life. Not only this, but He had His own Son, the only person to ever live without sin, put to death, so we might live free from sin, despite our sin.

Parallel these things in your mind: you outside Christ, dying a slow but eternal death, as God’s word says, “without Christ and without hope in the world,” then shift your thoughts to what Jesus Christ did for us by dying for us, and what has been given to us as sons and daughters of God.

Only when we have both the wretchedness of our sin, and the immense love and mercy of God in our minds, will we be able to see what a glory it is to be a part of God’s chosen race.

If the glory of belonging to Christ infinitely surpasses everything else, why is it that we strive to achieve glory in the common and mundane things of this life? Why do we hate standing out as Christians, being different, being what Peter calls ‘aliens’? Why do we so much want to be like the world?

On the way here a few weeks ago, I was in Detroit Metropolitan Airport. After I went through security, I looked at my ticket and found my gate number. I then proceeded to walk down the stretch of the terminal to my gate. I found a seat and sat down. There were not many people sitting around me—a older woman sitting a couple chairs down from me, a few people in the row behind me, then a handful of others scattered among the rows that followed further back.

About ten minutes after I sat down, a man wandered up through the rows and plopped himself down in the chair next to me. He was a sophisticated older man with a hard face and disheveled hair. Well, hard looks have never stopped me from talking to someone, so I turned to him and ask him why he was headed to Frankfurt. He told me that he wasn’t headed to Frankfurt, but Rome. He was a restaurant owner in Detroit, but was originally from Rome, and was

going back to settle some legal matters concerning his deceased mother's estate.

After he had told me his story, he ask me mine. I told him why I was here, and gave him the back-story on me coming here to work with Westlake. To this, he told me that he didn't care much for dogma, but he knew of a Christian man living in Rome who started an orphanage for kids, unwanted by their parents. This was Christianity. Giving. Serving. Being selfless. His advice to me was to care for other people and not get caught up into all the Bible stuff.

His story was nice, and I liked the thought of giving, serving, and being selfless, so I shook my head and heartily agreed with him. The conversation lingered a little longer; then I went to check in.

Do I know that Christianity is more than giving, serving and being selfless? Of course I do. Giving, serving and being selfless are all good things, but if that's all we have, and those things don't come out of a love for Jesus Christ, we'll find they won't count for anything in eternity.

In my hometown, there is a mega-Church that has four different campuses stretched out over the city. They have around 20,000 people that attend services over the weekend. Their services consist of flashing lights, smoke machines, and oversized TVs.

They worship to the top 20 singles on secular radio—from Coldplay to Green Day to U2 to Aerosmith. The sermon they hear every week is: God wants us to be satisfied. We can't be fully satisfied without God in our lives. So, let God into your life, and He will bless you to full satisfaction.

But tragically, just as I failed to do with the man at the airport, there is **no mention of the Gospel** at this church.

This Gospel-lite version of Christianity is so prevalent. So called "Christian" books can sell thousands, millions of copies, even making it onto the best-seller lists, but the Gospel they present is a pale imitation of the gritty and raw, 'I will live for the glory of Jesus Christ at any cost' gospel of Peter or Paul. And you know this? Because you've probably read some of them.

Now, what's all this got to do with us? Well this is what: my failure at the airport, and the mega-church's failure Sunday after Sunday, and the gospel-lite books that sell thousands, are all examples of how we exchange **the glory we have in God, for the things of this world**.

My actions in the airport showed, that I would rather have everyone observing me think that I was just a nice guy working in the ministry than that I was a real Christian **living for the glory of God**.

The mega-Church in my hometown has made it very apparent that they cherish the glory of a rock show with a self-help message during intermission, more than they cherish the glory of God, the glory of worship, and the glory of the Bible.

And these books make it clear that its easier and more beneficial to sell 'I'm a nice little Christian, everyone will like me and everything will go well with me' version of Christianity than it is to teach the truth of God's word.

And the tragedy for those of us who come from the post-Christian western developed world is that we now have church leaders from Africa and Asia calling us back to the truth of the gospel.

But what about closer to home? Are there ways in which we choose the things of the world over the things of Christ?

Well, think about it: **Men, are you rejoicing in the glory of remaining pure in heart and in mind, or are you taking glances at women, and magazines, and computer sites you shouldn't be? Do you love the glory of humbly serving God and others more than the car you drive and the house you live in? Do you thrive in the glory of leading your families to Christ, or are you spiritually lazy and at ease, working like a tiger at your business but coasting at home?**

Ladies, **do you rejoice in the glory of being called by God to care for your families**, and supporting your husband as he leads your family, or do you find yourself getting critical and undermining his authority?

Young men and women, do you realize the glory of obeying your parents in all things, or do you reject what they say? Do you realize the glory of remaining pure until marriage, or do you want pleasure right now? Do you know the glory of being rejected for God, or do you hate not being as cool as others in your school?

If we know mentally that it is the utmost, best, wonderful glory to be God's children; and if we know that when it comes down to the cold hard facts, we don't live this way; why not resolve to change? Why not decide to live putting the glories of God, and the implications of that above all the junk of this temporary life?

So, my first point, for God's people, it is the utmost glory to belong to God though we are exiles and strangers to this world. My second point is this: For

God's people, the purpose of our existence is, to declare the excellencies of Him who called us from darkness to marvelous light.

Those who have been Born Again have a specific and set purpose that overarches, but is intimately involved with, our entire lives. That means our jobs, our families, our church, our daily routine.

The well-known first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks this: What is the chief end of man? Essentially, this is asking, "What is man's greatest task or goal? What should his life be dedicated to?"

The answer is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

We've just talked about enjoying God and the glories that come from being one of His. Now I want us to consider the flip side of that coin. In what ways are we giving glory back to God?

Well, in order to come to an answer, we have to inspect two areas of our lives. One of those areas is our words—how we speak and what we speak. The second area is our actions—the things we do to others, our reactions to things done to us, and the things we do in private.

Ephesians says, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

Mark 16 says, "Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation."

These are simply two verses from the Bible, which give us very pointed and specific commands that serve as directions for us to glorify God with our speech. What kind of things comes out of our mouths? Who are they building up? Ourselves, others, God? Are we honest, or do we lie to our parents, or not tell our parents the whole truth? Do we honor our husbands and wives by what we say to them or about them to our friends at church, or colleagues at work?

Then the command from Mark... are we witnessing? Are we bringing glory to God by loving the lost so much, that we want to tell them the good news of Jesus as well as the consequences if they don't repent? When was the last time that you warned someone of the wrath to come unless they repented? And not this, but when was the last time you wept while sharing the message of the Gospel, because you truly cared for that person's soul?

Do we do this? Are we bringing glory to God with what we say?

As for our actions, are we bringing glory to God with what we do? Are we making a point to put others above ourselves? Are we tithing? Are we caring for the elderly and the orphans? Does the love we claim we have for others come out in the way we act toward them? Are we thirsting and being fed on the milk of the Word? Young people, are you consistently obeying your parents? Are we coming before the Throne Of Grace for ALL of our needs? Does God look at us like He looked at Job and say: there is a man or a woman of faith.

Now, I all too often hear things like: “God hasn’t given me the gift of witnessing.” Or, “I prefer to witness with my life instead of my words.”

These statements are wrong! Both our actions and our words are an essential part of bringing glory to God with our lives. Since when do we divorce our lives from the things we speak? What would life be without communication? If we’ve been born again, we are a new creation. That means that we have a new identity! If you were to go up to someone and ask them where they were from, you would think they were crazy if they replied with anything but their mouth.

The same is true with our actions. If we talk about Jesus all the time, yet live like the world, are we really bringing glory to God? Of course not! We are acting out of hypocrisy. If a man were to go around proclaiming how proud he was to be an American, all the while burning American Flags, we would think there was something vitally wrong.

The same is true in glorifying God. We need our WHOLE lives conformed to His likeness; our words and our actions.

This is why making it a priority to be in church every Sunday is vital! Being with fellow believers each Sunday propels us to bring glory to God with our actions and with our words! We are going to church, listening to the message, being convicted, thinking about how we can change, and singing and praying with our voices! Joining in praise with the family of God is one of the most basic things we should be doing! So just ask yourself a question: are there times when you’re in town, but you choose not to come? Church, that shouldn’t be.

God demands glory with our actions and words. What better place is there to grow in doing this than church?

The Second point was, for believers our existence is one with a set purpose: to give glory to God with our words and our actions. The third point this morning is that for God’s people, it is inevitable that living like this for God will cause us to be spoken against as evildoers.

How do we know this? Our passage puts it pretty plainly. Verse 12 says, “when they speak against you as evildoers...” not if.

That doesn’t leave much room for debate. In the same way it’s assumed that Martin will get teased because he is going bald, it is to be assumed that Christians will undergo persecution—and not simply the Christians that live in the hostile areas of China and North Korea. Paul writes in 2 Timothy, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...”

This persecution will come to us in all different forms and sizes. It may be being looked over for promotion, because they know you’re a Christian. It may be mocking comments, or critical remarks, **but whatever form or size it comes in, it comes nonetheless.**

Knowing that persecution will come, what should be our response when it arrives?

James tells us the answer. He writes, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything.

Consider it all joy. Do we do this? When we live lives giving glory to God and are persecuted for it, do we rejoice knowing that what men mean for evil God is using for good? When things are done against us, do we instantly think about how we’ve been hurt, or do we rejoice, eagerly awaiting to see what God is going to do?

Again, in verse 12, we see that responding to persecution in a joyful, Godly manner will cause even our persecutors to give glory to God in the day of His visitation—on the day when he comes to judge.

Having established that persecution will come to those who desire to live a godly life, it is a scary thing if we are not being persecuted. If you can look at your life, and say that you are not being persecuted for the Gospel, that is a pretty good self-evaluation as to whether or not you desire to live a godly life. It is a sobering thing to hear, but it is needed. We have a tendency to read things like this and think, well, he’s talking about Christians in general, or he’s talking about Christians living in savage times.

Brothers and sisters, these are savage times. The world hates God, and it loves impurity. Therefore, when we give glory to God by making it clear that the Bible is against **homosexual practice**, and abortion, and female leadership in the Church, and when we as men act like the man God has commanded us to be, and when we all live lives in which we declare **the praises of God with our actions and our mouths**, we should expect to be persecuted, and in this we should rejoice.

And if you are not facing opposition of one degree or another you've got to ask yourself whether you're living as you should. **And this brings us to our last point...**

The third point was: For God's people, living in a way that is glorifying to Him will inevitably cause us to be spoken against as evildoers. My brief and concluding point this morning is this: For God's people, these things that we've spoken about are altogether done in the context of Christ's Day of Visitation, His return as Judge.

What am I saying? I'm saying that my first three points—knowing that being a part God's family is the utmost glory of this life, living in a way that declares His excellencies by giving glory to Him with our lives, and rejoicing in persecution—are done because we look forward to the day that He returns to earth as judge.

On that day, we will no longer have to battle our fleshly desires, which try to usurp our utmost glory of being called a child of God.

On that day, we will no longer be tempted to give glory to anything or anyone but God. We will fall at His feet and rejoice and sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!" And we won't have to stop to feed the crying baby, but we will declare His excellencies for eternity!

On that day, we will no longer have to endure persecution for the name of Christ. Instead, we will be made new, perfect beings that have no need to develop perseverance.

This is why we do all these things, all the while, looking forward to Christ's return. The Bible says that we are running a race, and when a runner runs a race, there is never a time in his mind when he is not thinking about crossing the finish line. Everything that that runner does, he does, to have preformed well after crossing the finish line. The same is true with us.

But there is another side to Christ's return.

While for all those who have responded to His offer of life will receive life, when Christ returns as Conquering King it will spell doom for those who have made themselves his enemies in this life. Jesus said **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"**

Jesus hasn't got porn stars or drug addicts in mind there. He's got religious people in His sight. People who go through all the motions: saying the right stuff, sitting next to us in church, but whom Christ never knew.

While we rejoicing at the thought of His future coming, let us examine ourselves and make sure we will greet Him as our returning King and Saviour, not our enemy.

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