

In **1 Peter 2:5** we talked about the fact that we are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What was once an exclusive privilege of the Levitical order has now been conferred upon us as Jesus has made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. Like the priests of old, this job requires sacrifices: burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, guilt and sin offerings, and of course the drink offering. Being spiritual sacrifices, however, they do not involve animals, fire, grain, or blood; but they are extremely practical none-the-less and touch on every aspect of our relationship with God. And in order to serve in this capacity, it requires one to embrace the fact that they do not belong to this world. The priesthood requires separation from the identity which the world provides and an acceptance of our new identity provided to us in Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

I became a believer the spring of my freshman year in high school. As you know, high school is an emotionally disturbing time for oh so many reasons. Being a new believer, I suddenly did not really fit with any of the people I used to hang

out with; and I definitely did not desire to live like they did. As a result, I found myself alone a lot and that loneliness often haunted and tortured me. I had friends for sure, but the nature of my relationships became confusing because they could not share with me what had become most important to me and I could no longer share with them what was most important to them.

And I remember in one of my very painful and lonely moments, the Lord took me to this passage and it literally changed my life. It was at that moment that the Spirit bridged some weird gap in my soul and I suddenly connected to the fact that I was super special and that this world was not my home. I did not fully understand the depths of this truth; but that moment implanted in me a confidence and a determination to stand separate and, if necessary, alone. The Spirit actually gave me a sense of belonging—truly belonging—to my heavenly Father and it was amazing. I have never forgotten that moment. My life has since been a journey of learning to live as an alien separated from this world and given over to God. And He has always required me to play according to a different set of rules or expectations from others, in every situation whether at school, work, or in all my relationships. It was always a bit frustrating, but now I am learning to love the glory of my calling knowing full well to whom I belong.

I believe you can have one of those moments. This passage is full, it is thick, it is heavy, and it is powerful; and if you let the truth of who you are into your soul and penetrate your psyche, you will find that you will be able to understand and begin to embrace your unique identity that sets you apart from all others. I know we have all started to grasp this idea that we are aliens and strangers on this earth, but the reality is that our separation, our exclusivity, is even more radical

than you could probably imagine; which means the practical implication to your life is also just as radical. If you are a true child of God, you belong to a different race of people; and you are a part of a new nation that has no possessory rights in this world. As we go through this passage, I want you to start to think about what that practically means for you. You are an alien.

Just so you know, the capitalized portions of this passage indicate where Peter pulled text from the Old Testament and applied the promises of Israel to our lives. It is the translator's way of indicating the original sources.

But you are a chosen race.

Deuteronomy 10:14-15

Look, the highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God. Yet the Lord chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you, their descendants, above all other nations, as is evident today.

Isaiah 43:18-21

Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field will glorify Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I have given waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people. The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise.

We are fundamentally unique and different than all others that we qualify as a separate **race**. That means we literally have different DNA than others—a spiritual DNA. Through the **New Creation** that has been imparted to our lives, we have been infused with God’s very nature, a nature that is righteous, holy, and true (**Ephesians 4:24**). I know we quote this verse a lot but it applies so often; so please learn it and embrace it. Righteous, holy, and true are adjectives which define our race. Thus, you can be fairly confident that if these attributes do not define your life, then you are likely not living as a child of God. That goes the same for God’s divine agape love; if it does not define your life, then you are either not a child of God or you have chosen to live as a child of the world.

We have also been **chosen** by the Father to be a part of this race. We have been handpicked. Imagine, of all the people who have ever existed or who will ever exist, you were hand-chosen by the Father to come to Jesus; and because the Father sent you to Jesus, He has embraced you and welcomed you into His fold.

John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 6:44-45

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will

raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

Ephesians 1:4-5

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Imagine, not only were you chosen by the Father to be a part of this race, but it gave Him great pleasure to mark you and usher you into the arms of Jesus. You, yes you, bring pleasure to the Father. This is why you can trust that if you fall on the Rock you will not be put to shame, for you are a person who brings God great pleasure. That means He actually enjoys you, wants you, loves having you around, loves spending time with you, and simply adores you. Remember our study in ***Song of Solomon***, we have captured His heart and hold it captive with one glance of our eyes; our love delights Him (***Song 4:9-10***). We are a chosen race.

A royal priesthood.

Did you notice the switch from **2:5** which said “holy” priesthood? We are not just set apart, we are royalty. I know it is hard for us to appreciate this truth, but please understand how culturally radical this concept is. In the Jewish statehood, the religious order was always separate from the royal order: one came from the

tribe of Levi and the other from the tribe of Judah. And there was to be no crossover between the two. The one time that Saul tried to take the role of a priest and offer up sacrifices, God rejected him as king (**1 Samuel 13:8-14**). But we, the chosen ones, hold both titles. We are holy priests and we are royal priests because we will rule and reign with Christ as His holy princes.

2 Timothy 2:11-12

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him.

Revelation 2:26-28

To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, to them I will give authority over all the nations. They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

Revelation 3:21

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Revelation 5:9-10

Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and

purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 22:3-5

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him [which is the role of a priest]; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

As the combined priesthood and the kingship were vested in Melchizedek of old, they have also been vested in Jesus Christ. And since we are like Him, He has vested the priesthood and the royal authority in each of us. Can you imagine? We will have the same authority vested in us which the Father gave to the Son. And even though our reign has yet to begin; it is a guarantee; we will sit with Him on His throne and not only reign on this earth with His rod of iron, but throughout all

eternity. You are royalty, a son of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and like Jesus you will reign forever and ever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

A holy nation.

What is a nation? Technically, a nation is a large aggregate of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory. Accordingly, the Spirit once again reminds us that we are set apart from all others and our territory is not bound by land or by oceans, our territory is literally all of creation. Moreover, true believers are all united by a common descent or parentage, we have the same heavenly father. We are united in history with all who have ever trod this path before us—the history not of religion but the extremely narrow pathway of those who have made the choice to live by faith. We are bound by a culture and language of love—God’s divine love. We are a unique collective of radicals who have made the choice 1) to fully identify ourselves with Jesus knowing that WE DO NOT BELONG to this world; and 2) to practically live like WE DO NOT BELONG to this world. We are a holy nation and we live by a completely different set of criteria than those who have chosen to make their abode in this world.

These are truths by which you and I can be, and are to be, inextricably bound. These are truths by which we can truly identify ourselves and be proud. Our part in this holy nation provides the basis for our relationships and is why I can trust myself to you, let down my self-protection, let you in, and take the risk of letting you love me. You and I are both part of this holy, set apart, nation and we share so many attributes in our spiritual lineage that it is mind numbing. We love Jesus. We are given to Him and we are seeking to be like Him. We have come to realize

that it takes a collective to fully experience Him and we get to share that journey of faith together.

As a nation, we should never feel safer than when we are around one another and never more proud than when we look around and know that we are united under one banner: faith in Jesus Christ. We should never feel more free than when we gather at the communion table and remind ourselves, together, that Jesus has set us free from the sickness of self and has given us His life to fill our lives (a complete exchange) so that others get to know Him and experience Him by knowing and experiencing us. We should never feel more empowered than when we fight together in the Spirit against not just the unseen enemies of darkness but against the enemies that exist deep in our souls. We should never be more excited than when we see another member of this great nation filled with God's Spirit, living according to the leading of the Spirit, and forsaking all that this world has to offer. We are a nation of which we can be proud.

A people of God's own possession.

This one has always captured my heart and has penetrated to the depth of my being. This truth has kept me standing, walking, and continuing to find myself in Him. Just knowing who I am has given me unbelievable strength. Who am I? I am God's possession. Who am I? I am the one who belongs to the Lord my God Almighty who was and is and is to come whose name is the Lord of Heavens Armies. Who am I? Personally, He has said this about me: "Anyone who harms you harms ***my most precious possession***. I will raise my fist to crush them, and their own slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the Lord of Heaven's Armies has sent me" (***Zechariah 2:8-9***). Who am I? Well you better know because

there are real consequences of not treating me as His precious possession; and the Lord has a very long memory and nothing escapes His view. And who are you? There are a number of verses which speak of you being God's precious possession. The Spirit expects you to both read and own these truths.

Exodus 19:5-6

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 4:20

But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

Deuteronomy 14:2

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to

be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

That is who you are; a people for God's own possession. That is your identity; that is your security; that is your very personhood. Shed the ridiculous identity you have tried to create in order to survive this world. In fact, all that has stemmed for your goodness and that part of you that has tried to make the lie that you can be good like God, needs to be replaced for this identity. You are God's possession and He has given you His goodness. So you no longer have to fight for this silly identity you have created and try so hard to get others to believe. It is far too much work and no one truly believes it anyways. So get rid of it; accept who you are and own it, live it, and let it be your very personhood.

This new identity that Jesus offers us comes with a purpose: so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. And since "proclaim" is in the *aorist active subjunctive*, this is to

be your life and not just some evangelistic exercise; from beginning to end your life is to proclaim the excellencies of the Lord. This will not happen if you do not accept and embrace your identity. But once you do, then you can live as one who exudes Jesus all the time because you will be one who lives with Him and enjoys Him all the time. And for those of you who are new here, that is not just some religious phraseology. Literally, Jesus wants to live in you and through you such that your very being proclaims His excellencies and others get to know His character and nature simply by being in relationship with you.

Do you understand? This is not about your words; this is not about witnessing nor evangelism; and this is not about being one who goes to church claiming to “believe.” This is about His life being lived in your life such that you only do what your Father wants you to do, only say what your Father wants you to say, and only go where your Father wants you to go. And like the Son, your life will be lived only to do the will of God; accordingly, it will by definition proclaim His excellencies. As Paul says, “Examine yourself to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test” (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). If Jesus is among you, like Him, you will live only to do the Father’s will, for this reason we have been sent into the world. If you fail this test, then be honest about it, repent, and let Him give you His life for real.

You see, you have every reason to proclaim His excellencies; He has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. He has moved you out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, rebellion, pride, foolishness, hate, sensuality, selfishness, and so many other base

attributes of humanity. Whereas light is the emblem of sanity, wisdom, knowledge, kindness, love, safety, peace, assurance, and joy.

Isaiah 9:2

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.

Isaiah 42:16

I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, in paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone.

Isaiah 60:1-3

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Acts 26:15-18

'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will

appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Colossians 1:13-14

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the

kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We are no longer children of darkness. We are children of light and we must embrace this reality: it is our identity. I know, our flesh loves darkness and all that comes with it; but the Lord has given us so many reasons to let it go and let it die. For many of you when you hear “children of darkness” you don’t think that applies to you because you are not doing anything you consider to be raw evil. But remember what we have learned, only God is good. Thus, this darkness applies even to all your goodness. If what comes from your life is not a direct product of the Spirit of God but a result of you trying to be good for God, then it is by definition darkness. “And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is” (**Matthew 6:23**)! If you don’t fully grasp this truth, then I hate to say it but you are still bound by the false light of your own goodness.

When it says He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, “called” is in the *aorist active participle*. This means that every day of your life, from beginning to end, He is calling you out of darkness and into His light. That is how deep these delusions of “goodness” and “light” can be in our soul. Remember, the enemy poses as light and convinces us that so many things in this world, including our own ways of doing things, are light. So Jesus faithfully calls us over and over and over again, without stopping, to come out of this darkness, this delusion of light, and enter into His marvelous light. In His light we can see clearly, we don’t have to be afraid, and we don’t have to worry about tumbling and falling over things

unseen. His light illuminates the pathway He sets before us.

For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God.

This is another part of this verse that penetrated deep into my soul. The Lord is saying that before we came to Him we were no better off than the beasts of the earth. There was nothing truly alive in our lives. We were shadows, empty, forms of people, but not truly people. We were running around like the beast focused merely on survival and ensuring that no one got the best of us always ready to bite the hand of the person who tried. We were daily striving to find some little morsel of peace, hope or sustaining joy. We were striving to find purpose, meaning, and worth. But it all evaded our grasp and we were always left empty handed. It's as if we were ghost trying to get our hands on reality, but never being able to get a firm grip.

But now we are the people of God. We have identity and we can live like His people. We have purpose, meaning, and we have found our validation and no longer have to search for it. We can have lasting joy and a connection with others that goes beyond mere survival. We can be about others and it not be a selfish act; how amazing is that. We can actually love because we have been loved. We can live in hope and an assurance that transcends this world. We are now a people—the people of God.

Hosea 1:10

Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and in the place where it is said to them,

"You are not My people," it will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."

Hosea 2:23

At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself. I will show love to those I called 'Not loved.' And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' And they will reply, 'You are our God!'"

You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Prior to Jesus in you, there was never any evidence of forgiveness or true remission; you were a prisoner to your conscience, your failure, and sin. Guilt and shame lorded over your soul and there was no release from this self-evident truth. So you reached everywhere you could seeking some relief, trying to avoid the feeling, but never found it until you found Jesus. And now you have received mercy as God has chosen not to deal with you according to your sin.

Psalm 103:2-4; 10-12

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion...He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those

who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

This is radical mercy that has been applied to you and me. According to **Romans 9:23**, we are vessels or containers of His mercy. We are filled with it, imbued with it, and we are defined by it. By the way, “obtained mercy” is in the *aoist passive participle*. That means God has done it (*passive voice*); He is always doing it (*participle*); and from beginning to end mercy now defines our lives (*aoist tense*).

1 Peter 2:9-10

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This is who you are. This is your identity. The Spirit wants you to embrace this reality, own this reality, and live this reality. This is beyond amazing and if you let it into your heart, then you can start, to find the courage and strength to live like an alien and stranger in this world. You have a new identity and once you embrace it you will quickly see how worthless, useless, and ridiculous the old identity you created really is. It's time to complete the exchange: His life and His

identity for yours.

Let's pray