

1 Peter 2:9-10 | “A People *of* God and *for* God”

*Pastor Matt Brown*

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10.

Just two verses for this morning, but they are jam-packed with meaning. *[pause]*

The title for the sermon this morning is, “A People *of* God and *for* God.”

That title kind of reminded me of Abraham’s Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

In the Gettysburg Address, he says that famous line, “that government of the people, by the people, for the people.” *[pause]*

When you think about that line, what’s he emphasizing?

He’s emphasizing that the government revolves around the people.

It’s made up of and belongs to the people, it’s made by the people, and it’s there for the people.

And our title is in a similar format, but there’s a big difference.

The difference is *who* the line revolves around.

It’s not about the people, but about God.

We are a people *of* God and *for* God.

We belong to God and we are made for Him.

That’s what we will explore further today. *[pause]*

Let’s READ OUR PASSAGE. *[pause]*

Let’s say that someone sent letters to a bunch of people, and you were one of them, telling them to come to a certain place as they will be starting a new group...

...But that’s all the information you were given.

When you first gathered together with this group, wouldn’t you want some questions answered?

Like: Who are we? What is our identity going to be as a group? Why are we here? How did we get to be this group?

All of those questions relate to your *identity* as a group.

Well in a way, our passage answers these very important questions when it comes to the church, which is the people of God.

It will show us who we used to be, who we are now, how we got to be who we are, and why we are who we are.

*So let's jump in and see what it says first about our past...*

## **I. Who we used to be: Not God's people**

In this passage, Peter explains our past identity. *[pause]*

It's always good to remember your past identity because it reminds you of what God has done in your life.

Think of Paul - Paul always remembered his past.

He remembered and recounted often how he was a persecutor of the church.

And in retelling his story, he got to remind himself and show others the matchless grace of God.

That God would take him from being a persecutor of the church to an apostle and missionary of the church was astounding.

In every instance of his retelling of his story, it was like he was saying, "Look what God has done!" *[pauseeee]*

Well in each of our lives, our past identity is like that, it's a reminder of the mercy of God, for we can remember the difference between where we were and where we are now.

And even in this passage, Peter is reminding us of our past in order to highlight the mercy of God. *[pauseeeee]*

We were not a people.

This is talking about how the Gentiles used to not be included in the people of God.

It used to be only Israel that God primarily worked.

And living after the time of Christ, we don't quite grasp how big of a deal that this is because we are so used to the New Covenant time period.

So we should be even more grateful that God chose to include both Jew and Gentile in his grace. *[pause]*

Before Christ, and before we turned to Christ in faith, we were not a people.

We didn't have eternal life or the innumerable blessings of being a part of the people of God.

We were distant from God and had not received mercy. *[pause]*

In the past, we couldn't call out to Him as Father, but only as Judge. *[pause]*

That was our sad state before Christ - not a people and no mercy received.

We were living for ourselves and under the wrath and condemnation of God.

We were in darkness, without hope in this world, and without belonging to God. *[pauseeee]*

We need to really grasp this past reality in order to truly appreciate what God has done. *[pause]*

Peter is most likely referring here to the book of Hosea.

In Hosea 1, Hosea's wife has a girl and God tells Hosea to name her, "No Mercy."

And then his wife has a boy and God tells Hosea to name him, "Not my People."<sup>1</sup>

Yet that's not the end, for God doesn't give up on His people altogether, for in Hosea 2:23, he says...

"I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'" *[pause]*

We who were not His people are now His people, and we who had not received mercy, now receive His mercy. *[pauseeee]*

Do you remember your past identity and state before coming to faith in Christ?

Never forget it, for it reminds you where God has taken you. *[pause]*

Especially as Gentiles or non-Jews, we should be even more grateful for how God has included us in His people.

That was not always the case, and so we constantly give thanks to God for his mercy upon us. *[pause]*

*That is our past identity, but it's not our present identity for our text tells us who we are now...*

## **II. Who we are: God's people**

If you remember from last week's passage, Peter just ended by talking about those who stumble because they disobey the word and reject Christ.

And he said, "as they were destined to do."

Well now he makes a contrast and says, "*But you* are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession."

There may be some who disobey and reject Christ, but we are chosen and God's special possession. *[pause]*

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<sup>1</sup> See Hosea 1:6-9.

As we will look further at later, this is all of mercy, though.

It wasn't that we were awesome, but that God desired to be merciful to us. *[pauseeee]*

Looking broadly at these descriptors, we see a couple things come out.

First, each refers to us as a group.

We are a race, a priesthood, a nation, and a people.

So the focus of this passage is on the church, which involves all those who have trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

But secondly, each refers to something special and good that God has made us into.

We aren't just a race, but a chosen race.

We aren't just a priesthood but a royal priesthood.

We are a *holy nation*, and a *people of his own possession*.

So God hasn't just made us into a group, but into a chosen, royal, holy group that is *His* group of people. *[pause]*

And before we look at each of these individually, it's important to know that these terms were actually used of Israel in the Old Testament.

In Exodus 19, God says, "you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."<sup>2</sup>

Sound familiar?

So what God is doing is applying language given to Israel to the church now.

We are God's people! We are grafted into the olive tree, to use Paul's language. *[pause]*

So let's see each of these descriptions individually.

First, we are a chosen race.

This is pointing to the fact that Christians are now a new race.

This race isn't by physical descent, but by faith in Jesus.

Our citizenship is in Heaven and we are made into a new people group.

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<sup>2</sup> See Exodus 19:5-6.

Our new birth creates this new race of people, who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. *[pause]*

So what this means is that in the church there should be no hint of racism, partiality, or pride.

Paul says in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” *[pause]*

We are all made into a new race.

God has chosen people from all different ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures to become a new, chosen race.

It was nothing in ourselves that merited this, but it’s based on God’s loving choice. *[pauseeee]*

But not only that, we are also a royal priesthood.

We saw this last week.

We are each priests before God, serving Him and having access to approach Him.

There is no special class of Christians, for we are all priests before God, serving our great God with our lives. *[pause]*

Thirdly, we are called a holy nation.

We are a group of people set apart for God and His purposes.

We are therefore to live holy, set apart lives in the world for our Master. *[pause]*

We are a nation, not based on our ethnicity or even the region that we live in, but based on who our King is.

Our King is Jesus and we are his holy nation.

That means as a group we have a common identity with a certain worldview and certain values.

The church should look differently than the world because we are a set apart nation whose King is Jesus. *[pause]*

We follow Him above all, so that all of our earthly allegiances are subject to our citizenship in God’s holy nation, the church. *[pause]*

And fourthly, we are a people for his own possession.

We are God’s; we belong to Him.

So practically, we ought to live for Him and submit our lives and our church to Him.

We do everything for Him and His glory.

We are His people.

He's the owner, who bought us with the precious blood of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Now that we have seen each of these descriptions of the church, the people of God, let's think through what it means for us.

First, think about what it tells us about our relationship with God.

We have a special place in God's eyes, we are loved.

Not because we are amazing, but because he simply chose us to be His own special possession. *[pause]*

We are his people, so that should be humbling and remind us of the great privilege it is.

Being the church of God isn't some distant, unattached organization from God, but the church is His people, His priesthood, His nation, and His race.

The church isn't some last minute decision, but we are chosen and precious to the Lord. *[pause]*

Being God's means we are loved and cherished and close to Him, but it also entails great responsibility.

We have a special role in the world.

We are set apart by God to both live for Him and proclaim His excellencies to the world.

We are to be a shining light in this dark world, pointing people to God.

So let's cherish our special place and relationship with God, but let's never abandon our special responsibilities, either. *[pause]*

Practically, as a church this means we are to be growing closer to God in our relationship with Him, and reveling in His love.

But it also means we better be constantly on mission, proclaiming Him and serving Him.

Relationship and responsibilities, let's keep both in focus. *[pauseeee]*

These identity descriptors of the church also point us to our relationships with others in the church.

First, there is a lot more similarity with each other than we think.

We have each experienced God's mercy.

We have each been created into a new race, been placed into a new nation, and into the same priesthood. *[pause]*

You actually have more in common with the Christian in Africa or Asia than the unbeliever in America. *[pause]*

Also, our bond with each other should be strong, as God has brought us into one group.

We are one nation, one people, one race under God's reign, so let's live like it!

We are each a part of this group together, so let's act like we are one.

So we ought to remember our common God, our common relationship, and our common links together.

There should be supernatural unity, oneness, closeness, and openness among us.

So let's strive for that!

Let's strive for promoting unity, oneness, closeness, and openness among us. *[pauseeee]*

God has made us into His people - that is our identity now.

*So let's cherish it and live like it, but how did we get this identity?...*

### **III. How we got to be who we are: God's mercy**

It is wholly the mercy of God that we can go from being not a people to a people, and from no mercy to receivers of mercy.

It was all of God that we can be called chosen, holy, and called.

He has made us those things! *[pause]*

You don't choose yourself, and you can't call yourself.

Sinners can't make themselves holy, but God had to be the one to work!

He is the "chooser" and "caller"; he is the one who declares a sinner holy through Jesus.

That means that it's all of God's mercy, for He doesn't give us what we deserve. *[pause]*

Luis Palau shares this story in one of his books...

"A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son.<sup>3</sup> *[pauseeee]*

In mercy, God has not given us what we deserve, as we deserve to *not* be a part of His people.

The only thing we actually deserve is death and condemnation, but thankfully, we have a merciful God. *[pause]*

We were each in darkness.

Darkness is this picture of the realm of sin, ignorance, and death.

And he called us out of that realm and into his marvelous light, which pictures truth, righteousness, and life. *[pause]*

If it wasn't for his mercy, we would still be in darkness, stumbling around.

We would still be in sin and under the penalty of our sin, which is death.

But he has chosen to give mercy to people who didn't deserve it.

What else can we do but fall to our knees in gratefulness and worship?! *[pause]*

He has made us a people, His people, in mercy.

And that means we have meaning, purpose, and blessing, as we can be called children of God. *[pauseeee]*

Implied in this text is that this mercy is given to us through Christ.

It was only because Jesus died and rose again that we can receive mercy.

He had to take our sin and our place, and pay the penalty for our sin in order to take us out of darkness and into his light.

And he had to do this in order to make us His people. *[pauseeee]*

The difference between our past and present state is God's mercy.

For God wasn't obligated to save you, but did it out of mercy!

It was only by God's grace and mercy that we are saved!

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<sup>3</sup> Luis Palau, Experiencing God's Forgiveness, Multnomah Press, 1984.



It was only by God's grace and mercy that we are called out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

It was only by God's grace and mercy that he created us into a people. *[pause]*

Have you repented of your sins and turned in faith to Jesus Christ?

God's mercy is found in Christ and His work on the Cross, so will you receive the mercy extended to you? *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, when you truly understand what happened in salvation and in God making us His people, there can be no room for boasting.

There can be no room for thinking that we are deserving, or that we are entitled to anything.

If you boast, think you are deserving, or entitled to salvation or to being a part of God's people then you have neglected the clear truth of God's mercy.

If you do this, you are minimizing both your sinfulness and God's mercy. *[pauseeee]*

*How did we get to who we are? God's mercy. But the fourth question and answer is this...*

#### **IV. Why we are who we are: God's glory**

Why are we here? Why did God bring us together? Why did he unite all Christians together with such a bond as we have?

Have you ever wondered those questions?

There are so many thoughts as to the purpose of the church, but what is our *ultimate* purpose?

Is it to entertain? Is it to make people feel good about themselves? Is it to help people think positively and be materially successful in life?

Definitely none of those things.

Is it to share the Gospel, grow people to be more like Christ, and serve others?

Now we are getting closer, but those are more of the means to our ultimate purpose, not the ultimate purpose itself. *[pause]*

The ultimate purpose of the church is to glorify God.

The glory of God is kind of like the umbrella by which all of those other things fit under. *[pause]*

So what that means is that we aren't primarily here for ourselves.

Now of course, we are here partly because we can grow, be encouraged, be challenged, etc.

But the primary purpose of being here isn't for you.

This isn't a social club, of which you receive benefits and if you don't receive those benefits then you merely walk away.

We shouldn't be here because it makes us feel good or because we have always done so.

If that were the case, then everything in the church would be morphed to be in line with pleasing *us*.

And if everything is done to please us or to make us comfortable then we could end up not glorifying God...

...Because there are some things commanded in Scripture that go against our comforts or our wants. *[pause]*

We are often challenged out of our comfort zone. We are often challenged to think outside of ourselves.

What happens then? What happens when God's Word has friction with our wants? Which wins out?

You see, we aren't primarily here for us. *[pause]*

But also, we aren't primarily here for *others*.

We don't just merely take care of people's physical needs and leave it there.

If we were only here to make people feel good, then we would end up just entertaining the masses, while providing no spiritual change.

If we were only here to make people feel good, we would change our stances on important doctrines so that no one was offended. *[pause]*

But the church is not a social club or a networking event, it's the gathering of God's people to proclaim his excellencies!

Take a look at verse 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."

That's a purpose clause.

Peter is telling us our reason for being God's people, meaning, this is the very purpose of God redeeming a people of His own. *[pause]*

Think back to Israel.

He chose Israel out of all the nations of the world to be His, to be separate from the world, and to proclaim Him to the nations.

Well now we see that that's God's purpose of the church.

He chose us, set us apart, and was merciful to us in order that we would proclaim His excellencies in the world. *[pauseee]*

Let's take that phrase, "proclaim the excellencies of him," and break it down a little bit.

First, who are to be the ones who are to proclaim His excellencies?

Us! The chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people of his own possession.

We as the church are to be the ones proclaiming our great God, who called us out of the darkness and into his marvelous light. *[pause]*

It is mercy, which we just learned about, that propels us to proclaim.

And this makes sense.

Since God has lavished mercy upon us, then our tongues can't help but announce what He has done.

Experiencing God's mercy personally leads to extolling God's mercy publically.

It's those who have received mercy who are the ones to do this. *[pause]*

And what exactly are we to do? "Proclaim."

The word here means to publish abroad, that is, to make something known both publicly and widely to many people.

This means that we can't be silent about God and accomplish this task, but we must be actively proclaiming Him.

We must actually speak up and talk about God with others. *[pause]*

Living a godly life is important to our witness, but it's not the only thing, for we must actually *spea*k about God.

That's what proclaiming is! It's verbally speaking to others. *[pause]*

And yet we don't just proclaim what we want, right?

What are we to proclaim? God's excellencies.

Well what's excellent about God? Everything!

This is God's character and attributes. His virtues. His goodness. His eminent qualities.

We tell people all about the greatness, and goodness, and glory of our God! *[pause]*

This is important.

We don't proclaim what we want.

We don't proclaim our thoughts.

We don't proclaim what we think will work, or what we think is good, or what we think people will like.

We proclaim God! *[pause]*

Our mouths are the speakers, and his excellencies is our message.

We are all like little radios made to proclaim God throughout the whole world.

The radio itself doesn't make up the message, but the radio simply transmits the message that is coming to it.

So also, we don't make up the message, but we announce the message from God to others.  
*[pauseeee]*

So what does it look like to proclaim His excellencies as a church?

We pray that God's name would be hallowed.

We sing to our great God and about our great God.

We preach His excellencies.

We live lives that reflect His character.

We share Him with others by actually talking more about Him than we do. *[pause]*

God's greatness should be a consistent theme of our conversations.

Why do we rarely talk about God's greatness and goodness? For many it *only* comes up at church, if that. *[pause]*

Did you know that you could actually talk about Him more than you think?

Are you talking to someone about the weather?

Say, "What a wonderful day that God has made."

Talking about money?

Say, “Isn’t it amazing how God provides for our needs?”

Talking about sports?

Say, “God gives some people such natural ability to do this. This is amazing. And he has given us things like this to enjoy. He is such a good God.” *[pauseeee]*

Recently, I’ve been thinking about how almost everything in life points to Him.

Are you taking a drink of water? That reminds me that he gives us living water.

Are you eating bread? He’s the Bread of Life.

You see a house? The church is the spiritual house of God.

You just woke up from sleeping? You can say like Psalm 3:5, “I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.”

We do all things to the glory of God to help people see how great He is. *[pause]*

Everything we do as individuals and as a church should revolve around shining the spotlight away from us and on to Him. *[pauseeeee]*

I’m tired of man-centered theology!

I’m fed up with man-centered sermons and churches!

What does that produce?! Man-centered Christians with man-centered thinking.

We aren’t here for us!

I want some God-centered theology! I want God-centered sermons and churches and Christians...

...And God-centered thinking and living because it’s not about us!

He has given us everything. He has made us to be what we are. We are here because of him and for him!

May we never get away from that understanding. *[pauseeee]*

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are to be living for God’s glory.

And what’s a huge part of living for God’s glory? Proclaiming His excellencies. *[pause]*

There are so many things in our lives that try to deter us away from proclaiming.

But don’t let fear hinder you from proclaiming His excellencies.

Don’t let discomfort prevent you from sounding forth His goodness.

Don't let selfishness impede you from declaring His greatness. *[pause]*

We are those with a new identity proclaiming the one who gave us our identity.

We are the people of his own possession proclaiming the owner.

Priests proclaiming the One they serve and worship.

Chosen ones proclaiming the Chooser.

Holy ones proclaiming the One who made them holy.

Called ones proclaiming the Caller.

And mercy receivers proclaiming the Merciful One. *[pauseeee]*

God gave us mercy and called us into a people so that others would hear about His excellencies from us.

So let's be astonished by His excellencies, and announce His excellencies for all to hear.  
*[pauseeee]*

*If you could summarize this text in a sentence, it would be this...*

**In mercy, God has called us out of darkness, and made us into His people meant to proclaim his excellencies.**

That's our identity and that's our purpose.

We are here because of God and for God.

We are people made by Him and for Him.

It all revolves around our great God. *[pauseeee]*

There was a young boy who was homeless.

He was always muddy, hungry, and continually getting in with the wrong crowds and in trouble with the law.

One day, a great, honorable, respectable, and kind, rich man came and cleaned him up, adopted him, and gave him all the blessings of being a part of his family.

But as time went on, the young boy left the house, lived back on the streets, and got in with the wrong crowds again. *[pause]*

That boy's actions don't make sense to us.

Why would he do such a thing when he received such grace, honor, and love?

Yet isn't that how we live when we don't give glory to our Heavenly Father, and instead neglect the mercy and the new identity he has given to us? *[pause]*

We belong to God, are dependent on Him, and find our purpose in Him.

We are his possession - chosen and holy.

We have received his great mercy.

Where would we be without Him? In darkness and sin, and under condemnation.

So we glorify Him because He alone deserves it.

Who else deserves it, but Him? *[pause]*

**So let's live in light of our new identity and the mercy that was shown to us.**

*\*The sermon actually spoken may be slightly different than the sermon manuscript.*