

*1 Peter 2:9-12. <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

*You Are... So Be*

- 1. In Christ God graciously fulfills our need for belonging*
- 2. In Christ God graciously provides us with significance and meaning*

Which term do you identify with more? Are you a sinner or a saint? I'll give a few seconds to think about that? Are you a sinner or are you a saint? The Bible certainly tells us that we are both. But as redeemed children of God, our Lord Jesus would have us primarily identify more with the term saints. The gospel predominates in our lives through faith in Christ. Yes, we are most certainly sinners, we sin and fall short, but what happened with those sins? Jesus paid for them in full. They are forgiven, forgotten, as far as the east is from the west so far has the Lord removed our sins from us and removed our guilt forever. We are sinners, we daily sin much, however, there is this wonderful news that surpasses and overcomes our; sin we are forgiven in Jesus Christ.

It is good and right and God pleasing to think of yourself as God's holy people. That doesn't mean that we throw out the law of God and forget about the daily problem of sin, but rather in our daily fight against sin our Savior wants us to identify ourselves with the gospel of Jesus Christ so that we may be properly motivated to follow the commands of God. And the Lord encourages us through his word in this general way, "*You are... So be.*" You are a chosen people, a holy people, a people belonging to God, so be servants and priests of the almighty king of the universe.

Experts in human behavior will tell you that all people, both children and adults, have a need for belonging and significance.<sup>1</sup> It's just the way we're wired. I don't think it is really that surprising that the LORD who created us knows this about his children. And so, in the words of Scripture for today we are given more than mere pep talk, rather God speaks to us words of eternal significance and daily encouragement as he reminds us of how we are connected to God, how we are connected to each other, and how we have been given significance and purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> McCready, Amy; "Why do children really misbehave?", [www.today.com/parents](http://www.today.com/parents)

Jesus reminds us of that in his sermon on the mount. As Jesus took his disciples under his wing he reminded his disciples that they were blessed in him. ***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*** After making them look at the world in a different way and reminding him of his presence and love through the Beatitudes, Jesus would then go on to give his beloved children, his blessed disciples, instructions on how they were to live in a world full of the darkness of sin and unbelief. ***You are the light of the world.... so let your light shine.*** You are the light so be light. Shine with the truth of the gospel of Jesus. Shine with his love. You are a city on a hill that cannot be hidden so be what God made you to be. In Christ, you are set apart for God, you are different so be different. <sup>14</sup> ***“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.*** <sup>15</sup> ***Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*** <sup>16</sup> ***In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.***

In this striking and picturesque way, Jesus gently pulls his disciples close as he reminds them of the blessings that he gives to them and then encourages to live a life of thanks to God by living upright and decent lives. And the goal of all of this was made clear as well: that God may be glorified, that we may be held firmly in the faith, and others may see God’s love in us and in turn believe in the LORD.

It now appears that it Peter’s turn to encourage those whom he was trying to instruct, and Peter would encourage his listeners in a rather similar way. The disciple who sat at Jesus feet and listened to Jesus speak of himself and his followers as the light of the world, was now reaching out to his fellow believers to remind them of who they are in Christ. In verse 11, Peter describes his listeners as more than just friends, the original language indicates that he calls them those who are loved. And so in these verses Peter seems to be acting like a father pulling aside his beloved children to bestow upon them some fatherly advice. He speaks to them in his passionate style, stacking one loaded phrase upon another, in order to encourage his fellow believers and give them instruction for Christian living. ***you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*** <sup>10</sup> ***Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.***

Following a pattern similar to what we hear in Jesus’ teaching, Peter begins by saying, “*you are*” in order to encourage them *to be* what God made them to be. . <sup>11</sup> ***Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*** <sup>12</sup> ***Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*** To encourage them to live in a way that reflects their faith Peter points them to their identity in Christ. ***You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.***

That is a point that ought not be overlooked or treated with short shrift. In order to encourage his readers to live godly lives he starts by reminding them who they were in Christ. I want you to take a few moments to think of the labels that the world puts on us, that we put on ourselves. Often these labels, these titles, are anything but positive.

We have roles and titles that we are proud of, we are fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, neighbors and friends, but we often fall short in these roles. Maybe we did something regrettable and that past sin has earned us a label that sticks with us, especially in a small-town setting. Add to that how the world today rises us in mass numbers and shames us into thinking that Christians are a worthless and insignificant group that is diminishing in importance and relevance. The world says a vast majority has moved on from such childish beliefs and so should you or at the very least you need to modify what you believe to get with the times. But God comes to us in his word and tells us that we are part of his chosen people. Before the world began he elected, he chose us to believe in him, to follow Christ, and this connection is timeless. We are valued so much that he would send his Son to save us. He purchased and won us from all sin and he was willing to pay the ultimate price for us. He bought us with his blood, set us free and saved us by his innocent sufferings and death. In Christ, you are chosen, you a people that belongs to God, you are a prized possession. In Christ Jesus, we are given that which we from childhood crave, we are given belonging and significance. And these simple gospel reminders have a huge impact in our lives. Identifying ourselves with the good news of what Christ has done gives us tremendous motivation to live for God.

The world wants us to forget that, our own sinful flesh tries to bury that, but the Word of God reminds us that we are saints, we are made holy in Christ. God gives us this status, but we still live in this world of sin. We make so many mistakes in our lives and so the temptation is that instead of identifying ourselves with what we are in Christ, and how he has made us new, we look to the old. Often, it's not just the sinful world around us that is our enemy who attempts to drag us away from who we are in Christ, but the devil and the world find an ally in our sinful nature. Influenced by this enemy we begin to look away from Christ and we look at our failings to follow the law, we look at our sinful actions and impulses, and we are dragged past proper sorrow and repentance to despair. We lose our focus on identity in Christ so much that we have a hard time seeing our Savior through the good that we do or the sins that we produce. And that what makes what Jesus and Peter did in their teaching all the more necessary. We need those reminders, those simple yet powerful reminders pointing us back to who we are in Jesus so that we may daily claim and reclaim our identity in Christ.

There was something that happened this week that reminded me of this need. As I was out and about with my children (I think we were at the store) the kids were acting out a little bit, acting like children sometimes do, they were rough housing and not really listening. But then our 3-year-old said something that just jumped out to me as one of

those teachable moments. In a sudden burst of energy, he grabbed onto his brother he said, "I'm Noah and I'm naughty." It was said in a playful tone but it was one of those moments that made you stop and think. If that is how he sees himself how can I redirect him to see who he is in Jesus? I certainly will to call attention to his sin and to his improper behavior, but there is also a constant need to point him to who he is in Jesus. Yes, he is acting naughty. Yes, he is a sinner, but he is a sinner who is forgiven by God. He is a sinner who is made holy in Jesus. Jesus is in his heart. As a child of God he is the light of Christ and through faith in his Savior he has been called to let that light shine.

There are all sorts of parenting styles, all sorts of different advice out there to help my wife and I to help us bring our son up in the training and instruction of the LORD. But there is some divine wisdom that is placed before us today that would be wise not only in our situation, but in the lives of every single one us. We all need these gospel reminders. ***You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood.*** We need these gospel reminders of forgiveness of belonging and significance.

The world might label us as dumb and foolish because of the beliefs that we hold. Our human flesh might look at our inability to do the good that we want to do and we might label ourselves as failures. The devil will try to convince us that we are beyond hope, forgotten, forsaken. When we identify with those negative labels we set ourselves up for nothing good. God in his grace has saved us and he sets us up for lives that are blessed by the blessed assurance that our Savior gives to us as children of God. ***You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.*** Peter here presents a powerful and empowering list. You are a chosen people. Before the creation of the world God chose you to be his own. You are valued. You are significant. You are loved by God. You are people belonging to God. And in this description, we are also reminded of our significance, our role in God's kingdom. We have been chosen to be priests to serve the almighty and eternal God now on earth and forever in heaven. We have been called to go about the work of building the kingdom of the LORD as we live in a way that reflects the goodness and love of God and shares the good of salvation in Christ Jesus. What a blessing it is to know that in God's grace he has given you and me, our children and our grandchildren a powerful message of belonging and significance in Christ. May this be an encouragement to us on a daily basis. You are... So be. In Christ you are the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth. You are chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God ***that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*** To God be the glory now and forever. Amen.