

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 10 November 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

A Peculiar People

1 Peter 2:9-10

In our modern world, we often cross paths with people who are a little “peculiar.” For example, I often cross paths with people who have so many piercings in their lips or nose, that they look a bit frightening. I sometimes see men with long, black, railroad spike-shaped earrings, or with long, spiky, multi-coloured “mohawks” down the middle of their scalps. It is even becoming a fad now, among some young men, to have mohawk haircuts that are shaped and coloured like giant gecko lizards, right on top of their head! We often call such people “peculiar.” (Of course, this is simply a polite way of saying “bizarre.”)

Now, when we use the word “peculiar” in our everyday speech, we usually mean “strange, odd,” “weird,” or “outlandish.” However, this is *not* the real meaning of “peculiar.” The dictionary meaning of “peculiar” is “belonging to a particular person; one’s own possession.” It comes from the Latin word *peculiaris*, which means: “one’s own,” or “one’s own private property.” The word “peculiar” really has to do with *ownership*.

Well, guess what, brethren? We who are saved are what God calls a “***peculiar people.***” In the passage that we will be reading this morning, Peter points out that Christians are “***peculiar.***” The actual Greek phrase that Peter used is *eis peripoiesin*. This means “for a purchase or possession; belonging exclusively to oneself.” Now, that’s interesting, isn’t it? To whom do Christians “belong”? Do we belong to ourselves? No! We who have been saved belong to God! We are *His* purchased possession. The Bible says that if you know Christ as Saviour, you are “***bought with a price,***” and that “***ye are not your own.***”

Brethren, the fact that we are God’s purchased possession makes us distinct from the world around us. It also affects the way that the world looks at us. *Because* we belong to God, and because our desire is to do *His* will, the world views us as “bizarre.” Being viewed as an “oddball” is just part of the Christian experience. Should others around you consider you to be “bizarre,” Christian, it’s because your character is like that of your Owner, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning we will examine what it means to be a “***peculiar people.***” In what ways are we who know Christ “distinct” and “different” from the world? What does belonging to God demand? What are its privileges and responsibilities? That is what we will learn this morning. The title of this message is ***A Peculiar People.***

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10.

In these couple verses, God describes His people in four powerful ways. He calls them a “***chosen generation,***” a “***royal priesthood,***” a “***holy nation,***” and a “***peculiar people.***” All four of these descriptions speak of the unique privileges and responsibilities of God’s people. First of all, Peter calls Christians....

I. A chosen generation (v. 9)

(Read verse 9 again.) The first description that Peter gives of believers is that they are a “*chosen generation*.” Now, as you read through the New Testament, it is important to understand that the word “generation” does *not* mean “the people who were born within a certain period of time” (such as the “Baby Boomer” generation, or “Generation X”). It actually means “a family or a stock of people.” (It comes from the Greek word *genos*, which means “family,” or “people.”) What, then, is Peter saying? He is saying that we who have placed our faith in Christ are a “family.” We are “a stock of people” whom God has chosen out of the world, to be His own! Think of that! These two words, “*chosen generation*,” show what an incredible *privilege* it is to be one of God’s people. God has *chosen* us.

Now, if the words “*chosen generation*” sound like something from the Old Testament, *it is*. This is exactly how God described the nation of Israel. Out of all the families of the earth, God chose the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be His own people.

Read Exodus 19:3-6.

It’s easy to see where Peter got these words “*chosen generation*,” “*royal priesthood*,” “*holy nation*,” and “*peculiar people*,” isn’t it? They all come from **Exodus 19**. This is how God described Israel. Now, maybe you’re thinking, “Pastor, if this verse in **Exodus** be talking about the nation of Israel, then why does Peter apply it to us New Testament believers?” That’s a very good question; and we are going to find the answer to that question as we get farther into the message today. First, though, let’s look at another important question: “*Why* did God choose Israel in the first place?” Of all the people He could have chosen, *why* did He choose *them*? Once we understand why God chose Israel, we will better be able to understand why God has chosen *us Christians* in this New Testament age. Let’s look at a passage in **Deuteronomy**, and see how God Himself explained His choice of Israel.

Read Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

Read Romans 11:25-28. (The “*fathers*” are the “fathers” of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.)

Why did God choose Israel? According to these verses, it was *not* because Abraham’s descendants were morally superior to other people. The descendants of Abraham are rotten, sinful rebels, just like everyone else. In fact, they have *constantly* rebelled against their God—beginning at Mount Sinai! (As Paul painfully points out in **Romans 11**, most of his own people, the Jews, had made themselves the “*enemies*” of Christ, and of Christians.) God didn’t choose Israel because they were morally superior; nor did He choose them because they were stronger, larger, or more powerful than other nations. (God does *not* operate on the principal that “might makes right”!) To this day, Israel is still one of the smallest nations on the face of the earth. Yet, God chose them.

Why did God choose Israel? For one simple reason: God made a *promise* to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He would send a Saviour from among their descendants, who would bring blessing to the whole earth. God told Abraham, ***“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”*** (Genesis 12:1-3).

It's as simple as that, folks. God made an unconditional promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He has kept His promise. God certainly didn't give this promise to the patriarchs because *they deserved* it. (They often failed the Lord!) The promise had nothing to do with these men's worthiness, or faithfulness. Instead, God gave this promise because *He* is faithful. You see, God had promised Adam, all the way back in the Garden, that He would send a Saviour to save him and his descendants from their sins. God had a plan of salvation for *all mankind*; and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob simply had the privilege of being part of that plan. They were “tools” whom God used to carry out His plan of redemption for mankind.

God chose Israel *because He had made a promise*. With this in mind, let's get back to the question: Why has God chosen *Christians* today? We were chosen for the same reason that God chose the nation of Israel: *Because God made a promise*. What is the promise? The promise is that if anyone will humble himself, repent of his sin, and simply receive the gift of salvation that His Son has purchased on the cross, he will become a “son of God.” **John 1:12** says, ***“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”*** That's a promise, friends: and God keeps His promises! The same God who made the promise of salvation to Abraham offers His salvation to *all* mankind: and He delivers!

Read Romans 4:9-12.

This is a powerful truth, my friends! Paul says that Abraham is the “father” of all who place their faith in Christ. We who are saved are *spiritually* the children of promise—the children of Abraham. We are not *national, flesh-and-blood Israel*, nor any kind of “replacement” for Israel; we are merely part of the “spiritual family” of Abraham. The thing that makes us Abraham's family is not our bloodline, but rather our faith in the true God, and in His Son Jesus Christ.

Why did God choose us? Was it because we were morally virtuous, and deserving of salvation, whereas others were not? No! None of us is worthy of salvation! We were chosen for the same reason that God chose the nation of Israel—*because He made a promise*. The promise He has made to us is not one of national glory, nor of the piece of land which He gave to Israel. It is something far greater than that. It is the promise of *salvation through His Son*, to all who will receive it. Have *you* received that wonderful gift of salvation, by placing your complete faith in Christ, and in what He did for you? If not, you need to do so today! Christian, do you realise the incredible privilege that you have to be part of God's family? You are a ***“chosen generation”***!

II. A royal priesthood (v. 9)

(Read verse 9 again.) The next description of believers that Peter gives is that they are “*a royal priesthood*.” In this description, Peter is telling us what a Christian’s *duties* are.

Once again, Peter is referring back to **Exodus 19:6**, where God told the nation of Israel that they were to be “*a kingdom of priests*.” Christians are both *kings* (as seen by the words “*kingdom*” and “*royal*”); and, they are *priests*. Now, let’s break this down. First, let’s examine our kingship.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:7-8.

In one sense, we who are saved are already exercising “kingship.” This simply means that God has given each believer spiritual authority. In **Matthew 18:18-19**, Jesus said that believers in local churches here on earth have been given the power to “bind and loose” matters in heaven, through their prayers, and through their Spirit-led decisions as a church body. Christians also have the authority to proclaim deliverance to those who are in spiritual bondage, by preaching God’s Word to them in the power of the Holy Spirit. God says that we are kings. Even in this lifetime, we are kings.

Now, not only are we kings in a *spiritual* sense, right now; but in the future, we will also be *literal* kings. In **Revelation 5**, we find a magnificent scene of believers singing and praising Christ in heaven; and as they praised the Lord, they cried out, “*Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*” When Christ returns to earth and sets up His Kingdom, He will grant His resurrected saints (that’s us!) the privilege of ruling and reigning over cities and nations, for 1,000 years!

Now, not only are we kings: we are also “*priests*.” What does Peter mean when he says that believers are “*priests*”? Does it mean that certain men have the power to mediate between God and men, and to forgive sins, and to call Jesus down from heaven, and to turn a wafer into Christ’s literal body, so that people can eat Him? No, that is *not* what it means! The Bible teaches nothing of the sort. First of all, the Bible says that *all* believers are priests. Secondly, we do not have the power to forgive anyone’s sins: only God forgives sins. What *is* the biblical definition of a priest, then?

Well, to answer that question, let’s first go back to the Old Testament. In Old Testament times, God gave the priesthood to one of the twelve tribes of Israel—the tribe of Levi. And what did they do? *They served God in a special way, in God’s Temple*. They performed the rituals that God had given them; and those rituals were pictures of what Christ would one day do on the cross.

There you have it. That, in a nutshell, was the job of the priests. The priests never had any power to forgive anyone’s sins; nor did they have any supernatural powers. They had *authority*; but they didn’t have God-like powers. They were sinners, just like everyone else;

and they needed to be atoned in the same way that every other Israelite was atoned—by simple faith in God’s promise of salvation! By the way, it wasn’t merely the tribe of Levi who were priests. In a larger sense, the *whole nation of Israel* was called “priests.” Remember what God said to the nation of Israel in **Exodus 19**? He said that they were a **“kingdom of priests.”** Now, what does this mean? In what sense were *all* the children of Israel to be “priests”? What *makes* a priest...a priest?

Well, Peter gives an excellent definition of a “priest” right here in **1 Peter 2:9**. (**Read 1 Peter 2:9 again.**) Peter says that His priests “shew forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.” A priest serves and praises God, and leads others to do the same. That is what the *whole nation of Israel* was supposed to do in the Old Testament times. Sadly, through, most of them failed to fulfil this holy calling. To be a *true* priest before God, one must enter into a relationship with God by faith; but most of them never had that relationship with God. Now, every Israelite *should* have entered into that relationship with God. They certainly had everything at their disposal to be able to place their faith in God. They had the Scriptures right in front of them. God *committed* the Scriptures to their nation; and He spoke to them through His prophets. Yet, most of them rejected their God in their hearts. Even in the best of times, only a small remnant of them were truly saved, and thus able to live up to the calling of being a **“kingdom of priests.”** Even in the *Levitical* priesthood, there were many men who were in the *office* of priest; yet, they did not truly know God, and thus were unable to draw people to God.

However, in the New Testament age, every single person who has truly placed his faith in Christ is called a “king and priest” before God! Christian, you are a priest. Every day when you wake up, you are a king and priest, whether you carry out your duty very faithfully or not. **Remember Eli?** He was a priest, wasn’t he? In fact, he was the high priest of Israel. He was also a true believer, and thus was the kind of *spiritual* priest that only a true believer can be. Yet, he did not fulfil his duties very faithfully. He compromised, over and over again—to the point that many of the hearts of the children of Israel were turned away from the true God. What a tragedy!

Are you like Eli, Christian? Are you making compromises with your fleshly desires, and with the world? Or are you sincerely, fervently striving day and night to “show forth the praises” of your Lord, by obeying His commandments, and by telling others of His goodness? I fear that many Christians are seriously failing in their “king-priest” duties. We have been given so much bounty and blessing, that we have forgotten what our duties are. Many Christians live mainly for self, and little for God. Every believer in this room needs to take to heart the truth that you are a “king and priest before God.” Be the kind of king and priest that God desires you to be, Christian!

III. A holy nation and peculiar people (vv. 9-10)

(**Read verse 9 and 10 again.**) As I mentioned at the beginning of this message, the word “peculiar” means “for a possession,” or “purchased, belonging exclusively to someone.” We who know Christ have been **“bought with a price.”** We are His possession, and no one else’s. We have been purchased by Him so that we may truly be able to do His will.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:20-23.

We who know Christ are distinct, unique, and exclusive. We have the incredible, undeserved privilege of being part of the small remnant of people who belong to God. The fact that we belong to God automatically makes us “holy,” by definition. The word “holy” comes from the word *hagios*, which means “sacred, consecrated, or set apart.” We are holy in our *position*, in that we have been saved, and set apart to God. Therefore, we should be holy in *practice*. Just as the One who owns us is pure, we should keep ourselves pure from sin. Peter emphasised the need for holiness back in chapter one, when he said, **“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15).**

Do you know what this means, Christian? This means that as you strive to make your practice in Christ match your position in Christ (in other words, as you strive to be set apart from sin), you will be viewed as “peculiar”—in the sense that I mentioned at the beginning of this message. The world will view you as *strange*. Let’s face it: A Spirit-filled Christian’s way of thinking is foreign to lost people. It is completely opposite of their way of thinking. Those who are without Christ live for self, because that is all that they, in their unregenerate state, are inclined to do. Though they certainly may have nobler feelings, such as love and loyalty to family or friends, they have no true ability to love *God*, and to live for Him. For this reason, you can expect to be hated, misunderstood, and rejected by the world, Christian. Jesus guaranteed it!

Read John 15:18-21 and 16:33.

We Christians tend to get stressed out about this matter of “rejection,” don’t we? It isn’t easy to be hated. It isn’t easy to stand alone, or to be thought of as a “kook.” It isn’t easy to know that people are snickering about you behind your back because you live for Christ. Experiencing humiliation goes against the old fleshly nature, which desires to be *exalted*.

Yet, we can **“be of good cheer.”** No matter what happens to us in this life, Christ has **“overcome the world.”** When you are on the “mountaintop” of spiritual victory, you can rejoice that your name is written in heaven. Jesus said to His disciples: **“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”** Likewise, when we are in the valley of humiliation and tribulation, we can *still* rejoice that our names are written in heaven—and, that they won’t be blotted out!

With this note of victory in mind, let’s read **1 Peter 2:10** again. **(Read 1 Peter 2:10.)** This is a verse that should make every child of God rejoice. Think of this, brethren! At one time, we were not God’s people; yet, now we are His people. We were once *not* pitied; but now we are pitied!

Now, before I go any further, I would remind you of an important fact about this letter. In this letter, Peter is writing to *Jewish believers* who were scattered all around Asia Minor. To these *Jewish believers*, Peter says, “In time past, ye were *not* a people, but are now the people of

God.” This isn’t the first time these words had been uttered. Once again, Peter is quoting Old Testament Scripture. It is important for us to *look* at that Scripture, and see the context of it.

Read Hosea 1:2-10.

God’s prophets were often given very difficult commands by God; and Hosea was no exception. God commanded Hosea to marry a woman who He knew would be untrue to Hosea. God knew that Gomer would run away from her husband, and literally sell herself into prostitution. God allowed Hosea to go through this agony in order to give a jarring illustration to Israel of what *they* had done to *Him* by worshipping false gods. They had played the harlot on *Him*.

Furthermore, God illustrated His *feelings* about their unfaithfulness by commanding Hosea to name his daughter “Lo-ruhama,” which means “Not pitied”; and then, to name his second son “Lo-ammi,” which means, “Not my people.” God was declaring His *divorcement* from the nation of Israel. In the same vein, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah declared that God had given a “bill of divorcement” to Israel. Yet, in almost the same breath, the Lord repeatedly told Israel, “Though I’m divorcing you, I will, in the future, *restore* you to myself.”

Now, if God had “divorced” Himself from Israel during Hosea’s day (which was 700 years before Christ), why was Israel still called “Jehovah’s wife” during the time of Christ? Well, to answer that question, I need to explain how Jewish divorce worked. In **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**, God said that an Israelite man could divorce his wife if he had found her to be guilty of adultery. However, it is important to understand that the “marriage” that is being spoken of here is what the Jews call “betrothal.” “Betrothal” means that the couple was *officially* married, on paper. Yet, during the period of betrothal, the marriage was not yet *consummated*. (They are not living together in physical intimacy.) It was *only* during this time of betrothal that divorce was allowed.

So, what was “divorce,” essentially, to a Jew? “Divorce” was *separation* of the husband and wife. However, the divorce was not final and irrevocable until the wife went and married *someone else*. Once the wife had married someone else, she could *not* be re-married to her original husband, even if she was divorced by her second husband!

Twenty-seven hundred years ago, Jehovah said to Israel, “I’ve divorced you. I’m separating from you because of your unfaithfulness to me.” Now, the divorce is not irrevocable. God can still take Israel back! (And we know, from Scripture, that God *will* take Israel back!) Nevertheless, for now, God calls them “Lo-ammi” and “Lo-ruhuma.” How incredibly sad that the nation whom God had raised up to be His own people were called “*Not my people*,” and “*Not pitied*”!

So, then, what does this mean for the Jewish Christians to whom Peter was writing? If they belonged to the nation of Israel (whom God had divorced, and called “*not my people*”), then how could Peter call these Jews “*the people of God*,” and “*those who have obtained mercy*”? Well, here’s the answer: As members of the *Jewish* nation, they did not qualify to be the restored, pitied wife of Jehovah. The restoration of Israel will not happen until Christ returns

to earth in the future, and *all* Israel believes on their Messiah. However, as *believers in Jesus Christ*, these Jewish Christians belonged to another family—a spiritual family. It is the family that we talked about earlier, when we were in **Romans 4**. It is the family of faith—the family that is composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers of all ages. It is the family that Paul was talking about in **Ephesians 3** when he said, ***“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”***

We who have been saved by faith are truly a privileged people. We are a chosen generation. As kings and priests, we have great responsibility to serve Him. As a “holy nation” that has been set apart unto God, we are an exclusive people—a *peculiar* people.

Conclusion: Christian, do you realise the depth of God’s love for you? Do you realise the extent of His *faithfulness* to you? If God will go to such great lengths to restore *Israel* to Himself, even though they have played the harlot on Him, don’t you think that He loves *you*, who are a member of His spiritual family? Don’t you think He will be faithful to *you*, even when your faith fails? Don’t you think that He will keep His promise to ***“never leave thee, nor forsake thee?”*** Don’t you think such a God is worthy of your full love, and honour, and worship, and obedience? Remember—there was a time when *we* were “not a people,” either. Every saved person in this room was, at one time, *not* one of God’s people, and *without* mercy. Yet, now you have obtained mercy and pardon. And why? Because there was a day when you took Jesus at His Word. There was a day when you believed Jesus’ promise that ***“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*** You came to Him, and He received you. Praise Him, Christian! Love Him! Serve Him with all your heart!

Perhaps there are some of you who have never truly been saved. Should you be relying on your own goodness to get to heaven, or upon any work of your own, then you have not yet received mercy, and you are not one of God’s people. You must let go of your self-righteousness, and trust in Christ’s sacrifice for you *alone*.

Perhaps you have *professed* to trust in Him, yet you have never responded to His call to come ***“out of darkness into his marvellous light.”*** True faith cannot be separated from *repentance*. In order to turn to the Light of Jesus Christ, you must also *turn from darkness*. You must be willing to turn from idols—whether they be idols of wood and stone, or idols of the heart. You can’t cling to Christ, and still cling to idols. In **1 Thessalonians 1:9**, Paul defined salvation as turning ***“to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.”*** Jesus requires that those who would be His disciples must be willing to be rejected by family, if necessary—to love *Him* above father or mother, husband or wife, son or daughter. You may lose *every* loved one in your life: but you will have the LORD! David said, ***“When my father and mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.”*** My friend, have you truly turned to Christ? Have you counted the cost of becoming His peculiar possession? If not, I urge you to turn to Him today!