

A people of God's possession

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter 2.

verses 9 and 10 in particular. So just to set it in its context, Peter is writing to God's people. He is laying out to them that they have been set apart by God, but they are left in the world set apart, and therefore that brings its challenges, but it also brings the fact that their identity as the people of God will be seen because they're left in the world, and therefore distinctions are made. So he says, verse 9 onwards, now hear God's word, 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. 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. The focus there is the fact that God has made us his people. In Ephesians 5 verse 25, we read this verse. Of course, the context is a marriage context, but then marriage is only ever an illustration of Christ in his church. It should never be taken any more seriously than that, and it shouldn't be taken any less seriously than that. Okay, the primacy here is Christ in his church, and it says, husband loves your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Well, if you want to keep your Bibles open at the 1 Peter section, and remember the Ephesians 5, that would be great. And we'll come back to that after we've sung our praises to God this next...

I've often said over the years that ministers are normally two types of... they fall into two types of categories. They probably fall into more than that. I'm sure they do, but at least they fall into two in particular. You have the David-type ministers, and you have the Solomon-type ministers. Some ministers are brought into churches to fight battles, and other ministers are brought in to build. Davids are not Solomons. Solomons are not Davids. It's a distinction found often in the church. There are other types, I'm sure. Jesus Christ is both.

Jesus Christ is both. He is the better David, the better king, the better fighter and warrior. And, you know, we want to train our young men to grow up to fight, but we want them to fight in the right way for God and for truth and justice in these. We don't want them to physically start fights.

[4 : 03] And the men need to set that example to the younger men. And then, of course, Jesus Christ is the one who's greater than Solomon. As it says in the New Testament, one greater than Solomon is here.

He is the one with the greater wisdom, and he is the one who builds the greater temple. And that temple is us, the people of God. You are the temple of God. You are the people of God that Jesus Christ has built. But I don't want us to lose sight of the fact this evening, if we can, to lose sight of the fact that that was accomplished through fighting. Through a very spiritual fight, might I add, but it was accomplished through a fight, through a battle of which a victory was won.

The victory belongs to Christ, and on the cross, he says those words, telelestai, meaning it is finished, it is over, I've won. There may be enemies on the other side of Christ still holding their weapons, but they can do nothing. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against the church. And, by the way, when that's quoted or said, gates are not an offensive weapon. Gates are defensive. If you're stood behind a gate, no one gets attacked by gates. Gates is something that you stand behind. So, when Jesus Christ says the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church, what he's saying is death won't come to it. Those who have been given life cannot then be recaptured by death. That's the point of the gates of Hades. Gates keep people in. They don't attack.

They keep people behind them. And so, when Jesus quotes that, that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against, you know, the people of God, it means that those who have been given life in Christ

Jesus, those who have been given these mercies brought out of darkness into the marvelous light, cannot then be recaptured behind those gates. We cannot be recaptured behind that because we have been given a great gift in the great victory of Christ Jesus. In Leviticus 26, God makes very, very clear one of my favorite parts of the Bible where God is saying to his people, now listen, I'm your God and you are my people. Okay? I am your God and you are my people. Now, that is a great privilege to hear those words from God, that I belong to you and you belong to us. I'm your person, your people, part of your people, and you are my God. I think it'd be good then this evening if we can come to understand that we are the people of God because of a victory that was won. Okay? I don't want to look at it just from the point of view of salvation and the cross. All of that is true, but I want to look at it from the point of view of it being a victory that was won, a victory against darkness being brought into the marvelous light. And against that darkness, we have been brought out and it says here in 1 Peter 2 that the reason why that happened, verse 9, is that we might be, number one, a people of God's own possession, a possession of God. God wants us for himself and he jealously goes after us. We are his. He doesn't want to share us with anybody. He wants us all to himself. He goes on to say that the reason for this is that we might be able to proclaim the excellencies of everything that God has done for us. So, essentially, the church goes out into the playground and starts bragging about their dad. Okay? My dad's better than your dad. Okay? But it's not quite like that, but that's essentially what's happening here, that we are proclaiming the excellencies of what God has done for us. And then we have the reminder in verse 10 that before any of this happened, we were never any of those things because we had not received mercy. But now we have received mercy.

[8 : 20] That's why we are those things. We are a people of God's possession because of mercy given to us. We are God's own possession because mercy has been given to us. In other words, when God went to fight, okay, and he went to win the victory, he wasn't fighting us. He gave us mercy. He fought against death. He fought against temptation. He fought against the darkness. He fought against all those things. And in that victory, the spoils of that war, we receive mercy. We receive being accepted as children, being adopted into the family of God. That's what we receive. So it is true to say that God loves us and all of that's true. But the point, the picture of the church here is very, very similar to a man going out into the world and seeing all of these orphan children and says, I'm going to make you my own.

They've done nothing to deserve it. Okay? They've done nothing to be able to be any kind of favorable than any other child in the world. Okay? But God just, out of his sheer grace, out of his sheer mercy, out of his sheer love, comes down and says, you're going to be mine. And that's the picture. But the picture of that love is not without its battle. It's not without a fight that then has to come.

Now, here's the importance to all this. When a person understands the truth of the church, when a husband understands the truth of the church, or a mother understands the truth of the church, or a family does, and you've got a clear understanding of the church, you're able to prepare your young men for what type of men they ought to be when they get married. You're also able to prepare your young women as to what type of women they ought to be when they get married.

Okay? And for those men who are already married, it is a real wake-up call that if you're not the type of man that God wants you to be, then the doctrine of the church is going to wake you up to exactly the type of man you ought to be toward your wife. The same is true for wives, and the same is also true for those whose husbands and wives have perhaps gone to glory, or for those who are yet to have husbands and wives. It's true for all. The doctrine of the church wakes us up to these realities.

So here's the summary then of the fight. Over in Ephesians, we read that Christ fought for his bride, and the way that he fought for his bride was to lay down his life. Christ loved his bride, he loved the church, and he gave himself up for her. And the way that he did that was just to lay down his life. No one took it from him, but he laid it down for his church. And the reason he did that is so that he could make her beautiful. It's so that he could make the people of God a beautiful people of God, and present them in all of that splendor. Okay? I forget the name of the girl who has to be home by midnight. Someone, Cinderella? Okay? Okay, so Cinderella goes to the ball, and she's spotted for her beauty when she's all dolled up, right? Am I allowed to say that? I don't really have.

[11 : 45] She's all dolled up, okay? And the man goes, she's a pretty girl, okay? You didn't leave your phone number, okay? Whatever the case may be. Jesus does it completely the other way

around. Even before she gets to the party, Jesus goes to the house and notice that she's the cleaner and says, I want you.

I want you. And I want you so much, I'm going to lay down my life for you. So this idea of wanting someone because they're beautiful goes completely out of the window when it comes to Christ and his church. He wants you when you're on your knees scrubbing the floor and you don't look like much.

That's whom Christ lays down his life for. He then calls you, me, out of darkness and brings us into his light, making us his possession that we might proclaim that excellency and giving us mercy is how he did it. You'll notice then that Peter wants to make a special point to New Testament Christians by calling them names that are familiar to Old Testament realities. A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession. These are Old Testament descriptions.

And Peter is trying to get across to the New Testament church, this isn't something new. Being the people of God is something that God has always been about. The Garden of Eden is where this is first seen. God creates a man and a woman and then he tells the man and the woman to populate the earth because creation is perfect but it's not complete. There's a lot in creation which is perfect but it's not complete. That's the story that you get in the first couple of chapters.

It's beautiful but there's still a lot to happen. There's still a lot to be done moving forward. And yet you have this picture that is then disrupted by sin of people of God's own possession that's then sort of broken away from God because sin is introduced into the world. And then of course the whole story is about how do I get the girl back? How do I get the girl back? I've said it to my children perhaps a couple of times. Perhaps I need to say it more often. But the general picture of the whole Bible is kill the dragon and get the girl. Right from the very beginning. Christ, okay, is the one who comes, defeats Satan and gets the girl, the bride, the church and makes us his own. That's really the storyline of the Bible. It is the best love story. So when you see Disney coming out with these kind of the story, where do you think they got it from? Why do you think they're so, when they're good, why do you think they are so good? Because it's God's story. It's what God has done. That's the very thing that God did. He came down and rescued the girl. He came down and defeated the baddies. And he came down and brought her to himself. That's us. That's what God has done with all of us in Christ Jesus.

[14 : 57] So to be this chosen people, this royal priesthood, this holy nation, it is to be a people for whom Christ has fought for. He's that he's fought for, that he's laid down his life for, to make us his very own, redeeming us, forgiving us, winning the victory at the cross by laying down his life.

We receive all of these blessings. And at the same time, we don't receive any of the judgment. We receive everything that Christ has for us. And Christ takes all the bad stuff. You know, he's the one who fights. He's the one who takes the judgment of God. He's the one who deals with the temptations of Satan in the garden. He's the one who faces the enemy. And he does that on our behalf so that we might be his very own. So Christ loved his bride, loved his bride to be. One of the things we learn in the New Testament is that Christ is known as the last Adam. Okay. Sometimes he's referred to as the second Adam, which is technically incorrect. You have the first Adam and you have the last Adam to indicate that no more will follow. When you have a second Adam, you might be tempted to believe there could be a third or a fourth. So the way that it's explained properly is you have the first and the last. Christ is the last Adam. No more is going to come. And Christ is more than sufficient.

But when Christ is called the last Adam, it's meant to take us back in our minds and in our hearts and in our reading to what the first Adam was like and what he was meant to do. Because he too, remember, had a wife. He too had someone that he was meant to love. And Christ lays down his life for his bride.

Did Adam do the same? Well, no. If you go back to the very beginning, what you begin to find, it'd be good to see Adam and Eve being faithful towards God. But of course they weren't.

Eve, Eve, just so happens, she's not called Eve at this point, she's just called the woman, is offered a tree, being tempted. And her husband, who should have stepped in and done something about it, just stands right beside her and lets it happen. So there she is being tempted. And of course, she falls into sin. And he, not doing anything that he should have done, not doing anything about it, not dealing with the enemy, not dealing with the temptation, not fighting that battle for her and for himself, just stands back and just lets it go ahead. What harm can it come to, right?

[17 : 49] Well, only the fall of the world. Only the fall of the world. And of course, she eats. She then passes it to her husband because he's right beside her. And he eats. And of course, they both fall. What should have happened is that when God came walking in the garden, if Adam had not sinned, if Adam had not sinned at that point, and it was only Eve, when God came walking in the garden, Adam should have come and said, right, you know, I didn't win the battle, but I'm going to win it now. My life for hers. My life for hers. I will give you my, I will lay down my life and spare her. That's what should have happened. And how do we know that that's what should have happened? Because that's what does happen with the last Adam.

Okay. In Christ. That is how the story pans out in the end. That Christ comes into this world and he says, my life for hers. My life. I know that she sinned. I know that she's rebelled. I know that she's, she's gone away, but, but my life for her. Okay. I'm going to lay, and that's exactly what happens. So the last Adam, Christ Jesus, shows how the first Adam should have done it, but he didn't. And the last Adam shows how every husband needs to do it. Okay. That's the point that we learn here as we consider the doctrine of the church. Adam should have protected his wife from the temptations of the world. He didn't. And when he didn't, he fell with her. If he didn't fall with her, he should have offered his life for hers, but he couldn't have done that either because he sinned. But when we read on in the Bibles, we read that that is exactly what happened in the person of Christ Jesus. This is a model for the church. This is a model of how we ought to be with other people. It is most definitely a model of what type of husband you need to be. Okay. I haven't gone on to speak about wives because the text doesn't sort of let me. We could have read that bit, but it'll, you'll get your turn. Okay.

We'll come around to that. But until you do, husbands and the men in this fellowship, you need to recognize some of us need to man up. Some of us need to go to fight. We need to fight in the most biblical kind of way to protect our wives in exactly the same way Christ did it with his bride.

So we move on and understand that out of the doctrine of the church comes a model behavior. It's not just a place that we go to, but it actually sets the framework for life and fellowship within the body of God's people, right down to the very youngest and right up to the very oldest.

[20 : 43] Christian men are able, because of the doctrine of the church, to instruct their young sons in what type of men they ought to be before they get married. You want to get married, son? Not until you're this type of man. Why not? Because unless you're this type of man, you're not going to be able to protect your wife in the way that she ought to be. Okay. You're not ready, but I love her.

I don't care. You're not ready to be let loose on a woman that you cannot protect. Okay. Now, of course, mothers have to instruct their daughters in the same way. Okay. When we're not just, but the text here is about Christ leading us in how it is done. So don't leave your wife then, men, by a tree of temptation. Don't leave them out and thinking, no harm will come. Okay. If you see them engaged in conversations and your wife is saying, well, it makes sense to me. And you think, well, hang on. Okay. Eve sat there by the tree thinking, actually, this fruit doesn't have to look half bad. I mean, what harm can it do after all? Step in. Step in. And also, if you see your children playing out in the grass and there's a serpent in the garden, okay, teach them how to use a sword and kill it. Okay. If you can't keep them in, make sure they go out knowing how to deal with it.

This is the very model that Christ sets up in Ephesians 5 with no exaggeration. And it is how we become God's own possession. Jesus Christ doesn't just come into the world and die on the cross. He fights. He goes to war. He wins the victory. And that's a demonstration of love.

That's the demonstration of love. Winning and fighting for the bride to be. Winning and fighting.

Now, if we just move off of marriage and just take this as a general principle, the same applies.

You love someone, then fight for them. But fight for them in the right way. Fight for them in the way where they become God's possession. Where they become a people of God's own special attention. That's how you love a person. If we, the church, are a people who have been fought for. We, the church, are a people who are God's possession because he has loved us through fighting. Through winning a victory. Fighting against temptation. Fighting against the evil one. Fighting against all the evil there and overcoming death itself. Making us his very special people. You, the church, this evening have been fought for because you have been loved by God. So here's the exhortation as we sort of wrap all this up.

[23 : 39] Edmund Clowney, who I'm not expecting any of you to know. I'd be impressed if some of you did. Minister back in the day. Written several books. Written one very, very good book on the church.

He's written other very, very good books. But he makes the point very, very clear in his book that the doctrine of the church, and he uses doctrine rather than truth because he wants you to know that truth has to be understood in a particular way. It has to be understood in the way God wants it to be understood. And the word doctrine explains, fleshes that out, especially if you read the book. But he makes the point that when a person stands up and starts talking about church, okay, a dull sense of irrelevance kicks into God's people. This is going to be boring.

It's on church. I know what church is. I come to it every week. And yet, how many of us think of church as fighting for a woman? How many of us think of church as fighting against temptation and dealing with the snakes in the garden? How many of us think, and yet, in Ephesians 5, that's exactly how we're meant to understand it. How many of us think of church as being God's possession because he's gone out and fought for us because he loves us? So instead of this issue of church, which Clowney points out to some people can be a sense of dull irrelevance, where you then quench everything that you can possibly learn from it, he says, don't do it. Don't do that. Don't be that person. Don't think of church as something that you come to. Think of it as a model for the whole of life, the model for the type of people that we are meant to be. If we want to see strong families, and if we want to see strong boys grow up in this church, we want to see strong girls grow up in this church, and we want to see them get married and that their marriages last for a long time, then we need to make sure that they're ready long before they get there. long before they get there. And the church teaches us to teach what type of boys men ought to be, what type of men these young boys ought to be. And the same for the girls. A mature understanding, then, is needed for all of us. The church gives all of us an example to follow of what it is to love another person, whether you're married to them or not, and how to prepare them for the world that they live living. So here's the final thought as we close. All of us here, without exception, if we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, are able to praise God for everything that he's done because we've been given mercy. We've been given that mercy, we've been given that love, which means we have not been given judgment. Okay? If we have been given mercy, we have not been given judgment. We're then able to proclaim the excellencies of Christ, as it says here, the excellencies of everything that God has done in all the areas that the church models. The family, the home, the gathering together, the fellowship, the work life, wherever it is that we're talking about, everything that that models, we're able to proclaim the excellencies of Christ in those areas. And as we do, the people of the world, if you look down to verse 12 of 1 Peter 2, on the day of God's visitation, we'll see our good deeds and glorify God. That's what will happen. As we follow the model of scripture and we proclaim the excellencies of Christ and do our good deeds, on the day of God's visitation, when he comes, and when he comes, the people of the world will see her good deeds and give glory to God. What will not happen, even for a moment, is Christians looking out into the world and seeing all the good deeds of people and saying, hey, do you know what? You're pretty close. That's not half bad. That's not going to happen.

[27 : 48] As if to say the distinction between Christianity and the world isn't that great. No, it is tremendously great. Tremendously great. The church does not praise the world for how close they got to being like Jesus without belonging to Jesus. That doesn't happen. What does happen is all those in the world who see the Christian witness and yet fail to understand it in all of its glory will understand it entirely when Christ comes. On the day of his visitation, those people will glorify God for the deeds that we have done in all of the areas that I've spoken about this evening. We are a people who belong. We ought to have a great sense of belonging, a great sense that we belong to someone, that we are a possession that we have been purchased. Whatever type of life God has called you to live, live it.

But remember, you live it for him. Whatever it looks like, live it. But live it for him. And whatever God has got for you in the future, which none of us knows, everything can turn on a day's notice. In fact, sometimes God doesn't even give us that. The reason why God does it is so that you can proclaim his excellencies, that you're able to give thanks. You're able to go out in the world and say, my dad's better than your dad. My dad can do this. What can yours do?

Oh, okay. Now, of course, we wouldn't speak about God in that framework. It's an illustration to indicate the type of relationship and praise that we have for the one who's done all of this for us. So the next time you think about church, don't think about it as something you come to. Okay? Don't think about church as something you come to. Think about church as something you are and that you model to the world. Amen.