

Gamma 13

Study 8

1 Peter 2:9-12

Questions

1. In verse 9 the sole purpose of the church is to worship God and declare His praises. Many will feel that this indicates a very self centered or insecure God always demanding praise ?How do you respond?

The worship of God is founded on two issues , firstly God is the Creator and we his creatures and it is an appropriate and right response of a creature towards His Creator. It was our purpose and design as we were made in the image of God and hence our natural response is worship as we are creature created to worship. Just as it is the natural response to gasp and declare with delight when we come across the great beauty of a sunset or the intricate beauty of nature. His beauty and goodness is in all of creation and in particular demonstrated in the grace in which He has dispensed by making us His people.

The second reason for worship is because it is for our benefit it changes us and it moulds us towards our ultimate purpose of creation. Worship is for our benefit. When we are made in the image of God we were made to reflect Him and we can do so only through worship where there is awe, appreciation of beauty and glory and a desire to be like that which we worship
As worshipping creatures we either worship God in all his infinite beauty and glory or we worship something lower which is creation which will be an insult to our dignity as people created in the image of the most High. Why would we allow ourselves to worship anything or anyone less worthy than God?

2. What is the basis of our calling as a chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation and God's special possession as we can see in verse 10 (Hosea 2:23). Why does this matter to us?

The basis of our new spiritual identity is the fact that we have received mercy for it says 1 Peter 2:10 (ESV) 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.

Peter specifically quotes the prophet Hosea who lived during the time where Judah had broken covenant with God. Hosea's life was an acted prophesy in that his own life was a mirror of the broken relationship between God and His people. Hosea's wife became a prostitute and he was asked to name his children after the

manner in which God now regarded His people Judah . His daughter was named "No mercy" which indicated the coming punishment of exile the people of Judah were expecting to undergo. Then at the birth of the third child a son he was named in similar fashion -Hosea 1:8-9 (ESV) 8 When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. 9 And the Lord said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God." The naming indicated the consequences of Judah's breaking of covenant and its consequences. God no longer had a people who were functioning as his special possession. Because his people acted like the pagans of the surrounding nations, they were to be sent into exile, scattered among them. Then in Hosea 2:23 there is a prophecy that God will restore His people in the future. *" and I will sow her for myself in the land.And 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"*.

Peter now applies the fulfilment of this prophecy of the final promised restoration to the church instead. Isaiah and Hosea had spoken of a reconstitution of God's exiled people, traditionally interpreted to mean the regathering of Judah and Israel from exile. Some evidence of this is seen in Peter's address to his Christian readers as people of the Diaspora (1 Pet. 1:1) and sends greeting from those in "Babylon," the symbolic capital of exile (5:13). So the basis of calling the church the new Israel is that all along that God had meant to have Abraham's blessing extended to the nations of the world and the church is the new Israel because the church is that body that like Israel had not received mercy and were not His people because of their sin and now have received mercy through the blood of Jesus Christ.

3. How does Peter encourage the church to godly living by abstaining from the "passions of the flesh"? Why does he do it? Do we really regard ourselves as strangers and exiles or are we too comfortable in this land? What are the struggles that you face with regard to this in your daily lives? How can we encourage each other in this regard in church?

His challenge to holy living to the church is based on their new status in life. They are now strangers and exiles which are legal terms indicating that they are both present in the land but do not really belong to the land and hence there will always be a conflict of who they now are against the culture of the land they now reside in. They are now new creatures in Christ. Formerly citizens of the land, part and parcel of the landscape but now though they live in the land they have different aspirations, values, purposes than the natives who truly belong to the land. They will always contribute to their adopted land and be good citizens to work to bless the land but they march to the beat of a different drummer now to a tune which is completely alien to the national anthem as it were. The passions of the flesh belong to the culture of the land in which they now reside. They must not live like the natives of the land. They must not be influenced to follow their gods and idols. They must live as exile and strangers to the culture and have an internal culture driven by the Word which will have the final say in their actions.

4. The passions of the flesh can easily be misunderstood as those gross evils of sexual immorality, violent crime like rape. However the Greek word used here is actually “epithumia” which means “over desire” of the flesh. If that is the case why is Peter against this? Discuss how some of the over desires in your lives can be a struggle.

The issue is satisfaction of our normal desire to the extent it becomes an act of independence from God.

Our desires for love, comfort and food are a completely normal part of our physical make up but if that desire for love for example becomes so overwhelmingly strong that it over rides our responsibility to love and worship God above all else then it becomes an over desire. This distortion is very subtle because it is hard to draw the line between normal desire and over desire. For example, it is normal for a wife to desire the love of her husband but this become an over desire when it becomes the over riding obsession of her life when she begins to become jealous of every woman who speaks to him or keeps checking up on what’s on his phone messages daily or she refrains from church services simply because he does not like her to go to church. Over desires are part of our idolatrous nature.

5. Why will the Christian living a godly life always prove to be an enigma to Non- believers as there will be both a hostile response and yet grudging respect? Can you share some of the encounters Non believers at work or our spouses at home have responded to you. What are the struggles that you have and how can we help each other to overcome them?

- There will always be a mixed response to us which will parallel that towards Jesus. On the one hand they will see our good deeds and changed character and have grudging respect for that. On the other hand they will resent us because of perceived moral superiority because they will think that we are being totally arrogant for believing we of all peoples on earth have direct access to God. Our insistence on believing that Jesus is the only way to God will necessarily insult their own religious sensitivities because it will by default imply that their religions and philosophies of life will be defective or wrong. This insults and incenses them. They look at Christians and for all our good works or changed behaviour they will still see more than a few traces of the ugliness of sin and realise that we are such imperfect people yet having the audacity claiming to know God. Christians believe that the way to connect to God is to be weak through Christ whilst most people think it must be by being very moral as only the very holy who connect to God. The gospel says it is the people who admit they are weak and cannot save themselves that are saved. People on the outside will judge you based on their own perspective that Christians must be saved by works being very moral very strong. They must

necessarily will see believers as very arrogant because they believe that despite being weak and not that moral they claim to know God. They cannot understand that salvation is by grace of God simply because one has to be born again of the Spirit in order to perceive such spiritual realities anyway. Hence, the reason for their antagonism is their spiritual blindness for if they understood then they would have been born again.

- The other reason for their antagonism is simply because the good works and attitudes of humility are either a threat to their own rationalisation of corruption or evil and the behaviour of believers show them up for what they are.
- John 3:19-21 (ESV) *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."*
- The reason for antagonism towards Jesus is precisely because His presence showed up their evil practices for what it was and they preferred to continue their corrupt life and hence they had to snuff out that light.