

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 7
Topic	A New People of God
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV) 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 marvellous light. 10 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.

So if we divide up these verses into three parts

- a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,
This part talks about our identity.
- that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
This talks about our purpose.
- 10 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.
This talks about the foundation, why we have been what we have been.

Today we are going to look at the identity. Identity is very-very important. We all have a series of identities. George Clooney's identity is husband, actor. I actually sailed pass his house a couple of weeks ago. George Clooney is also a businessman. He runs a very successful business where he makes some sort of wine or tequila and it is worth quite a lot of money. So therefore, he is also a business. He makes tequila. He is also a motorbike fan. Hells angel kind of guy with his wife, who looks slightly unhappy sitting at the back there. But one word does not actually adequately describes.

So basically identity is important because each of us have a series of identities and each one of these identities inform us of what we are and it actually changes our behaviour. People always act in a manner consistent with their perceived identity. That's why identity is very-very important. That's why Peter brings out this idea of identity.

Identity gives you your basic values, informs of choices that you make and in the end it gives you a sense of fulfilment. Let me give you an example, if you go and do studies in school. Most of the data is taken from American schools and you will find who does better in class participation, academic results, neater handwriting and

hardworking. Boys or girls? Yes, every single paradigm in school, the girls always do better. Then the boys don't do as well, you know why the boys don't do well, because if you are in class and you participate and put your hands up all the time, your handwriting is very good, you do very well then people think you are girl. So a boy looks like that, a boy is cool, a boy doesn't have good handwriting, a boy doesn't bother with the homework. The boy bucks the trend and if you act like a girl, even though you get a better result people will look at you. So therefore it actually disincentivizes boys from actually doing well. So he has to act according to his identity and the girl has to act according to identity. In fact, there was a study done of a whole bunch of kids in a dorm who were given Live Strong bands, which are all war. They were quite happy to wear it. And there was another dorm and this dorm was full of computer geeks. So they gave them after a while the Live Strong bands and computer geeks and they wore it and the moment they found out their neighbors who are the geeks wearing these live bands, you know what happened. One third of these people who were in the first dorm, they gave up wearing it. Because they didn't want to be associated with geeks. Identity changes your behaviour.

In fact, this is work done by Professor Daphna Oyserman in University of Southern California, call identity based motivation theory which is a psychological theory. Your identity will determine how you actually behave. She actually was posted to Detroit and in Detroit the day before Halloween, in Halloween they do trick a treat and they wear horrible mask and they frighten people and the devil's night is the day before Halloween and what the kids use to do there, will do very naughty acts and some of them started setting fires to their neighborhood houses. So come devil's night everybody will set things in fire. She then looked, you know, how come the two sets of kids. There were some sets of kids who will set fire and some kids will never set fire. And she found that the ones who set fire will always be thinking, I will have fun, they bring excitement. I will look cool and brave, people will look up to me. They never think I will get caught, I will become a criminal, I might kill people. Whereas the other kids who will never do this will never think about that, but will always think about I will get caught. I will become a criminal, I am not that kind of person. Based on this she actually developed the theory that who you are determines your action completely.

If you look at children, a lot of them look at homework study and assignment. They don't like to do it all. And what she did was she introduced a series of experiments where you actually talk to them and ask them to write about what do you want to be when you grow up, your future self. So once you have started writing essays on your future self then she started asking them. Well, why do you be closer. How do you become your future self, there must be steps in order to get to your future self. And homework and assignments and study are a way in which you get to your future self and based on that control groups whether it is those who never went identity based motivation verses those who did, the results were astounding. Kids grade improved dramatically when they were able to bring their future self to proximity to be a proximate reality.

So therefore, we find that if you actually understand what your future self will be, you will be actually very-very motivated. So all of them very asked to draw a timeline to the future, make a pathway linking next year and adult possible self, the strategies attaining them, etcetera all that. And then every hurdle that they actually encountered were hurdles to be overcome based on their identity. So therefore, an exam, a setback with illness is perceived as a hurdle to jump over in order to get to the future selves.

So Peter is doing the same thing, he is bringing the future self, what they will be and bringing that image closer to basically reality and the first thing that he does, because this image of who you are will actually change your behaviour.

You are a chosen race. Israelites are the chosen race. We all know that. Race is very-very important in any society. In this country, just a couple of miles from here, some poor Malay fireman got killed and we know it is an accident. Because he was Malay and there was a Hindu temple, got all this trouble based on race. In America, even though it is a mature democracy racism is there well.

Race is important because it determines physical characteristics, culture, traditions, language, religion and every aspect whether it is political, economic. They have got all these implications around race. In fact, there was a gentleman many years ago called Samuel Morton, who actually did a study on the various skulls. He found that the Caucasian skull is the biggest one, so therefore they must be smartest one. The smallest skull was African, so they must be most stupid. So actually Samuel Morton provided the scientific basis for racism against the Negroes in the United States based on this couple of skulls which he actually studied.

Racism is everywhere. On Neo-Nazi racism President Xi Jin Ping says, there are fine people on both sides. That means there are good people who are nazis as well.

We actually have an ambivalent attitude towards race because on one hand he says all these things. Look at President Xi Jin Ping,

"Thinking that one's own race and culture are superior, and insisting on transforming or even replacing other civilisations is stupid in its understanding and disastrous in practice,"

Isn't that great. He is such a nice man, isn't it. If you look in China and Xinjiang province, you will see satellite pictures of concentration camp and inside them are huge number of people who are not like the Han Chinese, they are wegers. There are about million of them in concentration camps. On one hand he says no such thing is racism, on the other hand he practices it.

What about our own country?

Our socialist party member says, because there was education minister Muzli. He

said, increase matriculation by 40,000. So that more non-Muslim can come in. The quota is still the same, 5%. And then people were upset. And then he says, you all are very unfair. In private sector Bumis cannot get job because speak Mandarin. You forgot to mention in government sector. Even Chinese who can speak Malay language actually have very little opportunity to get in. So it is racism all the time. And this gentleman actually was very right. He says,

"But who exactly is racist? I believe that the majority of us are racists, and it is ingrained in our hearts. It's just that the matriculation issue has been given a narrow outlook by every race, for their respective agendas,"

"They (politicians) display political correctness when preaching unity to a multiracial crowd, but when they are talking to their own race, they will often talk about how their own race has been bullied and neglected"

This applies whether it is DAP or AMNO or anybody else. On one hand, you say something which is politically correct but with your own people you say a whole bunch of things. So race is very-very important.

What about the Jewish race?

The Jewish race is a very astonishing race. Sir Winston Churchill said,

"Some people like the Jews, and some do not. But no thoughtful man can deny the fact that they are, beyond any question, the most formidable and the most remarkable race which has appeared in the world."

In fact, they are quite amazing. If you look at the Jewish population in United States, it is about 3-4% of the population, world population is 0.2% but they comprise of

- 50% of top 200 intellectuals
- 20% of professors at leading universities
- 26% of reporters, editors and executives of major print and broadcast media
- 59% of directors, writers and producers of 50 top grossing motion pictures 1965-1982
- 58% of directors, writers and producers of two or more prime time TV series

So they actually occupy a disproportionate level of their top 1-2% of the world.

Are they special?

Well let's look at it. When you are a chosen race, it comes in the context of the fall of man. Adam and Eve, the flood, tower of Babel and God decides to save the world through one man called Abraham.

Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless

you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

When Abraham actually passes the test of sacrificing the son.

Genesis 22:17-18 (ESV) I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

So chosen means loved.

Isaiah 41:8-10 (ESV) But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ...10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

So chosen means protected, upheld and loved. So it has always been a divine choice. God chooses Abel rather than Cain, Jacob rather than Esau and in fact in terms of Esau and Jacob he was chosen when he is in the womb where none of them have done anything to have merited it. So salvation is actually through a choice and they are valuable. If you look at Isaiah 43

Isaiah 43:3-4 (ESV) For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.

Chosen means valuable to God.

Chosen does not mean choice.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 (ESV) For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers,

So actually they are not the smartest people. They are not the most abundant people or strongest people, is because they are descended from the father Abraham as it were and yet chosenness requires knowledge and knowledge means responsibility.

Amos 3:1-2 (ESV) Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: 2 “You

only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

The more you know of God's law, the more you are responsible for, so therefore you look in the history of Israel; Moses, Abraham, the people of Israel sin, exiled to Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, Southern Kingdom also sinned and exiled in 586 BC, returned to Israel in 516 BC, Jesus was rejected and after Jesus was rejected in AD 30 the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and Israelites were no more in the Promised Land. They only reconstituted in the Modern Israel in 1948, which is a heck of long time that the Jews were without a land.

So therefore each time they sinned against God, each time God would punish them. Alright.

Who is the real chosen race today?

Peter is saying that you are the chosen race. That means he is pointing to all the gentiles; all the Chinese, the Indians, you know, whoever. The question is who is the real chosen race. Is it the modern nation of Israel formed in 1948 or the church or Jesus Christ?

In fact, there are two ideas. One called replacement theology that says the church has replaced Israel, we don't have to worry about Israel anymore. Israel is finished, God will not bother with them anymore because the real Israel is the church. Another aspect is this sensationalism, which is some funny teaching. That actually teaches that God will still honour Israel and provide them the land. Much of this is based on the Scofield Study Bible, which was about last month 100 years ago by this lawyer called Scofield who wrote the Bible and he has got footnotes that actually gives you the actual interpretation of the Bible as well.

Now under dispensationalism they believe that Israel is separate from the church. The church will be saved and raptured to heaven but God will still be with Israel and Israel will achieve its geographic history borders; Battle of Armageddon in the end and all that.

So the question is, this is Israel 1000 BC and state of Israel today. We will actually get back to there. So we as Christians should support the nation of Israel and help them get back all their lands because this is what God has promised. Because God's promises never fall. That is what they believe. But let us actually look at the scripture itself. Did Abraham really look forward to a physical land? Was the whole promise about a physical land? Let me show you Hebrews

Hebrews 11:8-11 (ESV) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is

God.

Now he went to live in Canaan, intense, didn't really occupy the land yet but what was he thinking in the end, was he going to setup the Promised Land in Canaan itself, he was looking forward to a city whose foundations, whose designer and builder is God. What kind of city is that? Is it a physical city, is it a city in the land of Canaan? Was he looking at Jerusalem where they are going to move the capital of Israel? No. Abraham was looking for a heavenly city. If you look at other believers in Hebrews chapter 11, it says

Hebrews 11:13-16 (ESV) These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

They are not talking about returning back to the land of Canaan. They are talking about a better country, a heavenly one.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

So even in the Old Testament, even Abraham, they never took the physical promised land as the fulfilment of the covenant promise. They took a heavenly land, a heavenly city. So basically, what Abraham looked forward to was the New Jerusalem, the New Heavens and the New Earth and the promised land of the Canaan which actually is a shadow of what is to come. So basically, it was never a land.

What about those genetic Jews?

Romans 4:13 (ESV) For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith

Paul writes that there is a promise to Abraham and his offspring. Do you notice the word there, is it plural or singular. It is singular. One descendant, not multiple. Heir of what? Is it the promised land only? It is bigger than that. It is beyond the promise land. It is the world. The vision is actually much bigger.

Galatians 3:16 (ESV) Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ

So when God actually said to Abraham, this is my covenant I make with you and

your offspring which means he means Jesus Christ

Galatians 3:27-29 (ESV) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise

This means Jesus Christ inherits the promise. Because you are in Christ, you inherit the promise and so therefore it is about faith.

Romans 4:16-17 (ESV) That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations

So it is all dependent on faith. What about the Jews? Paul writes in Romans,

Romans 9:6-8 (ESV) But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

What about promises to Israel? They don't get it. It is because it is not based on genetics.

7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

So basically Israel isn't Israel by the fact of genetic. Remember Isaac had two children. One is Jacob and the other is Esau, but how come only Jacob is chosen. Esau, is he part of it? He is part of it but God only chose Jacob. So therefore it is not be genetic, it is by divine choice. So therefore what will happen to Israel

Romans 11:24-26 (ESV) For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. The Mystery of Israel's Salvation 25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved,

Paul is now saying that this is the olive tree, the Jewish heritage from the roots of Abraham, the Jewish believers, Jewish people who are genetically Jewish have unbelief, they are fallen away and this provides opportunity for gentiles to be grafted in. A lot of us, if they didn't fall out, we didn't have the opportunity to come in and once we have come in then the Jewish believers will be brought back in again. So therefore, God's promises stand. His promises do not stand and fall in terms of a

political geographic border. Israel may not even live in the promised land today, it doesn't really matter, but the promise is that Israelites will one day actually believe in Christ. They will become Messianic Jews. Today there are no more than 15,000 Messianic Jews. God promises that they will come back and one day when they come back all Israel will be saved, which means all Israel is Jewish believers, messianic Jews as well as all of us. That will be saved.

This is as much as scripture tells us that we know. So, the church is God's chosen race. Together, we have got God's DNA and because you are his chosen race, it means we are chosen by grace. If we are chosen by grace, then our faith is a result of grace and you don't receive salvation because of your faith. It is because your faith is a result of grace, it is never dependent on you and that's very-very important. So therefore if it doesn't depend on you, we are humbled, we are able to forgive others, just as God has forgiven us and there is no issue of racism because it is all by faith. So therefore, no race is superior, we are now the chosen race of God.

Now we are assured, why, because God has chosen us, because our faith and obedience is due to His choice we can know that we are chosen.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-7 (ESV) 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. ..6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

By the fact that you obey and you obey in terms of becoming imitator of Paul, the way he lives his Christian life, you experience to join the Holy Spirit that actually assures you that you are actually chosen. In fact, that we are a chosen race gives us assurance of total vindication

Romans 8:33-35 (ESV) Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn?

Because we are chosen race, the devil cannot come up in the morning and point to you about a particular sin that you are going to lose your salvation. That cannot happen because Paul says in Romans. Because you are chosen race, God shapes history around you too.

This is a marvellous verse talking about destruction in the end times.

But for the sake of the chosen ones those days will be cut short" Matt 24:22

He is talking about the suffering at the end time. The suffering on end time is so bad, but because of the chosen people of God, God will actually make that period of time shorter, which means God actually alters history, overcomes history for the sake of the elect.

I was hearing a beautiful testimony of a lady who was from the Mormon church. She was actually a lecturer at Brigham Youngs University. There came out a movie called, Unveiling Grace. It is beautiful. She had actually spent 30 years of her life in the Mormon church and finally, you know instead of just believing and just reading Joseph Smith's book, she finally one day got hold of the New Testament and started reading it and found salvation through Jesus Christ and then the first thing that actually felt when she was saved was that a total regret because she was one of the leaders of the Mormon church. Her husband was high priest and she was a lecturer, gone for missions, sacrificed their lives and then she felt, "I wasted 30 years of my life in false teaching". But you know what God redeemed that. You know why, because she got so many Mormon friends that when she became a Christian, wow! She was a tremendous witness. Of the 30 years when she was at the Mormon church, all the people whom she knew she started to evangelize and shared the ministry which nobody else could do. See that. God redeems your past. Why? Because you are special. You are chosen.

So therefore here we have a passage in Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:4-6 (ESV) In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Which means he choose us to be adopted, so that we will glorify him, we will worship him and that is our purpose. So therefore these are the things that being chosen means for us every day.

We are also a royal priesthood. There are three things when we talk about royal priesthood:

- Access
- Qualifications
- Duties

As royal priesthood, we are set aside to serve the king.

Exodus 19:4-6 (ESV) You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

We are supposed to be a kingdom of priest. Priests are basically mediators. So God's has covenant stipulations, ceremonies demands on his people, he will tell the priest. The priest will bring it to the people. The priest will also bring the issues of the people. They have got their sins, their concerns, their sacrifices, he will bring them to God. So therefore, the priest stands in the middle between God and man.

In fact, it is a very-very humbling position.

We actually have a situation where when the people of Old Testament worship God. Do you know that they never actually say the word Yahveh. You know why? Saying the word "Yahveh" in the old days, the theory is that if you say the name of the God it releases the power of the God and when you release the power of God it wipes you off as it were. In fact, they were so reverent towards God that the high priest after one week of preparation, only one day in the whole year will enter the holy of holies, offer sacrifices there and only then he will whisper the word, "Yahveh". So you really got to be prepared.

Now when he says, we are royal priesthood, which means this process in which just one person will come and say the name of God, we are now that priest. We enter the holy of holies and say 'Abba'. A tremendous privilege that we actually have. Not only that, because we are mediators, we bring the gospel to the people. We pray for them, we are mediators, we bring what God tells them. God tells them they are sinners, God tells them there is Jesus who has died for their sins. Priestly duty is basically being a mediator, evangelism.

This is Alvin Lim, he is the youngest Malaysian Datuk at 31. What would you have done to gain Datuk-ship you think at 31? I brought this up because I really don't know how he got his Datuk-ship. It came out a newspaper. How come this guy got Datuk-ship? He basically doesn't deserve it, but he got it and able to go to the Federal, it was a federal Datuk-ship actually. When you go there, you know this nice little suit. You know how much you have to pay for that? Nothing, it is free. When you are a Datuk, the king gives you the uniform. It is part of it. Otherwise, you go and buy your own. When the king supplies you the uniform and you wear this.

You cannot enter the court; you cannot come before the king unless he provides you the uniform. That concept is the same for us, we cannot enter the presence of God until he gives us a uniform and that uniform is the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The other duties of the priest is that he is advocates for the people. They are always worshipping and they always look after the weakest people, the poor and the needy. So as royal priesthood, we not only worship but we also share the gospel, we also look after the poor and the needy. We minister the presence of God to people, so when people are hungry, people are starving, we bring the presence of God. I think our Sister Pari shared with us about 40 million slaves all over the world and she is starting this ministry where she is going to reach out and provide help and work and safety for slaves all over the world. So here we have the concept of royal priesthood.

The other one is **holy nation**. When we think about nation, our nation is basically a geographic political entity. In those days, the word is ethos, which is basically an ethnic group. Now the word 'holy' is more than being separate or moral. It is basically a scale; justice, love, mercy, patience, you can be poor, average, good,

excellent, super or holy, which means God level. It is the God-ness, it is an adjective for God.

God's holiness is the essence of who He is. He is holy, full of justice, love and mercy, it is a category all on its own.

Air Force 1 is a 747 where the president sits one side. It was attacked by terrorist and it was going to crash and at last minute a C47, one of those transport planes came to back and they shot a line from the back of Air Force 1 which was going to crash into the cargo ship which is normal transport. And Harrison Ford was the president and he repelled from the rope from the Air Force 747 right down to the cargo plane. The moment he landed on the cargo plane and decoupled so that Air Force 1 could crash, the pilot of the cargo plane changed his calls line to Air Force 1. Why? Because of the presence of the president. That is the kind of concept of holiness.

We are holy. I mean you look at Air Force 1 747 compared to a stupid transport plane. The transport plane does not look like Air Force 1. It looks horrible, like some of us. They look at us and they call us, holy, oh my God. Yeah, we look like the horrible transport plane but because we have the presence of God suddenly we call us Air Force 1, we call us holy. There is the presence of God in our lives.

In fact, if you look at the temple. Do you know that the ashes of temple are holy. Even the ashes, I suppose if you have a mouse that runs around the temple, the mouse is also holy. It is a holy mouse.

All the things that are in the temple, some are nice, some are not nice. If you put a spade there also, it is also called a holy spade. So basically it is dedicated. When he refers to people, means we are his image bearers, we have to live up to who he is. Its functional property. We have to think, behave, feel and we have the purpose and direction, it is basically him. It must reflect who he is, which means if we are holy nation, we must have a changed way that we live and think. We are talking about a whole new culture.

A subculture is, for example bowling or music or the gym subculture. The gym subculture she would go to a gym and she will usually go every single day and they will talk about, you know how many weights you lifted the other day, how many kilometers you ran and all those boring things they will talk about and whether you ate your chia seeds or whether you had the protein and whether you had the energy drink. They all talk about all these things which you and I would not be interested in.

We call the gym a subculture because when you leave the gym for the rest of your life it doesn't affect you at all. Whether you bathe or not bathe, whether you are a gym person or not, it doesn't affect the way you talk to your wife or the way you interact with your friends or the way you go to work. It is completely different. What we are talking about a whole culture. It is like a Nepali worker who comes to

Malaysia. It is not a subculture anymore. The way he takes the bus, the way he lives, how he eats, you know, his entire outlook of life has completely changed.

So therefore, when we are talking about being a holy nation, we are talking about a ignition within a nation. That means we are Christians, we have a different culture, living within a Malaysian culture and that's kind of difficult isn't it. That's why Rome persecuted Christians. Finally came a time when the Roman has to either fight or tamely acknowledge the superpower within his borders. The Christians were so huge, so many of them that Rome actually gave up at the end, but initially they persecuted. That's why China is now persecuting Christians. Why, because Christians outnumber the number of communist party members, which only number about 80 million. Number of Christians exceed 130 million. That's why the president is upset and he tells them, Jesus will not save him, I will save you and he blows up huge churches completely. So we live in a different culture.

I believe that we follow the Word of God, but we have to live within the federal constitution. We are set apart in every aspect of our lives, that's why we are called strangers and aliens, why because we follow this law within this law. So there is a conflict. So, if we are truly belonging to God, we are a holy nation, we must live within this set of laws within the federal constitution.

How do we apply this?

When life becomes tough, when your boss is shouting at you and life is unfair, because you actually are dedicated to God and serving him. If you look in verse 18

1 Peter 2:18 (ESV) Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

You can cope up with bosses like that because in the end you are not serving that boss, you are serving God. It is a law within a law. It is a totally different culture. So therefore, this is how we are changed. We are people of his own possession.

Isaiah 19:24-25 (ESV) In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."

All the nations belong to God, but Israel is special.

Exodus 19:5 (ESV) Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;

Every time when God saves them, He saves them because they are God's special possession.

Recently they went to Mount Everest. You know how much rubbish they removed there. 10,000 kilograms of rubbish and they got rubbish from every corner of the world. You know why? Everybody is rushing to go up there, to become filled with the glory of Mount Everest. We all want to be there on the highest mountain on the world. We want to be associated with it. But actually if we look at that, God says you are my treasured possession, which means God of the universe who is taller than Mount Everest comes down and tells us, you don't have to climb the tallest mountain in the world to have glory, I am coming down to you and I am going to say to you, you are my treasured possession, which means irreplaceably treasured.

If we look at the greater treasure, the Crown in England and the big diamond stolen from somewhere. That is not what a treasured possession is. You know why? Well, I think a treasured possession looks like the signature of George Washington on an Act of Congress. It is only one of its kind. It is worth 9.8 million American dollars. Why? It is only a piece of paper. But why is it precious? Because it is irreplaceable. It has got a signature of George Washington which is first president of United States. That's why it is precious.

If you look at another treasure here. The most expensive baseball in the world. 623,000 US dollars, signed by Grover Cleveland, Tye Cobb, Eddie Collins, Babe Ruth. These are all the top baseball players in the world at that time. A small horrible ball which is misshapen but it is so valuable because of the signatures there.

Same thing with this one. The signature of Abraham Lincoln is on this one. This is the emancipation of the slaves. There are only a couple of these left behind and it is worth a lot of money because it has the signature of Abraham Lincoln. It is expensive. It is treasured, you know, why because of the person that put his name there. When you actually look at it, it is just a piece of paper worth nothing.

When I look at some of you, worth nothing. It is a fact. Some are too fat, some are too thin, some are too handsome, some are too ugly. But when God looks at us, He put his signature on our faces. The next time you look at your neighbor you see the handprint of God. You will never say, you are too fat or ugly or whatever else, you know why, because he has got the handprint of God. God is saying to us that we are his precious possession, you are irreplaceable. That is what it means. We are not only irreplaceable to people; we are irreplaceable to God. That is the complete difference.

"We were designed to find our fullest satisfaction not in front of a mirror, but in front of God."

So often we stand in front of a mirror and we kept looking at ourselves. I tell you that is a no-win situation for my age. The more you look, the worse it gets year by year. Some of you in your prime it is okay but you will mark my words, you will get to my stage. We are designed to find our fullest satisfaction not in front of a mirror

but in front of God. Every day as your hair falls out and your tummy bulges out, your spirit grows and the only person that matters is the one who looks at us and he is satisfied with us.

I was in the hospital just the other day and I ran into an old lady. She was just shuffling along and everybody sort of ignored her. She was with her daughter and then the lady just reached out to me and touched my hand and say, "hey Peter". I looked at her, she was wearing a shawl. "Remember me". Oh yeah. She said, "Elaine". I said who is Elaine. The CEO of Subang Medical Center. Once she walked the corridors of power, with a snap of finger she get the doctors fired for 20 years and today walking in Subang Medical Center, hair all gone because of cancer, wearing a shawl, shuffling along, lost her job, nobody recognised her and she grabbed my hand in order to make me recognize. Nobody gives a damn about her anymore.

Isn't it sad? She used to be CEO of Subang Medical Center. But that is actually what we will all be one day. One day we will get old and people will no longer look at us for anything and we will not be recognizable. That's the reality. In the eyes of God, He always recognizes us. We will be God's irreplaceable precious-precious possession and God will never let you go. Is it wonderful, we are God's precious irreplaceable possession.

So therefore I am going to end. This verse is beautiful. Whenever you are depressed. Whenever you went through something bad or somebody called you something bad or something didn't turn up well in your work, I want you to go back and memorize this verse. If there is any verse that to remember it is this verse. Because this verse tells you who you are and when it tells you who you are, it motivates you to live like who you are. It will change the colour of your day, it will change the way you live, the way you think, the way you act and the way you interact with everybody around. We remember, we are the chosen race, chosen by grace, we are royal priesthood where we have intimacy and access. We are a holy nation with dedication of our lives to serve him. We are special possession. We are irreplaceably valuable. We are odd because we don't deserve it. We are privileged, we want to bring people in relationship with him. We are inspired to love and serve him and we are excited because of who we are and what we will be one day.