

Out of Darkness into Light

I Peter 2:9-10

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. Introduction: Our primary text for today is I Peter 2:9-10 and the title of my message, “Out of Darkness into Light,” is taken from verse 9. Now, to get the broader context, know that the apostle wrote this epistle to a number of believers who were dispersed in different places. And so it follows, as with the other epistles, that what Peter was inspired by God to write concerning these believers can be said of all true believers in every age.
- II. I Peter 2:9-10: In these 2 verses I want us to examine how God (through Peter) describes true believers with emphasis on the latter part of verse 9 where they are described as those who have been called “...***out of darkness into his marvelous light:***” So look with me now at these 2 verses. Beginning in verse 9, God says of these believers, “***But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*** ¹⁰***Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.***”
 - A. A Chosen Generation: First he refers to them as a chosen generation – eternally chosen by God unto salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. Ephesians 1:3-4 elaborates on this “choosing” by God of all who are saved as it reads, “***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: ⁴According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,...***” So, here we see in plain, unmistakable language that those who are eternally blessed in Christ, called the election of grace, were just that – chosen in Christ from eternity past, before the world ever came into existence.
 2. And notice they are referred to in I Peter as a “***chosen generation.***” This isn’t speaking of an age grouping such as we might refer to as in “today’s generation” in which we currently live. But he’s speaking of a spiritual generation. Our text today has reference back to a passage in Isaiah and in the Greek translation of the original Hebrew (in which Isaiah was written) the word for “generation” is translated “kindred.” So we can know from this (and the phrases that follow) that Peter is not referring to God’s elect before their regeneration and conversion, but to a kindred people – kin folks in that they are now born again believers – as all the elect ultimately will be, without fail.

Just as Paul described believers for whom he was thankful in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, saying, ***“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:”***, so it is with this chosen “generation” who have now become a kindred people – born again of the spirit and of the same household and family, brethren with the same Father, same Lord, same Spirit, same faith, -- and all that, not owing to their choice, but to God’s choice of them in Christ.

3. So, if you’re a true believer, you’re part of this chosen generation and you will identify with your spiritual kin folks – identify in like-minded faith and fellowship. As you can see, to choose to disbelieve the biblical doctrine of election, is to disbelieve God as He speaks through His Word. To deny election is to deny God’s way of salvation by grace, because as I’ve said before, grace necessitates election. To believe that God didn’t do the choosing (i.e. - if your salvation is ultimately decided by your so-called freewill choice), then by default you don’t believe God’s way of salvation by grace for grace speaks of unmerited favor. And if it wasn’t God’s sovereign choice to save you, then there must be some merit found in you (perhaps your own choice) that is presumed to earn His favor. That’s to tragically trust in salvation by works (not grace) and God says He will not have it. (Cite Eph. 2:8-9).

B. A Royal Priesthood: Notice in verse 9 of our text, he then refers to them as a “royal priesthood.”

1. Under the Old Covenant there were priests and kings but these 2 offices came together in Christ, the believer’s high priest and the King of Kings who reigns over all. And being one with Christ, believers are kings and priests. For they too reign over sin and Satan in a reign of grace – grace which reigns through Christ’s righteousness unto eternal life (Rom. 5:21). Believers have the riches of kings, possessing the riches of grace in this life and entitled to the riches of glory in the next – no less than what the infinitely valuable blood of Christ can merit for them. And as only the priest could enter into the presence of God in the tabernacle, those made one in Christ have access to boldly enter into His presence (as we read about in Hebrews) having the merits of Christ’s perfect righteousness put to their accounts just as the demerit of their sins were put (or imputed) to the account of Christ so that He might justly pay the debt in full for them. (Mention 2 Cor. 5:21) That’s the believer’s royal apparel – a robe of righteousness – the merit of His perfect obedience unto death on the cross imputed!
2. And based upon His righteousness imputed, they have been made kings and priests by Him.

If you look back a few verses before our text to verse 5, you'll see there, Peter also refers to believers as a ***"holy priesthood*** saying, ***"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."*** All of our acceptance is in Him as we're told in that Ephesians 1 passage I referred to earlier, believers (and all they can offer as priests unto God) are ***"...accepted in the beloved"*** – in Jesus Christ.

C. A Holy Nation: Back in verse 9, it refers to believers as ***"an holy nation."*** And so we, believers, are a holy nation, in Him. Paul describes to the Colossians what they were like before God gave them spiritual life and how in their reconciliation they are presented as holy through the blood of Christ. Look at that with me beginning in Colossians 1:21: ***"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ²²In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:"*** Believers, saved sinners (but nonetheless sinners in themselves), are said to be presented unblameable, unprovable, holy and so accepted by God. How can this be? It's because they, these beloved sinners, and me and all of you who are of like-minded faith are (again) accepted in the Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ!

D. A Peculiar People: Now notice that Peter also calls believers ***"a peculiar people."*** Now some of us might be a bit peculiar as in being an odd person or picky person as we use it in our modern day vernacular, but know that the Greek word translated "peculiar" is a word which means "purchased." Believers here are being described as the purchased possession of God – again, a blood-bought people. In Acts 20:28, God's word refers to believers collectively as ***"...the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."***

III. The Reason: And then we discover why believers have these blessings in Christ as Peter explains that believers ***"...are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; <for what reason?> that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you ..."*** And let's stop for a moment right there. This is God's chief design in all that He does – that He should be made known and worshipped as He is by all of the objects of His electing, redeeming, and regenerating grace – It's His glory. If your "salvation" is presumed to be conditioned in any way on you, if it's of your choosing, if it's not due solely to the doing and dying of Christ as your Surety and Substitute, then you have room to boast – you must conclude there is something you did (or some decision you made) which distinguishes you from others. And you then would be showing forth the praises of yourself. In Romans 11:36, Paul (in speaking of Christ) wrote, ***"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*** Why does God save anyone? It's all for His glory.

- IV. Out of Darkness into Light: Now back in verse 9 of our text, who are the “ye” who show forth the praises of God? They are all the people Peter has been describing, including one more identifying characteristic of a true believer given here at the end of verse 9. It is every one who He has called “...***out of darkness into his marvellous light:***” And as with these other descriptions, only a true believer (and every true believer) is called by God (through His preached Word of regeneration, God’s Gospel) “...***out of darkness into his marvellous light:***” Let’s consider what that means.
- V. Darkness and Light: These two states, darkness and light, are opposites and mutually exclusive. That is – right now each of us are either in darkness (walking in darkness) or else we’re in light (walking in light). And we know that because the subject here is salvation that is evidenced by our belief in the true Gospel. To be in darkness is to be in unbelief. To be in light is to have been born again and brought to faith and repentance of our former dead works in which we trusted while in darkness.
- We’re all born in darkness and so in need of being translated into the kingdom of Light – which is the kingdom of His dear Son. Christ told us as much in John 8:12 in saying that He was that light. As He was speaking on the Mount of Olives we read, “***Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.***” If you follow the Christ of the Bible you have been translated from darkness into light – the light of spiritual life, the light which dispels the darkness. Paul put it this way as he spoke about how he was praying for the believers in Colossians 1:12:, “***Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:***” – their sins have been remitted – paid for in full (the debt has been forgiven) – and in light they come to see that Christ (and Christ alone) fits their need.
- A. Darkness: To be in the dark is to not be able to see the reality of things, and so we believe a lie. If we’re religious and still in darkness, we believe in a false god (an idol) as set forth in a false gospel, a false way of salvation. And we all start out this way. To be in darkness is to be blind. It is to be lost because in darkness (without spiritual eyes to see) you can’t see the way. At the end of John 12:35 we read where Jesus said, “... ***for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.***”

And in spiritual darkness, that blindness is so great that we are blind to our own blindness. Even for those who are religious, including the vast majority who call themselves “Christian,” unless (and until) God turns on the light for them (so to speak), such sincere religious folks think they see and know the way of salvation, but as God’s Word teaches us

in Proverbs 16:25, ***“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”***. So whatever way of salvation initially seems right to us by nature, know that it’s not God’s way of salvation, rather it is what Christ called the broad road that leadeth to destruction and that so many enter into (Matt. 7:13).

I once read a story about a blind woman in an assisted living facility who was moved to a new room that was okay, but really nothing special. But upon entering the room, the blind lady gushed over how beautiful she thought everything was. And the one assisting her countered, “Well, why do you say that? You can’t see.” And the blind lady replied, “Because I choose to see it that way.” Now that story was written to promote the value of having an optimistic attitude and a healthier, more positive outlook on life and that has some merit. But what if there was a big rattlesnake inside the room, ready to strike as soon as this blind lady entered. She couldn’t see it and her blindness in that case could prove to be deadly in spite of the fact that she was cheerfully imagining things were just fine.

That’s how I once viewed things at a time when I was confident of my own salvation, only later to discover I was lost. I was religiously sincere, but sincerely wrong. I didn’t know God’s way of salvation at that time and in spiritual blindness I thought I was just fine. Well, that’s the serpent Satan’s goal – is to keep us in blindness, content with imagining things are just fine with us and God when the reality is they’re not. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Paul wrote, ***“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”*** In darkness we walk contrary to God’s reality – in ignorance of God’s way of salvation by Christ, based upon His imputed righteousness alone. In spiritual darkness we believe a lie – a deadly lie – as we imagine (perhaps in keeping with what we’ve been taught), we imagine that our salvation is conditioned (at least in part) on something done by, in, or through us, the sinner, rather than conditioned exclusively on the doing and dying of the Savior in our place.

My wife, Susan, recently shared with me a comment she heard on a podcast she was listening to in which the lady said, “Whenever you fight reality, you lose 100% of the time.” Well there is no loss of greater consequence than to leave this life still in a state of a darkness, in ignorance of God’s reality concerning His way of salvation. That’s a loss for all eternity. Like the story of the blind lady I just mentioned, in trying to discuss the Gospel or scripture with others, I’ve heard them respond with, “Well, I think about it like this” or “I” choose to believe it’s this way,” etc. In essence, they treat the light, the specific truth of how God saves sinners as something they can accept or reject, assuming their salvation can be based upon however they choose to see it – but that’s not God’s reality as set forth in His Word.

How many times have you heard others, who worship and fellowship where you know a false gospel (a lie) is preached, say, "I believe a person is okay as long as they walk in the light they have?" The problem with that, is that we have available to us the light of the Gospel in God's word, but none of us (if left to ourselves) will naturally walk in that light and seek to know God as He really is.

Light is synonymous with truth and while many preach and teach some true things about God and Christ, the light to which a true believer is delivered is the specific truth of God's Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed which rightly sets forth Christ and the way of salvation conditioned solely on Him, based solely on His righteousness being imputed to (or put to the account of) of those He saves. So, to sit under (and thereby promote) a false gospel, in religious fellowship with unbelievers) is not to walk in the "light that you have" but in darkness, believing a lie – not walking in the light which is truth. It's not the truth concerning Christ who said of Himself, "***...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***"(John 14:6) – Not some other way you might choose to imagine things to be.

We all do start out in darkness as God's Word so clearly teaches. Consider these verses:

1. 1 Corinthians 2:14: ***"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."***
2. In John 3:19-21 Jesus said, ***"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. <Light exposes> ²¹But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."***
3. In Matthew 13, the disciples asked Christ why He spoke in parables and in verse 13 He replied, ***"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: ¹⁵For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. ¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."*** (Matthew 13:13-16).
4. In Ephesians 5:8, Paul told born-again believers: ***"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:***" So all believers start out in darkness.

5. And from our text, if those called into His marvelous light are called out of darkness, then darkness is where we all begin. And to further emphasize that, in verse 10 Peter describes the true believers as a people... ***“Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”*** We often acquaint “obtaining” something to be as a result of some effort we put forth to acquire it. But this word translated “obtain” is better translated “received” as in “having been shown mercy” Actually, it would not be mercy if the obtaining came as a result of something that you did. That would be something you earned, deserved or merited. That’s certainly not mercy because mercy, like grace, has to do with being shown favor based upon no merit found in the recipient of mercy or grace. Peter is describing true believers as those chosen from all eternity, redeemed at the cross, but who shall in time (in their respective lifetimes) come to Him for salvation – pleading not their merits – but His alone – being shown mercy and grace. By grace they get what they don’t deserve and by mercy through Christ they don’t get what they would deserve.
6. Romans 3: The darkness into which we are all naturally born is described very clearly in Romans 3, a passage most of you are familiar with. Paul begins in verse 10 saying ***“...There is none righteous, no, not one:”*** And Paul continues through verse 19, describing how none understand, none seek after God – meaning God as He is known by the Person and work of Christ. He states how none doeth good. He tells us that we don’t know the way of peace – meaning salvation wherein there is peace made between a holy God and sinners such as us and he adds they have no fear of God before their eyes – meaning no reverential respect for the honor of God’s character – His glory – that which is only seen in Christ and God’s way of salvation through Him. Having no fear of God would be akin to someone excusing their religious past in belief of a false gospel by saying (as I once said), “Well, I just didn’t think about it that way.” Our Pastor explained to me how that’s what it is to have no fear of God before your eyes – it’s to be unmindful, just not think about God’s glory in salvation.

And then in verse 20 of Romans 3, Paul draws the conclusion for us, in light of what (and who) we are by nature (in our darkness) saying ***“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*** So we see the problem is that none are righteous – none can produce the perfect righteousness that God requires and none want righteousness God’s way. And so by the doing of the sinner (by their works) no one shall be justified (declared not guilty but righteous in his sight) – not by that presumed false way of salvation by works. That’s the essence of the darkness of unbelief. In darkness, we imagine we can be justified by something we do or some choice we make. So there’s a huge problem.

In Acts 17:31, God tells us that He will judge the world in righteousness – the very righteousness of Christ – meaning you must have a righteousness that is equal to that of Christ – that’s the merit of His perfect obedience unto death. And as God declares in Romans 3, we fall way short of that. And as a holy and just God, He must (and does) punish sin.

But He’s also a loving and merciful God. And so He delivers His chosen generation (His dear children) out of darkness into His marvelous light whereby they see what they could not see before – how God can be just and still save a sinner like you and me. And that is what is revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit through His word of regeneration – through the preached Gospel of grace. In Romans 1:16-17, Paul said he wasn’t ashamed of the Gospel – the good news concerning how God saves sinner for it is the very power of God unto salvation, adding in verse 17 that this is so, because therein (in the Gospel) is revealed the righteousness of God.

B. Light: Now let’s talk about light. Christ said He was the light and often in the scripture “light” refers to the Gospel which sets forth Christ’s glorious Person and finished work – the work by which His chosen generation became “peculiar” – being purchased by His shed blood. To be in the light is to see – to see God’s reality of who He is and how He saves sinners. Light also exposes to us who we are as sinners and why we desperately need the righteousness of another. Light dispels the darkness.

By nature, we love the darkness. To stick with the metaphor of a dark room, if someone comes along and turns the light on and exposes what we really are by nature – sinners deserving God’s eternal wrath if judged by what we are in ourselves, why, we’re likely to say, “Turn that light off. I choose to not accept that reality” – the reality concerning how woefully I fall short of the righteousness I need. And apart from being given spiritual life and a new heart, that’s the natural reaction to the Gospel message. But for those delivered from that darkness, that Gospel is a “marvelous light” – good news whereby we come to know the reality of our sinfulness and who God is, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3).

We’re told in Ephesians 5:13: ***“But all things that are reprov’d are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”*** See the connection with truth and reality. In darkness we trust in that which we do to make the real difference in our salvation. That’s salvation by works that has us placing our trust in a presumed righteousness of our own making – self-righteousness. In light we now trust in that which our Substitute (and He alone) did to make all the difference in salvation. That’s salvation by grace that has us placing our trust solely in Christ and His imputed righteousness.

VI. Out of Darkness into His marvelous Light: Now how does one evidence that they are among these described in our text today. If one has been called out of darkness into His marvelous light, it is evidenced by their repentance – they have changed gods, rejecting the idol of their imagination and in light, turned to worship the true and living God.

A. Philippians 3:7-9: In Philippians 3, Paul describes the repentance that evidences this transition out of darkness into light. After listing the things upon which his former false hope had been based (which included his religious zeal), he then says of those things, beginning in verse 7, ***“But what things were gain to me, <meaning that which he had thought recommended him unto his god so as to be counted among the saved> those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, ⁹*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith <or faithfulness> of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*****

In darkness, Paul, like us all by nature, trusted in that which he did – his own presumed righteousness. In light, that which he thought was gaining him eternal life was put in the loss column. That’s the repentance that always accompanies genuine, God-given faith! And in light, Paul now needed to be found as one with Christ – needing the very righteousness of God put to His account – that which Christ produced for Him by dying in his place.

B. Now how did Christ’s righteousness become Paul’s? How is it now my (or your) righteousness? In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we’re told: ***“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*** What an exchange! God the Father imputed or accounted all the demerit of all the sins of His chosen generation to His sinless Son, that by His death He might pay the sin debt due unto the justice of God the Father – Christ dying for sins He had no part in producing. And on that basis, God the Father made this peculiar (purchased) people righteous in Christ – accounting (or imputing) the merit of His perfect obedience unto death (His righteousness) to each and every one of them for whom He died, making them acceptable in Jesus Christ with a righteousness which they had no part in producing.

VII. Closing: Well, as was read earlier from Psalm 118, in time God shows those He saves this light – the light of the Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed. In years past, in spite of having read some of the same scripture we looked at today, I continued along my merry way, content in the spiritual darkness of my former religion, perceiving no need to examine any further my own salvation, blindly content that I was saved and just fine, even though at that time, I couldn't say that this transition from darkness to light had taken place, not yet having what naturally "seemed" right to me (as taught from my childhood), exposed to me to be the lie that it was. Well, thankfully, in God's due time, He was pleased to so deliver me from that darkness into His marvelous light, just as He faithfully does for all of His chosen, redeemed children. Has the way of salvation that once naturally seemed right to you been exposed by the light of the Gospel to have been the wrong way? If not – I pray God will apply His Word as we've considered it today as motivation for you to examine yourself as to whether you're in the faith – to deal in God's reality concerning His way of salvation through Christ alone.

Are you in the company of this chosen generation, this royal priesthood, part of this holy nation, a peculiar (purchased) person? Well, as we saw in our text, if you are so blessed of God, He did so for the purpose of glorifying Himself – to shew forth the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. So who gets the glory in your salvation? Well, it's whoever makes the real difference. If you believe Christ died for all (as so many in our day do), meaning He did no more for those He saves than those who perish, then there's no one left to make the difference but you, the sinner. And the glory then would belong to you. That's not God's way of salvation and He won't share His glory.

As we read earlier in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, while it is Satan's aim is to keep you blind in darkness, had we continued to verse 6 we'd see that God overcomes that darkness as He graciously shines a light in the hearts of those He saves that achieves this very purpose of glorifying Himself. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, we read, "**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, <who said "Let there be light" and there was light; that same all powerful God...>hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face <the Person and work> of Jesus Christ.**" We see what we could not see before – how God, through the finished work of Christ, can be who He is and still save sinners like me and you – being both a just God and a Savior. Thereby He gets all the glory! If God hasn't already done so, I pray He will so shine in the heart of someone you who hears this message.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.