

(Message #1 of **The Church: A Divine Design**)

## **The Essence of the Church**

I Peter 2:9-10

Tonight I want to begin a study in regard to the church. Many of us have been a part of the church for a long time, but do we really know what the church is and what we have been called to do? Are we really aware of what we are blessed to be a part of? Do we fully understand what is required to be a part of the church?

We live in a time when most are encouraged to participate in all sorts of extra-curricular activities. They are pressed to join civic clubs, social groups, volunteer programs, etc. It seems as if humanity is now judged by which groups or clubs they are associated with.

These clubs and civic organizations, for the most part, do a good work among society. They offer help and assistance to those who would not otherwise be able to get certain services they need. Others are for mere enjoyment. But, these are just that, organizations, made up of men with largely human principles and ideals.

The sad part is many are looking to the good deeds they do to ensure their acceptance of God. They are depending upon their busyness and contributions to society. There is absolutely nothing wrong in being involved in our communities or volunteering our time and talents. But, we must understand that good works alone cannot save. [Ephes.2:8-9 – For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: \[9\] Not of works, lest any man should boast.](#)

So, what separates the church from all the other groups and organizations? As I said these are just organizations, made up on men. The church is much different. It isn't an organization, in fact, it is an organism. The church is a living thing. Those who genuinely make up the church were born of God and live unto Him. Our membership never ceases, because we never really die. We just change locations. [Ephes.2:10 – For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.](#)

The word church is translated from the Greek word *ecclesia* and literally means “a *called out assembly*.” Of all the groups and activities I have been involved in, none compare to the church. I rejoice to be a part of the church. I am pleased to identify with the church. I wasn't voted in; I was born into the church! As we begin our study, I want to consider the [elements](#) of the church described here as we think on: [The Essence of the Church](#).

**I. The Selection of the Church** [\(9\) – 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:](#) Peter reveals that we are a [chosen generation](#); we

were literally chosen of God. God in His infinite wisdom and mercy provided a means for our salvation. He looked out over the masses of humanity throughout eternity and chose to save us! We were included in His plan.

- I marvel to think that God would choose me, one who was so undeserving! We really don't like to think in those terms, but it is true nonetheless. How many of us woke up on the morning we were saved intending to get saved? Had God not come to us, revealing Himself to us and shown our need for Him, we would still be lost in our sin! Salvation is an act of His sovereign grace.

- Who am I that a King would bleed and die for? Who am I that He would offer such wonderful, marvelous grace? Being a part of the church involves being chosen of God.

## **I. The Selection of the Church** (9)

**II. The Dominion of the Church** (9) – We also discover that we are a [royal priesthood](#). This reveals a two-fold state. Notice:

**A. Our Standing** – Those who belong to the Lord, those who have been saved and born into the family of God are [royal](#). That has to do with “*majesty, sovereignty, and divine rule.*” That does not imply that we possess the deity and authority of our King, but we do belong to His royal family. We are all His ambassadors to the world. We are the King's children!

- Isn't that amazing? We were all unworthy of His grace, deserving of hell, and yet He redeemed us and made us part of His family, partakers in the eternal inheritance that He alone provides.

**B. Our Service** – We are a [royal priesthood](#). This reveals the blessing of serving the Lord and the responsibilities associated with it. Membership has its privileges, but it also has its obligations.

- Prior to Calvary and the birth of the church at Pentecost, God's people were served by the priesthood. Only a select few were allowed to participate in the most holy ordinances of the temple. The high priest was man's representative to God. He was the only one with access to the holy of holies. It was there that he went in, behind the veil on the Day of Atonement, and offered the blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. He was the only one who was privileged to experience the presence of God in that place.

- With the New Covenant and our salvation, all believers are now a **royal priesthood**. We no longer are limited in our service for the King. God has set the guidelines for particular offices, but all have the privilege and responsibility of working in the ministry of God!
- We no longer have to depend upon a man to make intercession for us. The veil of the temple was rent in twain as Christ died upon the cross. All believers now have unhindered access to the throne of grace. I don't have to plead my case to a mortal and depend upon him to intercede for me. I can go directly to the throne through prayer, make my intercessions known, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who stands as my Mediator with God!
- That is an abundant blessing, but it also carries an awesome responsibility. We must maintain our fellowship with God in order to carry out the work that we've been called to do. There is no reason for any believer to be lacking in their work in this royal priesthood!

#### **I. The Selection of the Church** (9)

#### **II. The Dominion of the Church** (9)

**III. The Sanctification of the Church** (9) – **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:** The church is considered a **holy nation** in the eyes of God. We are His people, separated unto Him and we have an obligation to represent and promote His holiness.

- It is interesting to note that the word holy in the text actually means “*separated; set apart, and different.*” This is a character of the church that seems to be falling by the wayside. The world views much of the church no differently than they do themselves. (I am convinced that much of that is the result of people being added to church roles, but not actually being a part of the church, born again in salvation.)
- We, as the church of the Living God, have an obligation to live holy, separated lives before the Lord and among the world. This is not a request or an option; it is a mandate of God! **2 Cor.6:17 – Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,** 1 Pet.1:16 – **Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.** We are to live sanctified lives!

**IV. The Admiration of the Church** (9) – Peter also reveals that we are a **peculiar people**. Now if you looked that up in Webster's you would not fully understand the text. This is not saying that we are odd or peculiar as we would commonly think of. This has the idea of “*a purchased possession; one of rare beauty and of priceless nature.*” The Hebrew word translated **jewels** in **Mal.3:17** has the same meaning. **And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day**

when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

- We are the Lord's priceless possession. He gave Himself for our redemption. He loved us so much that He was willing to die for our sin and purchase us from its bondage. Surely if He was willing to pay such a price, He would keep His eye upon us and care for our needs. We are a peculiar people! There are none who can claim the blessing we have received.

#### **I. The Selection of the Church** (9)

#### **II. The Dominion of the Church** (9)

#### **III. The Sanctification of the Church** (9)

#### **IV. The Admiration of the Church** (9)

**V. The Obligation of the Church** (9) – Here we find one of the greatest responsibilities that the church has. We are to shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We exist to give God glory. We are here tonight to offer our worship unto Christ our Lord. We have an obligation to praise Him!

- The phrase shew forth means “*to speak forth, publish abroad, to set forth.*” The word praises refers to “*those qualities that make Him excellent.*” When we see Him for all that He truly is, we will have no choice but to shew forth His praises. We will not be able to keep it quiet or contain our worship!

- A lot of congregations are meeting on a regular basis, but I wonder how many are offering heartfelt worship. Is worship our priority here? We are obligated to worship the Lord, publishing abroad His praises!

**VI. The Illumination of the Church** (9) – 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: Take just a moment to recall the life you lived before Christ. We all walked in darkness according to the lusts of the flesh. Our eyes were blinded to the truth and we could not see the light. We were helpless and hopeless, wandering aimlessly in the dark. But thank God one day the Holy Spirit came and opened my eyes to truth. I saw my need and trusted Christ in salvation. I was delivered from that darkness and now I walk in the light.

- The church now dwells in the glorious light of Christ our Lord. He has delivered us from the darkness of sin and the devastation that it brings. We have reason to rejoice in Him. Were it not for His abundant grace we would yet be in darkness.

**VII. The Transformation of the Church** (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. Peter concludes this thought with a wonderful truth. He realizes apart from Christ we are nothing. Before we met Him we were not even a people. Yes we may have lived a physical life, but it was void and empty. We may have been busy, but there was no real satisfaction. We may have been successful, but there was no peace or security. We were living in the bondage of sin, condemned and separated from God.

- Now all of that has changed. It was nothing we had done to earn or deserve this marvelous grace. We certainly didn't possess the ability to change our lives in and of ourselves. All that we are and ever hope to be rests in the finished work of Calvary.
- Christ died for those who deserved hell and transformed them from a life of sin and death to a life of hope and eternal life. We may not want to admit it, but we never truly lived before we met Christ. Now we are the people of God. I rejoice for the day that Jesus saved my soul! What a blessing and honor to be counted a part of the redeemed, the church of Christ our Lord.
- The church isn't perfect, but she is forgiven. She may face difficulty in this present age, but she is not defeated. The church will one day gather around the throne of God in the New Jerusalem and offer praise to the King!

I trust these verses have encouraged and challenged you this evening. There is nothing like being a child of God. I rejoice to be counted among the church

We need to take a close look at our responsibilities as well. Our Lord expects and deserves our best. I want to honor Him in this life and the life to come. What about you?

Are you certain that you are a part of the church? Simply attending the services or having your name on the role isn't enough. Have you been born into the family of God? Church members must be born into fellowship.