

Majestic

1 Peter 2:9, Deuteronomy 26:16-19, Isaiah 43:19-21, Titus 2:11-15

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New Year's Day was just a few days ago. Not that it's sacred to God or anything, or that the turning of the year on our Gregorian calendar has any particular Biblical meaning because it doesn't. It's significant to us since it speaks of fresh starts, of new opportunities.

To us, the beginning of a new year is a time to lay aside bad habits, and start new ones. It's a time to make promises to ourselves, or resolutions as we call them.

We make resolutions, I believe, because we realize that there are things about ourselves that need to change and the turning of the year seems a good time to start.

That's true for our Christian walk as well. Though the date on the calendar has no particular significance assigned to it by God, to us it has meaning because it seems the perfect time to realign our life's priorities.

It's an opportune time to make resolutions to ourselves to be more given to prayer and the study of God's Word than we may have been.

It's a great time to promise God, and ourselves, that we'll be more conscious of Kingdom citizenship and Kingdom values.

It's a good time to determine that we'll take church responsibilities more seriously. That we'll be more faithful in attendance, in financial support, and make ourselves more available for ministry.

It's a good time to ask the Lord more prayerfully and thoughtfully, "*Lord, what would you have me do?*"

The things that we consider at this time of year, the promises we make, are usually about important things and the weight of those things can bring a sense of solemnity, a sense of sacredness.

This series is centered around the calling, the commitment, the consecration, and the completeness of the life God has brought us to through the New Birth.

The series, called “Majestic,” is based on 1 Peter 2:9, and by God’s grace, I pray it’ll help us understand more fully what we’re saved to be.

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1 Peter 2:9, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

If you’ve read through the entire letter of 1 Peter, there’s something you may have noticed. In 1st Peter, theology always flows into Christian conduct which should affect our behavior.

There’s no real distinction made between orthodoxy, right belief, and orthopraxy, right practice. They go hand in hand.

You can’t have one without the other. In fact, this is characteristic of all the letters written to the churches, whoever wrote them.

It’s as true for Paul’s letters as it is for Peter’s, and it’s as true for James and Jude as it is for the letters written by John.

It’s a core aspect of how Christianity worked in the Early Church. If you had faith in Jesus, you obeyed Jesus. If you believed that God was holy, you lived as if God was holy.

Faith and belief weren’t separated from obedience and conduct. Faith flowed into obedience, and right belief flowed into right behavior.

That's not a new idea. For years it's been taught that orthodoxy and orthopraxy go hand in hand.

When I say that true faith flows into faithful obedience to God's Word and Way, I'm not saying something new.

Of course, this idea isn't popular in the unredeemed world. It's unpopular for Christians to hold that belief.

You must understand that the powers and influencers of this unredeemed world aren't concerned with us calling ourselves a Christian as long as we don't actually take Christian life seriously.

In the past few decades, there's been a concerted push to separate private faith from public conduct, as if for Christians there must be a clear dividing line.

In other words, *“Keep your faith private. It can’t affect your public conduct. It can’t affect your politics. It can’t affect your career. It can’t affect how you actually live around others.”*

Sadly, there are many people who think they can believe one way and live another. That they can give lip-service to the Faith, maintain some nominal level of private devotion, yet not govern their lives by the teachings of Christ.

It's important to be reminded that theology flows into Christian conduct, that orthodoxy flows into orthopraxy, that belief flows into behavior, especially at the outset of the new year.

And, if in looking back over the course of this past year, you see a growing tendency to draw a dividing line between your private beliefs and your public life, then you need to take this reminder to heart; belief flows into behavior.

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But beliefs aren't the sole reason for our Christian behavior. Theology isn't the only foundation of Christian conduct.

Peter ties something else in as both an enablement and a motivation of righteous behavior. That something else is identity; it's about who we really are. In this case, it's about who and what God made us to be.

Today's scripture tells us about that identity and lists four particular aspects of it. Peter tells us that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's special possession.

Let's look at each of them briefly. "*Chosen People*" That means a select family, a family chosen out of all others for special privilege. By God's work and grace, we're a being of prime excellence, precious, and beloved. That's who we are.

"*Royal Priesthood*" This is a sacred and consecrated order of priests who are royal in position, prerogative, and posture. By God's work and grace, that's who we are!

"*Holy Nation*" That's a sacred race, a people who're righteous, morally blameless and pure. By God's work and grace, that's who we are!

"*God's special possession*" That means saved, but in the sense of being kept because of value, something acquired and preserved because of its value. By God's work and grace, that's who we are!

While all these terms are particularly Jewish expressions, there wasn't a person in the entire Middle East at that time, Jew or Gentile, that wouldn't have drawn powerful meaning from these four aspects of Christian identity.

Each of them spoke of a selectness, a specialness, an otherness, a consecration, that every culture in the Middle East would have understood.

Any one of these states of being would have made someone special, but to be all four of them? Well, that would be majestic!

Such a person would be among the highest and loftiest of the high and lofty! They would be in the 1% of the 1%! They would be the elite of the elite!

We don't have this majestic identity by accident of birth into a certain earthly family, but by God's choosing. God chose us and made us this! This is our identity because God made it so!

Peter's audience would've realized something else, and they'd have realized it immediately after hearing this read to them; they'd have realized that with such a majestic identity came majestic responsibility.

If you're select, special, set apart, and consecrated to be someone as incredible as this, well you had to live and act like someone as incredible as this.

This sort of identity would bring with it expectations of behavior. Behavior that reflected the holy nature of such a lofty identity.

You would conduct yourself in an upright, Christian manner because of who you were, and your conduct would in turn testify to your identity.

Now listen, you really need to get this! Our behavior and our identity are linked! Who and what God has made us and declared us to be, brings with it expectations of behavior and responsibilities of conduct.

God has declared it, we've accepted it, and now we're expected to live it. But we need to know that Christian identity doesn't work like the contemporary notion of identity; that identity is a matter of self-declaration.

Just because we say it or we declare it, it doesn't automatically make it so. Such self-identification doesn't change a thing. We can call yourself a duck until the cows come home, but that doesn't make us a duck.

Calling ourselves a Christian doesn't make us a Christian. It's what God calls us that makes us a Christian.

Our Christian identity isn't borne out of the expression of our own will or desire; it's borne out the expression of God's will and His desire.

Our identity isn't borne out of what we declare ourselves to be! No, we're who God declares us to be! Our conduct, our behavior, and our manner of life is expected to reflect the majestic nature of that identity.

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All of this business of theology flowing into Christian conduct, all of this business of our behavior testifying to our identity is for one purpose and one purpose alone.

It's all for a purpose that's nothing less than majestic and that purpose is this: that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

All of it, everything He has made us, everything He has declared us to be, the faith He stirred to life in us, the repentance He led us to, the baptism that cleansed us and gave us His name, the indwelling Spirit that empowered us, all of it is for the purpose of us proclaiming His glory.

All of it, our calling, our commitment, our consecration, and the completeness in Him, all of it is for the purpose of us proclaiming His glory.

God's work in our lives should also affect our feelings. At times we may feel like shouting! At other times we may feel like weeping.

Sometimes we may feel like raising our hands. Other times we may feel like falling on our face.

God's work in our life affects our feelings. But the purpose of it isn't to affect our feelings. The purpose is for us to proclaim His glory!

Our work in God's Kingdom may bring us a sense of fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of satisfaction.

But it's not about our fulfillment, our accomplishment, or our satisfaction, the purpose is for us to proclaim His glory!

Our upright Christian behavior may cause others to take notice. Some may even respect us because of it. A few may even praise our holiness, but that's not what upright Christian behavior is about.

It's not so others will notice us, it's so that others will notice Him! It's so *"that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."*

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Conclusion

All of it, the calling He's issued to salvation, the commitment we've made to follow, the consecration we've made to His service, and the completeness He's bringing us to, all of it is for us to bring Him glory.

That's the purpose of it all. That's the simple, straightforward, majestic purpose of it all.

This is what I'm going to be talking to you about for the next few weeks; the majestic life for which Jesus has chosen us. A life that calls attention to His glory and majesty.

Isaiah 43:19-21, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.”