

## **Lesson 11: Spiritual Privileges—Part 3: Separation to Christ, Possession by Christ, Illumination in Christ, Compassion from Christ, and Proclamation of Christ**

**1 Peter 2:9-10, “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 marvelous light. 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.”**

In Luke 9:23-26, Jesus declared to all who would consider following Him, **“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”**

Every true believer in Christ knows about the cost involved with being in Christ. Just the opposite of the trendy church-building tactics of today that preaches a Jesus who doesn’t care about your life, or your theology, who just wants to love you, who’s happy if you’re happy and being the best you that you can be. Opposite of that philosophical nonsense is the biblical call to follow Christ, which entails knowing Christ so much so that we follow Him. Following means that we are aligned in heart, mind and spirit. Following means that our path of life is down the exact path that our Saviour trod. This following isn’t natural, nor is it easy. To follow Christ and live as He lived will cost us much in this life.

Later in the gospel of Luke, Jesus said in Luke 14:27-33, **“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”**

There are plenty of other passages that speak of this cost that are worth reading over. Romans 12:1-2 talks about offering our bodies up as living sacrifices, and the necessity of having our minds transformed, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 talks about how believers are supposed to put forth an effort into this Christian life, like the high-intensity that we’d see an Olympian would in preparation for the Olympic games, or a boxer would for the prize fight, **“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”**

Ephesians 6:10-18 talks about how a believer is to specifically and intentionally put on the character traits of godliness in their life. This passage is not optional, it is not a recommendation for maximum results, they are commands to all believers, **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”**

Philippians 3:7-14 talks about how believers are to strip themselves intentionally of means of self-righteousness, and to cling to Christ alone for righteousness. One of the costs of following Christ is to count everything that we once considered an asset in our right-standing before God as a detriment leading to our bankruptcy before Him. **“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

1 Timothy 6:11-12 speaks in the aggressive language of fleeing and fighting. These words, associated with following Christ, never give us the impression of making a light-hearted, easy decision for Christ. **“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”**

In 2 Timothy 2:3-10, note how Timothy was to fan into flame this passion for Christ. And note the urge to take courage in the face of sure and severe opposition for Christ. The cost was high, and is high for us as well today, **“I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested**

**through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”**

The author of Hebrews tells us likewise to remove sin, and run, looking to Christ in 12:1-2, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

James tells us that there is a great difference between the easy-believism of simply hearing the gospel, and the hard work of actually living out the gospel. The cost of following is high. God cares a great deal how we take what we know, and do with it, letting it control the entirety of our lives. To choose the route of belief without an effort towards holiness is worthless religion. James 1:19-26, **“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.”**

In 1 John 2:15-17, the cost of following Christ has to do with considering this world be of no value, and to consider Christ to be invaluable. There must be a choice. No one can serve two masters. **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”**

The cost of following Christ is so much that it requires an emptying of all things old, and a filling to the brim with all things new. The controlling influence of our hearts ought to be Jesus Christ, in His Word, through the Holy Spirit, **“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”**

This is the great cost of following Christ. Each and every true believe in Christ has to weigh that cost out and then act upon it in obedience. And while this particular text in 1 Peter has nothing to do with weighing out the cost of discipleship, this text does have a great deal to do with the spiritual privileges of believers, and so it was important to distinguish the criteria behind what a true believer looks like. And so now, let us encourage those true believers in Christ with five more spiritual privileges.

The first privilege for this lesson, from our text in 1 Peter 2, comes in verse 9, **“a holy nation.”** Every believer in Christ, chosen in Him, is not only called to be a royal priesthood (covered in our last lesson),

but is also placed into a holy nation. I think everyone here knows what a nation is, a nation is a group of people collected together who share a common descent. A nation of people share a common history, they live in the same culture, they speak the same language. So it is with Christian people. We may come from all over the world, and share little in terms of our old selves, but we share the same history of being saved by the Lord. Our lives have all been re-shaped into the image of Christ (new culture), and our tongues have been tamed and taught to speak a heavenly language. But more than just being congregated into a nation, we're all brought into a holy nation. What does holy mean?

To be holy is to be set apart. We all know what that means. Remember Mom's good china, the really pretty and breakable plates and bowls and cups and silverware that only came out on special occasions? That's holy. We had plates that we used everyday, and then there were those plates that were reserved for esteemed dinner guests and major holiday dinners. I know this analogy has some serious holes in it. I don't mean to paint the picture that Christians are somehow more valuable than all others around them because we aren't. What I mean to say is that God plucked out from among the masses of people, and set us apart for a distinguished use, some of humanity that He would call holy and use for His ordained purpose and glory.

God, loving us while we were still His enemies (Romans 5:8), set us apart to be in a right relationship with Him. We get this setting apart, this dividing out of humanity into a holy nation, in various different passages of scripture. Romans 6:4-6 is a helpful start, **"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."** Notice the dividing language of burying in death, and newness of life, of old self and new self. Clearly our bodies continue after conversion, so how are we to understand this? I think we easily interpret that this isn't speaking bodily, but spiritually. Paul in Romans is speaking of a violent change in our lives. Regeneration is an act that is invasive, Christ comes upon us when we weren't looking, or ready, or willing, and redeems us by His grace. This justifying work is no light matter. No one encounters Christ and is left unchanged. This effects of being changed by Christ are a radically changed life, in heart, mind and spirit. Even the word "changed" is too soft, the biblical word is "renewed". There ought to be something there that was never there before.

There are other verses that speak to this setting apart, this being made holy. Consider 1 Corinthians 6:11, **"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."** 2 Corinthians 5:17, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."** One chapter later in 6:17-18, Paul says, **"Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."** 2 Timothy 2:20-22, **"Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."** Hebrews 2:11, **"For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source."**

It's convincing to see that all Christians must be involved in the business of putting off sinful habits, and growing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord towards obedience. I don't think that the scriptures give us any wiggle room on the issue. If you're not actively being transformed daily into the image of Jesus Christ, the theological term for that being "Sanctification", the Bible would have you doubt whether you're truly in Christ at all. The sanctification process is one that begins in the life of the Christian at the moment of salvation and carries on until the moment of their death. The sanctification process is better understood from two perspectives. From one perspective (because we're justified in Christ) we are comforted in knowing that God recognizes us as separated from the penalty of sin. From our perspective however we realize that we've not attained sinlessness, and that we're reliant on the Holy Spirit's work in our lives to grow us and shape us daily into Christlikeness. Luke writes in Acts 20:32, **"And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."** A key spiritual privilege, one that is given only to those in Christ, is the Spirit-indwelt process of the pursuit of holiness. We are a holy nation.

The next spiritual privilege is found in our text again in 2:9, **"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 marvelous light."** In numerous places in the OT, God promised the Israelites, as He did in Deuteronomy 7:6-8, **"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. 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, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery."** The Israelites were chosen (not because of anything within them, purely by God's grace) to be His possession. And the same is true for each and every Christian today. We're likewise chosen purely by His grace, and as Peter says, we're a people for His own possession.

The word "possession" is an interesting word, because in the original Greek it gives us the idea of purchasing. None of us have ever purchased an item at a store and left it on the shelf! Once the value of our funds equals the value of the object we desire, the trade of our funds for that item transfers ownership of the item to us. The item is now ours to do as we please. The item can be placed on fine display in our house. It can be stored in a closet. It can be used on rare occasions. It can be used for dirty work purposes. The item isn't free to decide for itself what it's used for, the owner who possesses it decides that. We read clear possession language regarding God possessing believers in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, **"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** God the Father planned from eternity past to purchase us with the precious blood of Christ. Our slavery simply transferred ownership from one slave master to another, from sin to Christ. We see more possession (redeeming) language in Titus 2:13-14, **"Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."** God sovereignly elected all who would ever be in Christ. It was the divine foreknowledge of God to purchase sinners at the cost of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 3:25-26, **"Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show**

**God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

The next spiritual privilege is found in our text again in 2:9, our illumination in Christ, **"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 marvelous light."** What does the text mean by the darkness that the world is in? The darkness that we were called out of? I believe that the 'darkness' of this verse can be understood to mean various things. In one sense, the unregenerate world is ignorant of God's Word, which is light. They simply don't know the truth. Even if they were presented with the truth, they're unable to see and perceive it as truth. A life that is not centered around scripture, whose worldview isn't birthed out of the Bible, will most certainly be lost in darkness. In another sense, the 'darkness' of the unregenerate world has to do with the moral inability of people. It's not that unregenerate people are sinning to the max. We all know of unregenerate people that we'd categorize as "good people". Yet these people are living in moral darkness. Even their best effort are laden in sin. They live according to their own hearts, and give no weight to the things of God, or what please Him. I do believe our verse in 2:9 to be referring to this darkness, not so much a darkness of the mind, but of the heart. The heart is deceptive and wicked, and is completely unable to come to God of its own will. There are a spattering of verses that speak to this truth:

Jeremiah 17:9, **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"**  
Romans 8:7-8, **"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."** Ephesians 4:17-19, **"Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity."**

The human unregenerate heart cannot submit to God's law, it is completely unable to do so. Because of that inability, every effort the unregenerate heart makes towards goodness and morality is futile because it misses the mark, which is by definition 'sin'. Sin enslaves every heart outside of Christ. Ephesians 2:1-3, **"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."** Notice the complete inability of a "dead" person, not dead physically, but spiritually. This was the state that every believer was once in, and it is the state that every unbeliever is still in, universally. 1 John 5:19, **"We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."** The ability to come to Christ, to repent and trust in Christ, is a grace from God, 2 Timothy 2:25-26, **"Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."**

We should be careful to understand just how deceptive and disabling sin truly is in the heart. David writes about the universality of those who are lost in darkness in Psalm 143:2, **"Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you."** Paul builds on that thought in Romans 3:9-12, **"What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all,**

**both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”** It’s not just that unbelievers think and move and breathe in darkness, which they do, but they go a step further and absolutely love darkness. John tells us about this in his gospel, John 3:19-20, **“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”**

There are some who assess the spiritual hearts of believers and label them “holier than thou”. We all know that means someone who lives a life of spiritually snobbery. A puffed-up, pride-filled life of self-congratulations for not being like the wicked person their standing beside. A true believer recognizes that a heart attitude like that has nothing to do with true saving faith. A heart filled with spiritual pride is what Jesus warned about with the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14. A true believer *does* recognize a separation in heart and mind from the unbelieving world, but they also recognize that they were rescued from that darkness. It is the rescuing of that darkness that we’ll focus on now. The spiritual privilege of having our heart illumined is the rescuing from darkness, or as our text says, **“Who called us out of darkness.”** Notice the calling of believers that Paul mentions at the opening of his epistle to the Romans in 1:5-7, **“Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”** Believers are called from all people groups, Romans 9:24, **“Even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?”** Notice the ‘calling’ language that Paul uses at the outset of his first epistle to the Corinthians in 1:4-9, **“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”** In Paul’s opening to the Galatians, he teaches that they were called in 1:6, **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.”** Notice how Paul begins 2 Timothy, about the timing of God’s gracious calling in our lives, 2 Timothy 1:9, **“Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”** This saving call of God in the lives of believers, in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, decided before the foundation of world, is written about all throughout scripture. The evidence is staggering!

Believers are called out of darkness, but we’re not left there. We’re called into His marvelous light. Paul mentions this at the beginning of his epistle to the Colossians in 1:13-14, **“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”** When we’re graciously snatched out from our lives of darkness, and saved, adopted into the family of God, and brought into His marvelous light, we see the truth of God like never before. What was once dry and boring has now become the very thing that we crave and can’t live without! Only the grace of God that can create planets with a word from His mouth could create such a joy in a heart that was so against Him.

Our next spiritual privilege that we’ll examine is the compassion from Christ that we have. We see that in our text in 2:10, **“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.”** Before being drawn by Christ to Himself, we were outside of His compassion, we were ‘not a people’ as Peter says. But not we are God’s people because

of His mercy. When we think of His mercy, we can think of His compassion, as He looked upon our miserable condition and elected to save us from His just and sure wrathful condemnation for our sin.

There are two kinds of mercy that scripture references: General mercy and saving mercy. These two terms are of course referred to in different terms by different theologians, but we will attempt to see from scripture both sides of God's mercy. Firstly, we see God's general mercy, sometimes called 'common mercy', that is shown towards all people. This is expressed all throughout scripture, for example in Psalm 65:9-13, **"You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy."** As Christians, we recognize God's provision every time we eat. We recognize that the food we're eating is the result of God sustaining our health and strength so that we can have the ability to work. We recognize that our food requires sources of sunlight and water. Christians recognize that God must sustain every single atom in creation or nothing will work at all. Every heartbeat, and time our lungs fill with oxygen is a mercy. It is God allowing us to use His resources to prolong our existence for the sole purpose of praising and worshipping Him. Non-believers not only fail to thank God for these shared mercies, but they fail to conclude in thought that they even should thank Him. Many conclude that there is no God to thank. And yet, while God endures such unjust neglect from a large portion of His creation, He continues to desire to provide them with uncounted general, or common, mercies. Consider Matthew 5:44-45, **"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."** In the context of that verse, we see Jesus teaching us to love those who are against us because of Christ who lives within us. We're to love them as a mirror of God who loves those who hate Him by showering them with common mercy. We see further evidence of God's general mercy from the lips of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:14-17, **"But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.'** This common grace of God shows the infinite patience and compassion of God towards sinful humanity. Being a just judge Himself, God has the right to enact a swift and final judgment upon any sinner, even after the first offence, and yet we see the mercy of God is prolonging the lives of sinners to an exponential level of sin infraction. But there is always a limit to His patience. While we praise God for His limitless attributes, we ought not to confuse His perfect patience to mean that God will never reach the point of judgment. See Matthew 24:3-28, Revelation 18. There will come a time of divine judgment, it is the duty of all Christians to be spreading the gospel to the lost around us, that by God's grace, He might draw some to Himself, to be spared of the coming doom.

Now we will turn our attention to the mercy that our text in 1 Peter is referring to, that is, the saving mercy of God. On top of the common mercy that believers share, we also benefit from God's particular, saving mercy in our lives. John 14:2-7, **"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I**

am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” How blessed are we that our God would take notice of our pitiful life at all?! We know in our hearts that we’re entirely undeserving of the love, and mercy, and grace of God. Shouldn’t this have a profound impact on our evangelism? Shouldn’t we be sharing the gospel with unbelievers as fellow sinners (maybe more so than them) who need the same Saviour? Shouldn’t we be praying in our hearts while we evangelize, to the God who holds the key to their heart? We’re not wise beings who found God, trying to convince others to find Him too. We’re foolish sinners who are working for the Lord as conduits that He might send His grace through.

We are the undeserved recipients of God’s merciful compassion. It gives God so much more glory when we view that as another on our list of spiritual privileges. Our lives have been snatched from the flames of Hell and we will rest securely for eternity in the arms of God, because it pleased Him to do so. As Paul wrote in Colossians 1:12-14, **“Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”** It is good for us to pause and just think on that beloved privilege. Paul called God the Father of mercies, 2 Cor 1:3, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”** We are vessels of mercy, Paul says in Romans 9:23, which God prepared beforehand for His glory. Titus 3:5-8, **“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.”**

In what has likely by now taken close to two months to get through, we will conclude our third lesson in a row by looking at one final spiritual privilege, the proclamation of Christ. While many find great fear and intimidation, even danger in proclaiming the name of Christ, it is right that our minds be renewed to consider this a great privilege. Peter closes our lesson in 2:9, **“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 marvelous light.”**

This word ‘proclaim’ is used only here in the Bible. It means to publish, or advertise, to tell someone something they would otherwise never know. What we are to publish, or advertise, is the excellencies of Him. Christians have the privilege of proclaiming to the world the gospel of Jesus Christ, and His marvelous plan from before the foundation of the world to redeem lost sinners to Himself. It is our privilege to teach the world of sin, to use the Word of God to show them their need of Christ. And it is our privilege to show them how God can be both just, and the justifier. 1 Timothy 1:12-17 is a fitting end to this lesson, **“I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”**