

1 Peter 2:9-12

## **Power for the Powerless**

March 17, 2019

**Main point:** This is a passage about power. You who were powerless have received power. Nobodies have been made everything – God’s own special possession, His people. Your identity in this world is now a stranger, a foreigner, a temporary worker. As you tap into your powerlessness, the power of God enables you to live for others.

**SI:** Peter writing to persecuted Christians. General letter to the diaspora of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. What about for us?

God’s Word to us:

This is a passage about power for the powerless >  
Look at these words: Excellencies. Mighty Acts. Proclaiming. Power words - chosen, royal, priests, holy. God’s people. And then war words - abstain. passions. wage war against your soul. Glorifying – giving weight and heaviness to - God. Day of Visitation - 2nd coming.

This is the power we have, that has been given. Unearned. (ESPN series called earn everything. - nothing is given in competition. But is that true? Even the talents and abilities and work ethic and perseverance are given as gifts.)

And this is where it gets ridiculous > I who have earned my condemnation through my own deliberate choices to rebel against His Excellency, this royal, holy, king of everything has chosen to give me His robe, His ring, His position. What??

Let’s see how God has given power to the powerless who will receive it. And with that power, He enables us to give life to other undeserving people like us.

How do we proclaim?

### **1 Be Who You Are: Resurrected Proclaimers of Power**

This is a passage about power. Power words. Warfare words. Drawing us in to see the battle that has been fought and that we still fight.

Peter says that Christians form a new race among humanity. It was precisely at this point where they were criticized and persecuted. Writing in the first century, the Roman writer Suetonius says this: “Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of people given to a new and mischievous superstition.”

Christians were perceived to be haters of mankind. Why? Peter alludes to why in these few verses.

Distinct race > repudiate certain attitudes and practices of their society

Holy nation > charges of treason and poor citizenship b/c of religious society

A people for His own possession > straight from Ex. 19 & Is 43 – The exodus is about God’s deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt. And Isaiah glories in God’s power to deliver His people from exile in Babylon. And the powerless, these special ones, then make known what God has done: His power, His grace, His mercy. “that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.”

Once not a people > you have been resurrected. Brought from death to life!  
Sojourners and exiles > different core allegiance.

So consider Identity politics. Gospel reality of identity movements. Why such forceful p insertion of and protection of differing identities that end up polarizing and dividing and creating only win/lose dynamics.

Because of the image of God, people know deep down that they have worth and value. They are just looking for it inside themselves instead of outside themselves. See what Peter is saying. Once this is found – identity as His creation. And once this is found! Once this is received, discovered, foundation-ed, then! Then there is identity, value, worth, acceptance from Power.

\*All the identity politics just goes back to self, and we are not capable of that much self-glory, it wages war on our souls, it is self-destructive. It’s like what is happening in Venezuela – this beautiful, well-endowed, rich in resources country is falling in on itself b/c of those in power’s delusions of self-grandeur. What happens to all tyrannical power systems. And Peter warns, the self is tyrannical b/c it’s all about me.

Trans to 2: A chosen, holy, royal people are set apart from something (die to self) and for something (living for others).

**How do we proclaim? How do we do it? What do we do?**

**2 By Dying to Ourselves - / Die to Yourself**

Right off I react against this, and I’m saying it... die to myself?

Thick and overflowing With Humility – who me? Who do you think you are? Chosen? Precious? Royalty? Yes, it is crazy, ludicrous, ridiculousness. This wasn’t my idea, but I have been given this gift, and I take it up.

What you have received is the only power able to lead you die to yourself. Without that power, you are walking into more darkness, the darkness of trying to obey God in your own power.

ILLUS of walking into a dark room, I immediately look for the light-switch and flip it b/c there is power.... Tap in to your powerlessness – tragedy of government in Venezuela – no power there to tap into. But that is not us. Christians are powerless, but we have power available through our powerlessness. I acknowledge my powerlessness and the more I tap into that, the more I see my need for power.

When it comes to proclaiming, to sharing with others, I have found there are a lot of obstacles. Mostly having to do with fear or pride, or both.

Fear of rejection. I want to avoid the pain of social rejection.

Fear of time. I fear losing the resource of time.

Pride in myself. Won't you think I'm pretty great to share this gift with you?

Wow, there's a lot of yuck there. Yep.

Peter says to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. Peter is talking about the passions of the flesh that are accepted and trumpeted in the larger culture and society.

Of course we want to avoid being socially ostracized.

Of course we glory in our accomplishments and post everything wonderful on Instagram.

Dying to our own pride and fear happens by tapping into our powerlessness and humility.

I am nothing. God has made me and re-made me.

I have earned nothing. My talents and gifts and opportunities are from the Lord.

I have been given what I have. I have maintained it through the wisdom God has given me.

(trans to 3) The new identity of those brought from death to life led them to abstain from certain practices and attitudes that were celebrated by society. But it also won the world. Christians lived as members of a new, non-national and non-ethnic race, and paradoxically, they won over the masses.

And this is the power to die to ourselves. So that we can live for others.

### **3 By Living For Others / Live for Others**

Remember who you are – sojourners, exiles. This is not your home.

ILLUS of Saudi or U.A.E. government that puts cameras up at entrances to churches. Not illegal, and even supported for foreigners to attend church, but not for Arabs. They know it is war, it is dangerous to their religion and way of life, and so they forbid and create disincentives for the natives.

In the same way, we are foreigners and aliens, strangers. We are aware of the culture, but not consumers of it.

So that by abstaining you can engage in honorable conduct

\*Abstaining ILLUS – Georgetown Univ invited students to the (AR) seating section – Actual Reality – no electronic devices allowed. And we invite you to actually watch the

game... Abstaining in order to give you something better... enjoyment of the game and of your fellow game watchers.

Even abstaining is for others, not just your own protection... When you don't overindulge in consumerism at Christmas-time, when you abstain from entertainment in order to spend time with people, when you abstain from negative attacks of the government, when you abstain from gossip even though everyone else is, these choices are protecting you and giving evidence of a changed heart – a changed allegiance – to others.

\*\* This assumes we will be rubbing shoulders with the non-Christian world enough to be noticed...

ILLUS of meeting with Ron Yang – not a project, but a person. The power of asking genuine questions. The power of listening.

My aversion to the word evangelism b/c it seemed like a sales job of convincing and persuading to accept something from me.  
But as I die to my fear, die to my pride, die to my vision of success, of doing it right, God shows up.

Stay powerless (**conc**) – this is the key, the upside down nature of God's way to bless the world. Israel was the smallest of nations. David was the youngest of Jesse's sons. Jesus lived a life of poverty and was condemned as a blasphemous criminal by the religious and the state authorities. He chose mostly uneducated fishermen. We live in a culture hostile to true Christianity and Christian ethics. We always will, this side of Christ's visitation.


The Christian's heart is first a broken heart. This is not easy to get, or easy to keep. My self-centeredness so quickly climbs back on his tyrannical throne in my heart. My tendency to judge, to condemn, to withdraw into my bubble.  
I must be broken-hearted.

A burning heart... it is there... If you are a Christian, it is there. It may be a faintly burning wick, but it is there b/c the Spirit lives in you. He will fan it into flame, indeed that is what He is doing right now. Don't quench the Spirit, welcome Him to break open the hardness, the war ravaged places.

Remember who you are, and proclaim His excellencies as you continually humble yourself so that you can live for others.



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