

God's Portion Is His People



Seven Pictures of God's People (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys To Successful Living that God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry. The theme that I have chosen for this week is entitled, "Seven Pictures of God's People."

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of who who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It encourages me greatly to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write to me, even if it's only a brief note. Now, back to our theme for this week, "Seven Pictures of God's People."

In various passages of Scripture, God's Word is compared to a mirror—not a mirror that shows us our outward physical appearance, but a mirror which shows us our inward spiritual nature and condition. A mirror which shows us to ourselves as God sees us. You see, God doesn't see as we see. This is clearly stated in 1 Samuel 16:7, where it says this:

> "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (NIV)

So you see, this mirror that we're talking about shows us not the outward appearance, not what we see, but it shows us what God sees in us as He looks at our heart, our inward spiritual condition.

Now, if we look into this mirror before we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, it shows us our unclean and sinful condition. But once we've been reconciled to God and cleansed from our sin, after that, when we look in the same mirror, it shows us not what we were previously as sinners, but what we have become as God's new creation in Christ. We experience in a personal way the truths of Scriptures such as these: 1 Corinthians 5:17:

> "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." (NIV)

And again, Ephesians 2:10:

> "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (NIV)

Later on this week I'm going to speak more fully about the use of this mirror and how it works. But for the present, I just want to explain that our purpose throughout this week is to look by faith into the mirror of God's Word and really find out what kind of people we are in God's sight, as God's people. In our studies throughout this week we will not be looking at ourselves primarily as individuals, but rather as what we are as God's people collectively. For this reason, the title I've chosen for my talks is, "Seven Pictures of God's People."

It's tremendously important for all of us that we do not underestimate ourselves. The devil is very happy when we do this. On the other hand, God wants us to understand how wonderful we have become as God's redeemed people, and how central we are to the outworking of His purposes in the earth.

Now I'm going to turn to a scripture in the book of Exodus which presents very clearly God's primary purposes in redeeming His people to Himself. These words were transmitted to Israel from God through Moses as they gathered at the foot of Mt. Sinai to enter into the covenant with the Lord. This is what it says, Exodus 19:3–5:

> "And Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine…'" (NASB)

That phrase that's translated there "my own possession" represents a Hebrew word of which no one for certain knows the exact meaning. Another translation is, "a special treasure." The King James Version, I believe, says "a peculiar people." I think it's rather exciting that we don't know exactly, because it leaves open so many possibilities. But what we do know is that it's something beautiful, it's something wonderful, it's something far above the level of what we could imagine or think for ourselves. That's what God wants to make us. That's why He redeemed us.

Let me point out therefore, the two primary objects of redemption as they are revealed in these words of God to Israel. First of all, notice what He says about the actual act of redemption in verse 4:

> "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."

It's most important to see that. God brings the redeemed to Himself. That's the first purpose of redemption, it's to bring His redeemed people into a direct, personal relationship with Himself. That's true in the old covenant, it's true in the new covenant. God brings us, through redemption, to Himself.

Reading the history of God's people in the Old Testament, I'm always impressed that few of them apparently really grasped this primary purpose of redemption. They were interested about the Law, the material blessings, the Promised Land. They were looking at things. But most of them, I think, missed this wonderful, direct, personal relationship to God which is possible only through redemption, and which is the primary purpose of redemption. And I believe possibly many people today in the New Covenant really don't appreciate the primary purpose of God is to bring us to Himself. Everything else is secondary.

The second purpose of redemption stated there in Exodus 19 is that God makes the redeemed into—whatever you translate that—"his own possession," "a special treasure," "a peculiar people"—something different from all other peoples in the earth. Let me say it this way, God invests in people. God is much more concerned about people than about things. This is brought out in Deuteronomy 32:9, where the Scripture says:

> "For the Lord's portion is his people."

God's purposes center around His people. God moves in the material and the physical realms, but His real, primary objective is His people. That's what God is going to get out of history. His portion in all that's happening in the world today is His people. That's what He's working for. That's what His interests are focused on, His redeemed people.

We need to understand that the ultimate purpose of God with His people is not just to redeem individuals. The redemption of individuals is included but it's not the ultimate. The ultimate

is the creation of a special people, a single, new, organic whole—something different from whatever existed amongst peoples before God intervened through redemption. God is not just redeeming a certain number of individuals, but He's making for Himself a single, distinctive people. I think one of the big problems in many areas of contemporary Christianity is that we've put all the emphasis on the individual and the individual's relationship to God—all of which is tremendously important—but we've missed out on the fact that the final objective of God is not just redeemed individuals, it's a special people.

I'd like to read you the words of Jesus in His prayer to the Father in John 17:20–23. I believe these words are of tremendous significant to the particular stage in God's purposes in which we're living today. This is what Jesus says:

> "My prayer is not for them alone. [that's the disciples who were then present with Him] I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. [I believe that's all future followers of Jesus, because all of us have come to believe in Jesus through the message of the first apostles. There is no other way to come to believe in Jesus. He says:] I pray for all that will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them, and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (NIV)

That last sentence is tremendously powerful. "May they [all believers] be brought to complete unity to let the world know that God sent Jesus." The ultimate universal testimony of Jesus is that God can blend individuals from every race and background into visible unity. If it's going to reach the world, it must be a visible unity. It must be something the world can see and appreciate. The world doesn't see mystic realities in a spirit realm; the world sees things in time and space. So God's purpose is to bring His people into a visible, organic unity in this time, in this age, which will be a testimony to the whole world that God sent Jesus.

Now, the Bible contains many pictures of what God intends to produce in His people, especially in the epistle to the Ephesians. And so, in the remaining studies in this series we're going to look at those pictures.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. The title of my talk tomorrow will be, "God's Program of Transformation."

Radio Program

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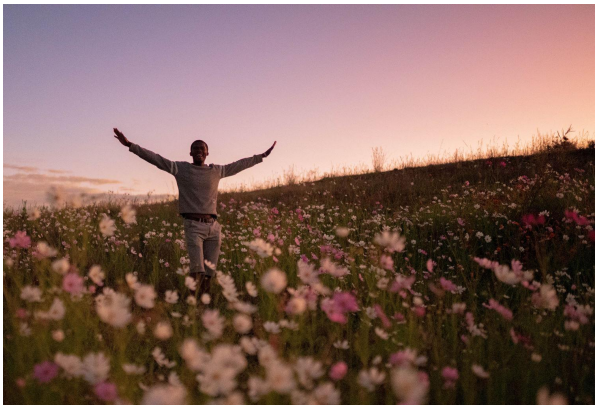

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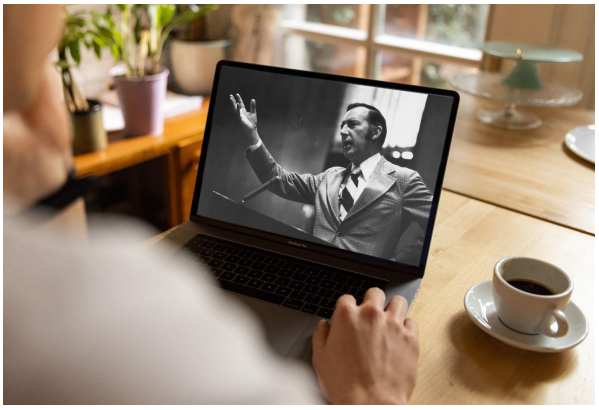

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