

Peculiar People #1

“For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.”

Deuteronomy 14:2

God’s people are to be peculiar people. After the deliverance of the people from Egyptian bondage, God governed them for more than three hundred years through judges. However, when Samuel become old, and his sons disobedient, the people rebelled against the very arrangement of having judges, and demanded a king, instead of respecting God’s order of things. They said, “And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:5). They did not want to remain a “peculiar people.”

Because of this action, God was displeased with them, and He said to Samuel, “And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). Samuel told the children of Israel of their mistake but they stubbornly said, “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

The reason for this wicked demand was their determination to be “like all the nations.” Their excuse was expressed to Samuel when they said, “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways ...” (1 Samuel 8:5). This absolutely shows that the children of Israel had a true human nature. Those who turn from the truth rarely ever give their reason for rejecting it, but they hide their reason in the background and then drag out some excuse, in the hope that it will appear more plausible. They are ashamed of their reason, for it is often silly or sinful in the extreme.

There was no reason for overthrowing God’s system of government, even though Samuel’s sons did not walk in his ways. They should have remembered that a king might not be a just and righteous man, and his sons, too, might not walk in God’s ways. However, when people reject God and determine to go after some new thing, there is nothing much that can be done with them, except to pray for them and let them reap what they sow (Galatians 6:7-8). God wanted them to be “a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth” (Deuteronomy 14:2); but they wanted to be “like all the nations.”

As these ancient Israelites had been called out of Egyptian bondage, and were to be a “peculiar people” above all nations, we too have been called out of the bondage of sin and into the church of our Lord, and are to also be a “peculiar people” (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). Today, a lot of people want to be like the nations around them. They want to convert the church to worldly standards, so they will not be ashamed to bring their

worldly friends to services with them, with assurance that their worldly ideas about religion will not be disturbed.

These people want to make the church like the denominations around them. Perhaps instrumental music was introduced into the worship largely to be like others. The great denominational leaders opposed it at first; but finally the people obtained it because they wanted it. Then, once it is in, some sort of justification for its use had to be made. Searching the scriptures for authority for it was, perhaps, an after thought (cp. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). This may account for the weak arguments made in its defense.

Many other practices are because of the desire to be like others. For example, boys begin smoking cigarettes (and worse) because they want to be like others. They do not want to be "peculiar". They want to be like the world. No reason can be given for such a habit, and such a waste of time and money. So they give excuses. It is incredibly well-documented that smoking causes cancer and costs billions of dollars a year in treatment of the disease. Of course, every time a public objection to smoking comes out, some old excuse is paraded out in front, while the reason, the very cause of disease was a terrible habit which owes its existence to nothing but a desire to be like others.

Time would fail me to tell of the prominent sins of drinking, fornication, gambling, cursing, etc. Christians have got to keep themselves "unspotted from the world" and not "conformed to this world" (James 1:27; Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:12-14). Instead of wanting to be more like Jesus, many are always wanting to be like others around them who are of the world. Sadly, peer pressure and television have convinced millions of young and old alike that these sins are normal, harmless activities. Nothing could be further from the truth! Brethren, do not let Satan fool you into falling into that trap!

For example, it has about reached the point where if a man lives with his wife and deeply cares about his children, he will be "peculiar". So many are divorcing their wives and husbands, and this will often be done because of those around us have convinced us that it is fine to get out of a "bad marriage". Whenever any sin or false doctrine becomes popular, it becomes a tremendous power for evil because of the weakness to want to be "like all the nations." Have the strength to stay pure! Have the strength to run against the world's wishes!

Finally, we might mention the religious influence in this connection. The influence of our parents and other close relatives often has more weight than what God says relative to church affiliation. To go into a church solely because one's relatives are in it, is to show a great spiritual weakness. If children must be like their parents and close relatives, then the children of unbelievers should be unbelievers, like their parents, Catholics like theirs, etc. This seems hard to believe but it is actually done! These children are simply controlled by the desire to be like others and not necessarily by the word of God. Why not give more time to searching the scriptures to learn how to be more like God would have us be? Is our church relationship to be determined by the natural birth — depend

upon the sort of teaching influence surrounding our birth — or should it be determined by searching the scriptures to see what is true (Acts 17:11-2)?

Is it generation or regeneration which settles the matter? This sinful sentiment is generally the case so many times that a lot of you are probably thinking that half the people in this congregation are here because of their relatives! As gloomy as this may sound, a lot of people today are learning not to trifle with religious matters. People are starting to realize that being “like all the nations” is not a mark of the true gospel.

We need convictions! We need to know the truth and stand for it, regardless of whether our relatives knew and obeyed it or not. We cannot go to Heaven on other people’s religion. Investigate the claims of the preacher, too, as well as your relatives. Since there is an incredible amount of confusion out there, somebody is in error and it might be closer to home than you think! Everyone knows how difficult it is to question a relative’s belief when we have held them in high esteem. Jesus said in Luke 14:26, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” The word “hate” means to disregard. If we do not regard God and His word above everything else, we are not worthy of His grace and the tremendous sacrifice which He gave (John 3:16).

Make no excuses, but learn and obey the word of God that you will find in the New Testament, regardless of what it is or what it commands you to do. Be like the disciples in the New Testament in faith, doctrine, and practice. If truth keeps one with relatives and friends, then so be it. Jesus said in John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” I encourage and exhort you to follow where the good Shepherd leads in His word. This is the only way we can be assured of the inheritance which is laid up in Heaven for us (1 Peter 1:3-4).

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