

**God's Building 12:
Living as Resident
Aliens**

Hennie Swart

1 Peter 2.9-12

⁹But 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 marvellous light.

¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2.9-12

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

¹²Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation... ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Introduction

There's a tension in the text that all Christians feel every day:

- “How do we live in a hostile world when we belong to a holy God?”
- The key this passage gives us is to live as ‘resident aliens’.

1 Peter 2.9-12

1. We are a community of ‘resident aliens’ (2.9a, 11)
2. defined by God’s grace (2.9-10),
3. declaring God’s glory (2.9b),
4. displaying God’s goodness (2.11-12).

community of ‘resident aliens’

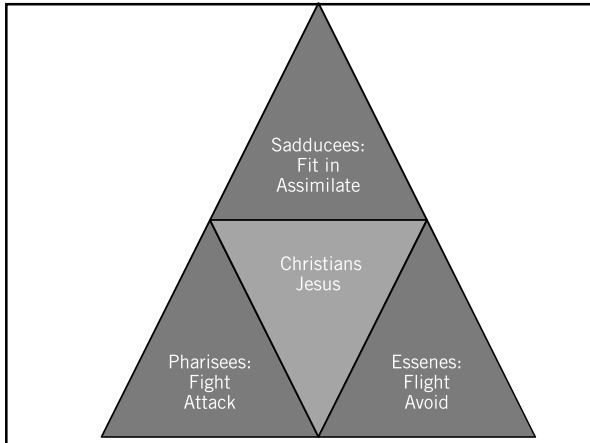
Note the unresolved tension in the text:

- We live ‘among the Gentiles’ and ‘do good’, even though we are slandered ‘as evildoers’.
- We live in the world, yet because we belong to God we abstain from it.
- We are in the world but not of the world.

community of 'resident aliens'

So how do we deal with this tension resulting from being in the world but not of the world?

- Sociologists tell us that most organizations or movements relate to the culture in one of three ways...



community of 'resident aliens'

We're in the world but not of it (2.11).

- 'sojourners' (Παροίκους) = "resident aliens, those who live in a place that is not their home."
- 'exiles' (Παρεπιδήμους) = those staying for a while in a strange or foreign place, *sojourning, residing temporarily*.

community of 'resident aliens'

- Note the community aspect of each description (2.9a) – not alone!
- Israel (Ex 19.5-6) in the desert.
- 'diaspora' paradigm (1 Pet 1.1): "But seek the welfare of the **city** where I have sent you into exile, and **pray** to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jer 29.7)

defined by God's grace

- 'chosen', not 'choice' (Deut 7.6-8)
- We are a 'priesthood', we don't have a priesthood: called 'atheists'.
- A 'holy' nation, despite 1 Pet 2.11!
- God's 'treasured possession', despite being like Gomer (2.10// Hosea 2.23; 1.2-3; 3,1-2).
- We're God's 'treasured possession', though all is His (Deut 10.14-15)!

declaring God's glory

- ... that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
- How can we not praise when we are so loved/favoured?
 - We praise what we enjoy: 'marvellous'
 - We were made for this (Isa 43.20-21)
 - God's grace produces God's greatest glory (and our greatest good).

displaying God's goodness

- If we're defined by God's grace we'll put His goodness on display.
- Despite God's grace there's still a battle for our souls.
- Internally we 'abstain'; externally we engage.
- 'Unless we have within us that which is above us we will soon yield to that which is around us.'

displaying God's goodness

- Allusion to Jesus' words (Matt 5.16)
- Our 'way of life' (1 Pet 1.15, 18; 2.12; 3.1-2).
- Imago Dei: there's some good left in culture: overlap with our values.
- The world will reject and regard us.
- See Naaman (2 Kings 5.1, 14-19)
- Explain 'day of visitation.' (2.12)

Conclusion

- We are a community of resident aliens, defined by God's grace, declaring God's glory, and displaying God's goodness.
- Because we are resident aliens, we can be both faithful to a holy God and fruitful to this hostile world!
