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Being His People

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Being His People

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2017

Tori Mann

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 33:12-22](#)

[Exodus 20:1-21](#)

[Matthew 5:1-12](#)

In the Old Testament, God's people were very clearly set apart from other nations, and they were given a set of laws to follow to guide them in how to live. In the New Testament, the extent of God's people went beyond the Jews, and they were called by a new name: Christians. We are still called Christians today, but it can be very hard to live as God's people. We believe we are part of God's Kingdom, but in our everyday lives it is hard to see how that is relevant or evident.

In Psalm 33, the Psalmist says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance." Even though God called out a special nation thousands of years ago, and we are not that nation, we are still the people of God, and we are still called to live like the people of God. What does that mean?

Well, let us look back to when God first called his people out of Egypt. Were they righteous? Of course not. They needed to become a righteous people. Hence, God gave them the law, summarized in the Ten Commandments. He called them to righteousness. So, being the people of God involves obedience and upright living.

However, when God gave the Ten Commandments, he obviously wanted more than external obedience. He opened with a reminder of what he had done for the Israelites when he had brought them out of Egypt. Then after the commandments were given in Exodus 20, Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." So, here are two motivations for obedience: fear and thankfulness. These motivations come from a state of heart. Beyond these, the commandments themselves show that God wants more than external obedience. "Do not covet" is a command explicitly for the heart, clueing us in that all the commandments involve our heart.

Going back to Psalm 33, the psalm is not primarily about the people; it is about God. He is the one doing the actions, including choosing his people. But, we do see a few things about the people. First, in verse one, they are righteous and upright. Second, in verse eighteen, they fear him and they hope in his unfailing love. Third, in verse twenty-one, they rejoice in him.

These characteristics aren't listed—they are assumed. In the eyes of the Psalmist, there is no question that the righteous fear God and rejoice in him. The people of God are not just people who do certain things. Rather, they are a people who know God and love him.

We have complete confirmation of this in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount—which, first of all, is given by God who came down to save his people, just as in the Psalm, God is acting to save his people. Jesus' sermon begins with the Beatitudes, which tell us that those in the Kingdom of God must have a state of heart that is right. External obedience follows the heart, which is what we saw in the giving of the law (which was also given after God had saved his people).

So, the people of God are those whom God has saved, called to himself, and called to obedience. They are those who see they have nothing, spiritually, and so must receive their riches from God. They are those who have experienced the Lord by putting their hope in him—they fear and love him, and so they must rejoice in him, and

thankfully obey him.

Sounds great. But do we feel like that always? Of course not. So often, being part of the people of God evokes little or no response in us, and even though we may know that we are supposed to be obedient, and that we are supposed to fear God and love him and be thankful for what he has done for us, we just don't feel anything and we struggle to live obedient lives. So, what do we do? We remind ourselves. That's why we read the history of God's people, and the Law, to see what it means to be called out of the world and to obedience. That's why we read the New Testament, to see what Jesus taught about being part of his Kingdom. That's why we read Psalm 33, to remind ourselves of who we are and who God is—the Psalm is, after all, a call to the righteous, to those who God chose! It is to us, and we can read it when we are struggling with how to be God's people.