

Consider Your Net Worth!

(1 Peter 2:9–10) But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In Christ Jesus whose mercies are new to us every morning,

“Zank, you’re in the game. Tell the quarterback: Right 46, tight end quick slant, on two.” This was my big chance to impress Coach Ambrosino. I was a Junior at D.C. Everest High School and a tight end on our varsity football team. Not only was the coach putting me in the game, he was calling my number. The play was a pass to me! I took my place on the line of scrimmage, reminding myself the play was on two. “Hut, hut!” I was to take three steps on an angle to the center of the field, throw my hands in the air, catch the ball and run like crazy. That’s what was supposed to happen. Instead, I got hit on the line, the ball was intercepted, and I chased the defender all the way to his endzone where he celebrated the touchdown that I had dreamed would be mine.

I remember all of this like it had happened yesterday. I remember feeling angry, humiliated and most of all, worthless. How I wish I could tell you that I learned some valuable lesson that day, one that taught me how to cope with and overcome all such feelings. But that’s not the case. Instead I went on to discover that each crushing disappointment in life only serves to validate the feeling of worthlessness. In other words, nothing that life has taught me has lightened the load of the emotional baggage I lug around. Life’s lessons have only served to make that baggage heavier. The same is true of you. I am sure of it. Because life can’t teach us what we need to know. Only God’s Word can do that. So as we turn to the Scriptures today, I invite you to Consider Your Net Worth first 1) Apart from Christ; and then 2) in Christ.

If I could somehow travel back in time to the day of my football fiasco, what would I say to my 15-year-old self? If I could get there before the game started, I’d be sure to say, “Don’t get hit. Get off the line!” But if that weren’t possible, if instead I found myself sulking on the bus after the game, (which is what I did) what would I say to that kid? I suppose I could try to remind myself that one bad day on the football field does not a failure make. I could say, “So you’re not good at football. Concentrate on the things you are good at.” Well let’s see. In addition to being third-string tight end, I was a second-chair French Horn player. I was runner-up for Badger Boys State. I wasn’t chosen for the math team. I didn’t get a single vote for prom king. Need I say more? If I were to spend my time trying to find my worth in something I do better than anyone else, it would be an exercise in futility. I haven’t found anything in life that I’m the best at. But even if I could be really, really good at something, let’s say I had a shirt that proclaimed me “Best Dad Ever!”, what would it prove about my value and worth? It would be so subjective. Something as important as a person’s value needs to be determined by something more substantial than thoughts and opinions. Right? We need something objective. So I’ll ask: What does God have to say about our worth?

God’s Word tells it like it is, like it was: “**Once you were not a people.**” (1 Peter 2:10). As it turns out, “worthless” is more than a feeling. The sin we inherited at our conception alienated us from God. It ruined us so that we must confess with St. Paul: “**I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature**” (Romans 7:18). When we were without mercy, that is, when we were apart from Christ, we were without value and without hope. In fact, without Christ Scripture says we would perish as the objects of God’s wrath (Ephesians 2:3). It’s a hard truth to

hear, but it's the truth just the same, one we must embrace in order to be saved. To believe anything else would be to call God a liar, for it is God who inspires Peter to write: "**...now you are the people of God...now you have received mercy.**" If there had been anything of value in us or about us, then we would have no need of God's mercy. Each of us would have been a diamond in the rough, in need of nothing more than a little polishing. We could imagine that God would have spotted and unleashed the great potential in each of us, allowing us to earn and claim our rightful place in his kingdom.

But that's not how it happened. God found us as we were, hateful and hell bound. That's when God had mercy on us – not because of who we are, but because of who he is. God is love (1 John 4:8). The redeeming quality is not in us. It's in him. Or as Luther put it: "God does not love us because we are valuable, but we are valuable because God loves us." God loves us in Christ. He loves us in view of all that Christ is and has done on our behalf. To rescue us from our sin, Christ put himself in our place. He emptied himself of all value and worth, telling us as he does in Psalm 22:6, "**I am a worm and not a man...**" For us who were once not a people, Christ became the one who was disowned and forsaken by his Father as he took ownership of all our guilt. On the cross he became every sinner, forfeiting all mercy in order to be the sole object of God's wrath and suffer in his body the tortures of hell meant for us.

Apart from Christ we are nothing but doomed. In Christ everything changes. Think about that. Consider your net worth in Christ. I realize that the term "net worth" is usually associated with finances, but I chose to use it any way because of the truth it conveys. Net worth is "the value of your assets minus your debts." Apart from Christ all we had was our sin debt and its eternal punishment. In Christ all your debts are canceled. What are you left with? Everything! Christ chose to become all that you were so that you may be all that he is. He chooses to give you title to all he has. So as Peter says, you are a chosen people. Remember that when you are feeling forgotten and neglected. It just isn't so. The Holy God of heaven chooses you to be his child. He adopts you into his family. You're not some spiritual accident or afterthought. You are wanted, and you are invaluable.

You are royalty. Life here in this world can leave us feeling like peasants or worse. Nothing could be further from the truth. You are royals because you are all sons and daughters of the King of kings. This is your Father's world and though you are only passing through, it's important to remember he rules everything you see and all that happens for your benefit. And the best is yet to come! When your life here is over, you too will rule along with Jesus. He promises: "**To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne**" (Revelation 3:21). You are kings and you are priests. Simply put, that means you have the authority to approach God in prayer any time day or night. How about that! The next time you're feeling worthless, say to yourself, "I have the ear of the CEO of the universe. He's waiting to hear from me." And don't just say it – in that moment, pray. Ask God to help you see yourself as he sees in you in Christ – dearly loved, always forgiven and ever-blessed.

Because you, dear Christian, are a holy citizen of God's holy nation. Jesus not only took away the debt of your sin, he credits you with all his holiness. Every perfect thing he's done has been done in your name. His compassion, his kindness, his perseverance, his obedience – it all counts as yours. That means that our God never sees or thinks of you as some sort of loser or failure. And if God doesn't see you that way, what business do you have thinking of yourself in such terms?

I ask, because this is something I struggle with. I'm afraid that I spend too much of my time thinking, speaking, interacting, just plain old living "apart from Christ." By that I mean, that in my sinful foolishness I forget and fail to take the things we study and discuss here and apply them to

my life out there. As a result, I invite a good deal of misery into my life. I carry around a hefty load of baggage, emotional and otherwise, that wouldn't need to be there – not if I would spend more time listening to, reflecting on, and living by the truth God speaks about me and my life in Christ.

I have a friend who came to this same conclusion. After studying the verses of Scripture that we are looking at today, he found a way to consider his net worth every time he signs his name. He adds three letters to his signature: P.O.G. Do you know what they stand for? “Priest Of God.” This is my friend's way of reminding himself of the status and privileges he enjoys through faith in Jesus. I need the same reminder all the time. I am precious and valuable in Christ on good days and bad. I'm precious and valuable in Christ even when I'm not the best husband, dad, son, brother, friend, or pastor. My sins and failures don't define me because I live my life through faith in the One whose precious blood has redeemed me and freed me from all sin and failure. The same is true of you! You are worth nothing less than the precious blood of God's own Son – every minute of every day. What a price God paid to make you his own. You are not worthless. You are “a people belonging to God.”

You have great value in God's eyes and you have a great purpose in God's world: “...**that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light**” (1 Peter 2:9). God has rescued you and me from the outer darkness of hell by bringing us into the saving light of Jesus. He has had mercy on us. Now we grateful souls get to play a role in extending God's mercy to others by telling them what God has done for them through the death and resurrection of his Son. I know, the thought of doing that can be a pretty scary. Where should I start? Whom should I tell? What should I say? Often we make this way too difficult for ourselves. You know your own inner-struggles – how much time you spend trying to find your worth by what you accomplish, how you look, how much money you make. Where does this get you? Nowhere. It leaves you feeling worthless. Your spouse, your children, your friends and coworkers struggle with the same thing. Why not start with them?

I can't go back in time to visit with my 15 year old self. That's a lost cause. But I remember what I was thinking and how I felt. I can use that to tell a young man today that a dropping a pass, or getting turned down for a date, or bombing a test doesn't make him worthless. His value doesn't depend on any of those things. His value is found in Jesus, in the forgiveness he's won for us, in the holiness he imparts to us, and in the future he's secured for us.

Carry this saving truth home with you today. Turn it over in your mind. Take it to heart. Celebrate your net worth in Christ by drawing comfort from it every time you're tempted to question your value and worth. And as God gives you opportunity, declare his praises by telling someone else the great value God has given them IN CHRIST. To him be the praise and the glory forever and ever. Amen.