

YOU ARE SPECIAL

God calls believers peculiar or special people because of what Jesus did on the cross. He bore our sins in His own body, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. When you become a born-again Christian, you become a new creation. The Bible says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (Corinthians 5:17). The apostle Peter puts it this way:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Being special, of course, gives us the best thing that can happen to any human being: we reign with God eternally. However, while we are still here in the world, we ought to make the world better for others, because Jesus also calls us the salt and the light of the world. Salt preserves food and makes it tasty, while light saves us from darkness. So should believers be to the world. We are special, but at times our actions and words do not show it, and they should.

When you go to fill your car tank, you will commonly see two choices at a gas pump: "regular" and "premium." In Nigeria, the regular is called "ordinary" while the premium is called "special" or "super." Some people do not care much about the difference; their concern is the price. As long as the car runs, that is all that matters.

Both the regular and the premium or special gasoline are byproducts of crude oil, so what is the difference? The difference is in its octane rating, a measure of how well the fuel mixture can resist pre-ignition. In a car, there is an internal combustion engine. When you crank the engine, the piston moves inside the cylinder and compresses a mixture of air and gasoline. Close to the top, the spark plug ignites and causes explosions, which power the car. At times, the fuel mixture is ignited earlier (called pre-ignition), particularly on old engines. This will leave behind an unburned mixture that passes through the exhaust pipe and contributes to air pollution. Because premium gasoline has a higher-octane rating, it can withstand this improper fuel combustion and make the engine run cleaner.

When you come to Christ, the Holy Spirit and His Word continue to work in you and conform you to the image of Christ, which gives you the ability to burn off everything that could cause mind pollution. As a result, the world or your environment is safer for people.

World leaders are making efforts to reduce pollution through several initiatives. These programs are commendable, but the type of pollution that has taken more lives than anything else is mind pollution. It has been doing so since the fall of man. That is why Cain killed his brother Abel. Because of man's wickedness, God had to destroy the earth with a flood, but spared Noah and his family.

“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). What happened on 9/11 in the US was as a result of mind pollution. Those who hated and refused to forgive carried out this repugnant activity. Today, we see the works of evil groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, and others who desire nothing but to destroy lives. The Bible calls the devil a thief and a murderer, and he comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus comes to give abundant life.

The wickedness in people's hearts is a result of giving room to Satan. Satan cannot operate except through the human mind, and he gets his desire when people refuse to forgive. It could be your neighbor, your spouse, or even your children or parents. Refusing to forgive has been described as drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. It will affect you and the people around you.

When you become a Christian, it is only your spirit that is renewed. Your flesh and mind are not renewed. That is why Paul says in Romans 12:1-2:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

You must renew your mind daily by the Word of God. Jesus said, "You are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

There was a time when an individual was opposing me at every turn. Even people around could sense something wasn't right between the two of us. I tried to reach out to him but met with even stronger opposition. As I was pondering the best way to resolve things, I thought I should just ignore him completely, but my spirit reminded me, "You are special." It went further to remind me of the occasion when Jesus performed a miracle by feeding five thousand people with just five loaves and two fishes. After Jesus blessed the bread, He gave it to His disciples to distribute to the people and did not ask them to skip the Pharisees who opposed Him at every turn. God also sends rain and sunshine without skipping the evil or people who do not honor Him.

Those words quickly changed my perspective on this fellow. Of course, people are going to have negative opinions toward you, but you must not harbor anything against anyone. We must be ready to forgive. If we do not forgive quickly, it can lead to hatred.

Hatred can come in different forms. A common one is when people become jealous of another person because something good happened to him. Instead of praising God with that individual, you wish it were you. This was the case with Cain, who became jealous that God accepted his brother Abel's offering. Instead of approaching his brother and learning from him, he turned to anger and hatred and became the first murderer. God took time to speak with Cain, asking him why he was angry. God went as far as telling him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:7).

Jealousy also led Joseph's brethren to hate him and eventually sell him into slavery. They wanted evil for him, but God's plan could not be thwarted. Neither can God's plan for your own life. No one can destroy it. They may cause delays, but as long as you fear God, He will bring the plan to pass.

As a Christian, you have the ability to control jealousy or anger you feel that can lead to hatred. Instead of wishing it was you, you should learn from your brother or sister so that you can achieve a similar thing, if it is what God wants for you. You must also realize that God has not called all of us to do the same thing. That is why we have different

professions. We are not all carpenters or teachers. Ask God what He wants you to do for His glory, rather than wishing to do what your brother is doing, which might lead to jealousy and hatred.

Like premium gas, which has additives to burn off what causes pollution, you as a believer must allow some additives to work in you to burn off those things that can cause mind pollution. These additives are what the apostle Peter teaches in 2 Peter 1. The epistle is to us believers— “to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

But also, for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Our faith in Christ is the foundation. From there on we must add:

- i. virtue (moral excellence or goodness)
- ii. knowledge (spiritual knowledge from the Holy Spirit, not head knowledge)
- iii. self-control (keeping your passion under control)
- iv. perseverance (endurance under provocation without seeking revenge even when mistreated)
- v. godliness (piety)
- vi. brotherly kindness (caring for one another)
- vii. love (agape, God’s kind of love, always sacrificial)

In verse 9, the apostle Peter said that if believers fail to add these things to their faith, they are shortsighted even to blindness, and have forgotten that they were cleansed from their old sins.

You have these additives available to you to burn off things that can pollute your mind. Therefore, add to your faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These things will cause you to live above reproach, as special, the way God has called you.

—Philip O. Akinyemi

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