

Excellencies

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, **so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you** out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. (1Peter 2:9-10)

Peter tells us that God's people are to "proclaim [show forth]" the "excellencies [praises]" of God (1Peter 2:9). Remember, these are the people whom God had called through the gospel (1Peter 2:9-10; 2Thessalonians 2:14). They are God's people (1Peter 1:18-19; 1:21-23; 2:1-2). Surely, people so wonderfully blessed, will be anxious to proclaim the excellencies of the One who called them. But what does it mean to "proclaim" and what are the "excellencies" of God? It is always helpful to define words.

Proclaim

The word translated "proclaim" or "show forth," is only used this one time in Scripture and has a very specific meaning. It is a compound word comprised of words meaning, "completely out of" and "declare, announce, report," hence, "declare completely out," or "announce entirely." What Peter tells us is that as God's people—His own possession—we are to declare entirely His excellencies. Within this context, Peter has quoted from two or three places in Scripture in reference to Israel. It would be well to consider what He told them in regard to their responsibilities under that covenant: "*The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken*" (Deuteronomy 26:18-19). Notice the focus of praise, fame, and honor is not the nation of Israel, but God—they are consecrated, or holy, to Him. Notice also that what brings this honor is the keeping of all of His commandments. Keeping His commands glorifies Him. This is very much the same approach Paul uses regarding God's people of the covenant through Christ: "*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory*" (Ephesians 1:13-14). Having introduced this concept to his readers, Peter further elaborates in his letter: "*Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*" (1Peter 4:11). God's people proclaim Him in word and deed in serving Him.

Excellencies

The word "excellencies," just as the word "proclaim," has much information to be gleaned. Also, like "proclaim," "excellencies" is a word rarely found in Scripture, but with a very specific meaning. The word is only used by Peter with one exception; Paul uses the word once. It means

“moral excellence” or “goodness.” The word appears as “praises” in one or two English translations. This is based on archaic usage. In modern usage, the idea of praise shifts the focus to an act [In the case of Christians giving praise to God, this act is a necessity]. However, the focus here is on the goodness or virtue of God, not the act which results from His goodness [That would be the focus of “proclaim”]. In short, the people who are possessed or owned by God are to declare entirely the glorious virtues of God. It is not just being vocal, Christians are even to think in this way. This is the way Paul uses the word: “*whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, **if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things***” (**Philippians 4:8**). This is why Peter, in his second letter, reminds Christians that we have been “*called by **His own glory and excellence ...***” so that we “*may become partakers of the divine nature ... **for this very reason** also, applying all diligence, **in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge ...***” (**2Peter 1:3-5**).

God is, of course, worthy of being proclaimed by the very fact of who He is. He is the God of gods (**Daniel 2:47**). There is none other like Him. He is a living God (**John 6:57**). He is eternal (**Deuteronomy 33:26-27**). He is from everlasting to everlasting (**Psalms 41:13**). He is so different from man (**Job 14:1-2**), though He created man in His own image. His worthiness can be seen in His personal traits: He is all-knowing (**Psalms 139:1-6**); He is all-present (**Psalms 139:7-10**); He is all-seeing (**Psalms 139:11-12**). God, who is worthy, has shown us His excellencies which we are to proclaim.

The excellencies of God are seen in His love (**John 3:16; 2Corinthians 13:11**). The excellencies of God are seen in His grace (**Titus 2:11-12; 3:4-6; Ephesians 2:4-9**). The excellencies of God are seen in His fairness (**Acts 10:34-35**). The excellencies of God are seen in that He gave instructions that we might know what to do to please Him (**Romans 1:16; 2Peter 1:3**). The excellencies of God are seen in His justice (**John 5:28-29; Romans 11:22**). You can think of many more excellencies of God to continue this list.

Peter tells us why we should be proclaiming His excellencies. “*Now you are **THE PEOPLE OF GOD ... now you have RECEIVED MERCY.***” Are you declaring His excellencies?