

January 8, 2017 by Steve Brandon



Proclaim His Excellencies

1 Peter 2:9-10

1. Embrace His Grace (verses 9a, 10)

2. Proclaim His Fame (verse 9b)

As most of you know, I spent this past week at Southern Seminary in Louisville at a doctoral seminar entitled, "Leadership in Volunteer Ministries." The idea of the class is to help ministry leaders think through their own ministry context to evaluate their recruitment, training, motivation, retention and replacement of volunteer workers. And one of the things that has been very clear to me with this course is that I don't do that very well at this. I have major ways to improve in this area.

But what I found is this--many ministry leaders don't lead volunteers very well, either. It is a challenge to motivate people in the ministry context to give of themselves to serve others.

We spent much of the week talking about our ministry contexts, seeking advice and counsel from others as to how we could all do this better. One of the things that our professor said is that around the table were hundreds of years of ministry experience, and that we all were going to benefit from this as we share our wisdom together.

We had people from all over the spectrum involved in all sorts of ministries. We had some from Africa. We had some locals, there in Louisville. We had some who work in the inner city. We had others who work in school administration. One guy in the seminar is a church planter. He's planting a church in Washington D. C. Right now his church is 30 people; this is his core group, some of whom aren't even Christians. Another guy is on staff of a church of 15,000!

Another guy recently stepped down from his church due to problems in the church. Others are facing some major challenges in their church right now. We even had a woman in the class who is part of a para-church ministry devoted to equipping women.

It was very informative and helpful to hear the particular challenges that each of these people were facing in their own ministry context. It was very helpful to hear the counsel that others gave. But one of the most helpful things that I discovered was this: I love our ministry context. And I would choose Rock Valley Bible Church over any of their ministries.

Now, that's not to speak anything poorly against any of these men. But what I want to say is that the culture of our church is so different than the culture of many of these churches. Sure, it would be exciting to be at a church of 15,000 people! And this year, alone, they took on 1,000 new members! But, they lost 1,000 members through the back door. And much of the church is about members. And all of their ministry is centered around the church, and not homes.

For many of the churches represented, the people of the church think that it's all about going to church. They think that it is about inviting others to come to church, learning some things, and being stirred to love Jesus. But the culture at Rock Valley Bible Church is so different. Sure, we have our weaknesses. We are a church filled with sinful people. I have deficiencies. I'm not good at creating an environment with lots of things to do, where we need lots of people involved to help pull off all of these events.

But in many ways, my weakness is our strength. Our focus isn't on extended activity. Yet, there is life here. There is genuine love. There is genuine care.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate it is with imagery. Last week, I mentioned this book, "The Trellis and the Vine." The premise of the book is this. For a vine to thrive, it needs a trellis, which it can scale. In ministry terms, the vine is people and life and relationships. The trellis is the organization and the methods and activities.

Imagine a good, healthy vine. The vine is growing. The trellis is holding it up.

Now, a picture of Rock Valley Bible Church would be that the vine is growing, but is sprawled out on the ground. We have a healthy vine, but we have little trellis to support it.

And when I presented such a picture in my seminar this week, people were envious. Because, many of their churches look like an empty trellis. The trellis is good and standing. They have lots of programs and things happening. They have lots of church invites. But in many ways, the vines all over the trellis are dead and withered, or lacking all together.

And it's much easier to build a trellis than it is to give life to the vine. And there is no other place that I would rather be than here. I want to be where there is life and love and joy.

One of the reasons why we have life at Rock Valley Bible Church is the path to involvement. We don't have a bunch of programs to plug people into. Now, to be sure, there are serving opportunities. We always need more to serve in the nursery, in Children's Church, serving

snacks, and doing maintenance on the grounds (mowing, shoveling). But our emphasis isn't upon activity. Our emphasis is upon relationship.

You want to get involved at Rock Valley Bible Church? Come, hang out, and get to know the people of the church. And as you get to know others, find ways to love and serve them. Sunday mornings is a great place to begin. We are glad to have you here with us. But one of the best places to be involved and engaged in a small group in one of our homes.

And my hope is that you are involved in the lives of the people of Rock Valley Bible Church. One of the greatest ways to feel disconnected is to simply have Sunday morning relationships. But I would encourage you to go deeper. Have Tuesday relationships. Have Thursday relationships. Have Saturday relationships. Much of that begins (and is fostered) in our small groups.

Now, that's all well and good. But when we talk about the Trellis and the Vine, we are also talking about reaching out to others, particularly to those who don't know Christ. We are talking about life-to-life ministries.

And so, this morning, as we come to the Scriptures, I want to think about life-to-life ministries with those around you who don't know Christ. I invite you to open in your Bibles to 1 Peter. We are going to spend our time this morning in two verses, 1 Peter 2:9-10. My message is entitled, "Proclaim the Excellencies."

1 Peter 2:9-10

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

I remember growing up in the 1980's watching a television show called, "That's Incredible!" If you are old enough, perhaps you remember it as well. John Davidson, Cathy Lee Crosby, and Fran Tarkenton hosted this "reality television" show before reality TV was en vogue.

On this show they would have wide variety of different segments spotlighting various people and the incredible things that they could do. Some segments were those who displayed a unique skill, like the ability to bowl at a very young age or a special skateboarding ability. Other segments would be a sentimental piece about someone who has overcome some disability to live a fairly normal life. There were times when the segments were informational, as they explained some great medical breakthroughs. Some segments put forth those who could solve the Rubik's cube in a matter of seconds or could blow smoke-filled soap bubbles. Other segments were downright dangerous, like the skydiver who jumped out of an airplane while handcuffed and strait-jacketed.

Perhaps this television show made a special impact upon me because of the stir it made in my hometown when I was in high school. There was a senior in high school who had developed an interest in Psychology. Particularly, he had studied some things that B. F. Skinner taught about rewards and punishments and how you could change the behavior of animals. Through rewarding certain behavior, he taught some rats how to pick up a ball and place it through a hoop, much like we would shoot a basketball. "That's Incredible" came out to DeKalb and did this little piece on these incredible basketball-playing rats by staging a "basketball game." They brought in Bill Baker, the play-by-play commentator for the local university. They also encouraged the student body to come out one night so that they might have a real crowd to cheer for these basketball playing rats. It was pretty neat to watch the production on television when it came out.

One of the things that I remember about this television show was the chant that the audience would always participate in at the end of every segment. When the segment was closing down, the audience would all chant at the same time, "THAT'S INCREDIBLE!!"

Well, this morning, in our text, we see some amazing blessings that have come upon our lives, handed down from God Almighty. When we finish reading these verses, we might easily want to shout, "THAT'S INCREDIBLE!!" In fact, I want to read a portion of these verses, and when I finish, I want for you to say, "That's Incredible."

So, let me read a portion. I want you to respond when I finish with a good, "That's Incredible!"

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, ...

"THAT'S INCREDIBLE!!"

1 Peter 2:10

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

"THAT'S INCREDIBLE!!"

Do you see what's so incredible about these words? If not, that's OK. It's my aim to give you an understanding of these words, so that you might leave today saying, "That's incredible!" So, stay with me.

By way of outline this morning, I have two points. My first point this morning is this:

1. Embrace His Grace (verses 9a, 10).

In verses 9 and 10, we see Peter giving us six descriptions of who we are. He says that we are ...

- 1 - A chosen race.
- 2 - A royal priesthood
- 3 - A holy nation
- 4 - A people for God's own possession.
- 5 - the people of God
- 6 - Those who have received mercy.

What makes these words so astonishing has to do with the audience to whom Peter is writing. He is writing this letter to scattered believers all across the geographic regions of "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). He was writing to Gentiles.

Now, there are some who would contend that Peter is writing to Jewish people. "After all," they say, "Peter was the apostle to the Jews" (Gal. 2:7-9). But, I don't think that this is the case. I believe that Peter's audience is mostly Gentile. Surely, there are some Jewish people among his readers. But, they are predominately Gentile.

I say this because they were redeemed out of their "futile way of life inherited from [their] forefathers" (1 Peter 1:18). Peter wouldn't describe use these terms to describe the lineage of a Jew. Jewish people had a great ancestry. Their adherence to the laws of Moses, even if by name only, wasn't a "futile life."

Furthermore, when you come to chapter 4 and verse 3, you see Peter describing their former manner of life. He said, "For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3). These types of things wouldn't be characteristic at all of the average Jewish person in the 1st century. Life in the synagogue would have prevented them from such abominations. Certainly, this may have been true of some of the worst backslidden Jews. But, it certainly wasn't the pattern of the life that would generalize the way that the Jews lived in the first century.

And so, I believe that Peter is writing to those who are, for the most part, converts from a non-Jewish background. I looked at a dozen commentaries on this text, and all but one agreed that with this assessment. So, I believe that it is reasonable to presume that Peter is writing primarily to converted Gentiles. Certainly, all of these things would be true of the minority of Jews who would read the letter as well.

Now do you see what's so incredible about Peter's words here in chapter 2? For 2,000 years of human history, God had set His focus upon one nation--the nation of Israel. But, now, Peter writes to the scattered churches, "But you are a chosen race! You are a royal priesthood! You are a holy nation! You are a people for God's own possession! You are now the people of God! You have now received mercy!" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

God's favor which was upon Israel has now come upon the church, which is made up of both Jew and Gentile! God now looks down upon all who believe in Christ as His chosen race.

Now, I don't believe that this displaces Israel as a unique people. I believe that this is still a future for Israel. This is clear as day in Romans, chapter 11, where Paul writes that "All Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26). There will be a day when the Jews will turn to Christ. God has promised that this would be the case. They are the only nation who has received a guarantee from God that He will revive their hearts and turn them to Jesus before the end of time. So, God has not lost his heart for these people. And, throughout all time, the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel will forever be etched in the gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12). And, we must never forget that our Jewish roots of the Old Testament are the very support of our faith (Rom. 11:18).

But, Peter's words here are expanding the scope of God's working in this world. No longer is the Lord merely focused upon one nation. Rather, Jew and Gentile alike share in this inheritance. It's no longer ethnic identity that includes you in the covenant. Rather, it's faith in Christ that brings you into the Abrahamic Covenant.

Throughout the New Testament, this is very clear. Paul said it this way in Galatians 3:7-9, ...

Galatians 3:7-9

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

And so, as we believe in Christ, we are "sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). As we believe in Christ, "we are blessed along with Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). It is in Christ that we are recipients of the mighty blessings of God (Gal. 3:8).

This is what Peter is saying. You, Gentiles, are "a chosen race, a royal priest hood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." What was once spoken to Israel now applies to the church!

I hope that you grasp just how marvelous this is! In the book of Ephesians, Paul wrote of the state of any non-Jewish person before the coming of Jesus. He said, "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Before the coming of Jesus, the promises of God were to the Jewish people. They were God's chosen race. Anybody who was outside of that was "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12).

Today in our society, hear about, "Illegal immigration." People from other nations are crossing our borders and living among us without

governmental permission. They benefit our country in that they work among us. But, they often fail to pay taxes, and suck off of our social services, freeloading on all of us. There is a push today to deal with that problem. Let's go through a process and make them "legal."

But, before Christ came, the situation was far worse for the Gentiles. If they wanted to "immigrate" to Israel, they certainly could. But, they could never become "legal citizens."

They could do everything possible to be a productive member of society. They could work hard. They could learn the laws and the customs of the land. They could support the work of the temple financially. They could be circumcised. They could be model citizens. But, they were never allowed full citizenship into their society.

The best that they could do would be called a "proselyte." That is, a convert into the religion. And they would be reminded of this every time that they came to worship. For they were restricted to the "court of the Gentiles" that prohibited the Gentile converts from going any further.

Can you imagine coming into Rock Valley Bible Church and being told, "Welcome to Rock Valley Bible Church. Did you grow up here in the Rockford area? I didn't think so. We're going to ask that you stand in the back. The seats are for those who grew up in northern Illinois. All others must stand." I believe that you would feel pretty left out, right? But, this was the situation for all Gentiles before the coming of Christ. And the Jews were very serious about these things.

Archaeologists have found a stone pillar in the Temple area upon which was written, "No man of another nation is to enter within the fence and enclosure around the Temple, and whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensued." Obviously, the Jews took these things very seriously. We also have Biblical proof of the seriousness of these things. It's recorded in Acts 21 that Jews arose from Jerusalem and laid hands on Paul, who was in the temple area. They began to cry out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place" (Acts 21:28).

Now, as it came out later, this was a false accusation. But, it was such a huge thing for the Jews to keep the Gentiles away from the temple area that they were ready to arrest (and even kill) the one who was responsible for bringing a Gentile into the temple area.

Gentiles were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel." They had no claim to the covenantal promises of the Old Testament. They had no hope that the Messiah would come and save them. They were "without God" in this world (Eph. 2:12). But, in Christ, it all has changed. As Paul wrote in Eph. 2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." You say, "Brought near to what?" Brought near to the Jews in one body, which is now called the church (Eph. 2:16).

This is what Peter is getting at in these words in 1 Peter 2. The church is now God's chosen race. Though the church is composed of many ethnic groups (from every tribe and tongue and people and nation), God looks down upon us and considers us to be one race of people, who are redeemed through the blood of Christ. All of us are "fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

Can you now see how incredible these things are? We are ...

- 1 - A chosen race;
- 2 - A royal priesthood;
- 3 - A holy nation;
- 4 - A people for his own possession;
- 5 - The people of God; and
- 6 - Those who have received mercy.

Every single one of these descriptions are all descriptions that God first gave to Israel, but now, he has given to the church. Let's spend a few moments thinking about each of these descriptions.

1 - A Chosen Race.

Many times throughout the Old Testament, God referred to Israel as His chosen nation, His chosen race of people. We read of, "Israel, whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 44:1); "Israel, My chosen one" (Isaiah 45:4); and, "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2).

It all began with Abraham, when God chose him out of the Land of Ur to journey to the promised land. God said of Abraham, "I will make you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). Later, God established His covenant with him, saying, "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:7-8).

As they were about to enter the promised land, Moses reminded Israel, "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). The story of the entire Old Testament is the story of God's gracious dealings with this one race of people that God chose to bless. And now, here in 1 Peter 2:9, God has expanded the scope of His chosen race to include Gentiles.

Through faith in Christ, all ethnic diversities are now removed. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Think about the next three phrases,
2 - A royal priesthood
3 - A holy nation
4 - A people for God's own possession.

All of these terms come from Exodus 19:5-6, just before Moses was to receive the law on Mount Sinai. The LORD said, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

Each of these phrases describe God's perspective of the nation of Israel. The amazing thing here is that Peter takes each of these phrases and transfers them directly to us, as the recipients of God's tremendous promises. And we can do the same. Israel was called to be--number two--a royal priesthood.

Even to Israel, this didn't mean that everyone would be priests. However, it did mean that the entire nation would have a priestly role, as it relates to the other nations of the world.

What does a priest do? He provides the way of access to God. And as Israel had a relationship with the Lord, they would be the ones to draw the nations to God. This role now has been turned to us, who believe in Christ. We are priests to the world in the sense that people can come to God through us, as they hear from our mouths of the glories of the gospel of Christ.

Getting back to Exodus 19, the Lord told Israel (through Moses), "You shall be to me a holy nation." (Ex. 19:6). This is attribute number three. This is one of the great purposes of the giving of the law which was to given by Moses. The law was given to teach people how to live before God. Israel was given rules and regulations that would set them apart from the other nations that surrounded them.

The Lord was very clear about the ways in which He called Israel to act when they entered into the land. The Ten Commandments spells out their conduct pretty well. They were to "make no covenant" with those in the land (Deut. 7:2). They were "not to intermarry with them" (Deut. 7:3). Rather, Moses said, "You are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). Their behavior was to be different because of God's relationship to them.

This has also come straight into the church as well. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are to be a holy people. Peter has already mentioned this fact in 1 Peter 1:16, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

When we aren't holy, we bring shame the name of God. In Peter's second epistle, he described the false teachers who were rising up among the people, who lived sinful lives. Peter wrote, "Many will follow their sensuality, and become of them the way of the truth will be maligned" (2 Pet. 2:2). In other words, an unholy life brings shame to God's name.

Let's think about this one last phrase in verse 9, ...

4 - A people for his own possession.

The idea here is the God would wrap His arms around Israel. He would be faithful to them. He would care for them and comfort them and be merciful to them. Isaiah 43:1, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!" Israel was God's possession. He owned them and would protect them and guard them.

Israel was the "apple of God's eye" (Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8). Israel was God's treasured possession (Deut. 26:18). They were to find their refuge and strength and trust in Him. God told Israel, "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

This is now God's attitude toward those who trust in Jesus. Christ Jesus "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Tit. 2:14). We are Christ's treasured possession. As a result, we need to trust Him with all things. Peter will later instruct us, "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

The two descriptions that Peter gives us in verse 10 are no less remarkable.

5 - the people of God
6 - Those who have received mercy.

He writes, "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." The contrast in each of these phrases shows you how marvelous they are. At one time, we were not the people of God. Israel was the people of God. But, now, through the work of Christ, we are the people of God. God's blessing is upon our lives.

Before Christ had come, we were no-mercy people. But, now that Christ has come and we have embraced him by faith, we have become "mercy people." Can you even imagine what life would be like to continue to live in the darkness of your sin? To all of these things, we ought to say, "That's Incredible."

And so, Embrace His Grace (verses 9a, 10). By this, I simply mean that we should seek to understand His grace and rejoice in it. Let's turn to our next point, ...

2. Proclaim His Fame (verse 9b).

This point comes from the last half of verse 9, where Peter says, ...

1 Peter 2:9b

that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The flow of Peter's argument here goes like this: "God has brought some unbelievable blessings into your life. He has given you the promises that He made to Israel. He has brought you out of a dark and hopeless situation. Now, he has given you a hope that is beyond all other hopes. Your role is simply to tell others of how precious God is!"

It's almost as if Peter is saying that this is should be a natural thing for you to speak this way.

Let's go back again to the 1980's when the show, "That's Incredible" was playing on the airwaves. I can imagine a conversation that would take place the next day at work. One coworker says to another, "Wow, did you see that guy that was on 'That's Incredible' last night? It was amazing what he did. He folded his whole body into that small box. I couldn't believe it!"

The response comes, "Yeah, I saw that, but I was much more impressed with the guy who jumped his motorcycle over those three helicopters with their rotor blades spinning. Now, that takes some real guts."

I can imagine a third coworker talking about the piece that they saw of the blind boy with severe brain damage, who had an incredible musical ability. I'm sure that this sort of conversation took place in the 1980's after a night spent watching television.

Now, why would this conversation take place? Because those who saw the television show were captivated by what they had seen on television the night before. It wasn't difficult for these people to speak about it. They found it stirring, so they wanted to share it with others.

This is what God calls all of us to have regarding our salvation. God has so lavished His blessings upon us in Christ that He wants for us to say, "That's Incredible." He wants for us to speak out of the overflow of what we have experienced! In verse 9, Peter talks about how God "has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." That's something that every believer in Jesus Christ has experienced.

At one point in your life, you were walking in darkness. But, the Lord, in His grace, has called you out of your sinful ways to serve Him, the living and true God. In so doing, you have found Him to be more lovely than you ever expected. We ought to be so amazed at what took place that we cannot help but to speak.

This is what took place in the early church. When the religious leaders tried to muzzle the early apostles by commanding them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, even threatening that they would be punished if they did, Peter and John answered them with these words (Acts 4:18, 21). "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). They couldn't restrain themselves from speaking about what they had witnessed through the life of Jesus Christ. It was so incredible that their mouths couldn't contain themselves.

They were so bold in their convictions that they went out and spoke again publicly about the Christ. Again, they were arrested and brought before the Council, who questioned them about their disobedience to their command to stop speaking as they were. Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Even being flogged didn't stop them from speaking (Acts 5:40). Instead, they went from that place "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). In the very next verse, we read that, "Every day in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

Here were simple fishermen, who were transformed by the power of God to give strong testimony for His gospel. Fundamentally, what changed them? They had witnessed the incredible. They had witnessed Jesus of Nazareth, who "God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). They had witnessed His death and resurrection and were on a crusade to make Him known.

I would contend that our difficulties in evangelism today have less to do with training, and more to do with the impact that Jesus Christ has made in our lives. I'm not against evangelism training. Not at all. But, speaking boldly about Jesus Christ has more to do with your own grasping of the marvels of what Christ has done for your soul than it does with technique. You can teach a salesman how to sell his product. But, nothing sells better than someone who uses the product himself and tells his neighbor how much it has helped him.

When Peter tells us to proclaim the "excellencies of Him," he's talking in aesthetic language. The emphasis here with Peter's words isn't so much the facts about God that we should broadcast. Rather, it's the beauty of Christ that should come forth from our mouth. Peter's emphasis here isn't so much upon the greatness and grandeur of God. Rather, Peter's emphasis here is upon the experienced kindness of God. Peter's emphasis here is upon the loveliness of Jesus. Peter tells us to tell the world why we have found Him to be so attractive.

We have experienced the sweetness of Jesus in our souls. We are to tell others, ...

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, and to take him at his word;
just to rest upon his promise, and to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

Refrain:

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him! How I've proved him o'er and o'er!

Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust him more!

O how sweet to trust in Jesus, just to trust his cleansing blood;
and in simple faith to plunge me neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus, just from sin and self to cease;
just from Jesus simply taking life and rest, and joy and peace.

I'm so glad I learned to trust thee, precious Jesus, Savior, friend;
and I know that thou art with me, wilt be with me to the end.

We have experienced the gospel first-hand. Peter says, tell others of how wonderful the Lord is. Tell others how gracious He has been to your soul. He has "called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Peter says, "Go and tell the world."

Such things are all over the Bible. "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary" (Ps. 107:1-2). It's the redeemed of the LORD who should speak forth His praises for how excellent He is! As God has redeemed us, we ought to speak forth of His goodness and His mercy to us. "Come and hear, all who fear God, and I will tell of what He has done for my soul" (Ps. 66:16).

When Mary had been visited by the angel, she said, "the Mighty One has done great things for me" (Luke 1:49). The entire Magnificat is her expression of the excellencies of God in showing favor toward her. And when you come to "embrace the grace" that is ours in Christ, you too will work to "proclaim the fame" of His name.

There is a great illustration of this in 2 Kings 7. Judah was in great distress because the Arameans had launched a military crusade against them. The Arameans had surrounded the city and were seeking to starve them to death. There were four lepers who were at the gate of the city. They were saying to one another, "Why do we sit here until we die? If we say, 'We will enter the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we will live; And if they kill us, we will but die." (2 Kings 7:3-4). They figured that they were going to die. So, they had nothing to lose by entering into the foreign camp.

That night, these four lepers went to the camp of the Arameans. Surprisingly, they found that the camp was empty. They found it empty because the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and a sound of horses, even the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, 'Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.'" (2 Kings 7:6). And so, they had fled for their lives, deserting everything in the camp.

When the lepers came upon the deserted camp, they entered a tent and ate and drank until they were satisfied. And then, they took away the silver and gold and clothes and hid them. Then, they returned to another tent and took some spoils from that tent as well and hid them. And then, they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent; If we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household" (2 Kings 7:9). And so, they returned and related the matter to the king of Judah. As a result, Judah was saved from their enemies.

Today is a day of mercy. We are in the situation of the lepers. "This day is a day of good news" (2 Kings 7:9). To "keep silent" is not right. Our mouths need to open and tell others of our precious Savior.

It doesn't really matter who is listening. When you speak of the excellencies of Christ, it will be worship from your mouth. When non-believers hear you speak these things, you will be evangelizing them, as they will be confronted in their own lack of love for God. When believers hear you speak these things, you will be encouraging and edifying their faith. You will be discipling them.

You say, "Steve, I'm just not able to do this." I think that we are all able. Aren't there circumstances in your life that have brought such excitement to your soul that you can't help but to talk about it? Perhaps you built something and enjoy showing it to others. Perhaps you found some type of deal at the Flea Market last weekend. Perhaps your son or daughter is the star athlete on their high school basketball team. Perhaps your children have some type of performance coming up. Perhaps you had a couple of huge sales at work, which will bring a nice bonus home. Is it difficult to talk with others about these things? Then, it ought not to be difficult to talk about the excellencies of Christ.

You may have difficulty talking about these things if you have never experienced God's work of grace in your heart. But, if you have tasted of the Savior, you have plenty to say.

Verse 10 is a great outline of what you might say.

1 Peter 2:10

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.

You might tell others, "I once was not a part of God's family. I was off doing my own thing. Oh, but the Lord was gracious to me. He brought me into His fold. He made me one of His chosen ones. I am now one of His people. He has forgiven all of my transgressions. It's not because I earned anything. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe."

Just think about the excellencies of Christ. I don't think that any of us fully realize all that we have in Christ Jesus.

In Christ Jesus, "all our transgressions" have been forgiven (Col. 2:13). Christ Jesus paid for our sins upon the cross, washing us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleansing us from our sin (Ps. 51:2).

In Christ Jesus, we receive all of His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). When we stand before the judgment seat someday, Christ Jesus will be our defense attorney, who will plead with God the Father for our souls (1 John. 2:1). Christ has taken away the wrath of God that was due to fall upon us in punishment (1 John 2:2).

In Christ Jesus, we face "no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1). And so, we have no reason to fear the judgment, because His perfect love for us casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

In Christ Jesus, we have been made alive to God (Eph. 2:4). In Christ Jesus, we have been "raised up" and "seated" with Christ "in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6). Christ Jesus has "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). In Christ Jesus, we have a "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:4). Christ Jesus is preparing for us in heaven--A place where we will live for eternity (John 14:2).

Someday, we will fully realize the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18). We will take part in being "a kingdom and priests to our God" (Rev. 5:10). We will be fellow heirs of the kingdom with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17). Until that time, Jesus is continually praying for us (Heb. 7:25). With any care and concern, we can draw near to Him and will "receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Ephesians 1:3 sums it up as best as I know in any verse in the entire Bible. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Every spiritual blessing that there is to give is ours in Christ Jesus. You can't name a spiritual blessing that God hasn't given to us. And the amazing thing is that we didn't earn any one of these blessings. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jam. 1:17).

It comes upon us and we receive it! Oh, "Embrace His Grace," that you might "Proclaim His Fame."

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