

Proclaim His Excellencies
1 Peter 2:9-10

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With a few exceptions, most of us don't know what it feels like to be an immigrant. But we know what it is like to meet an immigrant. We notice that their language is not like ours. We might be confused by some of their customs – the family structures, the food, the holidays they celebrate, their religion. We might be a little annoyed at how they don't seem to fit in. Sadly, some of us would have to admit that we have been suspicious of them. In some places, the majority culture will ostracize immigrants. In the worst cases, they will persecute them by slandering them, depriving them of jobs, driving them out of their homes, or even physically harming them.

It might surprise you to know that one of the ways the Bible describes the Christian identity is the word *exile*. Look at 1 Peter 1:1. Peter calls the Christians “chosen exiles.” Karen Jobes defines this term as *someone who did not hold citizenship in the place where he resided and was therefore viewed as a foreigner*. Kind of like an immigrant. Peter refers to these Christians as exiles who were living in various places in Asia Minor in the first century.

But the exile that Peter is speaking about here doesn't refer to geography. Peter is using the term to refer to the fact that because they are Christians, no matter where they live, they are going to be different. Their priorities are different. Their values are different. Their allegiances are different. These differences are going to create tension with their non-Christian neighbors no matter where they live. There is a sense in which they don't fit in. They are a cultural minority.

This is critical to grasp. Being a Christian isn't about being in America. Being a Christian is about being in Christ. Don't misunderstand me. I love America. I love my country. But being in born in America did not make me a Christian. Believing in Jesus Christ made me a Christian. From that point forward, no matter where I live, I am an exile. This world is not my home. My primary allegiance is to Jesus Christ. No matter who gets elected in November, we are not going to be living in the new heaven and new earth. We will not be home yet. We will still be in exile.

I believe this is important for us to embrace. We are living in a culture, even in America, in which following Jesus Christ puts us increasingly at odds with the people around us. This is not because we want to be antagonistic or difficult. It is because we are exiles. Like the believers to whom Peter wrote, we increasingly sense that we are out of step with prevailing ideas, values, and practices of the majority of people. Following Jesus will show us to be different. Those differences will create tension.

When we read 1 Peter we discover that these Christian exiles were slandered, insulted, and marginalized by their non-Christian neighbors. They were treated unjustly. They suffered because they refused to blend in and adopt the beliefs and practices of the culture which conflicted with their Christian faith. To quote Karen Jobes again, *Because of their Christian faith, they were being marginalized by their society, alienated in their relationships, and threatened with—if not experiencing—a loss of honor and socioeconomic standing (and possibly worse).*

So, what are Christians to do? Withdraw into Christian enclaves and let the world go to hell? No. This is not an option for us. One of the emphases in 1 Peter is the way that these exiles must continue to engage their non-Christian neighbors with the good news about Jesus Christ. To live on mission is embedded in the identity of a Christian as we shall see.

For the next few weeks, we are going to see from 1 Peter what it looks like to live on mission as exiles in the world. Today, we see in 1 Peter 2:9-10 that *the people of God must proclaim the praises of God to the world*.

I. Believers are God's special people (v. 9).

A. A chosen race.

1. Peter uses the language of Isaiah 43:20 where God addresses Israel as his chosen people.
2. Peter is now stating that all who believe in Christ are part of God's chosen people.
 - a. V. 9 is contrasted with the unbelievers mentioned in vv. 7-8. Thus, "but you" refers to believers in contrast to unbelievers.
 - b. Peter is writing to a largely Gentile audience. Clearly he is not using the term "race" to indicate one particular ethnicity. Rather, he is thinking about all those who believe in Christ as part of God's chosen people.
 - c. The fact that God has chosen them reminds us of 1:1. They are "chosen exiles." God has chosen them to belong to him.

B. A royal priesthood.

1. This description is from Exodus 19:6.
2. Believers constitute a royal priesthood. What does it mean to be a priest?
 - a. We are set apart by God. Priests were set apart to God.
 - b. We have access to God. Priests had access to the temple and to the presence of God. All Christians have this through Christ.
 - c. We serve God for the sake of others. Priests served God for the sake of the people.

In Exodus 19:6, God referred to the nation as a kingdom of priests. In other words, what the Aaronic priests were to Israel, Israel was to be for the world around them. They were to show the nations around them the glory of the Lord so those nations might seek him.

The privileges we enjoy as believers are not to be turned inward but outward. The church is not a mutual admiration society but a mission society. God has chosen us, given us access to him through Christ, and set us apart so that we might mediate for others.

C. A holy nation.

1. This is also from Exodus 19:6.
2. Believers are a people called to be set apart for God. Holy means separate.
3. This separateness does not mean withdrawn geographically or relationally. It means separate in the sense of pure, obedient, and morally upright.

4. This was the source of some of the tension with their neighbors. They would not participate in the immorality that was considered normal (4:4).

This is critical for maintaining our mission in the world. We will talk more about this next week. But when the church looks like the world in terms of values and practices, it has no hope of reaching the world with the gospel.

D. A people of God's own possession.

1. From Exodus 19:5.
2. Though the whole earth belongs to God, he chose Israel as his special people. Peter is saying that Christians are God's special people. This is not to say that the church replaces Israel. But it does mean that all those who believe in Christ are included in the special people of God.

Jay Speights of Rockville, MD started poking around on Ancestry.com and discovered he was a prince. He took a DNA test to confirm that he as part of the royal family in the west African country of Benin. One day he's in MD and the next day he's in Africa where they have a parade and hang up banners in his honor. It is an exciting thing to discover your true identity.

There are Christians who spend a lifetime not understanding their true identity in Jesus Christ. Peter has given us a profile of the identity of every believer.

You might be thinking, "Sounds wonderful. To be God's special possession, part of his holy people, part of his royal priesthood. What's so great about these people that they get to participate in these benefits?"

The answer to that question is nothing. Nothing is great about these people. They are not overachievers. They did not do something spectacular to merit this position. They are not people of pristine character with impressive spiritual resumes. How did they become part of God's special people? They received God's mercy by faith in Jesus Christ. That's it. Look at v. 10.

God's kingdom is not based on merit. It is based on mercy. If we get what we deserve, none of us will be part of God's people. God mercifully gave his Son Jesus Christ to live the life God's law demands and to die the death our sins deserve. He rose from the dead indicating that his sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for the forgiveness of our sins. Anyone, that includes you, who trusts in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins will be included in God's people.

1 Peter 2:6 says, "whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." Whoever believes in Jesus, the chosen cornerstone of salvation, will not be disappointed or put to shame. They will become part of the people of God, his treasured possession. Are you part of that people?

II. Believers must proclaim the praises of God to the world (v. 9).

- A. There is a mission embedded in the identity of God's people.
 1. Note the purpose clause – so that.
 2. This indicates that the privileges of belonging to God's people carry a missional mandate with them. You are this...so that you can...

B. The mission is to proclaim the praises of God.

1. The term proclaim means to announce broadly, to broadcast, widely report.
2. What are we announcing? The praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
 - a. The praises of God. Excellencies. The term refers to wonderful acts or powerful deeds.
 - b. What powerful deeds does he have in mind? It is the powerful deed of God calling believers out of darkness, into his marvelous light.

Proclaiming the excellencies of God in the message of the gospel is not easy when you are an exile. People often don't want to hear it. They don't understand it. They say, "you are welcome to believe that but don't try to foist it on other people." There is a lot of cultural pressure to silence the gospel.

Mustafa became a Christian out of a Muslim background in Central Asia. If you think there is pressure here to keep quiet about the gospel, imagine what he faced. His father refused to speak to him. His brothers tried to convince him to turn back to Islam. His mother called him to urge him to reconsider. Through tears she pleaded with him, "Be a thief, be a drug dealer, be a liar, but please don't be a Christian."

Mustafa says that he adjusted his expectations. He expects resistance. He expects insults. But he prays for boldness and proclaims the gospel.

Christian friend, our mandate to announce the excellencies of salvation through Jesus Christ is not withdrawn because we live in a culture which is increasingly hostile to Jesus Christ. Because of who we are, we are on mission to report what God has done for us by bringing us out of darkness and into his light. We announce with love and with respect. But we announce.

Conclusion

I want to leave you with this thought. Don't allow the hardships of living as an exile to sour you to the wonder of salvation through Jesus Christ. Think about how Peter states this. You have the privilege of announcing the powerful deed of being rescued from darkness to light through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All the powerful deeds of God in the Bible are pointed toward this one, mighty, deed of love and mercy through Jesus's death and resurrection.

If you were a blind person who had been given the gift of a cure for blindness, would your posture toward other blind people be adversarial and negative? I doubt it. You would gladly announce to them the cure for blindness.

In the same way, though we face adversity and resistance, our focus needs to be on the absolutely amazing grace and mercy we have been given in Jesus Christ. As someone said, "evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

Go and proclaim his praises.