

TITLE: "Proclaiming the Excellencies of God" (Part 1)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:11

THEME: Proclaiming the excellencies of God in our lives and witness

NUMBER: 1PET47-0706

DATE: July 23, 2006

Read Passage

This is a short passage: 2 verses

An interlude of sorts that bridges the thoughts of what we've studied thus far to the next major section of the epistle.

Peter turns a corner. This begins a second major section that runs to the word "amen" that closes chapter 4:11.

While it turns a corner, it doesn't forget what lies behind us

This passage and what follows draws from the earlier thoughts of 2:4-10. God has called out a people for Himself: He has called you out of darkness, into t/light; You are {cite v. 9a}; Why: "To proclaim His Excellencies."

It's one thing to proclaim the greatness of God among friends

It's easy to worship in t/CH. It's easy to speak of God's virtues when you're with other believers. Christian Communalism would make this easy - "I live, work, play, exist only w/other Christians . . . "

That's not what the church is about in this world

One of the theological names for the body of X is "The Church Militant." May not be PC today, but it reflects a truism: that we as t/body of X live in a hostile environment.

We are engaged in a spiritual battle

Bible often puts our lives as believers in those terms:

Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 6:12 to **Fight the good fight of faith . . .**

At the end of his own life, Paul declared: **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;** (2 Tim. 4:7)

We're told in Eph. 6:12 that . . . **our struggle [battle] is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

In 2 Cor. chapter 10 Paul gives us some good military-sounding advice for this spiritual campaign ==>

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 {We are} destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and {we are} taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

We don't live our lives in the serenity and comfort of peace; we live among t/dangers of war - a spiritual war - but a war that's every bit as dangerous as a physical war because it involves our very souls.

We don't retreat to Christian Communalism

We move forward, living in t/world // among t/world, but not owing anything to t/world. We have confidence that this is by God's design and not only His design but his protection and blessing. So Jesus prayed in John 17 ==>

15 "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

We really are, to use two somewhat dated terms, pilgrims among pagans. How do we proclaim God's excellencies to those who live in darkness?

How are we to live among those who hate everything we stand for and who would even cast insults or worse at us?

This passage, as well as that which follows in the rest of chapter 2, chapter 3, and chapter 4 answers that question.

As far as verses 11 and 12 are concerned ==>

We are to proclaim God's excellencies by protecting our passions while living with a pure purpose before the persecutions and problems of a pagan planet.

We're looking at ==>

I. Proclaiming the Excellencies of God (vv. 11-12)

2 major points, 1 in v. 11 & 1 in v. 12

In v. 11 we'll look at ==>

A. Proclaiming God's Excellencies By Our Inward Devotion (Our Preparation)

In v. 12 we'll cover the second half ==>

B. Proclaiming God's Excellencies By Our Outward Duty (Our Proclamation)

There's a logical progression. Our "Devotion" comes before our "Duty"; our "Preparation" must precede our "Proclamation"

Let's go back to our text . . .

I. Proclaiming the Excellencies of God (vv. 11-12)

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the pagans, so that in whatever they accuse you as evildoers, they may see your good works and glorify God in the day of visitation.

First of all ==>

A. Proclaiming God's Excellencies By Our Inward Devotion

- *Our Preparation* (11)

1. Rejoice that you are loved

Have joy; be excited that God loves you with an enduring, eternal love.

a. One word==>

Beloved . . . *"You get that out of that one word?"*

(1) Ἰ αγαπητοί

It's a word that, according to BAG, "[Inclines] strongly toward the meaning 'only beloved'

You are not only God's "chosen race; royal priesthood; holy nation; people for his own possession" you are also his "only beloved."

(a) If you're using the NIV

"dear friends" misses t/mark on 2 points: 1) Not strong enough (not "friendship"); 2) Emphasis is God's love, not Peter's. Isn't so much Peter saying "I love you" as it is a reminder that God deeply loves them with his covenantal love.

(2) Plight of Peter's audience

They were being Persecuted for their faith; Many were suffering. 1:1 - "aliens scattered t/o Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." They need hope // They need encouragement.

(3) There is no greater motivator than love

(a) What motivated Jesus to die for us?

Was it because we were so lovely? // He owed it to us? // He needed us // An enjoyable experience? He was motivated out of his love for t/Father & t/Father's love for Him.

John 17:24 - The Father loved the Son from before creation.

As Jesus said in John 15:9 ==>

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you . . . "

And in verse 13 ==>

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

What else could have changed the cross--an ancient symbol of horror--into a universal symbol of love and hope?

"In the Cross we may see the dimensions of Divine love. The Cross is not the cross of a man, but the exhibition of the heart of God. At the back of the wall of the world stands God with His arms outstretched, and every man driven there is driven into the arms of God. The Cross of Jesus is the supreme evidence of the love of God." [Oswald Chambers, Christianity Today, Vol. 37, no. 11.]

(3) There is no greater motivator than love

(b) This is why our obedience is connected to our love

We don't obey out of duty or obligation. We don't follow X because "we owe it to Him" or because "We have to so that we can go to heaven." This isn't some sterile exchange of goods: "Obey me and be my servant and I will give you a great place to live for eternity." That's Religion.

Why Jesus declared in John 14:15 ==>

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Not, "If you keep my commandments you might come to love me."

Looking at it from the other side of the equation, John 14:24

"He who does not love Me does not keep My words . . ."

In his epistle, TAJ wrote (1 John 5:3) ==>

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Think about that? What's the connection?

... this is the love of God ...

... that we keep His commandments ...

What does God's love have to do w/us keeping his commandments? John tells us in 1 John 4:19 {quote}. Why do we love Him? Because He first loved us. Why do we keep his commandments? Because we love Him.

... and His commandments are not burdensome.

Why aren't they burdensome? Because we are motivated by love, not obligation. Obligation = burden; Love = pleasure.

The saints' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them; it is the gift of that love. God gives them a spirit of love for Him because He loved them from eternity. His love is the foundation of their regeneration and the whole of their redemption. -- Jonathan Edwards in Religious Affections.

You are ==>

Beloved ...

b. Can you wrap your arms around that idea?

That you are dearly loved by God? In fact, God has set his special love upon you in calling you to faith in His Son. Nowhere are unbelievers called "beloved" They're called enemies. Word "beloved" is reserved for you; God has a special love for the elect.

(1) Simple in its profundity

So much so, that when the neo-orthodox German theologian Karl Barth was asked the question "What is the most profound thought that you know?" He answered, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Someone once put it this way ==>
"God carries your picture in his wallet."

In the 12th c. Saint Hildegard ==>
God hugs you.

St. Augustine ==>
God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.

This is a natural starting point for Peter . . .

Beloved . . .

A. Proclaiming God's Excellencies By Our Inward Devotion
- Our Preparation (11)

1. Rejoice that you are loved

2. Recognize that you are a pilgrim

You are not of this world; you're a pilgrim, an alien just passing thru.

I urge you as aliens and strangers. . .

a. Peter says, "I urge you" (παρακαλέω)

(1) This is the word of Christian exhortation

(a) Literally, "to call someone alongside" (παρα + καλέω)

Let me wrap my arm around in you in love and exhort you, even plead with you (that's the strength of this verb).

(b) Present Tense

"I'm pleading with you, as those who are dearly loved by God." He's

going to exhort them to do what? To "abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul." But before he gets to that part, look at how he addresses them—even how he addresses us.

I urge you as aliens and strangers . . .

2. Recognize that you are a pilgrim

b. You are aliens and strangers

Two words complement one another (concessive και ?)

(1) First word: παροικος comes from words παρα + οικος

Describes a "resident alien." Someone who comes to live in another country where he has not become a citizen. We get our English word "Parish" from this Gk. noun. A Parish/CH is a gathering of resident aliens. We have our citizenship elsewhere, in t/KD of God.

(2) Second word: παρεπιδημος - sojourner, pilgrim, someone in exile

Used of t/Patriarch Abraham in Gen. 23:4 where he's called a "stranger and a sojourner"

These two words describe a temporary resident of a foreign land who has his eye on going home.

These words were used to describe t/Patriarchs in their wanderings, such as Abraham who left his land not knowing where he was to go. Used to describe children of Israel when they were slaves in Egypt, before they entered the promised land.

c. In the same way this applies to us

We are wandering pilgrims in t/wilderness of t/world; we are servants in Egypt, awaiting t/promised land.

So, Jesus could pray for us, as he did in John 17 ==>

14 "I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world . . . [but] "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

As one NT scholar writes==>

"The Christian community is a body of people who live in this world, but who have never accepted the standards and the methods and the ways of this world. Their standards are the standards of God. They accept the law of the place wherein they dwell, but . . . for them there stands the law of God. The Christian is essentially a person whose only real citizenship is citizenship of the Kingdom of God. . . . The very fact that the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim and a sojourner is the proof that comfort is the last thing that he can expect in life, and that an easy popularity is not for him." [Barclay, NT Words, 285-87]

Early CH Father, Tertullian (born around 160 AD) ==>

"The Christian knows that on earth he has a pilgrimage, but that he has his dignity in heaven." [Apology, 1] "Nothing is of any importance to us in this world except to depart from it as quickly as possible." [Apology, 41] "The Christian is a sojourner among corruptible things." [Letter to Diognetus, 6:18]

Clement of Alexandria: "We have no fatherland on earth." [Paedagogus, 3.8.1]

Augustine: "We are sojourners, unable to live happily exiled from our fatherland. We seek for a way to help us to end our sorrows and to return to our native country." [Concerning Christian Doctrine, 2.4]

(1) We are just passing through

Everyone else is here to stay. The rank and file of mankind literally "bank" their lives on all that is this life.

It's the great deception. "He who dies with the most toys wins." According to Jesus, "He who dies w/the most toys, loses . . . His eternal soul." (Mark 8:36). It's the great deception: "I'm going to bank my life on this life."

It's like a cosmic game show. *Okay Alex. I'm going to bank my soul on this life.* " Ding! *I'm sorry, you really lose!* This world is all there is for them.

I remember a Xn I knew talking about a friend he had who kept rejecting the faith and how he once told him, "Well, if that's the way you want it, enjoy this life as much as you can, because there will be no enjoyment when it's over."

I believe that one of the marks of genuine saving faith is that we have risked it all to have it all. And in the end we find it was no risk at all.

Think about it - What are we doing here? Why are we living t/Xn life? We have wagered our lives for eternal truth!

Lois and I attended a memorial service recently for a friend we knew in AZ. He was suddenly taken with an illness and died at age 50. One of the things that really struck me at t/service was how many people testified how Mark had this sense that, as a Xn, he was an alien and a stranger. His wife shared that he would say things like, "I don't want you to think that I don't love you or the kids, but I really feel out of place in this world and I just want to go home."

Do you ever feel that way?

Can you ID w/TAP in Philippians 1:21-24 ==>

21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

(2) Doesn't mean we can't enjoy this life

I don't mean to paint some sort of morbid picture. When Jesus said "these things I have told you that your joy be full" he was talking about here & now. We have an entire Epistle, Phil., devoted to t/believer's joy. We enjoy friends, family, fellowship of believers, even a decent sermon! But we don't try to milk t/system t/way t/rest of t/world does.

So, while we're here, let's be about declaring the excellencies of our God. One way we can do that is ==>

A. By Our Inward Devotion to Christ

1. Rejoice that you are loved

God has set His love upon you.

2. Recognize that you are a pilgrim

That word "Pilgrim" comes from another word that lit. means, "To settle down alongside of pagans."

3. Resist sinful temptations

a. These three points really stand together

You see, if I know I'm loved by t/God of t/universe w/an eternal covenantal love & if I understand I'm just a pilgrim passing thru this life, then I'm not going to be so easily snared by t/sinful entrapments of t/world

Why don't I eat dog food? Because I'm not a dog. ISW - I resist sinful temptations because they're of this world and I'm not.

... as aliens and strangers ... abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

I really like what Albert Barnes said about this passage in that regard. Barnes was a Presbyterian scholar (born in Rome, NY). He died in 1870.

"The meaning here is, that Christians have no permanent home on earth; their citizenship is not here; they are mere sojourners, and they are passing on to their eternal home in the heavens. They should, therefore, act as become such persons; as sojourners and travelers do.

[Therefore,] They should not: * he gives 5 points

(a) regard the world as their home.

(b) They should not seek to acquire permanent possessions here, as if they were to remain here, but should act as travelers do, who merely seek a temporary lodging, without expecting permanently to reside in a place.

(c) They should not allow any such attachments to be formed, or arrangements to be made, as to impede their journey to their final home, as pilgrims seek only a temporary lodging, and steadily pursue their journey.

(d) Even while engaged here in the necessary callings of life - their studies, their farming, their merchandise - their thoughts and affections should be on other things. One in a strange land thinks much of his country and home; a pilgrim, much of the land to which he goes; and even while his time and attention may be necessarily occupied by the arrangements needful for the journey, his thoughts and affections will be far away.

(e) We should not encumber ourselves with much of this world's goods. Many professed Christians get so many worldly things around them, that it is impossible for them to make a journey to heaven. They burden themselves as no traveler would, and they make no progress. A traveler takes along as few things as possible; and a staff is often all that a pilgrim has. We make the most rapid progress in our journey to our final home when we are least encumbered with the things of this world."

b. We are to "abstain from fleshly lusts"

(1) Present Middle Infinitive (functioning as an imperative)

Keep on continually abstaining from fleshly lusts . . .

(2) What are "fleshly lusts?"

(a) Galatians 5:16-24

v. 16 - "desire" = ἐπιθυμία - same word that Peter used. Refers to any intense desire, but usually sinful desires.

{read through v. 24}

{Re-read v. 17a}

Peter captures t/same idea, but notice how he phrases it (v. 11) ==>

... abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

c. Peter uses a military term that means to wage war, or serve in the army

These desires which are σαρκικός, fleshly, are on a military campaign of their own. They have declared war. They are fighting against you.

d. I don't think this is just talking about your soul (immaterial part of who you are)

I believe this is talking about you in totality. The totality of who you are.

(1) Greek word ψυχή

In Jewish usage, your ψυχή - your soul was t/embodiment of who you were. It was your "SELF." Body, mind, spirit.

Sin, doesn't only harm the "soul" - Sin is dangerous to entire person. Yourself. You mental health // spiritual health // family // relationships // peace // joy. All of that is impacted by t/degree to which you fight sin in your life.

e. Are you fighting?

For unbelievers, the world is a gigantic playground where the flesh is free to engage in all sorts of perversions. For the believer, the world isn't a playground; it's a battleground where we combat the lust of the world, the flesh and the enemy of our souls.

Let me ask you again ==>

e. Are you fighting? (or are you just resting?)

Basketball fans will no doubt remember t/name J.B. Carroll. Carroll was taken w/the first pick of t/1980 NBA draft by t/Golden State Warriors. He was 7 feet 240 lbs. of promise. He never quite lived up to his potential and after a few seasons, J.B. Carroll came to be known as "Just Breathing" Carroll; or "Just Barely" Carroll.

I suppose that describes many Xns. Blessed w/every spiritual blessing in t/heavenly places w/every resource as their disposal, they are "Just breathing" or "Just barely" walking thru life.

f. We need to be focused

For a soldier, lack of focus and concentration can cost him his life, or t/life of his fellow troops. Some military trainers use the mantra "stay alert, stay alive" as a reminder of how imp. it is to be focused. Examples of men who have been killed because they didn't stay alert are legion.

ISW - We need to understand that we are engaged in a military campaign.

"As soon as the Spirit and faith enter our hearts, we become so weak that we think we cannot beat down the least imaginations and sparks of temptation, and we see nothing but sin in ourselves from the crown of the head even to the foot. For before we believed, we walked according to our own lusts, but now the Spirit has come and would purify us, and conflict arises when the devil, the flesh, and the world oppose faith. . . . If thou then hast wicked thoughts, thou shouldst not on this account despair; only be on thy guard, that thou be not taken prison by them." [Martin Luther]

... fleshly lusts ... war against the soul.

We could call them "Terrorists of the soul." That's what sin is! It's a spiritual terrorist and it will stop at nothing to kill you!

Maybe the problem is, we don't hate the enemy (our sin).

g. Maybe the issue is one of desire?

When we sin it's because we have a greater desire to please ourselves rather than to please God. It's that simple. Why are the majority of Christians in this country not active participants in a local church (I don't mean going on Sunday). Is there a shortage of churches? No. Is travel in our age difficult? No. Are we prevented from doing so by outward persecution? No. Why? They don't have the desire.

Why do we give into temptations? We want to. Our desire for sin is greater than our desire for Christ!

h. Some keys in winning the battle

(1) Reboot your spiritual disciplines

This has really been helpful to me this week as I've studied this. This passage has ministered to me greatly. Like a computer that's sluggish & needs to be rebooted, we sometimes need to refocus on t/spiritual disciplines.

(a) One of which is Prayer

Ever notice that you can't sin and pray at the same time? "I'm going to pray and fellowship w/God while I'm gossipping // looking at that girl.

Prayer is such a key to our strength.

You say, "I've got some issues that I really struggle with." How much time do you spend praying about it?

(b) Time in the Word (Cf. 2:1-3)

Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word.

119:11 Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.

That includes personal time during t/week as well as what we might call corporate time on Sunday.

Also includes being sound in your doctrine. I've said many times that you can't apply what you don't know and you can't apply rightly what you know wrongly.

Always an emphasis in Scripture. Principles of "doctrine before duty." Many of t/books of t/Bible are divided that way.

Even 1 Peter is divided between doctrinal emphasis in 1:2-2:10 to applicational emphasis t/o t/rest of the book.

(2) Exercise your Spiritual Resources

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of {the} divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

We have freedom in Christ – "You don't have to sin." "No one holds a gun to your head . . . "

Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Romans 6:6-7 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

(3) Exercise your Spiritual Resources

Walk (step by step) by t/Spirit not the flesh (Gal. 5). Be filled w/God's Spirit (Eph. 5); Allow God's Word to dwell in you richly (Col. 3).

Colossians 1:29 . . . I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

(3) Stay in the Race Don't give up!

Hebrews 12:1-4 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin

We need to encourage one another in this. How often do we get together & confess our sin to each other? // "I'm really struggling right now. I'm battling indwelling sin in my life & I need some encouragement here." We're too busy worrying about what someone might think if we were to say that.

(4) Involve yourself in the church

This is so important. We need each other. We need to hear God's Word proclaimed // fellowship // prayer // accountability // ministry.

Hebrews 10:24-25 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Why are majority of Xns in this country not active participants in a local CH (I don't mean going on Sunday)? Is there a shortage of churches? No. Is travel in our age difficult? No. Are we prevented from doing so by outward persecution? No. Why? I guess we don't have t/desire. Implicit in that is the statement "I don't care for the preaching of God's Word,"("don't despise prophetic utterances") "I don't care for fellowship with God's people." ("don't forsake the assembling together") "I don't care to be obedient to Jesus Christ." ("If you love me you will keep my commandments").

(5) See sin from God's perspective

Sometimes t/problem is that we don't see sin for what it is. We can sin, look around. Gee, lightning didn't strike me dead. I got away w/it. Sin cost JC His life. He died for that sin; don't treat his death w/contempt!

As someone once noted, every time we choose to sin it's as if we ascended t/stairs of heaven and did it right before t/throne of God.

(6) Take advantage of godly council and mutual accountability

Proverbs 1:5 . . . a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,

There are times when we need help. We need to come alongside a brother or sister and say, "I need your help. I'm struggling with this. Will you keep my accountable?" Part of bearing one another's burdens, Gal. 6:2.

There you have it . . . Might notice that these 6 points spell something...

A. Proclaiming God's Excellencies By Our Inward Devotion

1. Rejoice that you are loved
2. Recognize that you are a pilgrim
3. Resist sinful temptations