

Introduction:

1. Among the most magnificent words ever penned are those in Psalm 8:1-9.
 - a. This is a psalm of praise for all that God is and all that He has done for us. In verses one and nine David declares that God's name is excellent. The NASB words it like this: "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!" Whether *excellent* or *majestic* is used, it is a declaration of God's greatness.
 - b. All that God is, and all that He has done call for praise, celebration and reverence! The creation appeals to us to honor our God. The plan of salvation calls us to thank God. The wonders of the Bible draw us to the throne of God in worship. The glory of God's Son, and all that He has done for us, cause us to fall on our knees in humility.
 - c. God's name should be honored, not just by Old Testament Israel or by the New Testament church—but by all the earth. All men everywhere should praise and honor God.
 - d. Notice that David begins the psalm with the words, "O LORD, our Lord." If God is indeed Lord at all, then He must be our Lord. We are bound and obligated to submit to Him and obey Him.
2. Is He indeed our Lord? And if He is, what does His excellence mean to us? What does it mean to serve a God whose name is excellent above all others?

The Lesson:

I. Our God is an excellent, glorious God!

- A. Webster says the word *excellent* means "to be better, greater or superior to others; of great worth, surpassing, to be of more value." The Hebrew word used in Psalm 8:1 means "powerful, famous, glorious, mighty, noble and worthy" (Strong).
 1. It is an understatement to say that all these things characterize our God.
 2. Hear what some of the Bible writers say of our Lord, Psalm 68:33-35; 150:1-2; Isaiah 12:5-6; 28:29. How many passages extol the virtues of our excellent Lord?
- B. But even the text we began with has more to say about His excellent majesty, Psalm 8:3-4.
 1. The mighty works of God proclaim to all the world that there is an infinite Being, One who is the source of all beings; He is power and perfection, the bountiful benefactor, the powerful protector, the righteous ruler over all of His creation.
 2. How great and magnificent is His name! The light of God shines in every place, Romans 1:20. If men shut their eyes to it, that is their fault, for God has made Himself known in all the earth—both by creation and by revelation.
- C. We live in a time when men willingly blind themselves to God and His glory. But how do you view God? Did you know that how you view Him determines how you serve Him. If you are careless in your service to Him it is because you do not see Him as the awesome God He is.
 1. Our God is holy, righteous, good, kind, and yet to be feared in judgment; He is the mighty creator and sustainer of the universe—and of your life!
 2. He so far excels and exceeds the things that we worship and idolize in this world that He is not to be compared with them. But, do we serve Him with less than our best?
 3. The excellent God is looking for people who will excel in His service.

II. God seeks those who will excel for Him.

- A. Read Proverbs 22:29. The man or woman who is a diligent worker, gaining and using his skills will quickly rise to the top! Kings and governors will have confidence in him. He will soon stand in the presence of important men (rather than the obscure) because he excels in his work.
- B. This principal is seen in several Bible characters.
 1. Joseph was a man who excelled in his work, Genesis 39:2-6, 21-23; 41:40-43. A man of faith and a man of hard work, Joseph quickly stood in the presence of royalty. But, did Joseph excel merely for his own benefit? All he did, he did with a consciousness of the excellent God he served. This is seen in Joseph's moral excellence, Genesis 39:9.
 2. Nehemiah excelled in his work for God, Nehemiah 1:3-4, 11; 2:17-18; 6:3. As with Joseph, Nehemiah found favor with the king, and was granted his desire. His desire was to serve God and to excel at it. And excel he did!

3. Daniel is another, Daniel 1:3-4. Daniel was among these young men and he quickly advanced in Babylon, Daniel 2:47-48. He exemplified Ecclesiastes 9:10.
4. Joseph, Nehemiah and Daniel had several things in common that made them so successful. They all had faith in God; each was a diligent worker who sought to excel in what was given him; each, at one time or another found himself in bad circumstances, doing things they did not want to do, but excelled in those things in spite of the circumstances; because of their excellent work, each moved quickly into a position of responsibility and honor as they were given favor by God in the sight of their superiors; each sought not honor for himself, but for the excellent God whom they served!

III. We must excel in our service to our God.

- A. Our goal is to go to heaven; our mission here is to take as many with us as possible.
 1. We must do this while never forgetting that it is God who works in us; we do this, never forgetting the price paid for our redemption; we do this, never forgetting our responsibility to maintain the purity of the gospel; we do this, never forgetting that the church belongs to Christ, not us. It is His glory we seek.
 2. We do this, never forgetting that our purpose is to serve, not to be served; we do this, never forgetting that it is hard work and faith that have brought us this far; hard work and faith will continue to carry us. Excellence is essential to our goal.
 3. While others may try to fill their buildings by taking short cuts and by presenting a cheap, watered-down gospel (seeking to please men rather than God), we know that doing God's work in God's way is what works in the long run; doing it God's way will fill heaven with saved people, rather than filling buildings with sinful, selfish, self-pleasing men. The rush to mediocrity that has drawn so many churches can have no place here. We must strive for excellence!
 4. We must keep our eyes on the goal and absolutely avoid the fadism that has swept through much of religion in America. What's the latest thing? Speaking in tongues? Turning the church into a "night club" for our teenagers so they won't leave God? Suspending Sunday night and Wednesday services because they are not popular? Providing entertainment for an audience because that's what folks really want? Where does it end? To what lengths will we go to please men?
 5. The gospel is not a fad; the church is not a passing fancy. We are involved in the greatest thing that has ever happened in the course of human events. Forget about fads and quick and easy fixes; there are no shortcuts to success in the kingdom of God. Excellence, diligent effort in doing *God's will*, is what is needed.
- B. Excellence is expensive. It requires effort, sacrifice, dedication and time. That's what we saw in Joseph, Nehemiah and Daniel.
 1. We must avoid the temptation to be satisfied with "good enough" when it is less than our best. What kind of worker are you? What kind of deacon? Elder? Bible class teacher? Member? I hope you don't say, "About average," because average is awful. The average person doesn't strive for excellence. Average maybe gets a C+ on the report card, because he has done just enough to get by.
 2. Examine yourself and what you are doing in God's kingdom. Getting a C may not be a passing grade! Has a C ever honored God? What is your area of service in God's kingdom? Think about it. Examine *yourself*!

Conclusion:

1. We find ourselves in the 21st century, but we proclaim the first century gospel. If we are to meet the challenges of the 21st century, we can accept nothing less of ourselves than our best. With the advances in technology, transportation and communications, we are capable of doing more evangelism today than ever before. We must strive for excellence. But it is not just evangelism. It is all we do—our worship, our care of our property, our administration of the affairs of the church, our planning for the future. Mediocrity has no place in anything we do.
2. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth." Let us serve Him with excellence. He gave the best heaven had to offer. Let us give Him our best. (Song #54.)