

FIRST PETER 3:8-12 "Love Life And See Good Days. That Life Is Christ"

1PE 3:8-9 "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

This portion of God's Word is wrapping up the thought which Peter has been conveying regarding submission. He started by addressing the whole Body of Christ in chapter 2, verse 13, when he told everyone of them to submit to governing authorities for the Lord's sake.

He then moved on to address slaves, then wives, husbands and now finally back to the entire Body. And what he's encouraging these saints to do is to consider how they live their lives. This is what Peter wanted them to understand, because it is how the inward man of Christ is able to effect his world as people see the love of Christ in their lives.

This is what he meant when he wrote in 1PE 2:12 "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

Jesus said a similar thing in MAT 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

But notice what Peter implies in verse 9 of our text. He isn't suggesting here that the saints behave well among the unbelievers, though that is understood. He is saying that all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

This is the underlying basis for being able to accomplish God's will in this world to His glory. He is speaking to the church and saying that if we are to extend God's Kingdom and minister to the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively, then we must be willing to minister to one another and treat each other in a loving godly way.

In fact, Jesus Himself tells us that this will be the distinguishing mark of His people.

Joh. 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Should it surprise anyone that the world wonders if in fact we are the people we claim to be in Christ when at times we can't seem to extend to other believers, His love in us? The kind of love Peter talks of in our text is to show itself in ways which the world can actually see.

Peter starts with "live in harmony with one another..." The idea of being harmonious in the Greek carries the idea of being like-minded. This doesn't suggest that we all think exactly the same way, but it does mean that we are to be unified around Christ and His teachings.

Time and time again in the word of God our Lord keeps telling us how important it is to be one in the Spirit, to be unified around Christ.

ACT 4:31-32 "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. 32 All the believers were one in heart and mind."

1CO 1:10 "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."

EPH 4:3-4 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

This unity in the Spirit is an understanding that we belong to one another. We are literally part of the same family. And though you and I may not have the exact same political views or the exact same liking of a particular NFL team, or the exact same way of dealing with a particular problem, we have the exact same Spirit who dwells in us and desires that we love one another in an understanding way despite our differences.

Now, it is true that if the Spirit desires for us to be one in Christ, it is understood that this unity must be based on the truth of God's word, for the Spirit is truth. But even there we must be willing to love despite some differences in the way we view certain aspects of the word of God.

Someone comes to me and says that the way we baptize is not biblical. They believe that one must be sprinkled instead of submerged. This may not sound like a big deal but for the one who has a difference of opinion it may be a big deal. The way I respond to that person is important to God even if we disagree.

You can still show forth love in disagreement. You can still show unity of the Spirit in the sense that we agree that the essential ingredient for our fellowship is Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

In fact, we can still love even if someone were to blatantly abuse God's word and clearly not handle it accurately. The disagreement may be sharp, as we make our biblical case, but our response to that person must still be in love.

That love may point out the dangers of holding to a particular unbiblical view which will affect the way we view God and His salvation, but even in our unwillingness to compromise the truth, one truth still remains; we are to live harmoniously with one another, unless and until that person rejects such truth and is not willing to submit to the truth, and separates himself out, or will not repent and must be put out.

In dealing with this portion of God's word Dr. Hiebert says, "Living in harmony with one another *homophrones* is more a call for unity of disposition than uniformity of opinion..... it is a unity that arises from having the mind of Christ (Phi.2:5). Williams observes, "Christendom has long needed more oneness of doctrine, but much more has it needed oneness of heart."

Paul puts it this way.

ROM 12:16-18 "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

We may not be able to get along with everyone in the Body of Christ but that doesn't mean we shouldn't make an effort or that we can't still love that individual by acting civil and considerate toward that person.

I mean even Paul didn't agree with everyone in the Body of Christ when it came to certain decisions that had to be made. You might remember that he had a disagreement with Barnabas.

ACT 15:36-40 "Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord."

Now we may think that this sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas didn't leave room for them to love one another and yet we know that John-Mark, who abandoned them in Pamphylia, was to later be reunited to Paul.

When writing to the church in Colosse Paul wrote this.

COL 4:10 "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)"

We may not always agree on everything, but one thing we must agree on and that is that we must love one another to the degree that are willing to be reconciled if a difference has separated us.

We must be willing to recognize that in Christ we are still part of the same family in Christ, whether we're in separate parts of the country or different parts of the city.

And so, Peter wants us to see how important it is to be like-minded to the things of the Spirit regarding the way we live in this world with each other. He mentions some practical ways in which this can be accomplished. ..."be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."

The idea of being sympathetic here means that we share in each other's needs as we are sensitive to each other. These are the kind of feelings that enable us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." (ROM 12:15)

Whatever the need we need to be willing to enter into their particular situation and be there for them to either comfort them or share in their joy.

That's what family does; it participates in the lives of its members and to do that it must be in fellowship with one another. And that's what Peter is encouraging here with this idea of being sympathetic.

Next Peter says to "love as brothers" or as the NAS simply puts it, "be brotherly". Again, this puts into perspective our position with each other in Christ and how that should affect our attitude toward one another. Sometimes we may not see eye to eye, but being brotherly toward one another will guard against sinning against each other when we do differ.

Peter then says "be compassionate". As William Barclay puts it, "There can be no Christianity without compassion." He continues: "Pity is of the very essence of God and compassion of the very being of Jesus Christ; a pity so great that God sent His only Son to die for men, a compassion so intense that it took Christ to the cross."

For you and me, compassion should be something which is part of our inner being as the Spirit indwells us and moves us to such attitudes toward people.

Dr. Kistemaker says, "In the Greek, the word translated compassionate is far more descriptive. It depicts feelings that appear to come from our inner parts (literally, our intestines), especially when we observe the suffering which another person endures. Translators usually associate the Greek word with the heart and thus render it "tenderhearted."

Lastly in verse 8 Peter encourages his readers to be humble. Peter repeats this in chapter 5 when addressing young men.

1 Peter 5:5-6 ⁵ ... all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. ⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

PRO 3:33-34 "The Lord..... mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble."

This is in keeping with the theme that Peter has been addressing, which is submission. As we submit to God He will enable us to see how a humbling before Him will bring proper humbling toward one another.

A humble heart will put others before yourself and it will be sensitive to the needs of others and it will cause a desire to love the brethren because we know that Christ loves them.

This is all practical living which is born out of a love for God. And we know that we love God because He first loved us. That truth alone should humble us.

And so, in light of this, Peter continues in verse 9 "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

Keep in mind that Peter is addressing the church and as such he suggests that other believers may do evil things toward you and they may insult you. This would not exclude the world at large, but whoever acts this way toward you, Peter says, not to return evil for evil or insult for insult.

And keep in mind that not returning evil for evil or insult for insult involves both word and deed. Evil can take on certain actions, but insult almost always involves the mouth. Peter addresses both.

For this kind of attitude we really need to depend on the grace and strength of God and to live by faith when such things happen because our natural inclination is to give them just what they've given us. But how would that make us different from them?

If we have the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts then that love should show restraint and it should give back to them something they may not even expect. Peter says, 'instead of returning insult for insult and evil for evil give a blessing instead.'

Dr. Hiebert quoting Kenyon says, "When Christianity calls upon us to do what does not seem humanly possible it shows us its genius - - supernaturalism. Peter, of all men, should know what the grace of God had done for him in this respect. He had not only been fast with the sword; he had been quick with his tongue."

Peter knew first-hand of what he spoke. But he also knew that in his own strength he couldn't accomplish what he asks of these saints. To give a blessing instead of returning evil is only something the Spirit of God can accomplish in our lives. But what a testimony to the working of God in our lives.

But how does one give a blessing in such cases? Well, it begins with an understanding that you have been blessed when the only thing you deserved from God was His wrath. Notice how Peter ends verse 9.... "because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." Notice you don't earn a blessing, but you inherit it.

God called you to Himself with the express purpose of inheriting a blessing from Him.

MAT 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"

REV 21:7 "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

What Peter is saying is that since we have been called to so great a blessing, which we have inherited from our heavenly Father, and since we represent Him before the world, let us give to the world part of the blessing we've received. Part of that blessing is the down payment we have in the form of the indwelling of the Spirit.

And if we have the Spirit by faith in Christ then it stands to reason that we also should produce the fruit of the Spirit which is part of the blessing we have from God. And so, in essence, it can be inferred that if we are to bless others with what we've been blessed with, then when others want to dump on us we in turn should give them such things as the fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Gal.5:22-23)

This is how we can bless those who want to be rude to us. Show them Christ's love. Express patience and kindness along with self-control. These are practical ways in which we can bless.

The writer of Proverbs understood this principle of returning a blessing for evil.

PRO 15:1-2 "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly."

There are other ways in which we can bless instead of returning evil. One way is to forgive when we've been hurt. Forgiveness is the greatest of all blessings we receive from God and He expects us to forgive one another as He forgives us of our sin.

God will enable you to give a blessing, but only as we are humbling ourselves before God will we be able to bless in a way that brings honor and glory to our King who desires to draw all men unto Himself. And He can use you to accomplish that very thing as you are His witness in the way you treat others in His name.

Peter then expands on this idea of blessing by reminding us of what God desires to do with His people in the way of blessing.

1 Peter 3:10-12 ¹⁰ For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. ¹¹ "HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. ¹² "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

Peter is quoting Psalm 34:12-16. And the idea here is that life is meant to be loved because it is God Who gives it. And life has many blessings even in the midst of trials. And what Peter wants us to focus in on is our attitude toward life in light of the life we've been given in Christ.

Notice what he says in our text. ¹⁰ For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

The phrase, as the NIV uses it, "whoever would love life" in the Greek means the one wishing or desiring and as Dr. Hiebert puts it, "pictures an individual dominated by a unifying desire or purpose, namely, to love life."

To love life is to pursue what life offers. Again, I like what Dr. Hiebert says in regard to this because he puts into perspective what

we can expect from life when we pursue it from God's vantage point.

He says, "Not length but quality of life is in view -- to live zestfully, to participate in life with full intelligence and purpose. He has recognized and deliberately accepted the realization that life is not a playground of indulgence but rather an arena of redemption. Peter, like David, was thinking of life here on earth, but the revelation in Christ has now made it life indeed -- begun here but continued in the life beyond."

In other words, putting life into its proper perspective. And when we view life as does God, then we will live life as unto Him, and couple that with the anticipation of Christ's return it should encourage us to approach life on a moment by moment basis always looking for ways to live life with real purpose.

One thing I should point out here is that loving life and seeking good days does not necessarily guarantee that life will be trouble-free. Psalm 34 which Peter is quoting here has a verse that addresses this fact.

PSA 34:19 "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all...." How and when He does is up to Him, but the Lord is always with us and He is our Deliverer.

In our text Peter again repeats the admonition to keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 "He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it."

Again, the idea of putting off and putting on. Put off evil, put on peace. This is a conscious choice. It's a choice where we choose to please God and live life to honor Him so that we don't give the enemy an opportunity.

Paul put it very well.

EPH 4:22- "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold."

Part of loving life and seeking good days must consider the evil one, who would love to side-track your attention from honoring God with your life.

Paul gives some practical advice.

EPH 6:11,16 "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

Standing firm against the enemy involves a choice not to submit to his temptations or schemes, but being spiritually equipped so that you can recognize them, and by faith resist. James basically says the same thing.

JAM 4:7-8 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you..."

By the way, your ability to love life and seek good days is in direct proportion to drawing near to God by faith and trusting that He will enable you to please Him with your obedience and faithfulness. This is known as abiding in Christ.

12 "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (Psalm 34:12 -16)

This is encouraging news for every believer who seeks the Lord and trusts Him on a daily basis. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer"

The righteous are those who have embraced Christ by faith for their redemption, but there is the implication that those believers are living righteously before the Lord. God's eyes are always on us. This means that He is all knowing and all caring. He's there for us and when we come humbly to Him in prayer He hears us.

As a believer in Christ Jesus you never have to worry that the Lord isn't there to listen to your pleas or your praise or your prayers. Not seeking God will certainly effect communication lines but God is always willing to hear and answer any of His people who will humble themselves before Him. Again, listen to what James says in Jam.4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you..."

He is faithful to His promises. He will always be there for us. After all He's our Father and we are His children by faith in Christ. But there is also the promise to those who would rebel or reject the God who reaches out with a compassionate hand.

"But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." This is a sobering truth and it should encourage every believer not to take his salvation for granted or to think that it makes no difference if we alert the world to such judgement.

Dr. Kistemaker says this: "The contrast is clear, for as God sees the works of righteous people so He sees those of people who practice evil. Nothing escapes His view. And no one should think that God does not care. Those who delight in doing evil do not have God as their friend but as their adversary. Peter is not interested in explaining what God does to His adversaries. The desire is to give the evil-doer time and opportunity to repent and establish a living relationship with God."

This should be our desire as well. We have been shown mercy and compassion in Christ. May we show the world the same compassion as we extend Christ's message of love and forgiveness found only in the One who came, so that we might have life.

"Love life and see good days", but understand the life Christ wants you to live for Him. The good days will come, but they are ultimately the days of God's future Kingdom in which righteousness dwells, the new heavens and new earth we are promised by God in His word.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Until that day may we say with Paul in PHI 1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ..." He put it another way in GAL 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

He gave Himself for us that we might give ourselves to Him and to this world who needs Him. Live life for Him by the power of His Spirit.