

## PETER

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
  - A. **I Peter 3:8-12** . . . To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; [9] not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. [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."
  - B. Pray
- II. Summing up the exhortation to submit, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution.
  - A. We began looking at Peter's summation of **I Peter 2:13-3:7** last Sunday, and my goal today is to finish it.
    1. As you know by now, this section of Peter's letter deals with our behavior toward others, and in this section God is exhorting us to have an over-riding demeanor of humble submission and respect in **all** our relationships, **regardless** of how we are being treated. It is in doing this that we continue to grow and advance in fulfilling God's exhortation to be holy in all our behavior, just as He is holy.
    2. Last Sunday we looked at the five character qualities Peter listed as essential to being humbly submissive and respectful – especially in the face of ill-treatment. They are harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, kindheartedness, and humility of spirit.
    3. We ended last Sunday's teaching with Peter's reminder that we are to bless those who mistreat us, rather than return evil for evil or insult for insult. Or as Paul said in **Romans 12:21**, we are to overcome evil with good by blessing those who are mistreating us.
  - B. **I Peter 3:9a** . . . Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, **but giving a blessing instead**.
    1. It is not natural for us to want to bless those who are mistreating us, but it was not natural for Jesus either which is why He is our premier example in living according to this command. As we read

in **I Peter 2:21-23**, He committed no sin. He did not lie or deceive in any way. While being reviled, He did not revile in return. While suffering unjustly, He uttered no threats.

- a. And though the beginning of this example talks about Christ's humble submissiveness and respect by emphasizing what it cost Him to please God in this way, as we read on, we find that His obedience to God resulted in overcoming evil with good.
  - b. And how did His humble submission and respect result in the defeat of the evil being done to Him? In His enduring it, for in going through it, He bore our sin, redeemed us from Satan's kingdom of darkness, reconciled us to God, is transforming us through sanctification, and is bringing us to life eternal.
  - c. And as if that were not enough, Jesus further showed His obedience to giving a blessing to those mistreating Him when He said from the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (**Luke 23:34**).
2. **I Corinthians 4:11-13a** provides a glimpse into Paul's obedience to this command. It says: "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; [12] and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; [13] when we are slandered, we try to conciliate."
3. These two examples make it clear that giving a blessing in response to ill-treatment requires godly thinking, attitudes, controlled emotions, speaking, and behavior – because if we are not humbly submissive and respectful from the inside out, a situation will arise that will push us beyond our limits and expose our bitterness, anger, or victim mentality.
- a. In other words, you will not persevere in enduring ill-treatment according to this command until you have put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, slander, and the desire to get even in some way.
  - b. And you will not willingly give a blessing to those mistreating you until you have nurtured sympathy, brotherly love, kindness, tender-heartedness, humility, and forgiveness – to the point where you want to treat others the way God treats you (**Eph 4:31-32**).

C. **I Peter 3:9b . . . For you were called for the very purpose** that you might inherit a blessing.

1. The first thing to notice here is that we are called for a specific purpose, and that purpose is to bless those who mistreat us, rather

than receive blessings from God. And again, Christ is our example, for He was called for the purpose of making the blessing of salvation and sanctification accessible to all sinners everywhere.

- a. Now I think we all understand that this call from God on Christ's life was very costly to Him, but it yielded immeasurable blessings for God, and for all who are reconciled to God.
  - b. Therefore, like Christ, we are called to give a **blessing** to those who mistreat us, rather than return evil for evil.
2. The second thing I want to point out is that this is Peter's second reference to being called to something specific. In **I Peter 2:21**, Peter speaks of us being called to join Christ in humbly submitting and showing respect to those who are mistreating us. And as I have previously said, the goal of this first calling is to overcome evil with good, with the hoped for outcome of bringing sinners to repentance.
    - a. This second call that Peter speaks of not only builds on the first, it is the natural outcome of the first.
    - b. You see, being conformed to the likeness of Christ includes being humbly submissive and respectful in all our relationships, including our relationships with those who use their position of authority to mistreat us. But it doesn't stop there, for we cannot be genuinely submissive and respectful without also wanting good for our antagonists. And one of the ways to seek the good we are to want for those who mistreat us, is to bless them in some way.
  3. The last thing I want to point out about this calling is that it is not limited to a few mature or uniquely spiritual or zealous Christians. This calling is for all Christians – young and old, new believers and mature believers, male and female, husbands and wives, those in authority, and those under authority.

D. **I Peter 3:9b** . . . For you were called for the very purpose **that you might inherit a blessing**.

1. There is no question that God is commanding us to bless those who mistreat us. And there is no question that humbly and respectfully enduring mistreatment can be exceedingly costly. We have only to look at what it cost Jesus and some of His followers down through the ages to know this is true.
2. And so Peter brings to our attention a truth that is intended to help motivate us to live according to our calling, and to give us hope while in the midst of these costly and painful situations. And what is this truth? **God rewards godliness**. To put this truth in perspective,

I am going to list the four primary reasons given in scripture for living a godly life, and I am doing this because one of them is rewards.

- a. The **fear of God** and His judgment, in this life and at the beginning of the next.
  - b. The **love of God**, that is, to love God above ourselves, so that we live to please the most the One whom we love the most.
  - c. The **honor of God**, that is to live in such a way as to bring honor to God, thus giving Him a good reputation among unbelievers.
  - d. The **promised rewards** from God – which are both earthly and eternal in nature.
3. Therefore, if we are humbly submissive and respectful toward those who are mistreating us, and if we bless them instead of hate them or grow bitter toward them or try in some way to get even with them, God will be pleased, His reputation honored, sinners will be invited to repentance, and **we will be rewarded**.
4. Jesus taught this same truth in **Luke 6:36-38** . . . Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. [37] Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. [38] Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. **For by your standard of measure [in doing good to others, especially those mistreating you] it will be measured to you in return.**
5. The Psalmist said it like this in **Psalms 37:9,11,22,29** . . . For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. [11] But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. [22] For those blessed by Him will inherit the land, but those cursed by Him will be cut off. [29] The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.
6. As I have already said, God's rewards are both earthly or temporal, and heavenly or eternal. Here is a list of verses that show both.
- a. **Matthew 6:33** . . . But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
  - b. **Mark 10:28-30** . . . Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." [29] Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, [30] but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters

and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- c. **Luke 6:35** . . . But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.
  - d. **Matthew 5:11-12** . . . Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
  - e. **Colossians 3:23-24** . . . Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.
7. The point of this is that showing mercy, being kind, and doing good to those mistreating us is wise for several reasons.
    - a. It is wise because it is always wise to obey God.
    - b. It is wise because it is an added reason for God to show us mercy (**Matthew 5:7**).
    - c. And it is wise because God rewards this kind of behavior.
  8. So though I believe the highest, most worthy reason to be humbly submissiveness and respectful, and to bless those who mistreat you is to do so out of a heartfelt love for God, it is just as right and good to do this for the reward.

E. **I Peter 3:10-11** . . . 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.

1. Peter took this statement from **Psalms 34:12-14** . . . Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he may see good? [13] Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. [14] Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
2. The two most important truths conveyed here are:
  - a. **First**, it is right and good for you, as a Christian, to want a good life, a happy life, a life filled with God's goodness, blessings, provision, and protection, and to want a loving family who are given to loving each other.

- b. **Second**, the only way to this abundant life is God's way. And God's way is the way of honesty (with God, yourself, and others), killing off all selfishness and sin, pursuing righteousness, and doing your part to be at peace with God and with all those with whom you have relationship.
          - (1) Or to say it as Peter said it in his first chapter (**1:15**), the way to the abundant life is through the door of being holy in all your behavior, just as God is holy.
          - (2) Jesus put it this way in his sermon on the mount: "Seek first [God's] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (**Matthew 6:33**).
3. To me, the most obvious thing about Peter's statement is that God's way to the abundant life stands in stark contrast to the world's way.
  - a. What unbeliever, and for that matter, how many American Christians, actually believe that the only way to a happy, blessed, satisfying, love filled life is God's way?
  - b. It is my observation that for the most part, the world strives after things like money, financial security, possessions, position, recognition, fame, power, health insurance, a good spouse, well educated children, happy grand-children, and a well-financed retirement in their pursuit of the abundant life.
  - c. Now I know that the world's methods and means bring forms and measures of happiness, pleasure, health, fame, fortune, and financial security. But is having these things the same as having the abundant life?
4. Can there be abundant life without God as your loving Father, your comforter, your provider, and your protector? Can there be abundant life without forgiveness of sin, freedom from unfounded guilt, and a realistic means of lasting change? Can there be abundant life where there is depression, despair, irrational fears, ungodly anger, hatred, bitterness, and revenge? Can there be abundant life where there is selfishness, greed, covetousness, envy, jealousy, or even simple unkindness? Is it possible to have an abundant life if your abundance is confined to this life so that what you enjoy now is the best life you will ever know, while eternity will be the worst life you'll ever have?
5. And I have yet to mention the profoundly satisfying, completely fulfilling, joy-filled, and immeasurably intimate relationship with God, which, when you have it and walk in it, turns your worst earthly circumstances into the abundant life, and makes your best earthly circumstances seem trivial by comparison.

6. The point of all this is that living the world's way, as pleasurable and satisfying as it may be, will never bring you into the abundant life. The only way to the abundant life is to live life God's way – which includes honesty (with God, yourself and others), killing off selfishness and sin, pursuing righteousness, and doing your part to be at peace with God and with all those with whom you have relationship.

F. **I Peter 3:12 . . .** 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." (A quote from **Psalm 34:15-16**)

1. God promises to bless the righteous. And it is probable that His blessings are proportional to our righteousness, just as His discipline and judgment are proportional to our sinfulness.
2. An example of this is found in Peter's exhortation to husbands where he says that if they treat their wives with humility and respect, their prayers will be answered, and if they don't, their prayers won't be answered (**I Peter 3:7**).
3. Now without question, we are children of grace. But God's grace does not transform Him into an indulgent, permissive Father who spoils His children. Quite the contrary, for God, himself says that if we are not being disciplined by Him, it indicates we are not His children.
4. Therefore, I urge you to believe these words here in **I Peter 3:12**, for just as sure as God grants the gift of eternal life to those who repent and believe, so He blesses and rewards the righteous while resisting, punishing, and even ignoring (which is the worst punishment) the unrighteous.

### III. Conclusion

- A. This way of life is not natural to our flesh, and it seems to be uncommon in the Church. To go from here to the place where you live this way will require an exalted motive, persistent denying and dying to self, putting off discontentment, bitterness, and anger, putting on humility, kindness, and love, resisting temptation, clinging to God, lots of prayer, and the support of the church community.