

## Live To Be A Blessing Because God Is Watching

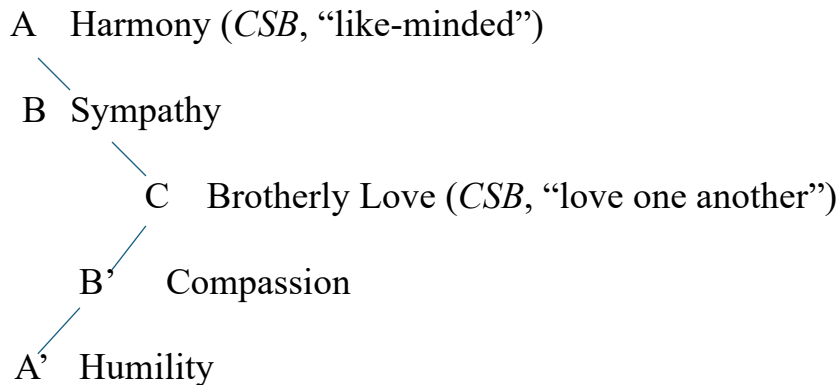
### 1 Peter 3:8-12

Introduction: In his book *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) quotes the great Church Father, Augustine (A.D. 354-430), and writes, “God wants to give us something, but cannot because our hands are full—there’s nowhere for God to put it” (p. 94). This statement is so true. God loves us and wants to give us blessings, the greatest blessing being Himself. Unfortunately, our hands are too often full. Sometimes they are full of good things that we have turned into God-things. This is idolatry. Sometimes they are full of sinful things like divisiveness, hatred, pride, evil, bitterness, a spirit of revenge and a wicked tongue that is out of control. Peter, knowing this, addresses such sins from both a positive and negative perspective in 3:8-12. He does not want us to hurt others and ourselves because we are eaten up with anger and bitterness. Rather, he wants us to bless others, even our enemies, and to continue to follow the example of Jesus and walk in his footsteps (2:21). Peter has addressed a number of specific groups, calling for a spirit of submissiveness in 2:13-3:7. Now, in verses 8-12, he draws his argument to a close. The word “Finally,” that begins verse 8, tips us off. The phrase “all of you” settles the matter. The whole community, the entire church, is now in view. His admonitions and encouragements are for all of us.

I. Know how to treat your brothers and sisters in Christ 3:8

Verse 8 contains 5 adjectives describing a life that follows the example of Jesus (2:21) and characterizes the life of a Christian. Each is an implied command.

Schreiner points out the verse functions as a chiasm:



He notes, “Brotherly love is the middle term, showing that it is the most important of all the virtues and that the other virtues are embraced in the call to love one another as a family” (Schreiner, 163-164), Let’s quickly examine each characteristic.

- 1) Like-minded – (*Gr. homophrones*) live in harmony having the same mind (cf Phil. 2:2). Be “united in spirit, aim and purpose” (Vaughn and Lea, 81). You are together in mind and mission. You are not divisive, selfish in ambition or vainly conceited rupturing the fellowship (see Phil. 2:3-4).
- 2) Sympathetic – (*Gr. sympatheis*) share in the feelings of others, “feel what others feel so that you can respond with sensitivity to the need” (Piper, “Your

Calling Is to Bless Believers,” 9-11-94). You are not hard-hearted, callous and indifferent to the hurts and needs of others.

- 3) Love one another – (*Gr. philadelphoi*) literally “brotherly love.” You love others like family because they are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You worship the same Father, adore the same Savior and are indwelt by the same Spirit. Calvin says, “where God is known as Father, there only brotherhood really exists” (*1 Peter*, 102).
- 4) Compassionate – (*ESV*, “a tender heart”) you have deep inward feelings and affections for others. Luther says, “This word I cannot explain except by giving an illustration. Observe how a mother or father acts towards their child; for example, when a mother sees her child enduring anguish, her whole inward being is moved, and her heart within her body” (*1 Peter*, 146). Luther, then points us to the famous story of the two women who claimed a baby boy was theirs and were brought before King Solomon to decide the case (1 Kings 3). When Solomon said, “Cut the living boy in two and give half to one and half to the other” (v. 25), the true mother “felt great compassion” (lit. “her compassion grew hot”) and said, “My lord, give her [the lying woman] the living baby but please don’t have him killed” (v. 26). Of course, Solomon saw who was the true mother and gave the boy to her. Luther then says, “we should be heartily kind and motherly, and the heart should be thoroughly

penetrated. Such a disposition should one Christian bear toward another.”

(Ibid).

- 5) Humility – an attitude and disposition of the heart where you esteem others more important than yourself. It is not that you think less of yourself but that you think of yourself less. You are not arrogant, prideful and self-centered. You are “others-focused” in your outlook on life. J.N.D. Kelly says, “humble-minded expresses a characteristic directly modeled on Christ (Mt. XI. 29)” (*Com. On the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 136).

These five characteristics tells us “how we should dance” with one another in the Body of Christ! It is a dance with an attractiveness that should cause the lost to stop and take notice and be drawn to join us. Peter will address that very thing in verse 9.

## II. Know how to respond to those who treat you badly 3:9

Pastor Warren Wiersbe wisely writes, “As Christians, we can live on one of three levels. We can return evil for good, which is the satanic level. We can return good for good and evil for evil, which is the human level. Or, we can return good for evil, which is the divine level. Jesus is the perfect example of this latter approach (1 Peter 2:21-23). As God’s loving children, we must do more than give “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Matt. 5:38-48),

which is the basis for *justice*. We must operate on the basis of *mercy*, for that is the way God deals with us.” (*Be Hopeful*, 93).

Verse 9 redirects our focus. In verse eight our attention was on how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. Verse nine places our attention on unbelievers, though sadly, fellow believers can sometimes be identified with the behaviors we see in this verse. When we are mistreated by action or word, what should be our response? Peter will again point us to the example of Christ seen in 2:18-23.

#### 1) Do not repay evil with evil

Peter tells us, building on verse eight, to “not pay back evil for evil.” *The Message* says, “No retaliation.” Peter’s words are very similar to Paul’s in Rom. 12:17, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil.” Both admonitions find their origin in the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:38-46; Luke 6:27-29). William Brownson captures the radical, counter-cultural nature of Peter’s words and says, “Do not return evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless.” There it is again, that miracle style of life (underlining mine). With most people, you reap what you sow. Shove them and they will shove back. Sow an insult and you will reap a choicer one. That’s the age-old pattern, and it leads to mounting hate and violence. But the Christians whom Peter describes don’t feed back what they receive. They don’t merely answer in kind. Somehow they transform what comes at them,

so that insults generate prayers and hate comes back as love” (*Tried by Fire*, 69).

2) Do not repay insult with insult

Do not return evil with evil is a general statement and looks to our actions.

Do not return insult with insult is a more specific statement and addresses the tongue. It once again points us to the example of our Lord in 2:23. When you are abused by the words of others don't repay them with even more abusive words. They cut you with their words, don't cut them back with a sharper blow and a deeper wound. Hendriksen says, “Peter indicates that the readers are trying to settle injuries and insults on their own terms. He tells them to stop retaliating; repaying evil for evil and insult for insult has no place in the Christian religion” (*Peter and Jude*, 128).

A sharp wit and a sharp tongue may impress the world, but it will receive no applause from heaven or praise from God. Go read and meditate on James 3.

Consider the wise prayer of Psalm 141:3, “Lord, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the doors of my lips.” Continually remind yourself of the truth: in the spiritual realm the tongue is connected to the heart. The former reveals the content of the latter.

3) Give a blessing because you will receive a blessing

The final phrase in v. 9 provides both a summary and the motivation for the “miracle style of life” that is to be the pattern of the child of God. We do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. No, contrary to the natural impulse of our flesh, “we give a blessing.” By action and word, we demonstrate unconditional love seeking the best for others, even our enemies. Because of the transforming power of the new birth (1:3, 23) on the inside, we react supernaturally on the outside. We seek what is best for those who seek what is worst for us. And, we take delight in this service to them. It is what we have been called by Christ to do. Peter Davids provides excellent insight into this new reality, tying our calling to bless others with our new status as holy and royal priest! He writes, “The word translated “blessing” meant in secular Greek simply “to speak good of a person,” but in the NT, because of the use of the Greek term in the Greek translation of the OT, the word means “bless.” Blessing was seen as something that really brought good to the person blessed. God, of course, is the chief blesser (e.g., Gen. 12:2; 26:3; 49:25), but patriarchs (e.g., Gen. 27:4, 33) and especially priests (Num. 6:22-26; Sir. 50:20-21) blessed. In Peter it is natural that all Christians should bless, for he has already recognized them all as priests (2:9). This is a concrete way of forgiving offending persons and doing good to them, just as God does.” (*The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT, 126).

Our motivation for being a blessing to others is two-fold. First, we “were called to this.” As our Lord has blessed us abundantly and overflowing, He calls us to follow in His steps and bless others. We are not saved by blessing others, we bless others because we are saved. Jesus said it like this, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy” (Matt. 5:7). We bless others for a moment, but our heavenly Father blesses us forever! Future blessings guides our blessing others in the present. Once again, we see the importance of our future hope for life in the here and now. It will make a difference. But, there is a 2<sup>nd</sup> motivation in vv. 10-12.

### III. Know who is always watching what you do 3:10-12(cf Ps. 34:12-16)

Once again Peter grounds his argument in the Christian Scriptures of his day, our OT. His text is a psalm of David, Ps. 34, especially verses 12-16. The entire psalm, all 22 verses, speak of the Lord’s deliverance and salvation for those who “taste and see that the Lord is good” (34:8; cf 1 Peter 2:3). E. Y. Mullins (1860-1928), president of Southern Seminary, said Psalm 34 is “an ancient recipe for a happy life” (quoted in Vaughn and Lea, 82). It also addresses fears (v. 4), the poor man (v. 6), troubles (v. 6), the brokenhearted (v. 18) and afflictions (v.v. 19, 21), making the psalm relevant for the sufferings and trials being endured by Peter’s audience. And, Ps. 34:20 is specifically applied to the crucifixion of Jesus in John 19:31-33. Once more the shadow of



Christ provides shade to the OT. Peter highlights six truths for our action and meditation. Verses 12a is critical in its importance.

1) God is watching so show Him you love the life He has given you 3:10

The word “For” connects verse 8-9 to verses 10-12. The “life” and good “days” of this verse include both this present life and the life to come, “the entire existence of the Christian with the Creator, both the temporal present and the eschatological future...[our] inheritance” (Karen Jobes, 1 Peter, *BECNT*, 224). “Love life and see good days” is an example of Hebrew parallelism. Lenski says “David and Peter are not thinking of easy, pleasant, sunny days but of a life and of days that are full of rich fruit” (*The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude*, 144). In other words, we demonstrate by our obedience and transformed lives a passion for life now and the life to come. As an act of faith we say to God, “I trust you have the best for me.” My best life now and in the future! Experiencing evil and reviling, for example, are intended by God for us; for a better life and good days ahead. Our God is using them to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). My Christlike responses, no matter what I may endure, gives evidence of my faith and trust in my Lord’s purposes and plans for life now and life in the future.

2) God is watching so guard your tongue 3:10

Once again we see Hebrew parallelism at play as well as God’s concern for the tongue. “Let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.” The first phrase is general. The second phrase is more specific.

Further, there is once more a logic to Peter’s thinking. Because we want to love life and see good days, we will allow that hope to keep our tongues from evil, for example, lying (being deceitful). Hope will guard us from saying the wrong thing in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. This admonition looks back to both 2:1 and 3:9. That Peter repeatedly addresses problems with the tongue must mean there were problems with the tongue in these communities. Suffering and trials can do this. These are times we especially need to trust our God and seek the assistance of His Holy Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23).

### 3) God is watching so do what is good                      3:11

The word “evil” occurs five times in our passage (v.9 twice, 10, 11, 12), a passage that is addressed to the church! That should cause all of us to take pause and consider that reality. Both David (Ps. 34) and now Peter call God’s people to a basic posture of heart and life. “Let him turn away from evil and do what is good.” This is a call to action! Living a good life that reflects the gospel is not a life of passivity. It is a life that loves God, knows His Word, and pursues what pleases Him. It contrasts with a life that is indifferent to

God, is ignorant of God's Word, and cares next to nothing for what pleases God. Bottomline: love what God loves (the good) and hate what God hates (evil).

4) God is watching so be a peacemaker not a troublemaker 3:11

Jesus said Matt. 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God." One way to turn from evil and do what is good is to "seek peace and pursue it." It is important to us. It is a priority. Schreiner is right, "Peace can easily be disrupted, especially when others mistreat and even abuse us.... Such peace will only be preserved if believers do not insult and revile others, if they extend forgiveness to those who injure them" (p. 167). Paul would add, "But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15). Troublemakers do not have bright futures. In time they cannibalize themselves.

5) God is watching so live righteously and know God hears your prayers 3:12

We have a God who sees and hears. He is especially attentive to the righteous, those who walk in His ways, when they suffer trials. Evil persons come against us, but God sees what's happening. Evil people cause us to suffer, but know that God hears your prayers. After all, we are his sons and daughters whom He redeemed with the blood of His Son (1:19; 2:24). Banish the thought He is not aware and unconcerned with your plight! Calvin rightly

reminds us, “It ought to be a consolation to us, sufficient to mitigate all evils, that we are looked upon by the Lord, so that he will bring us help in due time...for were not the Lord to care for his people, they would be like sheep exposed to wolves” (p. 104).

6) God is watching so remember He opposes the evil 3:12

The last phrase of verse 12 is the antithesis of the first phrase. God’s eyes and ears give attention and care to the righteous. In contrast, “the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil.” The evil will miss out on the Lord’s blessings in this life, but even worse, they will miss out on His blessings in eternity. Tragically, there is no inheritance kept for them in heaven (1:4). God takes his stand against them, and there is nothing bright or hopeful about their future. Luther captures well the disposition of our God for those who mock His ways, count Him unworthy of worship and hatefully mistreat his children. “For Peter says further that the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil; he does not behold them with a friendly eye, as he does the righteous, but with an angry countenance. In a person who is very angry one sees how his whole countenance is disfigured and changed; he looks sour, bites his teeth, wrinkles his brow, mouth and nose, and in general looks like one who will knock things to pieces with all his might. With such a countenance, Peter says, the Lord beholds those who do evil, so that he will

utterly root out their memory from the earth, as all historians testify that he has rooted out many great and mighty potentates, that neither a branch nor a root of them remains. So the final result is that all who persecute the righteous do themselves only harm, lose the blessing and the friendly countenance of the Lord, will not only be uprooted here in time, but will also still possess their guilt yonder; therefore they must be condemned forever.” (pgs. 154-55).

Conclusion: Luther, whom I just quoted, was known for his fiery temper, salty language, and opposition to Romanism that strangled the Church. However, he should also be known for his love for souls. As he reflected on the lost and the evils they so often inflicted upon God’s people, he was still moved to pray for their salvation and their good. We would do well to follow his example at this point. May his heart become ours. “Beloved Father, since our adversaries have so horribly fallen in thy wrath and have cast themselves so lamentably into eternal fire, I pray thou wouldst forgive them, rescue them from thy anger and show them grace, just as thou hast done to me. For, as I said, just as he looks upon the righteous with grace, so he frowns upon the wicked, wrinkles his countenance and in anger turns upon them. Since we therefore know that he looks upon us graciously and upon them ungraciously, we should have mercy and pity upon them, and pray that God would increase our faith to believe that his face is friendly toward us who suffer, and then

be cheerful and give understanding to those who persecute us, so that they may believe that God is angry with them, and that they may be terrified and converted.”

(155-56)