

15/11/20

“Doing Good!” – 1 Peter 3:8-17

Steve Christian

Imagine the disciple Peter sitting amongst the other disciples and Jesus was talking to a large crowd of people who had gathered around Him, and they no doubt wanted to hear some encouraging words. And Jesus says, **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** (Matt 5:11-12)

“Hang about! You’re telling us that we’re blessed when people might give us a hard time because we’re following you. You’re telling us to rejoice and be glad when we’re being persecuted like the prophets of old were.” Surely Peter and everybody else was somewhat perplexed by that suggestion. It just didn’t seem right. But Peter would come to repeat this very same message.

When we think of The Beatitudes, they do not reflect the world’s position. The world would say, blessed are the rich... blessed are the happy... blessed are the proud... blessed are the strong... the winners... blessed are the self-made, prosperous, self-sufficient... But Jesus said, and Peter now reinforces, **“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** (Matt 5:10)

We naturally reject pain and suffering. We reject slander and insults, ridicule and persecution. We demand that we have a peace filled life where others leave us alone. And if we do receive a hard time from any one, we threaten legal action or at least having our grievance broadcast over A Current Affair. We want justice!

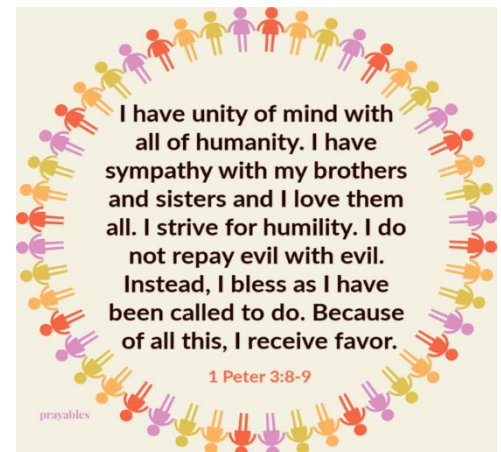
But Peter’s words apply to us just as much as they did to the scattered and persecuted Christians living in Turkey, and he has called them to submit to all earthly authority; for Christian slaves to submit to their masters, and for husbands and wives to submit to one another. He now speaks to all Christians within the church in Turkey and he says,

“Finally, all of you, be united in spirit, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

Wow. You and I were called to repay evil with blessing. When was the last time we did that? So, submit to all earthly authority and amongst yourselves... be like minded, sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. As mentioned last week, the Greek understanding of submission was to “come under another’s influence in respect” – to give and gain respect.

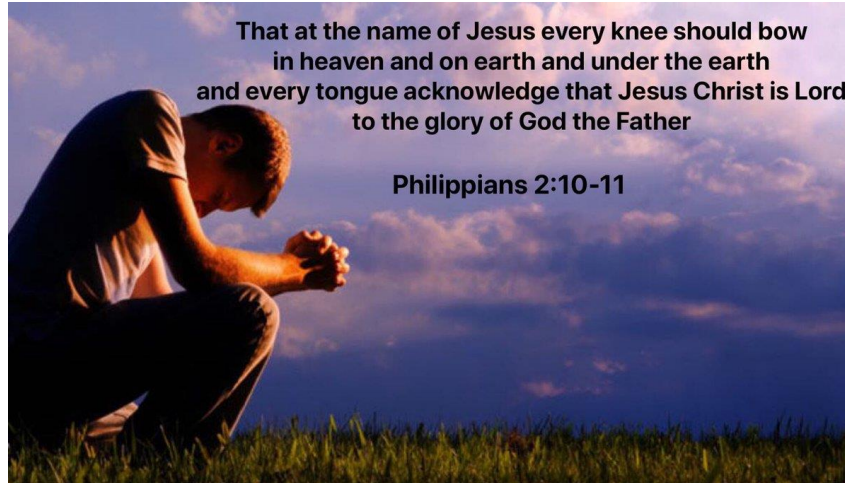
So, if we are to be submissive; allowing ourselves to come under one another’s influence out of respect and to gain their respect, then we’ll be united in spirit, sympathetic, loving one another, compassionate and humble. We won’t be submissive; we won’t allow ourselves to come under one another’s influence out of respect and to gain their respect, if we’re are not united in spirit, sympathetic, loving one another, being compassionate and humble.

Humility is the mark of a Jesus follower. Humility is exemplified in Jesus. Humility is not sought after by the world; rather strength, pride, confidence, power, self-sufficiency. Humility needs to be a daily pursuit for us if we are to be submissive. And humility allows us to then be united in spirit, sympathetic, compassionate, loving one another.



Humility is that willingness to take the lower place, to do the less exalted acts of service, to put the interests of others before one's own interests. Humility paves the way for us to being united in spirit. ☯ Your Bible might say "be like minded." A better translation is to be united in spirit. This allows for differences in opinion and preference, but being united in spirit is in the spirit of Christ; living in love for one another, under Christ as Lord. Being united in spirit fosters sympathy, compassion and love; and it puts aside one's own interests and preferences for the well-being of the greater community of believers.

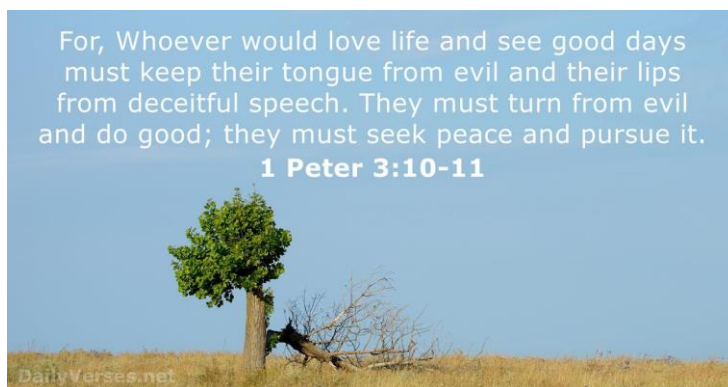
Jesus actually commanded us to ☯ love one another, and this was the mark by which Christians would be identified. John 13:34-35, "**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**" And if we follow Jesus example of love, then we put aside what we want for the best interests of others. "Not my will be done, but Yours," He said. And then He went to the Cross; submitting to all earthly authority, and we are the blessed recipients.



Communion (Phil 2:5-11)

Peter has called us to repay evil with blessing. Peter then quotes from Psalm 34 to support his previous teaching, and then lead into his next thoughts. ☯

"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. 11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. 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."



Restraining the tongue and doing good; being a peacemaker; comes from a submissive heart; from a people who are united in spirit, sympathetic, love one another, compassionate and humble. Such people turn from evil and do good for others.

And this is the context within which this whole passage is written – "doing good." "Doing good whilst those around you might wish to do you harm. In the midst of your suffering – keep doing good. Do good to those who persecute you." If we go back to 1 Peter 2:11-12, ☯ and then through to these verses from 1 Peter 3:13-17, these are the bookends of Peter's directive to do good by being submissive during your times of great suffering.

How do we do good? We submit to all earthly authority, submit to our employers; submit to our marriage partner; and submit to one another. Why do we submit? Because we seek to “do good” as we follow Jesus example.

A Facebook post by Kate during the week said, ☉ “Spiritual friendship is eagerly helping one another know, serve, love and resemble God in deeper and deeper ways.” This is such an apt way of describing the Greek understanding of Christian submission. ☉ “Submission is eagerly helping one another know, serve, love and resemble God in deeper and deeper ways.”

As we submit, we do not however, give way to fear, but live as a Christian, in our community, our work place or school, our marriage and family relationships; trusting ourselves into God’s hands and His will, understanding that He is sovereign and is working all things together for good and His glory. We trust God, even when things are not going well.

☉ V.13 then, **“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” 15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”**

Peter does not preach the prosperity gospel; that God will make all things well for us and we will prosper in every area of our lives. He knows full well that we live in a fallen world and we will have trouble. ☉ His hope is that for these Christians in Turkey that they may not come to harm, but if they should, he reminds them to be like Christ, and that it is better to suffer for doing good rather than suffering as a result of pursuing evil.

☉ He also tells them that they should be ready to speak with those who choose to bring them harm with gentleness and respect (their strength under control), and to share why they hold such hope for their future.

Now, we don’t like it when others attack Christianity. We don’t like it if we suspect that Christians are being targeted or discriminated against. We don’t like it if others in the workplace make fun of Jesus, the church, or give us a hard time because they know that we’re Christians. We don’t like that, and we buck against that; forgetting that God is sovereign and working out His plan.

☉ Now, Peter speaks of suffering, and his call is to endure it. He doesn’t suggest that they pray to God for Him to take it all away; he doesn’t suggest that they seek legal intervention and take their opponents to court; he doesn’t suggest they seek justice; he calls them to endure it. But not only that – to bless those who cause them harm.

The suffering to which he refers is not due to poverty, to illness or to poor working conditions. The suffering he refers to, is the abuse that they receive from non-Christian masters, husbands, and neighbours.

We don’t like suffering and so we seek to avoid it wherever possible. We suggest that when we are going through sickness or disease that we’re suffering. And we ask God to take away the suffering. The New Testament clearly invites us to pray for healing, but where the New Testament speaks of suffering it is always in reference to persecution, and we are repeatedly told to endure it.

You see, Jesus was attempting to right all social injustice, but came to save sinners. So, if you are copping a hard time because you’re a Christian; if the Government discriminates against us; if we are suffering for being a Christian – endure it. And endure it with grace, and seek to bless those who bring you harm

Now, that's not the teaching we want to hear. ☉ But Peter says, **“Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts hold Christ in reverent fear.** ☉ Jesus warned, **“do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. Rather: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”** (Luke 12:4-5) **“Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts hold Christ in reverent fear.”**

☉ Peter also says, **“To those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour, do good.”** Jesus said, **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** (Matt 5:11-12)

“It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” But always be ready to give the reason for the hope that you have - as to why you endure the way you do; why you bless those who persecute you, for this will be like heaping coals upon their head. Not only will they feel bad because they have falsely accused or sought to harm you, but will want to be like you; a person of grace, peace and inner joy. **“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.”** Amen.

In his second letter to the church Peter writes, (God) **“has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you might participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”** God has given us His great and precious Word, and His promises within bring us victory in this desperate and sin filled world; giving us strength to endure through the times of suffering. Let us therefore spend time in His Word and trust in Him and His promises. Amen.

Hymn 007x Standing on the Promises

