



1Peter - Lesson 3A

Chapter 3:8-16

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- Peter continues on his theme of living in the world as a foreigner
 - We started with honoring authority, which is the proper thing to do when you are a stranger
 - We honor government first because it's God Who places men in authority, so we submit to government because we obey God Himself

1Pet. 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

1Pet. 3:9 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.

- Verse 8 is a summation of Peter's argument going all the way back to Chapter 2:11
 - I know that because Peter says, to sum up...
 - This statement follows a section on servants, wives, husbands
 - And they are certainly essential attributes to a successful marriage
 - But they transcend the marriage relationship
 - They are attributes for Christian fellowship and they further establish us as different, as foreigners in this world
- It's interesting how Peter chose to write verse 8
 - There are five adjectives in the verse
 - *Homophron* – harmonious
 - *Sympathes* – sympathetic
 - *Philadelphos* – brotherly, loving
 - *Eusplagchnos* – kind or tender hearted
 - *Tapeinophron* – humble in spirit
 - Four of those five Greek words appear nowhere else in the New Testament except here
 - And the fifth one, tenderhearted, appears only one other place in Ephesians 5
- When we look at the unique language here, it seems like Peter is working hard to pick his words carefully, purposely
 - He wants to paint a very specific picture of how the church is to act
 - So, I think this is one of those sections where we take our time, we stop and consider why Peter chose these words
- Harmonious, or likeminded
 - Peter asks the church to think in a compatible or likeminded way
 - The idea is a unity of purpose and harmony in *action*
 - It doesn't necessarily mean unity of opinion
 - Or even unity of thought in general

- He isn't demanding that we all agree in every idea or plan or action, but that we unit under common purposes
 - To glorify God and deliver the Gospel
 - Which leaves room for some disagreement in doctrine or practice,
 - So long as the Gospel of grace isn't challenged
- But the Body of Christ is One unit
 - We have no distinction before the Lord
 - There is no us and them in the Body of Christ
 - There are no enemies among true believers
 - There is simply no basis for division within the true church, regardless of what the sign above the building says
- And if the church is to be an effective instrument in the world, and an effective witness for Christ, it must act in unity

Eccl. 4:9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

Eccl. 4:10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

Eccl. 4:11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?

Eccl. 4:12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

- Peter instructs us to be harmonious, but his command begs the question how?
 - We could try to imitate one another or perhaps we imitate our leaders
 - Maybe we pick out a successful church down the street and imitate it
 - Or perhaps we follow some strategy, or movement with the church so we can align with that movement
 - You see the problem is we need something to align with if we are to be likeminded
 - But then how are millions of different congregations worldwide supposed to stay likeminded, harmonious?

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become "unity" conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship."

A.W. Tozer

- Do you want to be an effective ambassador for the Lord?
 - Do you want to find support and encouragement in your walk as a Christian?
 - Do you want to forge relationships that strengthen you and offer loving correction?
 - Do you want to stand against the power of the enemy in your life and in the world and find fruit in your service?
 - Then do all things through Christ who strengthens us
 - But we will do far more as a family in unity by the Spirit according to God's word than we could ever hope to accomplish living a singular, isolated Christian experience
 - And this principle is true both for individual Christians who remain unconnected, not listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit
 - And for churches that remain isolated
- Peter's second word is sympathetic
 - The real meaning of the Greek word is a little deeper than just feeling empathy for someone
 - It means to suffer together
 - To join in the trials and sorrow that were becoming increasingly common for Christians in Peter's day
 - What a powerful distinction for the Christian
 - We cannot overestimate how powerful our witness will be when we communicate the love of the Lord to hurting people
 - In Peter's day, of course, the need was for the church to be ready to show a sympathetic response to those who suffered:
 - Persecution
 - Abandonment by families who rejected their Christian faith
 - Disenfranchisement from their Jewish culture
 - And because they were living as strangers in the world, they needed each other more than ever
- But we too should understand the power of sympathy as part of our witness today
 - What does the world do for people suffering today?
 - Often they blame the victim
 - The world plays the blame game
 - They assume that unfortunate circumstances are a sign of guilt
 - When bad things happen to us, it's proof that we've done something wrong
 - That God or karma or some cosmic justice is bringing us our just deserts
 - The world's thinking is reflected in the title of a popular book from decades ago
 - "When bad things happen to good people"
 - There is the assumption that bad things should only happen to bad

people, not good people

- The confusion begins with the fact that the unbelieving world assumes that there are such things as good people
 - When the Bible says none are good
 - So there is no such thing as a good person, but that's a different sermon
- Actually, there is some truth to their assumption
 - When we do the wrong thing – sin – we should expect negative consequences to follow

Gal. 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

- So it's true that our sin will quite often result in bad things happening to us
 - But that fact doesn't mean that the opposite condition is also true
 - It doesn't mean that good things must come to those who do good
 - Think about it: if only good things happened to those who did good, how do you explain the Apostles?
 - How do you explain Paul, John the Baptist, the first martyr Stephen or the many other martyrs over the centuries?
 - How do you explain Jesus Himself?
 - The ultimate example of bad things happening to good people
 - Do you remember Jesus' words in John 15:

John 15:17 “This I command you, that you love one another.

John 15:18 “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

John 15:22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 “He who hates Me hates My Father also.

- For the Christian, a life walked in the Spirit will necessarily bring the enemy's anger and hatred directed at us
 - Because we stand as Christ's ambassador, we stand in His place for a time

- So we should expect that the more we look like Christ, the more we are a target to the enemy
- A fair rule might be that if we are not suffering for our faith in any way at all, it may indicate our faith is invisible – the enemy doesn't need to spend time on an ambassador that never leaves its house

Toward the very end of his life, Voltaire, the French philosopher of the early 18th century was advised by a Christian that he should forswear and reject Satan. Voltaire declined. "This is no time to make new enemies!"

- So knowing that tragedy is simply a natural part of life amidst the consequences of sin
 - And it's a natural result of a life lived as an ambassador of Christ
 - Then what a shame it is if the body of Christ looks down upon a fellow brother or sister in the Lord in a moment of difficulty or pain or suffering
 - Judging them as if they are getting what they deserve
 - In fact, Peter says we should join them in their suffering, as an ambassador
- The next two adjectives are best viewed together – brotherly and kindhearted
 - The first word means to see one another like you would a true sibling in your family
 - For we are all now born again into a new family
 - And we will exist as one family for all eternity
 - This will always be our family, all believers in Christ
 - Just in case you need clarification on how to treat your brothers and sisters, Peter follows with kind or tenderhearted
 - Your relationship with fellow Christians should be one marked by a tenderhearted and loving kind of relationship
- What does a kindhearted sibling relationship look like?
 - We are to be affectionate with one another
 - We truly enjoy each other's company, longing for that company
 - We look out for one another
 - We defend one another
 - An argument, a disagreement doesn't end our relationship
 - Unfortunately for some of us, the brotherly love we find in our brothers and sisters in the Lord will be the only real sibling relationship we will ever know

Matt. 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

Matt. 12:47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."

Matt. 12:48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

Matt. 12:49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!

Matt. 12:50 “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

- Finally, Peter says we are to be humble in spirit
 - We are not to think too highly of ourselves
 - Often this phrase can be used to describe the salvation experience, but Peter is looking beyond that moment
 - He’s referring to our self-perception as believers
 - When we look around the members of our church body, we inevitably see differences
 - And some of these distinctions are given in scripture
 - Giftings
 - Roles
 - Age or maturity in the faith
 - But if you study these differences, none of them are given for the purpose of granting one group some kind of privilege or status over another group
 - But that IS the worldly way
 - The world is forever looking for ways to show off
 - To distinguish one from another and for the purpose of looking or feeling better than another by comparison
 - It’s all vanity
 - And the church isn’t to see itself in that
- As an example, look how Paul and Apollos describe themselves:

2Cor. 3:4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.

2Cor. 3:5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

2Cor. 3:6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- Paul was the greatest theologian in the history of the church
 - Apollos was said to be the greatest orator of the early church
 - And yet Paul says consider them to be nothing apart from God
- The church has a powerful witness for Christ when it lives in a humble way
 - While the world around us boasts of all that it can do and all that it achieves and how much it is worth, we respond by saying we have nothing to offer
 - But God working in us can do anything
 - Talk about being different and standing out! In a boastful, reviling world, a

humble spirit will always stand out

- That's what we offer to a lost and dying world that they can't find anywhere else in a genuine way
 - What a shame it would be if when the world comes to us looking for that difference, we only reflect the world back to them
- We must stand out as ambassadors to do the very thing Peter directs in verse 9:

1Pet. 3:9 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.

- Peter instructs us not to treat others with contempt, even when they treat us that way
 - Then Peter says that we were called according to this very same purpose – that we might inherit a blessing
 - Peter is referring to the way God treated us

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

- In other words, God turned to us in mercy while we were still busy hating Him and living as if we were our own God
 - And He saved us while we yet showed Him contempt
 - He didn't repay hatred with hatred, but rather hatred with kindness
 - He called us to inherit a blessing, so we should do the same to others – grant to others blessing and not evil
 - This is how the church stands as the ambassador for Christ
 - Acting to the world in the same way God acted toward us
- And this isn't new to the church
 - Peter quotes from Psalm 34 to remind the reader that this expectation has always been there

1Pet. 3:10 For, “THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

1Pet. 3:11 “HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

1Pet. 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.”

- God's people have always been told to seek good, turn from evil, seek peace
 - Desire a satisfying and good life which can only be brought about by seeking the

righteousness of the Lord

- For the Lord only hears the prayers of his children, the righteous by faith in other words
- We alone have the privilege to be heard by God
- Finally, Peter provides this conditional challenge to the church

1Pet. 3:13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

1Pet. 3:14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

1Pet. 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

1Pet. 3:16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

- He says who could harm you if you prove (or really become) zealous for what is good?
 - Which is very similar to something Paul teaches in Romans

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- You see Peter isn't claiming that those who are zealous for what is good will always have a peaceful life
 - Peter is saying what Paul said...speaking in an eternal sense, what reason do we have to fear when you do good?
 - When the believer becomes zealous to do good, God notices and credits his heavenly account
 - And truly what kind of harm can come to God's children in light of what God is preparing for them in eternity
 - Doing good can't simply result in earthly good as your return
 - Because that's not a lasting kind of good
 - No matter how good you are, you will eventually experience calamity
 - Remember, even the most righteous man still dies
 - So no matter how good your life is, you can't escape the death process
 - Therefore, the test of Peter's words are not whether you avoid bad things in your life
 - The test of whether your good works brought you benefit will come at your eternal reward
 - And if we are zealous for good, we have nothing to fear because that reward cannot be taken

- Peter himself in his very next verse acknowledges that bad things will happen from time to time to the believer
 - He says you may suffer for the sake of righteousness
 - Nevertheless, don't be troubled
 - Peter quotes God's encouragement to Isaiah when Isaiah worried that Israel wouldn't accept his message, which they didn't
 - Yet Isaiah was faithful and God told him not to fear
- Then in wrapping up this section, Peter draws us back to the main point
 - When we are suffering for righteousness sake, for being zealous for good...
 - Peter says we sanctify Christ, which means we set Christ apart
 - He's saying we should live according to the holiness of Christ during these periods of persecution or suffering
 - In other words, be His representative, be His ambassador
 - Live as He would under your circumstances
 - And then look at the effect it will have in the world
- And when we react to persecution the way Christ reacted to persecution, that behavior will prompt a reaction from the unbelieving world
 - Look at the reaction in verse 15
 - They will ask us to explain why we have hope in the midst of our hopeless circumstances
 - They will ask us to give an account or defense (*apologia*)
 - Peter says we should be prepared with an answer, with our *apologia*, apologetics, which is the study of our beliefs
 - Many assume this to mean a preparation to give our testimony
 - Having a clear recollection of our path to belief can be useful at times
 - But that's not what Peter wants the reader to be prepared to give
 - He wants us prepared to give the Gospel to our attackers or to those who witness how we withstand persecution
 - Not the story of how I came to Christ
 - But the story of how Christ came to men
 - Not an explanation of how I was saved
 - But an explanation of how all men can be saved
 - Peter is asking us to be ready to explain and defend the gospel
 - Which means preparation beforehand
 - Study of the history, doctrines and heroes of our faith
 - Then practice, so we can be ready
- Some will receive that testimony, but some will not
 - But we must be ready to give it nonetheless

- Peter says there are two reasons to give your testimony even to those who might not accept it
 - First, it serves to contradict their slanderous claims against believers
 - The one doing good and testifying of Christ will inevitably refute any false charge of improper behavior levied against the Christian
 - Secondly, it stands as testimony against unbelief itself
 - For the unbeliever who rejected our message, our testimony becomes evidence against them at their judgment
- But we are called to testify regardless of whether it converts or convicts