

I Peter 3:8-9
April 23, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Over the last few weeks, we have studied Peter's teachings on submission. He started with submission to institutions, like governmental authorities or law enforcement. Then he taught that slaves should submit to their masters, then he narrowed his focus asking wives to submit to their husbands. What made his teachings challenging is that he delivered these messages while they were enduring suffering, injustices, unfair treatment was the context.

Transition: In today's lesson, the context hasn't changed. They still feel persecuted, they still endure injustices, and Peter gives his readers words to live by to help them through it. As we read this passage, I believe **all of us can experience God's blessings in the worst of times by living out the PRINCIPLES Peter gives us.** Let's begin by reading I Peter 3:8-12.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.8:

- Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

V.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.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.8: What are the instructions Peter offers in this verse? [Live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, and be compassionate and humble.]

Note: We should begin with *love for God's people* (1 Peter 3:8). The word "finally" means "to sum it all up." Just as the whole of the Law is summed up in love (Rom. 13:8–10), so the whole of human relationships is fulfilled in love. This applies to every Christian and to every area of life.

Q: Do you agree that we've already processed this in prior lessons, or do we need to explore this further?

Q V.9: How are we to deal with evil and insult? [First, you don't repay with evil or insults! We are not to retaliate for ill treatment. Second, we offer a blessing, which is counterintuitive to our flesh. In fact, we are to love our enemies. We need to operate on the basis of mercy, since that is the way God deals with each of us.]

Q: Remember that Peter is the author. He's telling his readers not to repay evil for evil. But let's look at his past. When men came with Judas to arrest Jesus, Peter tried to fight them with a sword and cut off an ear of a servant to the high priest. What happened? [Jesus said, "No more of

this” and healed the servant’s ear! Peter learned that Christ does not want us to fight our enemies with physical swords.]

Q: So what was the “sword” for the early church? [Prayer, God’s Word, and God’s power through the Holy Spirit, not on human weapons]

Wiersbe: As Christians, we can live on one of three levels. We can return evil for good, which is the demonic 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).

LOOK:

Love is a recurring theme in Peter’s letters, not only God’s love for us, but also our love for others. We should begin with *love for God’s people*, evidenced by unity of mind, compassion, tenderness of heart toward others, and loving our enemies.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 411–412). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

1 Peter 3:8–17

A devoted pastor was facing serious surgery, and a friend visited him in the hospital to pray with him. “An interesting thing happened today,” the pastor told him. “One of the nurses looked at my chart and said, ‘Well, I guess you’re preparing for the worst!’ I smiled at her and said, ‘No, I’m preparing for the best. I’m a Christian, and God has promised to work all things together for good.’ Boy, did she drop that chart and leave this room in a hurry!”

Peter wrote this letter to prepare Christians for a “fiery trial” of persecution, yet his approach was optimistic and positive. “Prepare for the best!” was his message. In this section, he gave them three instructions to follow if they would experience the best blessings in the worst times.

Cultivate Christian Love (1 Peter 3:8–9)

We have noted that love is a recurring theme in Peter’s letters, not only God’s love for us, but also our love for others. Peter had to learn this important lesson himself, and he had a hard time learning it! How patient Jesus had to be with him!

We should begin with *love for God’s people* (1 Peter 3:8). The word “finally” means “to sum it all up.” Just as the whole of the Law is summed up in love (Rom. 13:8–10), so the whole of human relationships is fulfilled in love. This applies to every Christian and to every area of life.

This love is evidenced by a *unity of mind* (see Phil. 2:1–11). Unity does not mean uniformity; it means cooperation in the midst of diversity. The members of the body work together in unity, even though they are all different. Christians may differ on *how* things are to be done, but they must agree on *what* is to be done and *why*. A man criticized D.L. Moody’s methods of evangelism, and Moody said, “Well, I’m always ready for improvement. What are *your* methods?” The man confessed that he had none! “Then I’ll stick to my own,” said Moody. Whatever methods we may use, we must seek to honor Christ, win the lost, and build the church. Some methods are definitely not scriptural, but there is plenty of room for variety in the church.

Another evidence of love is *compassion*, a sincere “feeling for and with” the needs of others. Our English word “sympathy” comes from this word. We dare not get hardhearted toward each other. We must share both joys and trials (Rom. 12:15). The basis for this is the fact that we are brethren in the same family (see 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; 5:14). We are “taught of God to love one another” (1 Thes. 4:9).

Love reveals itself in *pity*, a tenderness of heart toward others. In the Roman Empire, this was not a quality that was admired; but the Christian message changed all of that. Today, we are deluged with so much bad news that it is easy for us to get insulated and unfeeling. We need to cultivate compassion, and actively show others that we are concerned.

“Be courteous” involves much more than acting like a lady or gentleman. “Be humble-minded” is a good translation; and, after all, humility is the foundation for courtesy, for the humble person puts others ahead of himself.

Not only should we love God’s people, but we should also *love our enemies* (1 Peter 3:9). The recipients of this letter were experiencing a certain amount of personal persecution because they were doing the will of God. Peter warned them that *official* persecution was just around the corner, so they had better prepare. The church today had better prepare, because difficult times are ahead.

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.

This admonition must have meant much to Peter himself, because he once tried to fight Christ’s enemies with a sword (Luke 22:47–53). When he was an unconverted rabbi, Paul used every means possible to oppose the church; but when he became a Christian, Paul never used human weapons to fight God’s battles (Rom. 12:17–21; 2 Cor. 10:1–6). When Peter and the

Apostles were persecuted, they depended on prayer and God's power, not on their own wisdom or strength (see Acts 4:23ff).

We must always be reminded of our *calling* as Christians, for this will help us love our enemies and do them good when they treat us badly. We are called to “inherit a blessing.” The persecutions we experience on earth today only add to our blessed inheritance of glory in heaven someday (Matt. 5:10–12). But we also inherit a blessing *today* when we treat our enemies with love and mercy. By sharing a blessing with them, we receive a blessing ourselves! Persecution can be a time of spiritual enrichment for a believer. The saints and martyrs in church history all bear witness to this fact.

Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, p. 849). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

IV. Cautioned for New Persecution (3:8–4:19)

In the first two chapters Peter referred to “all kinds of trials” (1:6), accusations of “doing wrong” (2:12), “the ignorant talk of foolish men” (2:15), and “the pain of unjust suffering” (2:19). All these persecutions seem to have resulted from the natural reactions of a pagan society against Christians who faithfully obeyed Jesus Christ.

Peter then warned that a time of more severe persecution and suffering was close at hand. He cautioned Christians to keep clear consciences when facing injustice, to endure the inevitable suffering with Christlike courage.

A. *Overcoming injustice* (3:8–22)

Peter used both Christ and Noah to illustrate the principle that in times of rising persecution the right response to injustice results in blessing.

1. A COMPASSIONATE CONDUCT (3:8–12)

3:8–9. **Finally** introduces a new section rather than giving a summary of the previous exhortations to specific groups (cf. “finally” in Phil. 3:1; 1 Thes. 4:1). Peter now addressed all his readers (all of you) and gave practical principles for living peacefully in a hostile pagan culture. First Peter 3:8–9 is Peter's exposition of Psalm 34:12–16, which he then quoted (1 Peter 3:10–12). Peter constructed his thoughts around the three exhortations in the psalm.