

## IN PURSUIT OF PEACE

1 Peter 3:8-12

**Intro:** We have noticed in studying this first epistle of Peter that after giving teaching which applied to all of the believers who were to receive this epistle, in chapter 2, verse 13, he spoke to them as citizens, speaking briefly of their responsibilities toward the Roman government under which they were living. He followed this in verse 18 by addressing himself to servants. Next, at the beginning of chapter 3 he taught wives what their duty was toward their husbands, even when the husband might not be a believer. Then, as we saw last week, in verse seven of chapter 3 Peter told husbands how they were to behave toward their wives, and why!

Today, as we come to the eighth verse of chapter 3, we can see that the Apostle was again devoting himself to all of the Lord's people. We can see this from the words which he used, "Finally, be ye all of one mind . . ." So this was meant to apply to all of the family of believers, not only husbands and wives, but all men and women, not only servants, but their masters as well, all citizens who were believers, and young people who knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Let me repeat what I have said before, that the Bible is addressed mainly to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles did not expect unbelievers to live as though they were believers because he would have been asking them to do the impossible. It is only possible for us who know the Lord to live obedience to God's Word, but it is totally out of the question for people who are not saved, and therefore, who do not have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But, on the other hand, no true Christian has any right to exclude himself from any of the practical teaching of Scripture which relates to daily life. What we are to consider this morning is for *all of us*, and so I trust that you were all listening carefully to the reading of the Scriptures, and that your heart, and my heart, will be receptive to what we are going to consider from the Scriptures today.

In some ways this passage is similar to the verse we considered together last Sunday morning. In verse seven (I trust you will remember) the Apostle Peter not only told the husbands what they were to do in their relationships with their wives, but he told the *why!* It was "that your prayers be not hindered." Have you noticed the same thing about verses eight through 12? Peter told all of the people of God how they were to live, and then in verse 12 *he told them why!* It was,

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are

open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Here again obedience is linked not just with prayers, *but with answered prayers!*

The Apostle John brought together obedience and answered prayer more than once. For example, in 1 John 3:22 we have these words:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22).

And then let me remind you of 1 John 5:14-15:

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Let me ask you a question regarding these last two verses I have read to you. “Do you think that you and I can ‘ask any thing according to His will,’ that is, God’s will, and at the same time not be living according to His will?” The answer to that question is, “NO!” Asking according to God’s will requires that we are living in obedience to God’s will, and then making our request in line with His will. God would be condoning our disobedience if He were to hear us when we were not living to please Him. That sure is why in reading 1 John we come to 3:22 before we get to 5:14 and 15.

So this makes both verse seven of our chapter, followed by verse 12, extremely important. We are often inclined to say when our prayers are not being answered, that evidently it is not God’s will for us to have what we are seeking from Him in prayer. That may not be the reason at all! It may be that the Lord is waiting until there is a change in our lives before He gives us what we are seeking from Him in prayer. Let all of us take this heart. This is a major point that the Apostle Peter was making. And this is often God’s purpose in the trials that we have. God is seeking to awaken us to things in our lives that are not pleasing to Him, and so He withholds blessings that He would otherwise give us because there are wicked ways in us, and He wants us to confess and forsake them.

So let us turn now to our text keeping in mind that all that we will see in verses 8 through 11 is leading up to verse 12.

Depending upon how we divide these commandments, there are approximately a dozen things here that we need to be concerned about. Peter did not go to great lengths to discuss them, but the fact that he stated them so briefly, and so clearly, and because there are so many of them in such a

few words, his purpose was that they would strike every reader's heart with powerful conviction. And today as we read them, almost two thousand years after they were written by the Apostle Peter, let us take them as though they were contained in a letter which he had written this past week, especially for us.

Notice:

## **I. THE FIRST WORD: "Finally."**

We can see that he was not finishing his letter. He was only about half through. Nor can we feel that he was like many of us as preachers say, "Finally," and then go on another fifteen or twenty minutes. *Instead, it may be that he was indicating that he was coming to the main part of what he had to say from the standpoint of his purpose in writing.* The apostles were all *teachers* of the great doctrines of Scripture, but they were also *exhorters*, as every good teacher should be. The apostles were always greatly concerned about how the people of God were living. They always looked to see how the truth was affecting the lives of the people who were under their ministries. And in this they were just like the greatest Teacher of all, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the word "finally" takes the position in this epistle as though Peter had said, "I have had a word for you as citizens. And then a word for those of you who are servants. I have spoken to you who are wives, and to you who are husbands. Now I come to speak in a special way to all of you, and I want to impress upon you needs which we all have, needs which we must not forget, ways in which we must make sure that we are pleasing the Lord.

And so let us look at what he had to say. The first command has to do with:

## **II. THE NEED TO GUARD THEIR FELLOWSHIP (1 Pet. 3:8-9).**

This seems to me to be the meaning of his first command, "Be ye all of one mind."

In verse 8 he approached this from a positive point-of-view, and in verse 9 from a negative point-of-view. In verse 8 he mentioned four things that are necessary for real fellowship, and then in verse 9 he mentioned what they must not do if their fellowship was to be a source of blessing to them, as well as being pleasing to God. The object of their fellowship was to win the blessing of the Lord, and each believer needed to recognize that he

or she was to be an instrument of blessing to the others in the church.

Oneness, harmony, agreement, fellowship – all are touched upon by the various writers of the NT, as it was a major emphasis in the teaching and prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been “called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). And what a fellowship it is! There is nothing on earth that even approaches it. And we need to guard ourselves and others against anything that would mar that fellowship.

Now let us look, first, at:

### **A. The positive side (1 Pet. 3:8).**

And so we need to have “compassion one of another.” This means that we are to be sympathetic with each other. The word *sympathy* is brought into the English language from the Greek, and it literally means *to suffer with each other*.

The Apostle Paul was talking about compassion when he was speaking of all of us as members of the body of Christ, and he said this:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

This is compassion.

When we injure some member of our physical bodies, we often say that we hurt all over. The members of our bodies are all tied in together. We can hurt in one place, but the trouble may be in another part of our bodies. Our bodies were made to show compassion, and that is true also of the body of Christ.

But we are not only to have compassion as members of the same body, the body of Christ, but we are love as brethren because we are all members of the family of God. There may be times in our families when brothers and sisters fight, but when a real need arises, such as the people of Kosovo are experiencing, we see what grief it causes when family members are separated and they can't find each other. When we were saved, God not only put a love in our hearts for Himself and for the Lord Jesus, but He put a love in our hearts for each other. Whenever you meet another Christian, you immediately sense a bond of fellowship with them. Again referring to the writings of the Apostle John, he said,

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

One indication that you are a true child of God, is that you love other Christians.

“Be pitiful” – This means to have a tender heart. “Pitiful” really means *to be full of pity*. It is the opposite of being hardhearted and critical. And it goes right along with showing compassion and love.

To “be courteous” is to be of a humble mind. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote Rom. 12:16:

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

It means that we pay attention to those who may be less prominent, and that we do what we can to encourage them, or to help meet their needs.

Notice that all of these words in a sense are a definition of what it means for us to love each other in the body of Christ, and in the family of God.

But now we come to:

### **B. The negative side (1 Pet. 3:9).**

We are not to render evil for evil. We are not to try to get even because that not only prolongs trouble that we might be having with each other, but it always makes things worse.

The same applies to “railing.” Here Peter referred for the first time to how we hurt each other by the things we say about one another. And our sinful hearts are such that if anyone says anything bad about us, we are inclined to say something a little worse about them. Neither “evil for evil” nor “railing for railing” is ever acceptable behavior for those of us who know the Lord. Instead, we should seek to be a blessing to that person who has been an offence to us. And the last part of this verse ought to be an encouragement to all of us. We have been called to Christ and to salvation because it was God’s intention to bless us. And the Lord blesses us when we react to others in a way that is pleasing to Him, not in the way that will enable us to get even. Instead, let us make sure that we understand what Peter was saying here, and also what the Apostle Paul said in Rom. 12: 19-21:

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay,

saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

When Peter came to the end of verse 9, he did a very interesting thing as he went on to verses 10 through 12. Without saying what he was doing, he began to quote from the OT. And yet the word “for” at the beginning of verse 10 is a giveaway that he was citing his special authority for what he had just said.

## **II. OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT FOR NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING (1 Pet. 3:10-12).**

The quotation here is from Psalm 34, verses 12 through the first part of verse 16. This shows that the standards for holiness in the NT are not different from the standards of holiness in the OT. And it also shows that obedience to God in the OT was a condition of God’s blessing just as it is in the NT. We know from what David said in Psalm 34 does not mean that loving life and seeing good days means that we are the Lord’s people will live trouble-free lives, because David said in Psalm 34, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” – and he was probably talking about the troubles, the persecution that comes our way because we are the children of God. But to love life and to see good days means to have the blessing of the Lord even though we do have our troubles. Such a life is promised to those of us who refrain from speaking evil of our brothers and sisters in Christ, who likewise refuse to use our tongues to deceive each other. And let us remember that to pretend to love each other when we really don’t, is one major form of guile.

But it is not enough to avoid evil and guile, we must “eschew” it, that is, we must keep ourselves as far away from it as we can possibly get, and, on the other hand “do good” and “seek peace, and ensue it.”

Last Sunday night in speaking on the first eleven verses of Psalm 37, I quoted one writer who said Psalm 37 “is the finest exposition of the third Beatitude that has ever been written.” That is the Beatitude which says, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” This morning I would like to say that it would be hard to find a better exposition of the seventh Beatitude than this passage in 1 Peter, and the passage from Psalm 34 which Peter quoted. What is the seventh Beatitude? It is, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Instead of retaliating against others, which is the natural and human thing to do, we “do good,” that is, seek to respond as the Lord wants us to

respond, and we not only “seek peace” at all times, but we “ensue it,” meaning that *we pursue it*.

That is why I have given my message the title, **In Pursuit of Peace**. This is not “peace at any price,” but it is refusing to react as people usually react. We would rather be wronged than to do wrong. Our fellowship with each other is a precious treasure, and it should be our objective to see that that fellowship is maintained even though it means that we have to be humbled in order to preserve it.

And what blessing do we seek?

Verse 12 is the reward which God has promised us. His eyes are upon us, and so He knows all that is going on in our lives. He knows the troubles we have, and the problems we face. His ears are open unto the prayers of the righteous, not used of our standing before God, but of the practical way in which we seek to please God by acting and reacting in a righteous manner.

On the other hand, His face is against those who do evil. I don’t want to face that consequence, do you? I am sure you don’t. So let us be sure that in all that concerns our relationships to each other, our main objective is to react in a way that is pleasing to God, not so we can get even with others.

**Concl:** F. B. Meyer was an Englishman, born in London in 1847, a godly minister of the Word, a contemporary of Spurgeon, a man greatly used of God in the United States as well as in Great Britain, who lived until 1929. In preaching on this passage he raised this question, and then commented on it:

Where in all the world can we discover such a community of Christians? It were a fair vision, worth going far to see. A temple of Love. An abode of heavenly bliss. An oasis in the desert. A snatch of celestial harmony amid the jarring discords of human selfishness. The New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven. Yet nothing less than this is the Christian ideal, as it is also that which our Lord died to secure. And it would well become us, if, without waiting for others, each one would adopt the injunctions of these verses as the binding rule and regulation of daily life. This would be our worthiest contribution to the convincing of the world, and to the coming of the kingdom of our Lord. And it would spread (Meyer, F. B., *Tried by Fire*, p. 107).

Most of us probably have known the truths we have been dealing with today, but the question is, How has it affected our lives? And this is espe-

cially important today as we come to the Lord's Table. To really be walking in fellowship with the Lord, we need to be walking in true fellowship with each other. May the Lord make that a reality in all of our lives.