

**THE STUDY OF 1 PETER & 2 PETER**  
**LESSON 11**  
**1 PETER 3:8-12 NOTES**

Peter begins our reading with "to sum up." This is really one word in the Greek-- "finally." Meaning that this is the final point to end his discussion since chapter 2 verse 11. After specific references to civil relationships (2:13-17), workplace relationships (2:18-20), and relationships to unsaved spouses (3:1-7), Peter gives all believers a general exhortation, which will open them to the life of blessing God desires for them to enjoy.

In the previous verses Peter has been specific, talking about being citizens, employees and spouses, now he becomes more general. He says in summing it up, let all of you... The word "all" is key to understanding to whom he directs this passage. Not just to you as citizens, not just to you as employees, not just to you as spouses, but to everyone, all of you Christians...here is the sum of it all. And we transition by that little word "all" out of the specific into the general.

**HARMONIOUS**

Believers are to "be harmonious." The word *harmonious* literally means "same think." Believers are to live in harmony together, maintaining a common commitment to the truth that produces an inward unity of heart with one another.

Jesus instructed the disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed earnestly for the spiritual unity of all believers. This spiritual

reality should be the basis for the church's visible harmony.

E.B. Cranfield writes, "The New Testament never treats this agreeing in Christ as an unnecessary though highly desirable spiritual luxury, but as something essential to the true being of the church."

### **SYMPATHETIC**

"Sympathetic," is virtually a transliteration of *sumpatheis*, which means "sharing the same feeling." Christians are to be united on the truth, but also ready to sympathize with the pain of others, even of those they do not know. Like Christ, the sympathetic high priest, they must share in the feelings of others, in their sorrows as well as their joys. Believers must not be insensitive, indifferent and censorious, even toward the lost in their pain of struggling anxiously with the issues of life. Saints must come alongside them with empathy to declare God's saving truth.

### **BROTHERLY**

Peter used the term *philadelphoi*, translated here as "brotherly." The first part of the word stems from the verb *phileo*, "to love," and refers to affection among people who are closely related in some way. Those who demonstrate that affection among people who are closely related in some way. Those who demonstrate that affection will do so by unselfish service for one another. This service begins in the church among believers and extends out to the world.

### **KINDHEARTED**

"Kindhearted" translates *eusplagchnoi*, the root of which refers to one's internal organs and is sometimes translated "bowels" or "intestines." Affections and emotions have a visceral impact; therefore, this word

signifies a powerful kind of feeling. Much like *sympathetic*, the expression calls for being so affected by the pain of others as to feel it deeply, following the kind of tenderhearted compassion God, through His Son, has for sinners.

Observe how a mother or a father acts toward their child; for example, when a mother sees her child enduring anguish, her whole inward being is moved, and her heart within her body. Now Peter will teach by this, that we should conduct ourselves toward one another like those who are truly friends by blood, as with them the whole heart is moved, the life, the pulse, and all the powers; so here also, we should be heartily kind and motherly, and the heart should be thoroughly penetrated. Such a disposition should one Christian bear toward another. -Martin Luther

### **HUMBLE IN SPIRIT**

"Humble in Spirit," is actually one word in the Greek, *tapeinophrones* meaning "humble-minded." Humility is arguably the most essential all-encompassing virtue of the Christian life. Paul used a form of this Greek word in Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." Years earlier Jesus demonstrated the importance of His own example of humility when He said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Ask we reflect on all of these virtues, where do we see all of them rolled in to one? Jesus Christ! The greatest living peacemaker. The ultimate sympathizer, lover, kindhearted person, and the humblest of all, who humbled Himself even unto death.

Every Christian is to have the attitude of Christ. No matter how difficult the circumstances in which we live, we are to be conciliatory, we are to be peacemakers in disposition, and we are to be sympathetic and sensitive to the pain of people and their joy. We are to be sacrificial in our love to one another and those outside. We are to be tender and

compassionate, not ever unkind, critical or indifferent. And we are to bear the spirit of humility.

### **NOT RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL**

A Godly approach to life incorporated not only the right action motivated by the right attitude, but the proper reaction when mistreated. "Not returning evil for evil" begins with an imperative present participle expressing a negative command, which can also mean "stop returning." If a believer is not retaliating to evil with more evil, he must not start; if he is, he must stop.

"Evil" is from *kakos*, which denotes the inherent quality of badness not just bad words or actions. When mistreated by someone with a wicked disposition, believers must not retaliate.

Turning to the matter of speech, Peter warned his readers not to return "insult for insult." The term *insult* means an abusive railing against, cursing or speaking evil of someone and is the root of the word translated "reviled" in 2:23. To engage in such vengeance is an unacceptable response for believers. The apostle Paul sought to have the right verbal response to enemies, "When we are reviled, we bless" (1 Cor. 4:12), and warned other believers not to revile or even associate with those who do.

Rather than retaliating when treated in a hostile way, believers are to respond by "giving a blessing instead." The term translated blessing is the word from which the English word *eulogy* derives. It means to praise or speak well of others.

"Eulogeo" is in the present tense indicating we are to continually eulogize others (not while dead but alive) but not patronizing. How could we bless them? Praying

for their welfare, protection, truly pitying and loving them. 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.

### **INHERIT A BLESSING**

Peter states that believers have been "called for the very purpose that they might inherit (freely receive) a blessing (a gift). The apostle's point is that believers have received the divine, unmerited, and eternal blessing of complete forgiveness of an unpayable debt to a holy God and heavenly life forever with Him, rather than His deserved wrath and vengeance for sin. A believer's freely granting forgiveness to someone who has offended him should be an easy consequence, since both that believer and the offense are so small compared to God's greatness and how He has been offended.

Christians are enabled to do good works—to return a blessing instead of a curse—because of the new life they have received in Christ. But they are also commanded to do good works. We should do what we are now enabled to do.

Similarly, we are promised blessing based on the work of Christ alone, yet we are commanded to do good works in order to receive blessings. We do not work FOR our salvation, but as a RESULT of our salvation. Yet, after we have received the gift of salvation—according to our works—we will receive blessings in this life and the next.

The word "for" at the beginning of verse 10 connects verses 8 and 9 to Peter's quotes from Psalm 34: 12-14, supporting his exhortation that believers must have a right response to hostility. A Christian—described here as "the one who desires life, to love and see good

days," must refrain from speaking anything that comes from the underlying evil of an immoral disposition.

The "tongue" is often unruly and prone to sin: "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell" (James 3:6).

In addition to refraining from verbal retaliation, believers must stop their "lips from speaking deceit." They must be absolutely committed to the truth and opposed to all lying deception, and hypocrisy. These matters of speech are controlled, not at the mouth, but on the inside—as Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, "for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."

Verse 11, drawn from Psalm 34:14, contains four straightforward imperative commands. First, believers are to "turn away from evil." The verb *turn away from evil* connotes an intensely strong rejection of what is sinful—in this context, sinful treatment of others, even those who persecute the saints.

Second, Peter commanded his readers to "do good," what is excellent in quality, what expresses deep down virtue. That contrasts sharply with the contemporary notion of the good life as "doing one's own thing," whatever feels good at the expense of obeying God's will.

The third and fourth imperatives appear together in the command for believers to "seek peace and pursue it." The verbs translated *seek* and *pursue* both convey an intensity and aggressiveness of action. Implicit in the phrase is the analogy of the hunter vigorously tracking down his prey.

Peace denotes a constant condition of tranquility that produces permanent joy and happiness. Christians are to seek peace and hunt for it aggressively. They are to be known as much as possible without compromising the truth.

Peter's quote in verse 12 of Psalm 34:15 vividly fixes the reality that ought to motivate believers to live lives pleasing to God. The psalmist's words describe a sovereign, ruling God who sees all, knows all, holds people accountable for their behavior, and threatens punishment for disobedience. But for Peter, the primary issue here is not judgment but God's gracious care for His people.

"The eyes of the Lord" is a common Old Testament phrase that relates to God's special, caring watchfulness over His people. Sometimes the phrase indicates God's judgmental watchfulness, but here the emphasis is on His omniscient awareness of every detail of believers' lives.

God is also looking "toward the righteous" so that He can "attend to their prayer."

The word translating *prayer* means "entreaty," "petition" or "supplication," and relates to believers' crying out for God to meet their needs. God is always fully aware of everything in the lives of His children. It ought to be a great incentive for believers to live as Peter has outlined, knowing that they can have confidence that the Lord is always watching and waiting, ready to hear and answer their prayers.

On the other hand, "the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." In contrast to "the eyes of the Lord," which refers to watchfulness, the Old Testament concept "face of the Lord" refers to judgment. His "eyes" represent His all-seeing omniscience, whereas His "face" in this context represents the manifestation

of His anger and displeasure. God's wrath "is against those who do evil" and those who disobey His Word.

Christians, whether today or in Peter's time, have always had to contend with a hostile world. But they can live humbly, respond to persecution in a Christ like manner, and adhere to God's standard of authority because they have the promise that even in the midst of trying circumstances God is watching over them, protecting them and ready to extend His blessings.