

EXHORTATIONS TO BE A GODLY CONGREGATION

1 Pet 3.8-9b

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In 1 Peter, Christians (1.2) are exhorted to follow Christ's example (2.21) in suffering and in holiness (1.15-16). We must live as God's chosen people in a profane world, as aliens to bring glory to God in a hostile world. Whether subjects (2.13-17), slaves (2.18-25), wives (3.1-6), or husbands (3.7), there is a distinctively Christian/holy/godly way to live which will distinguish us from unbelievers and reflect God's glory.

"Finally, all of you" must (3.8, moral duty) be a godly congregation together. N.B.: *Christian virtue elevates the quality of all interpersonal relationships, both within the church and with those outside.* Profound! (cf. 1 John 4.20-21). You cannot love God *and* hate the one God loves. Cain killed Abel and wronged his Creator and parents. Popular isolated individualism needs to embrace this. "If you think you are a spiritual person, who are you spiritual with?" An isolationist is evil: "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment" (Prov 18.1 ESV; cf. 1 John 2.19). The NT expects every Christian to be a church member. "All believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches" (1689 LBCF XXVI.12). Beware! A wandering, wayward sheep is more vulnerable to the wolf.

1 Pet 3.9 calls us to love society at large. Integrity permeates one's whole life and all relationships—not just with fellow Christians.

These graces are not natural (i.e., from us) but spiritual—the character of Christ and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You will not "just feel like" doing them because of your sinfulness. Besides, the world and the devil work against these things, so you must *fight* for them. This is a matter of spiritual warfare.

These are **gospel imperatives** to real Christians, temples of the HS. Peter builds on aforementioned **gospel indicatives** (e.g., 1.3-5).

If godliness were an orange, these would be seven sections. Each is similar in its "orangeness," yet each is somewhat distinct. Cf. Paul's similar but not identical description (Rom 12.9-16) → one Christ, consistent counsel. The Christian ethic amounts to LOVE, the Golden Rule (Matt 7.12). Every single one of these things describes how you all want others to treat you.

1: BE AGREEABLE (3.8a). "Be ye all of one mind."

"Have unity of mind" (ESV), "let all be harmonious" (NASB), "you should all agree among yourselves" (NJB), "a unity based on being of the same or similar mind or thoughts" (DBLSD #3939), "congenial" ("of the same nature, disposition," MWCD). This is not mindless groupthink where a fallible leader is slavishly followed, but a unity of judgment among regenerate, Spirit-filled, clear-thinking and Bible-believing brethren. Some disagree just because they are disagreeable "CAVE people" (**C**hristians **A**gainst **V**irtually **E**verything). This dissenting spirit is sinful, even wicked. See the ideal on display in Acts 2.1; 4.32; cf. Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor 1.10. Unity comes when all are possessed by Christ's spirit and teaching.

2: BE SYMPATHETIC (3.8b). "Having compassion one of another."

"Sympathetic, understanding" (BDAG). Gk. "feel together" (lit.). So members of the same body (1 Cor 12.26). Love makes us identify inwardly with each other's joys and sorrows. The sinful alternative is not necessarily to be mean, but to be apathetic, withdrawn, selfish—to neglect others for self-protection.

3: BE LOVING (3.8c). "Love as brethren." Gk. φιλα-ἀδελφοί (love + brethren).

"Affectionate" (NET). Cf. Gen 13.8; nothing is more common or more ironic than sibling rivalry in God's house. "Brotherly love" is especially right among Christians adopted into God's family, and a special mark of being true followers of Jesus (John 13.34-35).

4: BE COMPASSIONATE (3.8d). Gk. word 2x (Eph 4.32, "tenderhearted").

"Pitiful" → full of pity or compassion. The original literally means "having strong bowels," i.e., feelings → a very emotional term. "Affectionate and compassionate" (LN 25.51). Luther, of this word: "When a mother sees her child enduring anguish, her whole inward being is moved." "The first century was cold and hard-hearted, but Christianity has a tenderizing influence. Today as a result, we have hospitals, homes for the aged, and various charities. Yet how callous our hearts can be to another's pain!" (Wuest).

5: BE FRIENDLY (3.8e). Gk. "friendly, kind" (BAGD), "affable" (Liddell).

Today "courteous" (AV) means "polished manners" (very good), but it stems from "of the court" with the sense of a well-bred person's bearing and behavior—kind and considerate. One who puts others at ease and draws them out because they feel they can trust him. Test yourself.

6: BE LONGSUFFERING (3.9a, slow to anger even when hurt or humiliated)

"Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult" (NET). "Never repay one wrong with another, or one abusive word with another" (NJB). Prohibition of a hateful response to hateful treatment, whether verbally or otherwise. I remember seeing a puppy annoying a big dog, jumping on him, biting his ears, etc., and provoking no reaction. We should be like that. Shame on us that there would be the first instance of evil or insult in the church, but a double shame on retaliation! Totally repudiate this carnality. Have a mind to suffer harmlessly like Jesus from love to him and to the abuser.

7: BE GRACIOUS (3.9b, treat people far, far better than they deserve)

"But giving a blessing instead" (NASB) [of harm or an insult]. To "bless" others here is to speak well (Gk. *eulogeo*) to them and to pray for them, and implies loving them and doing good to them (Matt 5.43-48).

Brethren, I am glad for this text today. As your pastor I urge you to self-examination, repentance, and reformation. Even old friendships are like gardens that need constant weeding and cultivating. Look around you. These are the very people you are called to love. You may need to pull up some relational weeds by reaffirming your love and asking forgiveness. Your relationship with him and with her is the test of your love to Christ.

MOTIVES TO BE A GODLY CONGREGATION

1 Pet 3.9c-12

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The Christian ethic (holy love) can be described as Peter here (3.8-9a), as Paul (Rom 12.9-21), as David (Psa 34.12-16, Peter cites): 1) don't say bad or dishonest things, 2) depart from evil and do good, 3) seek peace and pursue it. This elaborates what David calls "the fear of the Lord" (Psa 34.11). True religion is the foundation of true love. True worship fuels love. Salvation precedes sanctification. You cannot become a Christian by loving people; you must come as you are, a hateful person (Tit 3.3), to Christ as He is, and He will change your heart and ways. We are never more like Christ than when we graciously love enemies. 3 motives:

1: GOD CALLS US TO BLESS AND BE BLESSED (3.9c)

Command: with respect to the one who hurts or insults you → "bless" them:

It means to forgive those who abuse one and do good to them instead, to speak well of enemies, to invoke God's graciousness upon them, offering the gospel, or to use words of kindness to offer the hope of salvation, to seek the highest good for others (ES1P).

Why? It is not your calling to repay them for their misdeeds (Rom 12.19-20).

Also, "knowing that to this ye were called, that blessing ye should inherit." The Greek for "knowing" → remembering, recalling from memory. "Were called" is passive; God is the one who calls us. The verbs for "called" and "inherit" are plural → "ye," the Christian congregation as the saved.

Put all that together and you get this: gracious treatment of those who sin against you works toward our sanctification and ultimate blessedness, and this is the destiny God has appointed for all believers. God calls you all to exercise the means of grace so you will receive His grace! When we refuse to repay wrongs and treat people far better than they deserve, we are living here and now like members of God's eternal kingdom. We show ourselves sons of God living in amidst a perverse and crooked generation (Phil 2.15).

2: GOD PROMISES HIS OWN A TRULY BLESSED LIFE NOW (3.10-11)

Here he cites Psa 34.12ff., OT "wisdom literature," Jewish philosophy → truisms about life under the sovereign rule of Yahweh, Israel's God.

First, he describes a certain kind of person: "He that will love life and see good days." This describes everyone, so it is an attention-getter and implies a general promise. Follow the counsel given and you will experience a life blessed in the highest sense. The sense is clear in the GNB (Psa 34.11-22):

Come, my young friends, and listen to me, and I will teach you to honor the Lord. Would you like to enjoy life? Do you want long life and happiness? Then hold back from speaking evil and from telling lies. Turn away from evil and do good; strive for peace with all your heart. The Lord watches over the righteous and listens to their cries; but he opposes those who do evil, so that when they die, they are soon

forgotten. The righteous call to the Lord, and he listens; he rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; he saves those who have lost all hope. Good people suffer many troubles, but the Lord saves them from them all; the Lord preserves them completely; not one of their bones is broken. Evil will kill the wicked; those who hate the righteous will be punished. The Lord will save his people; those who go to him for protection will be spared.

God does not promise "your best life now" (the afterlife is best), but if you will fear Him, then he does promise you *a good life now*, even though it may have suffering, sickness, poverty, persecution, and an early death. How can *that* be a good life? → God will observe you with special love. He will hear your prayers with favor. He will eventually save you from all your troubles. He will be near you. Though you may suffer, He will protect you from ultimate harm. He will never punish you for your sins. None of this is true for the wicked!

But you must trust Him for all this. Unbelievers can't live as Christians without the faith of Christians, nor can you. By faith you must turn the other cheek, enduring the pain now, giving generously now, and you CAN, because you know, as God is true, that this is the way YOU YOURSELF are truly and most greatly blessed NOW, in this life. You have God's Word on it.

3: GOD IS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS AND AGAINST THE WICKED (3.12)

This is the cause of a righteous man's truly blessed life NOW, whatever his temporal miseries, and also the cause of a wicked man's truly cursed life NOW, whatever his temporal pleasures.

Since God is righteous and hates sin, he is FOR the righteous (i.e., true Christian believers) and AGAINST the wicked (i.e., everyone else). This reality is described in the distinctive, beautifully poetic Hebrew way, mentioning the Lord's EYES, EARS, and FACE, all anthropomorphic.

FOR THE RIGHTEOUS: 1) His EYES are over (or toward) the righteous.

This is to say that he pays attention to them for the purpose of taking care of them. 2) His EARS are open unto their prayers (context: cries for help in distress). Though it may not appear so, the righteous have God on their side!

AGAINST THE WICKED: 3) "But the FACE of the Lord is against them that do evil." Psa 34.16 adds "to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." NET: "But the Lord opposes evildoers and wipes out all memory of them from the earth." The world obliterates this distinction and thinks God is not against anyone, but they are greatly deceived. God "sets his face" (Heb. idiom for his angry countenance and his harmful intent) against practitioners of evil (Lev 26.17; Jer 44.11; Ezek 14.7-8; cf. Psa 7.11-13).

These twin truths of blessedness for the righteous and the curse for the wicked are great motivations. If you will by Christlike conduct prove yourselves real Christians, then you will inherit the blessing. This is no denial of grace but a recognition of God's grace and justice (John 5.28-29).