

1 Peter 3:8-12
Righteousness – Yes! Evil – No!

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰ For

**“Whoever desires to love life
 and see good days,
 let him keep his tongue from evil
 and his lips from speaking deceit;
¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good;
 let him seek peace and pursue it.
¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
 and his ears are open to their prayer.
 But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

Prayer:

Lord, open your Word to our understanding today and work your sanctifying grace in us, to make us more holy as our Lord Jesus Christ is holy. In his name. Amen.

It is obvious from reading Peter’s writings that he is not a novice in being aware of the struggles in the Christian life. Old bad habits are hard to break, new ways of thinking have to be developed, attitudes have to come under submission to God’s Word, and spiritual battle against the world, the flesh (that is, the old sinful nature), and the devil is the frequent fare, the frequent diet, of the Christian believer.

I don’t think he wants to come under the same description himself that he said about the Apostle Paul, “that some of his writings were hard to understand,” so in this passage Peter speaks plainly – it’s not hard to understand the point he’s trying to get across. The point is that the Christian should pursue righteousness, that is goodness of the godly sort, and at the same time reject evil, reject all forms of evil, reject everything that is opposed to God and raises its fist in opposition to God. So, a way we could summarize Peter’s teaching in this passage is like this:

Righteousness – yes! And evil – no!

As we read through these five verses we see that almost every phrase or sentence can be put in one of these two categories - either righteousness to be embraced or evil to be avoided.

So let’s look at verse 8. Remember, Peter has just been talking to wives and husbands and telling them how they should relate to one another. So he is speaking to Christians, to Christians in the churches in Asia Minor that he is writing.

[Wayne’s summary]:

The context here is interpersonal relationships in the church. There are certain attitudes and behaviors we should exemplify towards one another, but sometimes we fail – we may say something that was not loving, that was hurtful – or any number of sinful actions common to humanity. But in the church we must bear with one another’s weaknesses and sins, we must forgive one another, and support and uphold one another in our various struggles.

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

This verse is an exhortation for all the people in these churches to pursue 5 specific Christian virtues in their relationships with one another. Those are:

- a) Unity of mind – that is, being in agreement with one another in the essential matters of life and of faith and of fellowship and mission in the world.
- b) They should have sympathy for those who are suffering, whether it is from health problems – physically or mentally – or financial or relationship problems – we need to suffer with them – help carry their burdens. These Christians should love one another as much or more as they would love members of their own blood-related families.
- c) Having a tender heart is so important. It is easy in our sinful flesh to be mean to people, to be uncaring and unsympathetic. We need to be touched with concern for the suffering and sins of other people. Peter was a rough, brash fisherman but he had learned to have a tender heart towards his suffering brothers and sisters.
- d) Humility, not arrogance, should mark our relationships with one another. To have a mindset of humility – recognizing the greatness of God, the holiness of God – being in the fear of God – yet recognizing our own sins and indebtedness to God – is always a safe and good mindset to have. ***A humble mind will carry us a long way toward positive relationship with others.*** I don’t mean being a doormat – but recognizing our true place before God and our equality as saved sinners with others.

⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling,

Definition of reviling: to criticize someone strongly, or say unpleasant things to or about someone:

Now Peter tells us some things we need to avoid – to put away from our lives – it is a vengeful spirit – a “pay – back” mentality – “you did this to hurt me, so I’m going to do something to hurt you.”

When people revile us, that is, criticize us and say bad things about us, we should not revile them back – criticize them and say bad things about them.

Prov. 20:22 -
Do not say, (A)“I will repay evil”;
(B)wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you

Prov. 24:29 - Do not say, (A)“I will do to him as he has done to me;
I will pay the man back for what he has done.”

Matt. 5:37 - ³⁹ But I say to you, (A)Do not resist the one who is evil. But (B)if anyone (C)slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matt. 5:34 - ⁴⁴ But I say to you, (A)Love your enemies and (B)pray for those who persecute you,

Luke. 6:27-28 - ²⁷ “But I say to you who hear, (A)Love your enemies, (B)do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ (C) bless those who curse you, (D)pray for those who abuse you

Rom. 12:17 - ¹⁷ (A)Repay no one evil for evil, but (B)give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

Rom. 12:19 - ¹⁹ Beloved, (A)never avenge yourselves, but leave it^[a] to the wrath of God, for it is written, (B)“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Rom. 12:20-21 - ²⁰ To the contrary, (A)“if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1 Thess. 5:15 - ¹⁵ See that (A)no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always (B)seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

You see, in all these Christian behaviors – it is the example and model of the Lord Jesus Christ that is our standard and goal.

1 Pet. 2:23 - ²³ (A)When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, (B)but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Isa. 50:6 - (A)I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.

Jesus' example:

Matt. 26:67: -⁶⁷ Then (A)they spit in his face (B)and (C)struck him. And some slapped him,

Luke 22:63 - ⁶³ (A)Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him.

(In Olive Grove, Jesus restored the soldier's ear)

Examples of early church:

Acts 7:59-60 - ⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, ^(DP)he called out, "Lord Jesus, ^(DQ)receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ And ^(DR)falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ^(DS)"Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, ^(DT)he fell asleep.

but on the contrary, bless,

Jesus: Luke 6:28 - ²⁸ ^(BF)bless those who curse you, ^(BG)pray for those who abuse you.

Rom. 12:14 - ¹⁴ ^(A)Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Another example in the early Christian church was a lady named Blandina. She was suspended on a piece of wood affixed in the ground and placed in an area to be food for wild beasts. Her earnest prayers both encouraged the group that was being martyred with her, but also kept the wild beasts away from her. The guards returned her to the prison. Again she was brought out to be tortured and her faith so outraged the crowd that she and the young person (who was with her) were greatly strengthened. They were unmercifully punished. She was finally slain by a sword and is now listed among the Christian women martyrs. By her steadfastness and courage she encouraged her fellow Christians who were also being tortured.

<https://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/christian-women-martyrs-faq.htm>

for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

To bless others and not lash out at them is a divine calling, a divine commission – it is part of our Christian job description and responsibility.

1 Pet. 2:21 - ²¹ For ^(A)to this you have been called, ^(B)because Christ also suffered for you, ^(C)leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

What Peter does next to reinforce his exhortation to be humble and bless others who may treat us badly is he quotes from Psalm 34:12-16. He is turning to the Word of God to back up his commands to the churches

¹⁰ **For**

**“Whoever desires to love life
and see good days,
let him keep his tongue from evil**

Psa. 15:3 - who (A)does not slander with his tongue
and does no evil to his neighbor,
nor (B)takes up a reproach against his friend;

Psalm 39:1 - I said, "I will (B)guard my ways,
that I (C)may not sin with my tongue;
I will (D)guard my mouth with a muzzle,
so long as the wicked are in my presence.

and his lips from speaking deceit;

Psalm 32:2 - Blessed is the man against whom the Lord (A)counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit (B)there is no deceit.

James 1:26 - ²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious (A)and does not bridle his tongue but
deceives his heart, this person's (B)religion is worthless.

1 Pet. 2:1 - (A)So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all
slander.

1 Pet. 2:22 - ²² (A)He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

Rev. 14:4-5 - ...who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed
from mankind as (M)firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ⁵ and (N)in their mouth no lie was
found, for they are (O)blameless.

Note: key aspect of following Lamb is they were truth-speakers and not liars.

Examples of deceivers:

Genesis 27:19

Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up,
please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me

Genesis 37:31 -

So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the
blood;

Matthew 2:8

And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and
when you have (A) found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

Acts 5

Ananias and Saphira

Example of liars:

The original liar and deceiver:

John 8:44 - . You are of your father **the devil...** **there is** no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he **is a liar** and **the** father of lies.

Examples of truth-tellers:

John 8:55 – But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, **I would be a liar** like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.

) **Matt. 26:63-64**

And the high priest said to him, (C)“I adjure you by (D)the living God, (E)tell us if you are (E)the Christ, (G)the Son of God.”⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, (H)“You have said so. But I tell you, from now on (I)you will see the Son of Man (J)seated at the right hand of Power and (K)coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Peter – Acts 2:22-24

²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, (Y)a man attested to you by God (Z)with (AA)mighty works and wonders and signs that (AB)God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, (G) (AC)delivered up according to (AD)the definite plan and (AE)foreknowledge of God, (AF)you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ (AG)God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because (AH)it was not possible for him to be held by it.

¹¹ **let him turn away from evil and do good;**

Job 28:28 -

‘Behold, (A)the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
and to (B)turn away from evil is understanding.’”

Isa. 1:16-17 - A)Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;

remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;

(B)cease to do evil,

¹⁷ learn to do good;

(C)seek justice,

correct oppression;

(D)bring justice to the fatherless,

plead the widow's cause.

Prov. 14:16 - (A)One who is wise is cautious^[a] and (B)turns away from evil,
but a fool is reckless and careless.

Prov. 16:6 - and by (B)the fear of the Lord one (C)turns away from evil.

let him seek peace and pursue it.

Mark 9:50 - (C)Have salt in yourselves, and (D)be at peace with one another.”

Rom. 12:18 -¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, (A)live peaceably with all.

Rom. 14:19 - ¹⁹ So then let us ^(A)pursue what makes for peace and for ^(B)mutual upbuilding.

Heb. 12:14 - ¹⁴ ^(A)Strive for peace with everyone, and for the ^(B)holiness ^(C)without which no one will see the Lord.

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

Psa. 33:18 - Behold, ^(A)the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
^(B)on those who hope in his steadfast love

Psa. 145:18 – The Lord is ^(A)near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him ^(B)in truth.

and his ears are open to their prayer.

John 9:31 - ³¹ We know that ^(A)God does not listen to sinners, but ^(B)if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. [blind man to the Jews]

Again, as in the case of husbands needing to honor and uphold their wives – if they don't, then their prayers will be hindered. So here, the Lord's ear is open to the prayers of the righteous.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Lev. 20:3 - ³ ^(A)I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary ^(B)unclean and ^(C)to profane my holy name.

Jer. 21:10 - ¹⁰ For ^(A)I have set my face against this city for harm and ^(B)not for good, declares the Lord: ^(C)it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.'

Jer. 44:11 - ¹¹ “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ^(A)Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah.

1 Pet. 4:17 - ¹⁷ For it is time ***for judgment*** ^(D)to begin at the household of God; and ^(E)if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who ^(E)do not obey the gospel of God?

Rom. 2:9 - ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress ^(A)for every human being who does evil, the Jew ^(B)first and also the Greek,

Run of the argument (textual emphasis)

v. 8: positive virtues – what to do, embrace, incorporate

v.9-12 – what to reject – what not to do:
 Repay evil with evil
 Repay reviling with reviling

What to do:

Bless others who revile you
 Reject the use of the tongue for evil and deceit.
 Do good.
 Seek peace and pursue it.

Three ways to live a long, good life:

1. Holy, not unholy use of the tongue.
2. Turn from evil and instead do good.
3. Seek peace and pursue it.

Why do the good?

The Lord sees the righteous
 The Lord's ears are alert to the prayers of his people.
 The Lord is against those who do evil.

Main Idea: pursue righteousness and goodness, and reject evil and reviling.

Summary text: Phil. 2: 12-13 ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for (C)it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for (D)his good pleasure.

Observations/Applications

1. Relevance of the OT/Psalms to early Christianity and for us
2. Modeling of the Lord Jesus Christ (and apostles and church history)
3. Seriousness of evil – need to totally reject every form.

Righteousness – Yes! Evil – No!

4. Active, not passive, sanctification process
5. Danger of igniting the Lord's anger against us.

Peter is giving his people, and all the people of God, his apostolic exhortations which are really apostolic commands, and he leans heavily on Psalm 34.

These commands in Psalm 34 were given to the People in the old Covenant but in the new Covenant we have the permanent, indwelling HS, so we have the power by the grace of God to live this kind of life – blessing others even when they curse us or mistreat us.

So may our speech and all of our conduct bring blessing and good to others, even if they do not treat us kindly or even abuse us, for in so doing we follow in the steps of our Lord, and his face will shine on us.

Prayer:

Lord help us to be a blessing to others, especially those in the church. Even if we offend or hurt one another, help us to forgive and return good and blessing to them, instead of retaliation. Help us embrace righteousness and reject evil in our lives. Help us follow our Lord's steps – speaking truth and healing, seeking peace and pursuing it. Thus your name will be exalted in our lives and others will gain benefit from our Christ-like responses. In our Savior Jesus' name we pray.

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