

## A Study of First Peter

### Living as if Our Future Depends Upon It (1 Peter 3:8-12)

“Faith is full of good works. It believes as if it did not work, and it works as if it did not believe.”  
~ Thomas Watson

#### I. An Introduction

In 3:8-12, Peter will summarize the content of 2:11-3:7. This section not only concludes his discussion pertaining to particular human relationships (i.e., a citizen to his/her government, a slave to his/her master, and a wife and a husband), it also provides a general principle for all relationships. Vital to his argument, Peter employs the use of Psalm 34 to “bring the Christian reader into solidarity with the experience of Israel through the lens of David, and with the experience and example of Christ as the ultimate righteous sufferer, encouraging a present response of obedience while awaiting the ultimate blessing of vindication” (S. Christensen, “Solidarity in Suffering and Glory,” *JETS* 58.2. [2015], 351).

#### II. General Instructions (3:8-12)

v. 8 - Peter provides a list of five descriptors that should describe their behavior (a similar list is found in Romans 12:10-17). Note the following:

- *Harmonious*. The call for unity is stressed frequently in the New Testament (Rom 15:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:1-2). While the church may be a collection of saints, she is also a group of *sinners* saved by grace!
- *Sympathetic*. The notion behind this term suggests entering into the experience of others. We are to share in the joys and sorrows of others (Rom 12:15).
- *Loving*. One commentator argues that the construction of this list accentuates the importance of loving one another (Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 163-64).
- *Compassionate*. This word implies a feeling of concern for others, which is expressed in a tangible way. “Compassion” is putting love into action.
- *Humble*. Humility does not permit the existence of pride or self-centeredness (Prov 5:6; Matt 23:12).

v. 9a - The believer is not only called to forego revenge, the believer is also expected to bless the persecutor (Matt 5:44; Lk 6:27-29, 35)!

v. 9b - The reason for such a response is based upon the final phrase—a phrase that is debated by scholars. The confusion resides with what the identification of “this” is in the phrase “in *this* you were called”. Theologically, the “this” would seem to be forward looking. In other words, one blesses because he/she has been blessed (see Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 127). However, the grammatical construction suggests otherwise (modifying what precedes is seen earlier in 2:21-25). Most likely the “this” refers back to blessing one’s enemies, thus, making one’s inheritance dependent upon his/her blessing of others.

Such a rendering of verse 9 would seem to imply that works are essential for salvation. What evidence from 1 Peter could you cite that this verse is not teaching righteousness by works? See 1:3, 5, 23; 2:9; and 2 Peter 1:5-11.

One commentator aptly warns, “Paul was hardly suggesting that believers will live perfectly and that such perfection is necessary to obtain an inheritance. But he was insisting that a transformed life is necessary to obtain an inheritance” (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 168).

vv. 10-12 - Peter appeals to Psalm 34 as support for his general instructions. As we have already noted, Psalm 34 was previously cited in this epistle (see 2:3). So significant is this psalm to 1 Peter, that several scholars have argued that the entire letter was a sermon based upon this Old Testament passage (e.g., W. Bomemann and S. Woan).

This psalm is most fitting for Peter’s audience who are in need of encouragement to persevere in the midst of suffering.

“love life and see good days” - One could argue that this phrase not only speaks of the future blessing awaiting God’s people (1:13), but also, this blessing is for the present (see 1:8, 9, 17; 2:2, 19-20; 3:1-2). Certainly Psalm 34 expected blessings in this life, such as the Lord caring for us and answering our prayers.

Psalm 34 was penned by David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, the king of Gath (1 Sam 21:10-15). “The psalmist invites the people to join him in praising the LORD for delivering him from all his troubles and to experience the LORD’s goodness for themselves by following the instructions he gives them” (A. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:747).

The phrase “loving life” “suggests an enjoyment of life and contentment in the life God has given, no matter what the outward circumstances (cf. Eph 5:20; Phil 4:4, 7, 11; 1 Thess 5:16-18)” (Grudem, *1 Peter*, 158).

vv. 10b-11 - The specific nature of righteous conduct is now highlighted. Note the following:

- *Proper use of the tongue.* Throughout Scripture the tongue serves as a barometer of one’s heart (James 3:1-12; 1 Pet 2:1).
- *Performing acts of goodness.* This reiterates 2:9 (also, see Rom 12:18). “Therefore the ‘desire to enjoy (eternal) life (3:10) should motivate a person to bless those who revile him” (J. Piper, “Hope as the Motivation of Love,” *NTS* 26.6 [1980], 229).
- *Actively seek peace.* Peace serves as bookends to this entire epistle (see 1:2; 5:14).

v. 12 - Those who seek to live out their salvation will receive the Lord's blessing, namely, a promised inheritance (3:9), an abundant life—here and in the future (3:10), and a listening ear to our prayers (3:11).

“the Lord's face is against those who do evil” - This phrase means the Lord will deliver punishment. Failure to seek the Lord bears consequences—consequences with eternal ramifications.

The final two verses of Psalm 34, though not cited in this epistle, echo 1 Peter 3:12.

### III. Intersect

A. An eternal perspective creates an eclipse of the temporal pleasures of life and exposes our self-centeredness. Our eschatology (study of the end times) is always Christological (study of Christ), not anthropological (study of man)!

1 Peter 1:13 -

B. If Christianity is Christ, and if Christ is compassion, love, humility, and grace, then Christianity's finest expression is compassion, love, humility, and grace.

Colossians 3:12-17 -

“We are not justified by doing good works, but being justified when we do good.”  
~ William Jenkyn

**For further thought . . .**

*Based upon our study this morning, you may want to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:*

Reread 1 Peter 3:8 and note the five adjectives that should mark our lives as believers. Identify one of these traits listed below that needs attention in your own life.

- *Harmonious.* Romans 15:5.
- *Sympathetic.* Romans 12:15.
- *Loving.* John 15:12.
- *Compassionate.* Colossians 3:12.
- *Humble.* Proverbs 11:2

Commit to memorize the passage listed above with the particular trait you selected. Also, spend some time each day praying through this passage. Ask the Lord to show you how you might grow in this specific area.