

Attitudes to Change Your World

1 Peter 3:8-12 (09/25/16)

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1 Peter 3:8-12 *To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For "The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. 11 He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

Do you love life? Are you enjoying good days? Do you love getting up in the morning and going out there to do your job with a joyful, happy spirit? Are you enjoying every day as a gift from God and blessing the people in your life: your spouse, your kids, your friends, fellow workers, your boss, your neighbors? All the people who come in contact with you?

Or are you an Eeyore – pessimistic, gloomy, depressed, sour and dour? Do you look at your life as hard, unfair, tough, miserable? God has good news for you this morning. He has called you to inherit a blessing and to bless all the people in your world. God never said it was a virtue to be down and murky and miserable. God delights to see His people happy, joyful, loving life. You can see it in verse 10 – loving life and seeing good days, regardless of what's happening.

As a believer in Christ, you are not controlled by hard circumstances or nasty people. You are controlled by your heart filled with God's Spirit. Let the world fight, sue, divorce, hate, slander and rage. God's people are here to display the sin-conquering, love-nurturing power of Christ, of grace, of what mercy really looks like. We're here to shine our lights in the darkness and to learn and grow to be like Christ, who suffered evil, enduring insults, but trusted God and brought forth our salvation.

Let's follow Peter as he brings this section on submission to a close. He says, "To sum up..." meaning, "I want to give you a series of godly virtues to be sure to live out as believers in this world." He called us to submit to the government, in the work place, in your marriage, and he gave us Christ as our model! Sometimes life is hard and people won't treat you very well. But how are you to treat people? How are you to really represent Christ? You've been super blessed by God; now you need to bless everyone in your world. Then you will love your life and see good days, even when mistreated. We're going to look at four ways to bless all the people in your world and at the same time experience God's blessing in your own life.

First, you will bless people in your world by nurturing Christ-like heart attitudes – v. 8 *To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.*

"All of you." God is talking to every person who knows Christ here, regardless of your status. You are here in this world to shine the blazing light of His glory wherever you are and whoever you are. You're in middle school, high school, college, in your first job, running your own business, raising a family, looking at your autumn years; you're male or female, white or black, American or Asian. If you have come to Christ, if you are born again, if you are trusting in Christ alone as your Savior, you have a home in heaven, Christ is interceding for you at God's right hand, you are indwelt by Christ's Spirit every moment of your life, and you are being kept by God's power Monday through Sunday. Now God says you need to be nurturing and developing five Christ-like attitudes to totally change and impact your world! You are representing Jesus Christ every day of your life in a hostile, unbelieving world, so God is talking to you! When you rub shoulders with people, God wants you to display these five attitudes before them.

#1 – Harmonious means thinking the same thing, being in agreement, working together with the same mindset with others. It's the opposite of being cantankerous and contrary. Some people are just unreasonable, cranky, grouchy, grumpy, and bad tempered. They'll disagree about anything. Satan loves

nothing more than to set believers at odds with one another, to stir up conflicts in a church that go unresolved and lead to secret hatreds and bitterness. Don't let that happen! We're all on the same team, playing the same game for God's glory, fighting in the same war with the same Savior and cause, and opposing the same enemy, the devil! God's people need to be committed to the same truth, the same love, the same purpose and cause.

This doesn't mean every one agrees on everything. There's room for differences in opinions, as long as those differences don't affect God's truth. There are certain non-negotiable doctrines at the center of Christianity that everyone in the body of Christ must be committed to: the inspiration of the Bible, the trinity, the incarnation, Christ's virgin conception, His substitutionary sacrifice on that cross for sinners, His resurrection and ascension, the doctrines of the gospel – these solas we have on our banner for you to read and understand. These are not up for debate; to deny any of them is to deny the faith. There are other doctrines that you may not understand, haven't studied yet, or may differ from what our church holds. That's ok. Just be harmonious by continuing to study God's Word and agreeing not to teach in the church those doctrines which are contrary to what our church teaches.

#2 – Sympathetic means getting inside another's skin or life and feeling what they're feeling. Someone is going through a really difficult time and you assure them you are praying for them and that you are concerned for them. Someone may be really struggling with something in their life. They may be living with a disobedient husband or facing a surgery they are dreading. Letting them know you are praying for them shows sympathy and is encouraging. For a brother to come along and say, "Hey, I know what you're going through. I had the same operation. It's not easy but I survived; you will too!" You may know what it's like to have a difficult child, a failing business, a miscarriage, or any other difficult human experience; you will bless others by your sympathy.

#3 – Brotherly love means you identify with God's people. You realize you have the same heavenly Father, belong to the same Savior, traveling to the same country, heirs of the same kingdom, and are going through this life on earth together as God's people. That doesn't mean you won't have differences. Brothers have differences. John Wesley and George Whitefield had some really strong words against each other over their different theologies, but John Wesley laid that aside and preached the memorial service for Whitefield. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott disagreed sharply over the basis of church unity, but Stott was gracious enough to say Lloyd-Jones was among the seven most important men in his life.

You bless others with your spiritual friendship glued together by mutual faith in Christ. This is why getting to personally know others in the local church is so important. There is no lone-wolf Christian. Coming Sunday mornings and leaving without ever interacting with those around you won't work. Your brotherly love will bless others in the body of Christ only as you become aware of something a fellow believer is going through. You must converse with others, listen to them, and when appropriate assure them, "I'll be praying for God to give you wisdom." Then make sure you do and check with them later to see how they are doing. This is brotherly love; one family going through life's journey together.

#4 – Kindhearted or tenderhearted means you feel deeply for others, especially those in the body of Christ. The Greek word means you feel in your visceral organs – your heart, lungs, liver, bowels. In other words, you aren't cold-hearted in your relationships with others. Paul used the same word in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." Treat others with great grace and mercy, knowing they struggle with sin and a fallen life just like you do.

Be ready to forgive, as God has forgiven you. Never forget how much have you been forgiven. Imagine yourself before a king who could throw you in prison for an enormous debt you could never pay off. You feel hopeless. But instead of doing so, he shows you great mercy and forgives you all that debt with just a word. He had great mercy on you. Then picture yourself remembering a guy who owes you \$10 and going out and grabbing that poor fellow by the neck and nearly choking the daylights out of him demanding payment. What a vile and utterly repulsive act! Now transfer this scene to real life. Every time you take offense at someone's attack or criticism or hurtful word which makes you want to hold a grudge against him rather than forgive, replay in your mind those scenes of what you were forgiven and what you mercilessly demanded. Refusing to show mercy is the opposite of being kindhearted. Bless the people in

your life with this Christ-like attitude that refuses to hold grudges but is quick to give grace and mercy because God has poured out sweet grace and mercy on you!

#5 – Humble in spirit means you esteem others as more important than yourself – Philippians 2:3-5. This is far easier said than done. We tend to think we're pretty good, even though we'd never say it. We need Christ and the cross to deal with our pride. Spurgeon said "the demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. If any man tells me he's humble, I know him to be profoundly proud. Your pride will fight you tooth and nail to maintain influence in your heart." You can bless others by stepping on your pride. People will recognize small displays of humility coming out of your life as you receive correction, admit wrong, are teachable, thankful, and appreciative. You won't be all full of yourself and always turning the conversation to everything you did, everything you know, all the good you've done for others. We are so marinated in pride we can become proud of our humility! Bless people by treating them as more important than yourself.

There you have five heart attitudes that will change your world and bless the people who know you. Review them in your heart and pray God will grow them. None of us fulfills them, but Christ died to save us and change us into people who shine the light of blessing in this world. You need forgiveness and the power of the Spirit to fill and empower you to treat others with these attitudes.

Second, you will bless people in your world by your Christ-like response to evil – v. 9 *not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.*

Nothing so demonstrates Christ than how you respond to evil. Our natural response, you know, is to get even, to pay back in kind. "He punched me, I punch him. He makes a snide, critical comment about me, I'll be sure to pay back the 'compliment.' Who is she to say that when she does the same thing?" Sadly, that's just the way our sinful heart works!

But God over and over absolutely forbids us to return evil for evil in Romans 12, 1 Thessalonians 5, and right here in 1 Peter. God says in no uncertain terms we must never do this! Look at Christ when they insulted Him. Did He punch out their lights? Did he retaliate, "Why, you worthless creatures, after all I've done for you!" No, He blessed them instead. "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." And it's not just don't react sinfully, but we are to bless them. Bless means speak well of them. Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Why should you bless others, even your enemies? Because God called you to Himself to totally bless your life! Did you deserve it? Not in the least. There was not one iota of sinless good in your heart, yet He blessed you by giving you His Son! God blessed you; so in turn, bless everyone you know. Talk to yourself, "I'm so blessed. God has so richly blessed me. I'm going to inherit His blessing and I don't deserve any of it. Lord, help me to respond with blessing others in my life, even to evil stuff, even to insults and snide comments."

Third, you will bless the people in your world by your Christ-like words – v. 10 *For, "The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit."*

Now Peter goes back to David in Psalm 34. David is being chased by Saul out in the wilderness. David could have turned him into royal shishikabob at least twice, but refused to return evil for evil. Then he writes this wonderful Psalm. In spite of all the evil coming against him, David starts by blessing the Lord at all times. He delights in the Lord, trusts in the Lord, tastes the goodness of the Lord, and teaches you how to love your life and enjoy good days. Who doesn't want good days? Days filled with zestful living with exciting purpose for your God? Jesus came to give you life more abundantly, a life filled with joy and peace, and all of this good life right smack dab in the middle of this nasty world. How?

The first thing you have to do is guard your tongue. Everyone knows that it's our tongue that gets us in the most trouble. We say things we regret. Remember, Jesus said the mouth speaks from what fills the

heart! (Luke 6:45). God says, “Keep, cease, stop!” Guarding the tongue is the energetic restraint when tempted to speak a word of evil. Oh, how easy to let that zinger fly! Speaking deceit is more than lying. It’s using words to bait or impress people to think highly of you.

Fourth, you will bless the people in your world by your Christ-like pursuit of peace – v. 11 *He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

The King James says “eschew evil.” That means “run for your life!” Our young family was hiking at Brown County State Park years ago when we heard a rustle in the ground cover near us. A squirrel? A bird? Hmm...no, our eyes fell on a rather large slithering creature only inches from our trail. Now when you meet a full grown timber rattler in the wild, you don’t stop for a conversation. We eschewed that snake, fast! No messing around! Likewise, if you want to bless people in your life and enjoy good days, immediately turn from evil. Quit playing footsies with bad stuff and start doing good stuff. Find ways to serve others.

And then, watch this next command – seek peace. Be a peacemaker; don’t be a troublemaker. When you’ve offended someone, when there are issues between you and your spouse or a brother or sister in the body of Christ, consider Romans 12:17, “As much as lies in you, be at peace with all men.” And notice that last phrase in verse 11– pursue it. Run after it. You said the wrong thing and immediately you can feel it. The peace and harmony just chilled between you and the other person. The harmony has been damaged and peace has fled the relationship. Don’t let the peace flee. Go pursue it! Go after it! Go now! Be reconciled to your brother! Be humble, confess, forgive, and reestablish the relationship. Bless the people in your world by seeking peace and pursuing it.

God’s assurances: v. 12 *For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*

God delights in your efforts to be a blessing to others. He knows it isn’t easy in this world, but you glorify Him when you determine to obey Him, especially from your heart. And look what He promises; His eye is always on you and His ear is always listening to you. And for His enemies who mistreat His people, He assures you that evildoers will not get away with their evil. But that’s in God’s court, not yours.

So What?

Whatever may happen to you in this world, God has already blessed you beyond measure and will continue to do so. Determine to please God by nurturing these Christ-like responses to all the people in your world. Love the life God has given you; bless everyone in your world! May God work in our hearts and nurture these beautiful virtues and responses so we may shine brightly in a world of hurt and hate, pride and arrogance, misery and anger.