

Bless: A Study in 1 Peter 3:8-17

Preached at Harambee by Pastor Michael Ly on May 31, 2009

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 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. For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 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.”

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil - 1 Peter 3:8-17 (English Standard Version)

Introduction

Peter continues to reveal what it looks like to “*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable*” as referred to in 2:12. He has described the believers’ relationship with government, the believers’ relationship with their boss, and the role of both husband and wife in marriage. In all these cases, Peter exhorts us to trust God, placing our fear in Him and not in man, centering in the life and work of Jesus. Peter now summarizes this section of this letter, exhorting all believers on how to live amidst their suffering.

Peter tells us to have five attitudes as a body of believers (v.8):

- **Unity of mind**

Peter has the idea of being like minded and in harmony with one another. Paul has the same idea in Romans 12:16 when says to “*live in harmony with one another*” or “*be of the same mind toward one another*”. Believers united in Christ through the Spirit show how valuable God’s glory. We all put aside our own visions of grandeur and fame and we all put forth God’s name and fame in the world.

- **Sympathy**

The idea is suffering or feeling the like with another - deeply understanding each other. It’s impossible to have unity of mind without sympathy. Otherwise, it’s just a mission statement on a piece of paper or website. This is only possible when we see ourselves for who we really are – a wretched person who has been saved by a glorious and gracious God. I did nothing to deserve this amazing salvation. So I am able to deeply understand other believers because this is true of each of us in Christ. There is a sense of suffering with one another because we understand each other so deeply and understand how amazing it is to be in Christ.

- **Brotherly love**

Peter’s calling us to love each other like family. Everyone is part of your family and that means everyone is included. That also means when it comes to conflict, you resolve it and grow deeper with one another. This is so counter-cultural, as we live in a culture where you can hop from church to church for any reason.

- **Tender heart**

Have you ever been deeply moved for someone else? It seems to come right out of your guts? That's what Peter is talking about here. There is a very deep compassion for one another that makes us soft for one another. When there is rejoicing to be had, we rejoice with one another. When there is sorrow, we have sorrow with one another. When there are victories, we party with one another. When there is defeat, we mourn with one another.

- **Humble mind**

Peter really is describing an attitude like that of Christ's when he went to the cross. *"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."* – Philippians 2:3-4

None of these attitudes can be lived out in isolation. We must be deeply involved within a local body of believers where these attributes can really be lived out. To sum it all up, it's not about me, but about what God is doing in and through the body.

Peter tells us how to respond to the world around us as a body of believers (v. 9):

- **Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but bless**

Jesus promised that we would have trials and tribulations happen to us. He also promised that the world would hate us and not respond well to every good deed to accomplish. When evil or reviling happens to us, every part of us screams for justice. Whenever something evil or wrong is done to us, our automatic response is to do the same. However, Peter reminds of Christ's commands given in Matthew 5:38-42, to bless our enemies.

Peter also quotes Psalm 34, which is David wrote after he was delivered out of Abimelech's presence.

Peter reminds us that Christ is Lord, the Holy One (v. 15)

- **Regard Christ the Lord as holy**

Peter knows that even while we bless people around us, the response will not always be positive. How do we prevent ourselves from carrying ourselves and responding in fear to the culture around us?

Some translations say *"sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts"*. Regardless, the emphasis is on setting Christ as Lord in your life, realizing he is the only one to fear. Christ is the holy one, which means he is set apart for all your worship and praise. Some believe Peter had Isaiah 8:13 in mind, which says *"But the Lord of host, him you shall regard as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."*

When Christ is Lord, we can have no fear of others. Because Christ is Lord, we can respond with gentleness and respect to all who ask us for the hope within us. Are you living in a way that demands questions from others? Are you living in a way that is so other worldly that your family, friends, neighbors desire to know why?