

1 Peter 3:8-12 | “Called to Bless Others”

*Preached on May 23, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 3, verses 8 through 12.

We have been working through the book of 1 Peter, and what a time it has been. *[pause]*

There’s something to be said about taking big chunks of Scripture, and understanding the broad themes of Scripture...

...But there’s something special about taking a small portion of the Bible, like we have been doing, and holding it up like a diamond and seeing all of its intricate details.

So that’s what we will continue to do as we look through and learn from 1 Peter. *[pause]*

**Let’s READ THE PASSAGE.** *[pause]*

Have you ever heard instructions that weren’t really for you?

Let’s say that your school has a gathering, and the principal says, “Eighth graders, you need to report to classroom 205.”

Well if you were a senior in high school that wouldn’t apply to you because you’re not an eighth grader.

But what if the principal said, “I want all of you to leave today at 2pm.”

Now that’s different, and your ears perk up in attention because it applies to you. *[pause]*

I find that this sort of thing happens when you are boarding a plane.

The airport employee will get on the loudspeaker and give some announcements and instructions.

He or she will give instructions to specific groups, at times.

So sometimes they will say, “Those who are first class, you may board now.”

Or, “Those who have a wheelchair, you may come up and report to me.”

But then the airport employee will also give instructions over the loudspeaker to *everyone*.

They will tell everyone to board now, or to have their boarding pass out and ready. *[pauseeee]*

As we have been working through 1 Peter recently, Peter has been giving instructions and commands to specific groups.

He has talked to those who are citizens about their relationship with their governing authorities.

He has talked to those who are servants about how to respond to their masters, he has talked to wives and also to husbands.

**But what if you weren't really a part of any of those specific groups?**

What if you have been sitting through the past 5 or 6 sermons thinking, "Well this isn't really for me, as I don't have a job," or, "I don't have an employer because I'm my own boss."

**Or maybe you were thinking, "I'm not a wife," or, "I'm not a husband."**

Or it could even be, "I'm a widow, so this doesn't necessarily apply to me anymore." *[pause]*

**What instructions are for you?**

Are you just exempt from everything?

**No, you're not, for Peter uses a catch-all phrase to make sure everyone is aware of what they must do.**

He says, "Finally, *all of you...*" *[pause]*

**These commands are aimed at everyone.**

No one can get out of what Peter says here.

**No one is exempt, no one can close their ears, but all must be alert and have their ears perked up and ready to hear what Peter is about to say.** *[pause]*

Like that principal or that airport employee giving instructions to everyone, so Peter now broadens out his audience to everyone. *[pause]*

**So I want everyone, therefore, to listen up, for this directly applies to each of you.** *[pauseeee]*

Now, typically I will wait and give the big point of the sermon at the end, but I'm going to give it up front this week.

*And it's this...*

**A person changed by God's goodness should do good for others.**

Now you may be wondering, 'Where did he get that from in this text?'

**Well, let me explain...**

Every passage is a part of a context, and this passage is no different.

**The context is very important for being able to understand this text.**

If you looked at *only* this portion of Scripture and didn't take the context into account, it would lead you to some wrong conclusions.

You would see these commands and think that you must simply do these things in your own effort and strength.

Or you would see a part of this passage and think that it's talking about works-salvation, which is against Scripture's teaching. *[pause]*

So how does our context help us?

Because it reminds us of the foundation of what Peter assumes his readers to know since he has already laid the foundation. *[pause]*

In the beginning of the book, Peter reminded his readers that they were elect, according to the foreknowledge of God.

He also told them that according to God's mercy, He had caused them to be born again.

They have a living hope and a sure inheritance, kept in heaven for them.

They were even being guarded by God's power through faith for salvation.<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

So these are people ransomed from futile ways, but not only that, they have purified souls and have been born again by the living and abiding Word of God.<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

They are living stones being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.

They are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a people of his own possession.

Once they had not received mercy, but now they had received mercy.

They had truly tasted that the Lord is good, for he had completely changed their lives by giving them new birth and a new identity.<sup>3</sup> *[pause]*

That is the foundation that Peter has already laid, and now he is building on that foundation.

He's showing us that being born again leads to a changed life.

A new identity leads to new action.

They are to live out their identity and live out who they were called to be.

This is why the Bible can emphasize that godly conduct is a sign of a changed life.<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Peter 1:1-5.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Peter 1:18, 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Peter 2:3, 5, 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> See Matt. 7:17-18 and Matt. 12:33-35 for a small sampling of this truth.

This godliness or good works won't be perfect, but they should characterize our life and be something that we are striving for.

We are to live as God's children, reflecting his character in our relationships and interactions with others.

We seek to live as obedient children, being holy like our Father is holy.<sup>5</sup> *[pauseeee]*

You see, Christian conduct matters.

The Christian life isn't idle.

And what God does is he uses passages like this one to compel us to live the kind of life that should be demonstrated in us.

And so this is all why as Christians, our works don't earn our salvation, but they simply flow from being born again. *[pause]*

This is why Paul in Ephesians 2 can say that we have been saved by grace, not works, yet he can also say right after that...

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, *that we should walk in them.*"<sup>6</sup>

And he can also say in Titus 2:14 that Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." *[pauseeee]*

A person changed by God's goodness should do good for others.

Since God has been so good to us in saving us, so now we can't help but do good for others. *[pause]*

Just look at the example of Christ and what he has done for us.

Truly, the grace of God has appeared, training us to renounce ungodliness and to live godly lives.<sup>7</sup> *[pause]*

So keep these things in mind as you see these all-important commands from God.

Think of the foundation.

It's not in your own sweat and willpower, but it's all because we have been changed by a great God. *[pause]*

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<sup>5</sup> See 1 Peter 1:14-16.

<sup>6</sup> See Ephesians 2:8-10.

<sup>7</sup> See Titus 2:11-12.

The goodness of our God leads us to be good to others.

*But how is this goodness shown? Peter instructs us and shows us that...*

### **I. They should love those in the church.**

In verse 8, Peter gives five attitudes that we should have towards others in the church.

**And I believe “attitudes” describes this list well.**

An attitude as defined by the dictionary is: “a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person’s behavior.”

*So these are ways that we think or feel which then are shown in our behavior.*

And what are they according to Peter?

*First, we are to have unity of mind. [pause]*

We should be like-minded, having the same mindset.

**We are to be of one mind, harmonious in our thinking. [pause]**

Now we are all certainly different in our personalities and in our giftings, but that doesn’t mean we can’t have unity of mind.

*But how is this possible when nowadays everyone likes to promote their opinion and put down anyone who thinks differently?*

Because as Christ-followers, our minds ought to be united around Christ.

*Our minds should all reflect the mindset of Christ, and our minds should be centered on what God’s Word says, so that we are all centered and unified around the same thing.*

This only happens the more we are changed by the Word of God, and the more we willingly submit to His Word. *[pause]*

**And when this happens, we all become on the same page in our minds.**

This produces a unity of mind that the world can’t explain. *[pause]*

*I believe this unity of mind can be clearly seen in church business meetings.*

In the past, I’ve been in other churches where many business meetings are *brutal*, as people come with all these different mindsets.

*And what happens is conflict ensues because everyone is coming to the table with a different mindset about what is important and what needs to be done. [pause]*

They don't have unity of mind, but disunity of mind.

They don't have one mind, but they each want to follow their own mind's wants and desires.  
[pause]

This ought not to be so, for we are commanded by God to have unity of mind!

So this is a challenge for us as individuals, but also us as a church body.

Do we have unity of mind as a church?

Let's continue seeking to be like-minded by looking to and submitting to Scripture alone.  
[pause]

The second attitude that Peter calls us to have is sympathy and since the fourth attitude is like unto it, then I'll also talk about that as well here since it's a tender heart.

Sympathy and a tender heart are pretty close in meaning, with a tender heart being deeper.  
[pauseeee]

To have sympathy is to be compassionate.

It's to be sensitive to and seek to understand the feelings and experiences of another person.

It's to feel pity for someone in pain and sorrow.

But it's also to feel joy for someone who has joy.

It's to care about someone so much that when they are going through something difficult, you feel for them. [pause]

Think of the opposite of sympathy.

The opposite would be if someone is sorrowful, then you just don't care.

You are kind of detached from them and you just don't care that others are struggling.

You think, "Eh, glad it's not me." [pause]

To not have sympathy means that you are caring about yourself above all.

You only care about what you are feeling and going through, no matter what others are facing.

That's the epitome of selfishness and a lack of love.

But sympathy shows that I love and care for others.

I care about what they are going through.

I try to understand what they are going through and I show that I care. *[pause]*

Something that I have found is that it's easier to be sympathetic when things are going well for you.

Your life is going smoothly and you hear about someone struggling and you have sympathy.

Yet it gets hard when we ourselves are going through pain and we hear of someone else's pain.

But this command to have sympathy has no exceptions!

It doesn't say to have sympathy unless you are having a hard time. *[pause]*

When we go through something hard and then we hear about someone else going through something hard, it's easy to compare your strugglings.

You start to think, "They may have lost their job, but at least they didn't lose their loved one like me."

No, that's not being sympathetic, that's being totally unsympathetic and uncaring.

That's putting yourself and your struggles above others.

Yes, you may be right that they didn't lose a loved one, but you can still have sympathy for what they are going through.

You can still care. *[pauseeee]*

A tender heart is similar to this, as it is emphasizing compassion.

But it's more *deep* compassion for others.

The word literally points to having strong or healthy bowels.

So this is something that arises deep within us to be tender towards others.

When someone is struggling, something deep in you yearns for them, and your heart is softened for them and what they are facing. *[pauseeee]*

Are you tender-hearted and do you have sympathy for others?

Or does your world simply revolve around *your* experiences and feelings?

It's going to take care and concern for what others are feeling. *[pauseeee]*

And get this: sympathy and a tender heart are commanded by God.

These aren't optional things in the Christian life, but they are commandments.

We so easily overlook these sorts of things, and think nothing of being unsympathetic.

So let's get back to what God wants from us, and seek to be tender-hearted and sympathetic towards others. *[pause]*

To do what God requires is going to take love for others and humility.

Those are the last two characteristics that I haven't talked about yet...

We are called to have brotherly love. *[pause]*

This is a family love that sees others in the church as brothers and sisters, for that is what they actually are.

Yet how often do we view them differently, as we consider them more distant than family?

But that is neglecting what God has made us!

God has brought us all into one family, and we are brothers and sisters, so let's love one another with a brotherly love. *[pause]*

Let's be willing to get to know those in our church deeper, and let's love them like we would our own family.

Take some initiative and do this, don't wait for others.

For you are called to have brotherly love for others. *[pause]*

Call someone up and talk to them on a deeper level.

Do something for someone else, showing love and care.

Imagine the impact that this brotherly love could make on our church body. *[pause]*

Brotherly love prays for others, gives generously to others, serves others, and it basically puts another first.

And that leads me to the last attitude we must have: a humble mind. *[pause]*

A humble mind is practically humility.

It's to be humble, having modest thoughts about yourself.

This is a hard one because everyone tends to struggle with pride to one degree or another.

We think of ourselves more highly than we ought.

We like to compare ourselves with others, and we like to put ourselves first in situations.



But a humble mind doesn't put itself up on a pedestal, but thinks rightly about oneself. *[pauseeee]*

These five attitudes are needed, yet they aren't always easy to do.

All five of these show love for others, and a tendency to show deference for other people.  
*[pauseeee]*

We can only have these attitudes when we think of the goodness of God in Christ.

We can have unity of mind as we are all having the mind of Christ.

We can have sympathy and a tender heart remembering the sympathy, compassion, and tender heart of Christ for us.

We can show love to others because Christ loved us first.

And we can have a humble mind because Christ "humbled himself, by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."<sup>8</sup> *[pause]*

So we can do these things only because we are reflecting the same attitude and mindset of Christ, being centered on him. *[pauseeeee]*

How are you doing with this list of attitudes?

Do you have unity of mind with those in our church body?

Are you sympathetic or unsympathetic towards others who are facing difficulty?

Do you show brotherly love in practical ways towards others in our church?

Do you have a tender heart that shows compassion for others?

And is your mind humble?

Let's all strive for these things, relying on God's working in us to do them. *[pause]*

*Not only should we love those in the church, but doing good to others is also seen in this way...*

## **II. They should bless those who treat them badly.**

Back in 2006, about 20 minutes away from where I grew up in the Lancaster area, there was a horrible shooting that took place.

A man walked into a one-room Amish schoolhouse and eventually killed 5 young girls, and injured 5 others, before killing himself.

But what followed was an amazing story that fascinated the media.

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<sup>8</sup> Philippians 2:8.

The Amish community responded to this tragedy with forgiveness and blessing rather than retaliation or any sort of mean words in return.

In fact, on the day of the incident, a grandfather of one of the girls that was killed extended forgiveness to the killer.

After that, some Amish neighbors went and consoled the killer's family.

And the killer's family was even invited to the funeral of one of the young girls who was killed.<sup>9</sup>

That's an extreme example, yet an example nonetheless, of what Peter is calling us to do.

*[pause]*

Peter calls us not to repay evil for evil, or to repay reviling for reviling, but to bless.

The normal response of our sinful nature is to retaliate in some way when someone does something evil to us.

Something within us rises up in anger and we want to get them back.

We want to pay them back for what they did.

We want to give them a taste of their own "medicine". *[pause]*

In our mind's logic, we think, "You did this to me, so I'm going to do this to you, for you deserve it in return."

But when we do that, what are we doing?

We are being the arbitrator of justice.

We are taking vengeance into our own hands. *[pause]*

And also think about it, what else are you doing by retaliating in kind?

You are doing evil.

So you are doing something sinful because someone did something sinful to you.

But Peter shows us that it is never right to do something sinful, even if someone does the exact thing to you.

Retaliation of any kind is never an option for a Christian. *[pause]*

Even if someone reviles you, you should not revile back. *[pauseeee]*

Reviling is verbal abuse intended to injure someone.

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<sup>9</sup> "Amish Grace and Forgiveness." *LancasterPA.com*, 2 June 2014, [lancasterpa.com/amish/amish-forgiveness/](http://lancasterpa.com/amish/amish-forgiveness/).

So if someone says something wrong and insulting, you are not called to insult back. *[pause]*

This is hard!

It's hard not to say something mean back to them in order to get them back for what they said, but this is what God commands us to do.

So instead of doing evil in return or reviling back, what should we do? *Bless. [pause]*

Yikes, Peter! Now you are taking it too far, aren't you?

It would be hard enough to do nothing when someone hurts you, but he takes it a step further by saying to bless.

To bless is the opposite of cursing someone.

To curse is asking and wishing for bad to come upon another person.

But to bless is to call down God's gracious goodness on a person.

It's actually wishing good to come upon another, like saying, "May God bless you!"

It is speech that desires positive circumstances for another person.

You are wishing that God would do something good for them. *[pause]*

And the thing is that this blessing has to be genuine, where you genuinely want good for the person who hurt you.

You are saying not only, "I don't want to hurt you," but also, "I want good for you." *[pause]*

How can we possibly do this to someone who hurts us?!

First, it takes entrusting the situation with the God who judges justly, which is exactly what Jesus did.<sup>10</sup> *[pause]*

We are giving it to the Lord, but also, this correct response takes a reminder of what Christ has done for us.

When we are reminded how much grace and forgiveness that Christ gave to us, considering we sinned against him, then we are able to extend blessing and forgiveness to others. *[pause]*

But also, it takes great love for them.

Again, this love is motivated by God's great love for us.

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<sup>10</sup> See 1 Peter 2:23.

If a perfect God could love such horrible sinners and bless us in Christ, how could we not love others who are sinners just like us? *[pauseeee]*

**When we bless in response to reviling and evil, we are showing something supernatural.**

We are reflecting God's love, grace, and forgiveness towards others - we are truly being like our Father.

So when someone says something hurtful to you, don't respond *in kind* with hurtful words, but you should respond *with kind* words. *[pauseeee]*

By the way, this isn't just Peter's command, for this is the teaching of Jesus repeated by Paul, too.<sup>11</sup>

And Jesus didn't just say this, but he exemplified it in his own life.

He was reviled and didn't revile in return, when he suffered, he didn't threaten.<sup>12</sup>

Even as he was hanging on the Cross, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."<sup>13</sup> *[pause]*

This is a radical truth!

It goes against everything within us to bless instead of retaliate.

So the only way we can do this is through our radical, life-changing God.

And that's why Peter says, "for to this you were called." *[pause]*

Our calling is to bless others who do evil to us.

**This is one of our motivations to respond this way.**

So when you retaliate and get them back with hurtful words, you are going against your calling. *[pause]*

But why is it our calling?

Because we have been born again by God, we are his children, and we ought to be reflecting His character.

As Peter said earlier, "As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."<sup>14</sup> *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>11</sup> See Matt. 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-36, Rom. 12:9-18, 1 Cor. 4:12, 1 Thess. 5:15.

<sup>12</sup> See 1 Peter 2:23.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 23:34.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 1:15.

So Peter says to not do evil in return for evil, but to bless, and he tells us that we should because it's our calling, but he takes it a little further.

He says, “for to this you were called, *that you may obtain a blessing.*” *[pause]*

The goal or purpose of living out our calling is that we will receive blessing.

So our calling leads to blessing.

Put another way, our calling is the path to blessing. *[pause]*

You see, what this reflects is that those who do good are those who have been changed by the goodness of God.

Your goodness, therefore, reflects the genuineness of your faith and that's why there is blessing for those who do good. *[pause]*

Peter then uses an Old Testament passage to prove this truth.

He refers to Psalm 34:12-16, which talks about how if someone desires to love life and see good days, they should turn away from evil and do good.

And the reason is because God's eyes and ears are on the righteous, but his face is against the wicked. *[pause]*

What's Peter's point in referring to this passage?

His point is that it has always been the case that God's people are called to turn away from evil and to do good.

And it has always been the case that God blesses the righteous and is against the wicked.

This isn't something new, but God's people have been called to do good, and God's blessing rests on those who are righteous. *[pause]*

So the motivation is that if God is against the wicked, why would we live wickedly?

If God cares for and listens to the righteous, why would we *not* pursue a life of righteousness? *[pause]*

So thinking about this deeper, we could say this: live out your identity.

You have been declared righteous in God's sight because of Christ, so now live that way.

Do good and turn away from evil, even when people do evil to you! *[pauseeee]*

How do you respond to someone who does something mean to you?

How do you respond when someone says something hurtful?

Are you looking for ways to get revenge, or are you looking for ways to bless?

We are to be different from the world, and respond to evil with good. *[pause]*

Remember that this is what God has called you to do, as his people are called to keep their tongues from evil, and their lips from speaking deceit.

We are to be the peacemakers of the world, seeking and pursuing peace in all of our relationships.

**So do good, and seek peace, remembering and reflecting your Father's character.** *[pauseeee]*

When that person does evil to you or speaks hurtful words, bless them, and seek to make peace.

Don't be just like them, but be different - be like Christ, who has blessed you so abundantly.

As Paul says so clearly, "Walk in a manner worthy of your calling."<sup>15</sup> *[pause]*

This is what God desires, this is what He has called us to, and this is what God blesses.

We don't do these things to earn salvation, but we do them because we have been captivated by His goodness. *[pause]*

**A person changed by God's goodness should do good for others.**

We think of what God did in Christ.

**We were sinning against Him.**

We were the ones doing evil towards him, and reviling our God by our rejection of Him, yet what did he do in response?

He didn't do evil in response or revile back, but out of love, he did good.

He chose to give eternal blessing through sending His only Son, Jesus, to die in our place and for our sins.

We deserved evil in return, but a good God never does evil, but only good.

He has truly blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.<sup>16</sup> *[pauseeee]*

**With such a good God, who has done so much good for us, how could we not do good for others?**

How could we not be sympathetic, loving, and tender-hearted towards others?

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<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 4:1.

<sup>16</sup> See Ephesians 1:3.

How could we not be humble and unified around Christ?

How could we not bless in return, even when we are treated badly? *[pause]*

It's our calling because it's what our Savior did for us, and he is not only our Leader and Example, but he lives within us.

So let's strive to do good to others, loving others, and responding with blessing even when it's hard.

And we strive, knowing that it is God who works in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Philippians 2:13.