

Submission: A Path To Blessing

1 Peter 3:8-12

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Let's read the passage, I'll read it, you follow with me, then we're going to go back and literally unpack this whole section phrase by phrase. I want you to pay attention to the text. Peter says in 1 Peter 3:8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren,"—that would include 'sistren' as well—"be pitiful, be courteous: 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 Let him eschew"—the King James translation means hate—"evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and [pursue] it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Now, going back to verse 8, Peter opens this section with the word "finally." When he uses that word, "finally," he's not saying he's completing his book or finishing his letter, it's not a word of conclusion, it's a word of summary. You could render that to summarize or to wrap up. What he's referring to is the section on submission. He's not finishing the book, he's summarizing or giving a summation of the doctrines of submission for the believer. He's not concluding the letter.

The submission that we covered in this section began back in 1 Peter 2:12. In that verse, Peter had said that we should live a beautiful life before a watching world, that when they see the way we live, they may be won to Christ, and he referred to it as " . . . the day of visitation." This section started back in 1 Peter 2:12, and we covered that we're to be submissive to the state, 1 Peter 2:13; we're to be submissive in the workplace, 1 Peter 2:18; we're to be submissive in the home, 1 Peter 3:1, 7, remember wives submitting to their husband, husbands loving their wives, giving honor unto them as unto the weaker vessel; and tonight we wrap this section up with submission in the church. He says in verse 8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

The context—get this—is the church. It's talking about the body of Christ, the family of God, the brethren. When the Bible uses that term 'brethren,' it's not saying just the guys, it's referring to all believers—male and female. It's a term that's used for the body of Christ, the family of the church. The context is submission in the church. Submission is not a popular subject today, and even in Christianity it's many times avoided, this idea of that we submit to the government or we submit in the workplace or we submit in our marriage or we submit parents with children. It's not a popular subject, but it is all throughout Scripture. If you're going to love life—enjoy life, see good days, live a beautiful life, be a witness to the watching world—you must learn what it means to live humbly and submissively.

Peter tells us that living in submission is the path to blessing and a happy life. I want you to see the key phrase there in verse 10, "For he that will love life,"—that is, that you will love the walk

with the Lord, you'll love to read the Word of God, you'll experience the life of God in your soul and be blessed, "... see good days." It uses that phrase, verse 10, "... love life, and see good days." That goes back to 1 Peter 2:12, the blessed life. What a blessed life this is to not live for self, but to submit and live for others. That's the key. "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days," the New Living Translation renders that.

If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, seek to be a submissive individual. Everything we covered tonight is directed toward us as believers being submitted in the body of Christ, in the family of God, one to another, even if we are mistreated; and this is also a transitional section. It's going to transition us into the section on suffering. Even if we're persecuted and we're suffering or mistreated or being abused by someone else, we're still to respond in caring for them, in submitting to them.

There are three things you need to cultivate if you're going to "love life, and see good days." First, if you're taking notes, cultivate the right attitude, or you might say attitudes. Go back with me to verse 8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren,"—the King James says—"be pitiful, be courteous."

Peter gives us five attitudes that every Christian should cultivate. They're all a picture of the loving submission of a believer and also they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is almost like a description of a truly Spirit-filled believer. I love the way it breaks down. Let me point out in verse 8 these five attitudes that we need to cultivate, if we're going to enjoy life and see good days. First, we must be like-minded as fellow believers. Notice verse 8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind." In that phrase, Peter's not saying that we must agree with each other on all issues. If you've got two people that agree on everything all the time, one of them is not thinking. This may come as real shock to you tonight, but even husbands and wives don't always agree with each other. I don't want anyone to say, "Amen," right now, but it is true. He's not saying that you all have to think exactly the same thing or agree on all the fine points of theology or agree with how long the worship should go or whether we should have drums with the worship and how we do church. He's not saying that there has to be uniformity, which is pressure on the outside, he's saying there must be unity.

Peter is not saying that we should agree with each other on secondary issues. There are secondary doctrinal issues not essential to orthodox Christianity that it's okay to disagree on. But then there are the essentials that are a part of orthodox Christianity. In essentials, we do need unity; in nonessentials, we need liberty; and in all things, we need love. It's learning what are essentials, what are nonessentials. It's learning what we can disagree about; it's learning what we cannot disagree about. The general focus of our life should be that we should be "... of one mind." This idea "of one mind," as I said, is not a call for uniformity, which comes from pressure on the outside, it's a call for unity of disposition.

You know, there are some churches that try to create unity by having a dress code, and you can tell who they are by how they dress. They also have all their do's and don'ts and legalistic standards by which they create a uniformity in the church, which comes from pressure on the

outside—you've gotta dress this way, you gotta have this translation of the Bible or you're out or you're not spiritual, you gotta worship this way, sing these particular songs—and they try to put pressure on the believers to create unity. That's not unity.

Unity is of the Holy Spirit. Unity comes from the inside. Unity is the work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, and it comes from the work of the Spirit in our hearts. It's united in Spirit or aim or purpose, not uniformity of opinion, but it's a call for unity of disposition—we have an attitude of unity.

The human body is a great example of what we call unity with diversity. You know, you have two hands, ten fingers. Lord willing, you have ten toes. You have two legs. You have a nose. You have ears. You have eyes. You have all this diversity in the body, but it's one body, right? So is the church. The Bible uses that metaphor for the church that we are a body—Christ is the head, we're the body—and that we all need one another, “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.” So, within the church there's what we call diversity—different gifts, different callings, different abilities—but there's also unity as Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one . . . even as [He and the Father] are one.”

Also, this mind or this attitude was also found in Jesus Christ who was submissive. I want you to write down Philippians 2. In Philippians 2, he says, “Let this mind”—this attitude or outlook—“be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought . . . equal with God,”—not something to hold onto, but He emptied Himself, that's that humility, that's that submission—“ . . . and took upon him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Paul says, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The text that I just quoted is what's called the kenosis passage where Christ emptied Himself, took on Him humanity, died voluntarily on the cross; therefore, God highly exalts Him. When he's telling us here that we should cultivate an attitude of being like-minded or that we should all be of one mind, we should have the mind of Christ which humbly submitted to the Father's plan in order that He might redeem us sinners back to God and that we could have the church. It's a great illustration of what Paul is trying to convey to us as believers. Ask yourself, do I have the mind of Christ? Which is —what?— a humble mind, a submissive mind. That I'm humbly serving other individuals, not seeking my own will but the will of God and the good of others.

Here's the second attitude we should seek to cultivate, we should be sympathetic. So, cultivate the right attitude of 1) be like-minded, be all of the same mind, and 2) be sympathetic. This is again in verse 8. Look at it with me. In the King James translation, “ . . . having compassion one of another.” The King James Bible translates this “compassion for one another,” but the word in the Greek is where we get our word sympathetic from or sympathy. The word “sympathy” is a cool word. It actually means that we share together or to fall in together. It's sharing in the feelings of others, whether it's their joys or their sorrows. Someone described

sympathy as your pain and your joy in my heart. I love that. Your pain in my heart or your joy in my heart.

I've had different friends over the years that I felt they had this gift of sympathy where if something good happened to you, they rejoiced; if something bad happened to you, they wept. The Bible says, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." It's your pain in my heart. It's your joy in my heart. It means to feel together, to have a sympathetic, compassionate heart for each other in the body of Christ. Sympathy and selfishness cannot coexist in the same heart. Sympathy and selfishness cannot coexist in the same heart. I'll mention it right now, I was going to wait a little longer, but isn't it interesting that this text comes right after wives and husbands and marriage. Right after husbands and wives and marriage, he says that we should all be " . . . of one mind, having compassion one of another." Oh, how we need to be sympathetic in our marriages. Amen? Oh, how we need to be sympathetic in our friendships. Oh, how we need to be sympathetic and compassionate toward others in the fellowship and in the body of Christ, the church.

William Barclay said, "As long as self is the most important thing in the world, there can be no sympathy; sympathy depends on the willingness to forget self, to step outside self, and to identify oneself with the pains and sorrows of others. It is only when we die to self that we can live for others. Sympathy comes to the heart when Christ reigns within the heart." That could revolutionize not only your marriage but all your human relationships, trying to sympathize or understand and have compassion on others.

Write down 1 Corinthians 12:26 where Paul says, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Again, this is the diversity and the unity in the body—one member is exalted, the whole body rejoices; one member suffers, the whole body suffers with it.

In Romans 12:15, it's where Paul said, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," Ask God to give you a sympathetic heart, again, to be like Jesus. All these characteristics in verse 8 are Christlike. When the Holy Spirit works in your heart, He's trying to produce Christlikeness.

Here's the third characteristic under this first point, " . . . love as brethren," notice that, verse 8. This is where we get our word *philádelphos* or "*philadelphía*," brotherly love; " . . . love as brethren." Do you want to know why? Because we are. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. You know, if you have biological brothers and sisters, you should love them, right? Nobody says, "Right." "You don't know my brothers and sisters." This is you don't get to pick your biological brothers and sisters; you don't get to pick your spiritual brothers and sisters. You come to church, "Lord, why did You choose that person over there? Why did You save them? I don't know why You would do that." Why did He save you? So, we're to love one another. This is the Scripture where he's exhorting us to "*philadelphía*," brotherly love. Not just because you find each other lovable, we are members of the same family with God as our Father, and remember that Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love

one to another.”

Here's the fourth character in verse 8, “. . . be pitiful,”—compassionate. Notice that. In my King James Bible, and I kinda laugh when I see it, it renders that, “. . . be pitiful.” That's not too hard for a lot of Christians to do, is to be pitiful. “Look at that pitiful person over there.” It means to be compassionate. Pity and compassion aren't the same thing. Someone said, “Pity weeps and walks away. Compassion comes to help and stay.” We can feel pity for someone and do nothing. You cannot feel compassion and not be moved. The word “compassion” carries the idea of being moved in a direction, so compassion moves you to help. Pity is just, “Oh, that's too bad. I'm sorry that happened to you,” but you just turn and walk away. Jesus is constantly referred to in the gospels as being moved with compassion. Every time Jesus saw someone in need, He was moved with compassion. He looked out on the crowds and He was moved with compassion. Again, to be more like Jesus Christ. This is a Christian virtue. The world before Christ was uncompassionate. Christianity brought compassion to the world, so we should be Christlike and compassionate.

Then, the fifth, and we'll wrap up this verse 8, “be courteous,”—humble. The King James Bible has “be courteous,” but again this is not talking about opening the door for people, don't eat your food until everyone is there, starting to eat, mind your manners. Courtesy is a good thing, but what it's conveying is the idea of being humble, and the humble person is actually courteous of others. Again, Christ exemplified this virtue. A humble person is a submissive person. He is a courteous, caring person. He's others-centered. God gives grace to the humble, but the proud He knows afar off.

You know one of the best ways, by the way, to be humble is? One of the best ways to be humble is to fix your gaze upon Jesus Christ, to get your eyes on God. So many times we get critical, we get fault-finding, we develop a censorious, critical, fault-finding attitude toward others and we're not courteous, we're not humble, we're not loving, we're not submissive because we've taken our eyes off of Christ and we're looking at other individuals and we're not really focusing on the Lord.

The first thing we need to do is cultivate, verse 8, these right attitudes. We need to be like-minded, we need to be sympathetic, we need to love as brethren. We need to be compassionate, and we need to be humble in the body of Christ. By the way, doing this will fortify us against persecution and suffering. Everyone needs to be a part of a church fellowship where these things are taking place in their relationship to others.

Here's the second, verse 9, cultivate the right response to opposition and persecution. Again, this is just good instruction for life—cultivate the right response. You're not responsible for how people treat you, you're only responsible for how you respond to their treatment. Look at verse 9 with me again, “Not rendering evil for evil,”—good advice—“or railing for railing”—don't be doing that—“but contrariwise blessing;”—here's the positive—“knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” In other words, you're called to be persecuted. You're called to be spoken evil of, but you're not to render “. . . evil for evil, or railing for railing; but . . .

knowing that ye are thereunto called." All that live godly will suffer persecution, then if you respond properly, "that ye should inherit a blessing."

Peter moves from our response to people who mistreat us into these verses. By the way, remember the context? This is in the church. You know, you can actually come to church and have someone mistreat you. That should not happen, but it does. Why? Because we're human. We're human beings. We sin. We fall. We make mistakes. Sometimes people will be hurt in the church and they'll try to find another church. Then, they get hurt in that church, and they find another church. Then, they get hurt in that church, they find another church. You'll never find a perfect church. You know what's been said about that, right? If you ever do, don't join it because it won't be perfect anymore. "Well, they said this," or "He said that." "They hurt my feelings," or "They're not nice." "The Pastor didn't shake my hand," or "I'm not going back to that church." I just thought I'd throw that in. Sooner or later someone's going to rub you the wrong way. Sooner or later someone's not going to be nice, and you need to respond in a Christlike way in the church. So, the response is the same whether it's in the church or from the unbelieving world. Don't return " . . . evil for evil."

Again, remember we just talked about marriage. How good this is for a marriage relationship, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." Someone said there's three levels that we can live on. We can live on the satanic level, evil for good; we can live on the human level, evil for evil, good for good; or we can live on the divine level, good for evil. That's what God wants us to do. Even though people may be evil to us, we're to return goodness back to them.

Peter learned this the hard way when in the Garden of Gethsemane he pulled out his sword, was going to try to take off Malchus' head and all he got was his ear. It's a good thing he wasn't a swordsman, the soldier's head would've been rolling in the dirt and Peter would've been in big trouble. He just got his ear, and Jesus had to pick up his ear (blow the dirt off, it's not in the Bible, but I just see Jesus wiping the dirt off, [blows] getting it off, and sticking it back on the guy's head and slapping it back on), and He healed the guy. That's the J.P. Miller translation. Peter was told by the Lord, "Peter, put away your sword." " . . . for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Aren't you glad that Christianity isn't a religion of swords? Conquering people with swords or violence? We're to show goodness for even evil.

Jesus said it this way in Matthew 5:38-48, the Sermon on the Mount. He said, " . . . do good to them that"—do you evil—" . . . bless them that curse you." Remember in verse 9, too, it's your calling so that we can have a blessed life. So, cultivate the right responses.

Here's the third thing we need to do if we're going to learn to have a blessed life and love life, cultivate a desire for the blessed or spiritual or Spirit-filled life, verses 10-12. In verses 10-12, he's going to quote—listen carefully—from the book of Psalms 34:12-16. So, in verses 10-12, this is a quotation by Peter from Psalm 34:12-16. Some feel that it was taken out of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but I'm going to point out, when we get to the end of verse 12, that Peter left out a statement that is so key to understand. Peter is quoting from Psalm 34:12-16. He's using Scripture to support what he just taught.

Now, we should live by the Word of God, that's a principle implied there. We should basically live by God's Word. Our attitudes, our actions, our service to the Lord should all be governed, controlled, and guided by the Book, the Bible. This is why we need to study the Word, feed on the Word, teach the Word, be grounded in the Word of God if you want, verse 10, to “. . . love life, and see good days,” which is another way of saying, if you want the blessed life. If you want to see good days, then try not to run away from your problems. Don't just endure life, but enjoy life, even when pain and sorrow and persecution come in. This is where it's very clear that he's going to be transitioning, beginning in verse 13 of this chapter to the subject of persecution and suffering for the believer.

Now, if you want to have the blessed life, and I'm sure you do, notice these three things. First, control your tongue. Look at verse 10, “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him”—here it is, number one—“refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” Don't raise your hand, but how many of you have ever gotten in trouble because of what you said? Why are you laughing? How many have been unable to tame the tongue and thought, Oh, I wish I wouldn't have said that! Or you say things that you wished you didn't, and you get in trouble or you cause problems. You've read the book of James, right? “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” The most ferocious beast on planet earth makes it's den just behind the human teeth, the tongue; and would to God that we could control that. We can't. We need the Holy Spirit. Isn't it interesting that he says, “If you want to have a blessed life, if you want to see good days, if you want God's blessings on your life,” then, “let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” That is not easy. Amen? Only the Holy Spirit can control our tongues. We need the Holy Spirit's help.

Here's the second thing you need to do if you want the blessed life, you need to turn away from sin. Look at the first part of verse 11. He says, “Let him eschew”—in my King James Bible, which means hate—“evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and [pursue] it.” The idea is turn away from evil. So, control your tongue by surrendering to the Holy Spirit. Let Him fill you. Whatever's in the well will come up in the bucket. Whatever's in your heart will come out of your mouth, so if you want to change your speech, you work on your heart, and then you turn away from sin. We must swerve. The phrase “turn away” means to swerve away or to turn away, to avoid. It means swerving to avoid. We must, like God, hate sin. It's not enough to just avoid it, we must have a hatred of it. We that love the Lord, the Bible says, we must hate evil.

Here's the third, and we'll wrap this up, “. . . do good . . . seek peace,” verse 11. “Let him . . . do good; let him seek peace, and [pursue] it.” Jesus said this in Matthew 5:9, “Blessed

are the peacemakers,”—not peace breakers—“for they shall be called the children of God.” We're to actively seek and pursue to bring peace. But you say, “If I live like that, I will get walked on. I will get trampled on. I will get abused.” So, Peter gives us three reasons or motives to live a life of loving submission. You say, “Well, I don't want to do that because my husband will take advantage of me,” or “My wife will step on me and walk over me,” or “My friends will abuse me.” Well, notice what happens. Here's the reason why we should do this. First, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,” verse 12. These are the reasons.

Notice the word “For,” in verse 12. This is the rationale. Why should I live submissively? Why should I serve other people? Because “ . . . the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.” I love that picture there.

We’re going to have a series of what are called anthropomorphisms, a big fancy word which means that these are human characteristics to describe God. God does not have eyes. Now, don’t freak out. You say, “I read in my Bible that the eyes of the Lord,” God doesn’t actually have eyes. God is a Spirit. God doesn’t have ears. God doesn’t have feet. God doesn’t have hands. Those are figures of speech that we understand so that we can relate to the fact that God sees, God hears, God knows, God delivers. He uses these anthropomorphisms. I love this idea that if I do verses 8-12, that God’s eyes will watch over me, a righteous man. Don’t you want God watching over your life? I do. I want to know the Lord is watching over me. How wonderful!

The second reason we do this is because the ears of the Lord “ . . . are open unto their prayers.” Isn’t that great? His eyes are watching over me. I love that old song that Ethel Waters used to sing at the Billy Graham Crusades, His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. It’s so wonderful to realize that God is watching over me. “ . . . and his ears are open unto their prayers,” that I’m not living in a way that would cut off God’s answer to my prayers. We’re going to be talking about prayer again this Sunday morning and looking at the parable of the friend at midnight and the promise if we ask or seek or knock that God will open the door and it will be given to us. So, I want God to be able to answer my prayers.

Here’s the third reason, verse 12. It says, “ . . . but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil”—that’s the negative on those who don’t put this text into practice. God’s face...so you have His eyes, His ears, and His face all mentioned in verse 12. “ . . . but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” Peter is speaking here of God’s judgment and displeasure. You know, not only is submission an unpopular topic that’s biblical today in the world, but God’s righteous wrath and righteous judgment and God’s indignation and judgment of sin is not a popular subject today. Not a lot of televangelists, or television preachers, speak about the wrath of God or the judgment of God or God’s hatred and judgment of sin. But that’s what this text closes with from Psalm 34.

When you get a chance, check out Psalm 34:12-16. Peter omits the last statement in verse 16 of Psalm 34 which would follow verse 12, which reads, “The face of the LORD is against them that do evil,”—this is what Peter took out—“to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” That’s pretty heavy. He didn’t put that in. Why? Because that happens at the Second Coming of Christ. When Jesus Christ does come back in His Second Coming, He’s coming back in judgment and righteousness. “His eyes,”—are described in Revelation like—“ . . . a flame of fire,” “ . . . his hairs were white like wool . . . And his feet like unto fine brass.” “And out of his mouth . . . a sharp sword.” He’s coming back to judge, and the text says, “ . . . to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

So, two options here, we can love life, we can see good days, we can have the “ . . . eyes of the

Lord,”—watching over us—“ . . . his ears open unto their prayers,” or we can disregard all this. We can oppose the Lord. We can live selfishly and sinfully, and “ . . . the face of the Lord is against them that do evil,” and the Lord will come back in judgment upon them.

Would you like to have a blessed life? Submit your life to Jesus. Would you like to have a blessed life? Submit your life to others, and then you’ll have God’s eyes watching over you, His ears open to your prayers. But if you reject Jesus Christ, and you don’t walk in His ways, and you live for self, then His face will be against you, and you will experience His judgment and His wrath, which is so sad because Jesus died on the cross and took your punishment, paid your penalty, and bore your sin. Amen? So, why would you want to experience God’s judgment when Jesus took it for you and you can have His righteousness imputed to you, and He paid for your sins. Let’s pray.