

After a one week interlude, we come back to our study of 1 Peter, where we have seen Peter's exhortations to the pilgrims of the dispersion – that is, those who have had to flee their homes because of their faith in Christ as Savior.

He has told them many things – that they have been chosen by God ... that they have a place reserved in heaven for them ... that we are just passing through this world on our way to heaven ... that what they believe has its foundation in what the prophets taught, among other things.

He summarized their special standing before God in 1 Peter 2:9,10 (READ). Again, this is an incredible description of who we are – we have been chosen by God Himself, we are a royal priesthood, in that we have direct and immediate access to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a holy nation, we are separated from the world and the ways of the world, and we are a special people ... a peculiar people.

It is as a result of who we are that Peter then begins a series of exhortations to the pilgrims of the dispersion on how they should act and react in the world in which God has placed them, including their relationship to the government in authority, their submission to masters, wives and their relationship to their husbands, and what a husband is to do, as we saw two weeks ago.

Peter is not finished yet. He continues today with some additional exhortations – turn with me to 1 Peter 3:8-12 (READ). In his previous exhortations Peter has been specific – addressing specific groups of people – citizens, slaves and masters, wives and husbands. Now he addresses something that is to be common to all Christians.

What Peter says he should really sound familiar to all of us, because it is really nothing more than another way of stating the 2nd half of the Great Commandment that we say each week during our Communion Service.

Again, we are reminded that when asked what was the greatest commandment of the law, our Savior responded by quoting the Old Testament. As we read in Matthew 22:37-40: *"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"*

As we have said before, if we are loving the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind, then we are fulfilling the first four of the 10 commandments. If we are loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we are fulfilling the last six of the 10 commandments.

Now, we know that cannot keep the commandments perfectly ... we also know that if we have broken one of them, then we have broken them all, according to the scriptures ... and so, we then know that is why we need a Savior ... that is why we need Jesus who kept the law perfectly for us.

As an aside, this precisely why our Communion liturgy begins with the 10 Commandments, because it reminds us that we need a Savior ... and it also reminds us of why Christ died – because we could not keep the law ourselves.

Now, let's look at what Peter says. He begins by saying: 1 Peter 3:8: *"Finally, all of you be of one mind ..."*

Finally ... he is saying here are the last of my instructions to you. And what does he say?

“Finally, all of you be of one mind ...” This means to be like minded. Yes, we are all different ... we come from different backgrounds ... different nationalities ... different religious backgrounds ... different economic backgrounds ... and yet we are to be like minded. Why, because we are all one in Christ. Romans 12:16 says: *“Be of the same mind toward one another...”*

Putting it another way, that which binds us – that is, our relationship to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, is stronger than that which divides us. Will we agree on everything? Of course not. Just ask my wife the multitude of places where she disagrees with me!

And as Peter goes on he fleshes out this unity that we are to have a series statements as to what we, as Christians should be doing: *“having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;”*

Having compassion for one another ... meaning to sympathize with one another. The Greek word used here is used no where else in the Scriptures. It describes that state of mind which exists when we enter into the feelings of others as if they were our own, as the different parts of the body are affected by that which affects one. What this means, is that our brother or sister in Christ is hurting, then we should be hurting also. You might remember the saying “I feel your pain” – here it is.

This is expressed in the next phrase ... *love as brothers ...* and sisters – brothers includes all of us, because we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are to love one another as we do our physical brothers and sisters. Remember, in Christ we are all part of the same family — we are part of God’s family.

One of my clients in my outside job is a very large union. Whenever the President or one of the Vice-presidents gets up to speak, they generally address the crowd as “brothers and sisters” – indicating the bond that they have with one another. As Christians we have an even greater bond because we are all one in Christ... we have been saved by the blood of Christ.

As he continues he says *be tenderhearted ...* This means having a heart of pity and compassion, that shows kindness to the faults of our brothers and sisters. Again, remember, none of us are perfect, and someone will always do something that is wrong. We are to be tenderhearted to those who do something wrong.

And lastly, he says *be courteous*. We are to act in a gentlemanly manner to all. I would pause here to remind us all that when we read these exhortations that we are to follow, it is so that we can fulfill our purpose of being a witness to the grace of God in our lives to a non-Christian world around us.

This truth is seen in the next section where we read: 1 Peter 3:9 *“not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”*

When someone does something against us the normal reaction is to react ... to get even ... or even to get ahead. But not for the Christian. We are different. Remember, we are a peculiar people. In the Sermon on the Mount our Savior taught us this from Matthew 5:44: *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...”* The Christian has a different standard.

The reason we are not to return reviling for reviling is that we will inherit a blessing from God, as we have seen ... heaven and all of it's glory, along with the forgiveness of our sins, the privilege of worship and prayer and all the other blessings of our salvation.

It is for this reason that we are to bless others, even if they do something against us. And of course we have the example of our Savior who on the cross said: "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*" And then there is also the example of Stephen who said, as he was being stoned said: "*Lord, do not charge them with this sin.*"

The concluding words of our passage gives emphasis to this: 1 Peter 3:10-12: "*For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain 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 prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."*

Again, this is nothing new for God's people. This is a quote from Psalm 34:12-16: "*Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."*

We need to remember that when God speaks to us through His Word it is only because He wants the best for us. As I have said on numerous occasions we live in world created by God, and He has been gracious enough to give us an instruction manual on how to live in this world that He has created AND in the world to come. Truly, as His word says in the 2nd letter of Peter – 2 Peter 1:3: "*as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue...*"

Do we want the best life possible – then let us refrain our tongues from evil – that is all slander and falsehood. Think the opposite of the political ads that are out there! We should be speaking only the truth... and speaking it in love.

We need to avoid all evil which is negative, but then we are to do good. As Peter continues in his quote from the Psalms he says that we are to *seek peace and pursue it*. Hebrews 12:14 says: "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*" Romans 12:18 says: "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*"

Why? The concluding words tell us: *For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.*

Again my friends remember that we are a special people ... a peculiar people. We are not like the rest of the world around us. While we are in the world, we are not of the world because we are just passing through. And as we are passing through we are called to be a blessing to others – to the Christian and the non-Christian. We are a blessing to others when we follow what God has revealed in His Word, doing and not doing the types of things that we have looked at today.

Being of one mind ... having compassion ... loving the brethren ...being tenderhearted and courteous ... not returning evil for evil, but blessing because we know that we have a great blessing awaiting for us that we will

inherit when we leave this earth. May we always remember who we are and act accordingly.