

1 Peter Chapter 3 v 9 - 22

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[0 : 00] Peter and chapter 3. We're going to continue our studies in 1 Peter. We've been studying this letter for several weeks, and every now and then we have a little break and we come back to it.

And we're in chapter 3, and last week we looked at verse 8. It's not often we only look at one verse, but it is such a verse jam-packed with truth and instruction that we just looked at one verse.

We're going to read from verse 8 through to and including verse 18, and then we're going to stop there. But we won't look at all of that passage, we'll look at most of it. Just to put you again in the picture of what Peter's letter is about, he's writing to several different groups of Christians who have spread or spread out across what he calls Asia, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia.

It's really Turkey, particularly northern Turkey as we know it today. They were Christians who had suffered and were suffering persecution, but Christians who Peter wanted to encourage and to help both practically and spiritually.

And so the letter so far has been very much centered upon who we are in Christ or who they are in Christ and what God has done for us in Jesus, the precious Lamb of God who was slain for us.

[1 : 26] And then in this section we've been looking at, which really begins at verse 11 of chapter 2, we saw that Peter applies. Who we are means what we do.

Who we are means what we do. What we know of ourselves must affect how we live our lives. We cannot be unaffected by what we know. That's how we live in every sphere, particularly in the Christian life.

So he's looked at that and particularly just a few weeks ago we looked at matters of authority and submission in particular. So we're going to pick up from verse 8 and read, as I said, through to and including verse 18.

Finally, and that's really not the end of the letter, it merely means just we're getting to the close of this section. Finally, all of you be like-minded. Be sympathetic. Love one another.

Be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

[2 : 31] For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good.

They must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats.

Do not be frightened. But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

[3 : 28] For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the Spirit. We thank God for his word. Amen. So we're in 1 Peter, 1 Peter in chapter 3.

While you're turning there, I'm going to read from Matthew 5. No need for you to turn there necessarily. Matthew 5, the beginning of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes.

Here's what Jesus said. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
[4 : 37] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you. When people insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven from the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The beatitudes of Jesus are radical words in the extreme. They ran counter to the culture of Jesus' day, just as they run counter to the culture of our own day.

This concept that Jesus promotes, that contentment and happiness, that's what the phrase blessed means, that happiness and contentment, could belong to the likes of the meek, the poor, the hungry, those who mourn, those who are persecuted.

It just doesn't compute with human reasoning and the natural mind. And yet, when we've been looking at Peter's letter, his first letter, we've recognized that counter-culture is at the very heart of living as a child of God.

[6 : 03] Counter-culture is at the heart of living as a child of God. That's why we have these phrases there in 2 verse 11, which begins this section. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, as people who are living in a foreign land, as people who do not belong in the world in which they find themselves, the community, the culture that they are in, and so as we've gone through these verses from verse 11, we've found that whether it is in regard to national or local government, whether it's in respect of our place of employment or education, whether it's within our marriage relationship or as part of the local church, everywhere, the life of the believer is to be in stark contrast to those whose inheritance is in this world alone.

And just as Jesus spoke of the blessed, so Peter's words are similarly charged with blessing concerning the believer.

There in verse 9, repay evil with blessing. Verse 9, that you may inherit a blessing. Verse 14, even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

The word blessed and blessing permeates these verses that we're going to look at this evening. So what is it, where is it that we find these blessings?

When do we know these blessings? Where are these blessings? Is it as we thought last week, verse 8, where we are in a united, loving, and harmonious church?

[7 : 50] Remember we saw there that verse 8 particularly points to and speaks about our relationships within our local church towards one another. All of you, there's no exceptions.

We may have said, well I'm not married so wives and husbands doesn't refer to me, or I don't happen to be employed, or something else. No, all of you, everyone, whoever you are, the married, the single, the employed, the unemployed, those who are under a harsh regime, those who are in a democratic authority, wherever you are, if you are a believer, these words are for you.

Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble, and we saw that these are all hallmarks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are to have the mind of Christ in our dealings with one another.

So, is it there? Is that there in that wonderful church, that ideal church, that we are to find the blessing? No, quite the opposite, says Peter.

Quite the opposite. We are to find blessing where there is evil and insult and suffering. In other words, in life.

[9 : 01] In life. That's just the reality. In life, there is insult, evil and suffering. There's just no getting away from that. Now, it would be quite natural for us to think, and you may think this yourself anyway, that once we leave verse 8, we move away from the church and we move into the world.

That verse 8 refers to the church, but verse 9 onwards refers wholly to a hostile world outside the church. Now, if you want to take issue with me, then you can do that. I am convinced, doesn't mean I'm right, but I'm convinced, that verse 9 sadly applies to the church as much as it does to the world. that what we read of in verse 8 follows on into verse 9 with what we find in the life of many local churches. Sadly, that's the case.

And if you're a Christian and you've been in a local church for any length of time, you'll know this is true. That sadly, there is no perfect church, not in this side of glory.

Sadly, there is no church without insult. There is no church without suffering. There is even no church without evil. These words speak to us as believers in our relationship to one another as well as our relationship with those who are unbelievers.

[10:24] In fact, I would say that it's not until we really get to verse 13 and beyond that we move from the realm of the church to the realm of the world. There's a transition that's taking place in what Peter is saying and in that transition there are lines that overlap like two circles coming together.

The realm of the church and the realm of the world and there are things that overlap one another and this is certainly the case. Let me ask you this simple list of questions and I think you'll find that this is only too true.

How many of us have been the source of grief to our fellow believers? whether in ignorance or not we've all caused one another sorrow.

Perhaps we were unaware that we'd done it but I doubt it. Perhaps we'd been met with blessing from those who'd said it who we'd spoken to or hurt.

Perhaps we knew very well what we were doing and even now we haven't truly repented of it. But the reality is this.

[11:32] The reality is that you and I dear Christians are not meant to be harmful to one another. We are not meant to be the cause of grief to one another. Actually what Peter says is this on the contrary repay evil with blessing because to this you were called.

You were called to be a blessing. You and I dear believers are to be a blessing to the world. Remember when Abraham was spoken to by the Lord his God he said you will be a blessing to all nations.

That's what the whole role of God's people has always been. Whether it was the Old Testament people or the New Testament people we are one people and we are to be a blessing. Now of course that blessing comes to the Lord Jesus Christ the great seed as it were of Abraham.

But God's people have always been to be a blessing. We're called to that. Even to those who harm us. Even to those who are unpleasant towards us. Even to those who hurt us.

And if we are called to be a blessing to those in our local church how much more so are we to be a blessing to the world outside the church?

[12:46] And the question is how can we be this blessing? How can you and I be a blessing? How can we fulfill our vocation this God-given vocation? Now it's a vital question.

An important question. How can I be a blessing? Not only because that's God's purpose in saving you. That's the purpose for which he called you to himself. Not only that you may enter into the blessing of knowing him and enjoying his grace, his love, his forgiveness.

Not only that you might be with him in heaven but he has left you in this world dear friends and he's left you and I that each one of us should be a blessing to one another and to the world in which we live, to our community, to our nation.

How can we do that? But also by being a blessing we are blessed. This is the sense here. On the contrary, verse 9, repay evil with blessing because to this you were called to be a blessing so that you may inherit a blessing.

So just as we are called to be a blessing so in being a blessing there is a blessing to be had for us. That's a principle that runs all the way through scripture.

[13:57] A truth that we shall see. Those who bless enjoy God's blessing. That's why he goes on for, he quotes here from Psalm 34 as your footnotes will tell you, whoever would love life and see good days, in other words, whoever would be blessed, we can put it in that way, keep their tongue from evil, their lips from deceitful speech, turn from evil and do good.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, his ears attended to their prayer, blessing, face the Lord against those who do evil. We are to bless and because we are God's people, because we are Christians but as we bless there is a blessing.

Now what Peter is teaching here and what I'm saying is not that we earn God's blessing by blessing others, not that somehow we are saved by our works, in other words a good person will be blessed by God and a bad person won't, that's not what we're saying.

That's not what the Bible teaches anywhere, that we are saved by being good people. We are not saved by being good people, we are saved to be good people. There's a difference. It's a truth all the way through scripture that those who are holy, as we've seen earlier in chapter 1, shall live holy

lives.

Those who are loved by God will love others. So 1 John chapter 4:19, we love each other because God loved us first.

[15:18] We love because He first loved us. So there's a principle, a truth that runs all through scripture that we live out the purposes of God and in living out the purposes of God there is blessing.

That's the Christian life, that's the wonderful thing, that's what the world cannot see and understand, that the blessing of the Christian life is not only that we should be in heaven and saved from hell. Wonderful, if that was all that God ever did for us, my goodness, that would be enough to sing His praises for all eternity.

The fact is, actually, in coming to faith in Christ Jesus and trusting Him and following Him, our lives are much more blessed than they ever could be living for ourselves. So the instructions we have here from verse 9, they rule over every relationship, with our relationship in the church, our relationship with other believers, with unbelievers rather.

They relate to our relationship with people who are nice and the people who are not so nice. And they begin with one clear problem.

What stops us from being a blessing? What is the one thing above all else that causes the greatest harm in any church and in any relationship?

[16:34] And it's very simply words. Words. Do you see that here? Verse 9. Insult. And then later on, keep your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech.

Words. Words cause the greatest harm, don't they? To us. Words are always there when there's a problem. When there's a start of a falling out between brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever, words are always there, aren't they?

How many of us have not spoken an unkind word that has wounded another believer? And who of us have not been on the receiving end of a tongue lashing?

We know the problem is there. We know that is the difficulty. We know that that is the problem. Our mouths, if only we could keep our mouths shut. But we can't. So what's the cure?

What's the cure to the problem? Well, here it is. We must keep our tongues from evil and keep our lips from deceitful speech. We need to put a restraining order on our mouths.

[17:45] That's exactly what James speaks about, doesn't he, in his letter, that very practical letter. Listen to what he says in chapter 3, verse 7. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind.

But no human can tame the tongue. True, isn't it? God's word is true. No human can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison.

We need to have a restraining order on our tongue. Well, how do we do that? Well, dear friends, hard as it may be, here in Psalm 34, there are some very clear and practical lessons for us about controlling our tongues, controlling our mouths.

Before we speak, and of course this is the big problem, we never stop before we speak, but if we could stop before we speak, we should ask ourselves these questions concerning what we say.

Do my words bless the person I'm speaking to or break the person I'm speaking to? Do my, will what I say actually be a blessing to them or would it actually be a harm to them?

[18:55] Listen again, just later on in James chapter 3. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?

Brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, a grapevine bear figs? No, they can a salt spring produce fresh water. When I speak, are the words that I'm speaking refreshing words of blessing to encourage and build up?

Or will they actually just simply tear down and pull down and harm? Call to be a blessing and our words. Firstly, a blessing must start with our words.

Secondly, here as well, of course, Peter speaks about false words. The lips from deceitful speech. Are the things I'm saying actually true?

Really true? Are they just a bit of gossip? A bit of rumor? A bit of hearsay? Well, dear friends, when we pass on those things and we are liars and we are deceitful, the things that we say are harmful and untrue.

[20 : 01] Rather, says Paul to the Ephesians, I long that you should speak the truth in love. Again, we know only too well that there are times when we love to speak the truth, but that's very different from speaking the truth in love.

Do I speak in love? In other words, it's not just in my heart I'm saying, oh yes, I'm saying this because I love you. No, that isn't the case.

Am I saying it in such a way that shows that I love you? That demonstrates that I love you? Not just because I think this is right for you and I think this is best for you. That's not the same as speaking the truth in love.

Are my words demonstrably loving? And then as well, of course, we see, we go to verse 11 here of 1 Peter, they must turn from evil and do good.

They must seek peace and pursue it. So here again, do my words bring peace or division?

Remember what Jesus said, Matthew 5 verse 9, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.

[21 : 08] In other words, they display the characteristics of the very nature of God, the God of peace who sent his son to be the prince of peace, to accomplish peace between sinful humanity and a holy God.

So when I'm speaking to somebody, is it that I might be united with them, one with them, might have peace with them, or rather is it that I might divide for them? Will my words cause division between me and someone else or between them and someone else?

Dear friends, how important these things are. And you may say, well that's great Peter, that's fine, that's, you know, we understand all that. Yeah, we've heard James 3 before and you know, you're saying the same thing but dear friends, we need to grasp something absolutely essential here that how we deal with one another in our relationships has severe consequences upon our relationship with God.

Has severe consequences. That's exactly what's being said here by Peter. If we repay evil with evil and insult with insult, if our words and our lives are ones which are not a blessing, then there is a severe repercussion in our relationship with God.

Well look what he says, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

[22 : 30] That's how serious it is about how we live in our relationship with one another, how we speak to one another. Now of course we know that the eyes of the Lord are upon everybody in the sense that God sees everybody, he sees every heart, he sees every life, nothing is hidden from him.

None of our secret sins that we do in our hearts and our minds against one another are hidden from God but that's not what it means here. Particularly it's saying to us the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous to do them good.

The Lord is watching out for us. The world, even the world recognises that, doesn't it? The world says something like this, oh someone up there is looking out to me when they've been, when they've had good news from an illness or whatever it is or recovered or someone up there is looking out for me.

But for the Christian it's true. God not just sees what we do but he looks out for us. He has his eye upon us. He is concerned, he is interested in his people and his eyes are upon us to bless us. He is at work actively to do us good. That's the sense of the phrase here. We know that. But here particularly I want us to dwell for a moment upon this matter of prayer. Prayer is a great mystery isn't it?

[23 : 45] A great mystery. God knows everything that's going to happen to our lives, everything that's coming our way and yet we're still to pray. And God doesn't change his mind. Well there's a mystery.

Now here's the wonderful truth. The Lord is attentive to the prayers of those who seek to do his will in a way that he is not with those who actively sin. God is attentive to the prayers of those who do right before him in a way which is different to how he listens to the prayers of those who sin. Here's Isaiah in chapter 1 verse 15 speaking to the people. When you spread out your hands in prayer as many did in those days. Spread out your hands in prayer. I hide my eyes from you. Even if you offer many prayers I'm not listening. That's God speaking. Speaking to a disobedient and sinful people. Now as we're going through Jeremiah in the midweek meetings we're

recognising this again.

God's saying to the people you can pray as much as you like. He even says to Jeremiah don't pray for these people because I'm not listening. That's an amazing thing isn't it?

[24 : 56] God who hears everything chooses how he will deal with our prayers according to our walk with him. Now just previously in this chapter in chapter 3 we read at the end of verse 7 how a husband's prayers are affected by his relationship with his wife.

Husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Husbands your prayers will be hindered if you do not treat your wife rightly. And wives your lives will be your prayers will be hindered if you do not treat your husbands rightly.

But more importantly to us what we're reading here is this dear Christian brothers and sisters in Christ God's our prayers will be hindered in some way by our wrong relationships with one another. That's serious isn't it? That's serious. It's what James again says later on in his letter he's talked about prayer but he goes on and speaks about the fact that there are disputes and quarrels between these believers and he says this when you ask you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives.

[26 : 13] What is it that you and I are praying for? What is it we're beseeching God for and asking him for? Dear friends is it possible that our prayers are hindered because we are not right with one another? That we are not forgiving of one another?

That we are not gracious and tender and gentle with one another? That we speak harshly to one another? I know this is hard for us to hear but this is the word of God.

There's something even more serious than that. I've said that our relationship with one another has a bearing upon our relationship with the Lord and we've seen that particularly in the matter of prayer but look at that end part of the verse verse 12 the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. What have we been told evil is? It's insulting one another. It's using our tongue to act evilly. It's using our tongue to speak deceitfully.

Ultimately the consequence is this that our relationship with God is at stake for if we continue in wrong and bad relationships with one another especially within the church it is unlikely that we are actually in a right relationship with God.

[27 : 28] In fact I would go so far as to say what the Bible says that if we do not love one another then indeed dear friends it is unlikely we've experienced the grace of God. That's not my words here's John's words 1 John chapter 3 verse 14 goes all the way through his letter.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life resigning in him. Do you see that? He's talking about the local church dear friends. He's talking about if we have a wrong relationship a seriously wrong relationship with another brother or sister in Christ we have not passed from life to death death to life.

Oh my Lord spare us from these things but we know the seeds are there don't we? We know the seeds are there and so Peter warns severely I believe here not only in our relationship with the world but in our relationship with one another but that's not the end is it?

That's the consequence of living lives which are repaying evil for evil but what about if we aren't? What if we do exactly what God would encourages us to do?

[28 : 49] If what we do what God has shown us to do in the example of his son and in his own dealings with us in grace if we repay evil with blessing insult with blessing if we are tender and gracious towards one another what is the outcome?

Well the outcome is this says Peter not only that we should be in a right relationship with God as we shall see in a moment but this we shall deliver ourselves from much harm who's going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

It's a natural question isn't it? If you are such a person who lives to do what is good to be a blessing to others you're going to preserve yourselves from all sorts of heartache it's only natural that if we do good when we meet people if we are kind if we are Christ-like if we are gracious then we should be saved from a great deal of harm after all who are the people who get into the arguments who are the people who get into the fights and the scabbles not only in the world but in the church are they

the people who don't seek to be a blessing are they the people who are difficult are they the people who are ungracious are they the people who are hostile aggressive they're the ones that are always getting into arguments the people who are gracious the people who are quiet the peacemakers the meek those who hunger for righteousness they aren't at least not very often so Peter argues that as we seek to be a blessing to one another in the world and in the church we seek to do good seek to do what is right keep us from a great deal of harm in our lives but it won't always be so

Peter's a realist he knows who's going to harm you if you're eager to do good if you live like this you're going to be free from a great deal of sorrows but he says verse 14 even if you should suffer for what is right you're blessed the truth is again a principle that the bible teaches again and again everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution Paul's words to Timothy 2 Timothy 3 12 no matter how hard we seek to be good no matter how hard we try to be gracious to one another no matter how hard we seek to be followers of the Lord Jesus in our lives and the truth is that our lives will necessitate and create opposition partly because we are still sinful all of us even the very best even the most loving you the most gracious person dear friend we know in our hearts that we are still sinful selfish foolish say the wrong thing even if we try hard not to but also when we live for

Christ we are living as we saw at the beginning a life which is counter cultural we are living a life which is different to the world around about us and the one thing the world hates and the one thing that people hate is somebody who is different whether it be the color of their skin whether it be the language that they speak the nationality they come from whether it be their height their weight or whatever it is and so if we are living lives for Christ like Christ who himself suffered persecution who himself rubbed up the Pharisees the wrong way when he only spoke truth in love then we shall certainly do the same what does Peter say does Peter say well even if you are if you should suffer for what is right that's tough that's life that's hard well if you're going to suffer for doing what's right why bother doing right why bother doing good why bother living like Christ if we're going to only have opposition we might as well just well let's blend in with the rest of the world blend in go with the flow let's not ever ever speak of Christ no he doesn't say that does he he says you're blessed if when you seek to do right as you seek to put Christ first as you seek to live for him as you seek to be gracious in your speech and your action you seek to be a peacemaker you're blessed why are you blessed well because it's the proof that you are a child of

[32 : 57] God the Father it's a proof that you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ the suffering saviour it's a proof that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and not the spirit of this world it's a proof that you have nothing to fear even if you should suffer what is right you're blessed do not fear their threats do not be frightened why because if God is for us who can be against us dear friends we are not perfect we never shall be perfect but if in our hearts in our lives in our speech in our actions in our ways our desire and longing is to do good and be a blessing for Christ's name's sake then we truly are his people and whatever comes our way we have nothing to fear for his eyes are upon the righteous he hears and is attentive to our prayers he is our father and we are his children let's sing together our final hymn hymn which continues this sense this theme of longing to be more like the

Lord Jesus and to follow him number 653 love divine all loves excelling joy of heaven to earth come down 653 love divine all love excelling joy of heaven to earth come come down come down he's in us thy humble dwelling all thy faithful mercy's crown Jesus Jesus Jesus power all compassion pure and thunder of the heart visit us with

Christ's salvation enter every trembling heart in this Ged ■■■ ligeneration grand Hebrews efforts here King restored in Thee.

Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we pass the crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love and grace.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

[36 : 57] Amen.