

Called for Righteousness

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[0 : 00] I want you to open your Bibles up to 1 Peter chapter 3. We're sort of in the middle of chapter 3. We're going to begin reading this morning in verse 8 and only go down to verse 12.

And so as you turn there in your Bibles, I want to ask you if you're able to, to stand with me in honor of God's Word and we'll read together. 1 Peter chapter 3 beginning in verse 8.

The Apostle writes, Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind.

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.

Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

[1 : 07] Take your word now by your spirit. Open our eyes to see the truth of it and our hearts to receive it and rejoice in it, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Well, I'm not sure if you've been paying attention lately, but it has become all the more clear recently that we are being watched.

Every time a new news report comes out, it seems in the last few weeks that it becomes more evident that the government does have the ability to look into our lives and see what's going on. And so it began with sort of news of their ability to have your phone records and see who you've been calling and what's been going on with your phone. And then it was emails.

They could read your emails and see what's happening in your emails. And then your internet activity and the collection of all sorts of data by government agencies on your internet activity. And then I read an article yesterday that said the FBI, through some various hacking tools, has the ability with some phones and computers to actually remotely, if they get the right viruses or software installed, to remotely turn on your microphones and your cameras.

[2 : 21] And they can use that in sting operations. And they can use that when they're trying to capture terrorists and all those sorts of things. But it really sometimes, there's sometimes when you begin to see all the things that they're capable of and the sort of technological world that we live in, that it begins to feel like a 1984 kind of Big Brother kind of world sometimes.

And you kind of begin to feel that way, that you're being watched all the time. And you begin to notice all the cameras. Have you ever noticed how many cameras there are everywhere that you go, whether you're in the mall parking lot or you're at a traffic scene, there are cameras everywhere. And you just, yeah, you're looking around for cameras, right? I don't know what this little round thing is up here. Maybe that's full of cameras. I don't know. I think it's some sort of robot or something, but it's been there for a while. But we feel like we're being watched.

And it really is a reminder that there are far more important eyes upon us all the time than that of the government or anyone else. Look at what Peter says, quoting Psalm 34.

He says here in verse 12, that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

[3 : 32] He sees and He knows and He's able to identify at all times the righteous and identify those who do evil, the wicked, and distinguish between them. And He sees and knows all that we do, all that we say, all that we think.

God's eyes are always watching. His ears are always open to what is going on in our lives. And it matters a whole lot more that the judge of all the earth sees and hears what we do than whether or not a government agency is able to tap into your computers or your phones.

Whatever you may think about those things, what ought to grab your attention every day and what ought to rivet your mind every day is the knowledge that God knows, God sees what's happening, which means that what we do actually matters.

Our behavior matters. What we say matters. These things are important because God is watching and He remembers all the things that He sees and hears in our lives.

He knows. He sees. He is the judge. He will call us to account someday for every word spoken and every deed done.

[4 : 51] He's watching. He sees us. And Peter reminds us of that so that our behavior does matter. And in fact, Peter has been very much concerned with the way that we live our lives, with our behavior in the last chapter or so of this letter.

In fact, we have seen him specifically address the conduct of servants and then address the way that wives live in relation to their husbands and then the way that husbands live in relation to their wives.

And now he sort of turns a corner beginning here in verse 8 and rather than addressing individual groups within the church, he addresses all of us. He says, finally, all of you.

So what he says now is not just for wives. It's not just for husbands. Not just for servants. This is for all of us. This concerns all of our behavior.

Finally, all of you. And before we look specifically at what he has to say about our lives and about our behavior, I just want to kind of give you a basic outline of these verses and then we'll work our way backwards through them.

[5 : 56] Verse 8 gives us instructions for how we are to treat one another as fellow believers, relationships within the body of Christ. And then the first half of verse 9 turns and deals with how we respond to those outside of Christ.

How do we respond to non-believers when they come against us and persecute us and say false things about us? How do we respond to those who are outside? So first, how do we respond to those and how we treat those who are inside within the body of Christ?

Then how do we respond to and treat people outside the body of Christ? And then the second half of verse 9 gives us motivation. There's a motive there. It begins with the word for.

There's motive for why we ought to heed Peter's instructions in verse 8 and the first half of verse 9. And then if you'll notice verses 10 through 12 in a lot of your Bibles are either sort of indented over or in some Bibles they might be in all capital letters and that's because verses 10 through 12 are quotation from Psalm 34 so that Peter comes back and he gives Old Testament support, scriptural support for the commands that he's giving us in verses 8 and 9.

And so I want to start here sort of in the middle with the end of verse 9 and look at the motive that he gives us. Before we look at the actual behavior, the actual commands that Peter gives to us, I want us to first see the kind of motive that he lays down.

[7 : 22] Notice verse 9. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling but on the contrary bless. Now here's the motive. For to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.

So Peter says bless others because you were called to bless them. You were called to this behavior that he's just described in the previous verses.

Bless others. Treat others within the body of Christ in this way. Respond to those who come against you in this way. Bless them because you were called to do that.

You are called to this in order that you might obtain a blessing. Now it sounds on the surface and you just read that it sounds as if Peter is saying we want you to behave this way so that you can earn God's blessing.

That sounds on a surface level reading to be what Peter is saying. But I don't think Peter is saying that at all. Peter nowhere teaches in this letter that our final ultimate salvation that our standing before God is dependent upon our works.

[8 : 39] It's not. So for instance you see throughout this letter that it's based upon God's grace. You see in verse 3 of chapter 1 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again.

He's caused us to be born again. You can look down in chapter 2 verse 24 where it speaks of Jesus who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.

He bore our sins. He has won our forgiveness and our right standing. Paul calls it our justification before God.

And that is based not upon anything that we do. That is based solely upon our faith in Christ. Peter uses the word hope in place of faith many times. He says that we have been born again to a living hope.

It is that hope. It is that faith. It is being born again through the power of God's Word and Spirit at work that gives us the gift of salvation.

[9 : 43] So Peter I don't think is saying here that we earn God's blessing that we earn salvation from Him by blessing others.

Now it's not just because of what he says elsewhere though that I think that. It's because of the language that he chooses to use in this verse itself. There's two words I want to call your attention to here. And the first one is the word called.

For to this you were called. Now we use the word called and the Bible even uses the word called in a lot of different ways. Probably most frequently the way that we use the word called in a sort of Christian spiritual sense is we talk about a person's vocation to which they're called.

So sometimes we'll say so and so was called to be a missionary or she was called to be a teacher or called to be a nurse and so we speak of somebody's vocation as their calling but that's not the way in which Peter is using the word here.

Sometimes we use the word called to refer to the preaching of the gospel so that we say that we are calling people to faith in Christ when we preach the gospel. In fact Jesus uses it that way when he says that many are called but few are chosen.

[10 : 55] Many are called. The gospel call goes out and that's not the way in which Peter is using the word here. Peter is using the word called here in much the same way that Paul often uses the word to refer to God's work through the spirit of changing our hearts and bringing us to faith in Christ.

He's calling us. So this has to do with conversion. This has to do with salvation here. It has to do with salvation. So for instance Paul uses I want you to hold your place in 1 Peter.

I'll show you one place where Paul does it and then a couple of places where Peter uses the word called in this way. Turn over to 1 Corinthians 1 and we'll see the apostle Paul using this language of calling to describe coming to faith in Christ or being saved.

In 1 Corinthians 1 you may be familiar with verse 18 which says that the word of the cross is folly or foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

It is foolishness to those who are lost but to those whom God is saving the word of the cross the gospel is power. And then you move down and you find similar language starting in verse 22.

[12 : 08] For the Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom but we preach Christ crucified that's the word of the cross a stumbling walk to Jews and a folly to Gentiles but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

So calling here in 1 Corinthians 1 is parallel with salvation earlier in the passage. So calling has to do with God's work of bringing us to Christ of saving us and setting us apart.

Peter uses it that same way. In 1 Peter 2 verse 21 Peter says for to this you have been called. You've been called.

And then he says again in chapter 5 verse 10 he says after you have suffered a little while the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

He will call you. And then probably the clearest instances in verse 9 of chapter 2 you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you will proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[13 : 26] So he calls you out of darkness he saves you he rescues you he delivers you and he calls you into the eternal glory of Christ. So this calling is all about conversion.

In fact it's almost synonymous with the term born again or regeneration which we see Peter using. Chapter 1 verse 3 God is said to have caused us to be born again.

So the first thing I want you to notice in this passage is that it does have to do with salvation. We are called. And then secondly I want you to pay attention to the word that in my translation I'm reading from the English Standard Version it says that you obtain a blessing but mark that word obtain because it actually is the word inherit.

You inherit a blessing. It has to do with an inheritance and we've seen inheritance. Verse 4 of chapter 1 we are born again to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in

heaven for you.

So inheritance has to do with our final ultimate salvation. It comes to us by being born again and the power of the resurrection of Christ. We inherit eternal life.

[14 : 44] So what Peter says here is for to this you have been called saved born again so that you might inherit the blessing.

An inheritance by its very nature is something that you cannot earn. In fact you receive an inheritance not because of what you do you receive an inheritance very much because of who you who you are.

Mark that down you receive an inheritance not because of what you do you receive an inheritance because of who you are especially in the ancient world if you were a son you received an inheritance if you were the firstborn son you received a far greater portion of the inheritance. It was automatic. That's just the way it was. That's why the story of Jacob and Esau plays out as such a strange thing that Jacob somehow swindles himself into receiving Esau's covenant blessing. That was a strange thing, a strange turn of events because automatically, by virtue of being the firstborn son, you would receive the largest share of the inheritance.

[15 : 54] And inheritance comes to you because of who you are. It cannot be earned. You cannot do anything to merit this blessing.

You receive it as an inheritance. So what exactly is Peter telling us here? Here's probably how I would, I might tweak this translation a little bit to make it a little bit more clear.

I would probably say this. Because, well let's read all of verse 9, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. Because for this you were called, saved, so that you might inherit a blessing.

You were called for, you were saved, you were born again, for blessing others so that you inherit the blessing.

so that our behavior does not determine our destiny. Our identity determines our destiny.

[17 : 00] You are either in Adam or you are in Christ. You are either a sheep following the shepherd or you are a goat. You are either those whom Paul describes as the perishing or you belong to those whom he describes as the saved.

Your identity determines your destiny. But your behavior reveals your identity. You see that? You were called, you were born again, you were saved for blessing others so that you might inherit the blessing. In other words, what Peter is saying here is that those who have been called have been called not only to ultimate salvation, but they've been set apart and called for obedience in this life for the blessing of others.

And if that fruit is born out in their lives, it shows that they are indeed a child of God and therefore a recipient of the inheritance. Behavior does not determine your destiny, but it reveals your identity and your identity determines your eternal destiny.

So what behavior specifically does he have in mind? Look at the first half of verse 9 and the command that he gives us about our behavior towards those outside of Christ.

[18 : 23] Do not, he says, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless.

The fact of the matter is is that we will encounter opposition from those who are not believers. Now, sometimes you may encounter that opposition precisely because you are a Christian and they're not a Christian, and I think that's the primary thing that Peter has in mind here.

That will happen to you sometimes. There will be times when simply because of what you believe and who you are and what you stand upon, people will insult you.

They will revile you, to use Peter's term. They will come against you. They will do evil to you. And that happens every day all over the world. Simply because we live in a bubble in which we have religious freedom does not mean that that's not a reality for people all over the world.

But it will be a reality for you as well. Because it's not always soldiers marching into your home to arrest you. In fact, that wasn't happening for Peter's readers here. The kind of persecution we've seen as we're walking through this letter, the kind of persecution that Peter's readers were experiencing was very similar to what you and I experience.

[19 : 36] Social ostracism, slander from those who don't belong to Christ. Those are the very things that we will receive because we are a part of the body of Christ.

So there will be those who say things against you. There will be those who gossip and slander you and say hurtful things to you. The question becomes, when someone comes to you, when a friend

comes to you and says, oh, I heard that Jim said this about you.

Or I heard that Jane said, Jane said this about you at our bunco game the other night. You should have heard everything that she was saying about you the other night. You should have heard that. The question then becomes, how do we respond to that?

Do we respond by saying, well, let me tell you about them. Let me tell you what they've done. You return reviling for reviling? Or at work, when somebody does something to undercut the work that you've done, they take credit for the work that you've done.

Or they make you look foolish in front of your boss on purpose and they do it continually. Do you try to repay that in kind? Do you try to make them look foolish? Do you try to make sure that everybody knows that they haven't done anything and you've done all the work?

[20 : 48] Do you return evil for evil, pay back evil for evil, reviling for reviling? Or on the contrary, do you begin to pray for that person? Jesus says to pray for those who persecute you.

Do we do that? Or do we pay it back? Your behavior matters a great deal. Those who belong to Christ are not those who ought to seek to get even with the world.

It's not our calling. It's not what we've been saved for. We've been saved to bless those who do evil to us. But then he raises the level in verse 8 and he talks to us about our relationships with one another as the body of Christ.

And when you see how these things are laid out, he mentions five things here. Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Now I want you to try to picture this visually, if you will, because these are not five entirely separate things. They're very closely connected. So if you look at the first two, you have the first one that deals with your mind and the second that deals with your heart.

[22 : 05] You have unity of mind and sympathy. Head and heart are dealt with there in that order. And then you look at the last two and you have a tender heart and a humble mind.

You have heart and head dealt with in the reverse order. So first, the life of the mind addressed in relation to other believers, then the life of the heart. And then over here, the life of the heart and then the life of the mind.

And if you draw a line between those, then right in the middle, connecting them all together, holding them all together, showing how the heart and mind are tied together, is love.

The preeminent of all of these. Love is not listed third because it's just thrown in the middle. Love is listed in the middle because it holds all of these together. And when your mind and your heart, your attitude and your feeling towards other believers models that which Christ would have you do, then that's what we call genuine, brotherly, Christian love.

So look at what he says about how we ought to think, how our minds ought to be geared towards one another. Unity of mind, first of all, and then a humble mind, second of all.

[23 : 14] Now, I don't think that unity of mind means that we have to agree on everything because we're not going to agree on everything. We're going to have some differences occasionally.

You may not like the way that we order our worship service. You may think that we might need to do it a little differently.

Or maybe you don't like some of the things that others around you are doing. Maybe you think that somebody ought to do something completely different with their lives. We're not going to always agree on every detail of one another's lives and every detail of what we do when we gather together as a body.

We're not always going to agree. I don't think unity of mind means that. I think unity of mind means that we're pursuing unity and that we have the same goals in mind. The proclamation of the gospel, the glory of Christ, that there is some rooted, base level, theological, and doctrinal unity among us. We don't have unity of mind if half of you think that you can be saved only through faith in Christ and half of you think that everybody's going to be saved just somehow, some way, universalism.

[24 : 26] We don't have unity of mind if some of you believe in the doctrine of the Trinity and some of you deny it and embrace some other vision of who God is. There's basic theological and doctrinal unity and there's unity of purpose wherever we're headed and those things need to be together but we don't have to agree on every detail.

But here's the thing. You cannot have that kind of unity and you cannot walk together and aim at the same goals if you don't have, first of all, a humble mind.

You can't have one without the other because there are going to be many times when you and I have to set aside our own preferences and our own opinions. I'm not saying that we set aside biblical truth.

I'm not saying that at all. We want to stand upon the truth but what I'm saying is that when we have disagreements over things that are not gospel issues, will we be humble?

Or will we insist on our way or the highway? You can't have unity of mind if you don't have a humble mind. And then, of course, you have the issue of the heart.

[25 : 36] He describes it with two words, sympathy and a tender heart. Sympathy, of course, means that you identify with others in the feelings that they have.

When someone else is hurting in the body of Christ, you hurt along with them. You grieve along with them. And that is impossible if you don't, first of all, have a tender heart.

A heart of compassion. A heart that's able to see and understand why people are feeling exactly the way that they're feeling.

And I'll be honest with you, I sometimes struggle in this area because I'm not an emotional person. I'm more of a laying it out logically and here's how it works and this is what we ought to do and I don't always see and sense and feel the way that others are feeling and so I have to work a little bit harder at this at times and some of you may have to work a little harder at this.

But we've got to try to care and identify when other people are hurting even if logically we can't figure out why that bothers them. That's not the point at all.

[26 : 51] The point is something is bothering someone else in the body of Christ. Something's hurting them. Their hearts are sore and we should have sympathy for them and we should have a tender heart to identify with them and feel to a degree and begin to feel what they feel.

And then when you have a heart that's primed and ready like that and a mind that's humble and ready to move forward with the same purposes and goals when those things are both happening that's when we see genuine displays of brotherly love.

And you remember how important this is to Peter. Look in chapter 2 verse 17 where he's giving another sort of summary of how we are to respond to various people and he says we are to honor everyone.

Give honor to everyone. But then he says but you are to love the brotherhood. You see there's this distinction that Peter maintains between the way that we respond to those outside of Christ which is important.

We honor them. We bless them of course. But our relationships within the body are on another level entirely. And we must pursue this love.

[28 : 15] We must pursue a kind of heart that goes out to others and a way of thinking and an attitude that desires to move in the same direction rooted in the gospel moving forward together and not leaving people behind and not getting frustrated because somebody's not where you are or where you expect them to be.

But a unity of mind and a compassionate tender sympathetic heart love for one another must drive and characterize everything that we do as a body.

Everything that we do as a church. because your behavior reveals who you really are.

It does. We don't all do this perfectly. We're all going to stumble. We're all going to slip up. There are going to be times when we say things that we regret and we do things that are not loving.

There will be times when we respond to someone who's done something to us in a way that we later have to repent of and wish that we hadn't done. We're not going to do this perfectly.

[29 : 20] We're just not. But those who belong to Christ are a genuine work in progress. We're not perfect but we're a work in progress and you know something is a work in progress if you see progress.

Right? We should be getting better at this. We should be becoming more loving as a people. We should be getting better at responding to those who come against us and that process of progressing in our growth in Christ becoming a more righteous person a more holy person reveals that we belong to him.

You can see pretty easily if I were to for instance if I were to go back into the nursery right now and you didn't say that you didn't know me and you didn't know my family at all and I walked back in the nursery and I began to interact with the kids back there it really wouldn't take you very long at all to realize that Eli is mine.

He's distinct from all the other little kids in there it wouldn't take very long at all not because of the way that we look but because of his behavior when I'm around him because of the way that we interact together it would not take you very long to realize which one of those kids back there which one which one belongs to me.

The same should be true of us as we live our lives in the church and in the world. People watching should be able to see after some observation they should be able to see to whom we belong because we were saved and we were called for this.

[31 : 06] Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. To know that your eyes are on the righteous that you look upon your people with kindness is a great thing father.

To know that your face is against those who do evil is a fearful thing and we come to you with thankful hearts for having received your mercy and fearful hearts because we know who you are. I want us to be father as a church as a body I want us to be a people who are characterized by love for one another and a heart for the world such that we wouldn't respond to them in kind that we would bless them and pray for their salvation.

I want us father to be not first and foremost known as a people who have great worship services or who or as a church that has good preaching or good bible study or good I want us to first be seen and known as a people who love one another and belong to you and everything else flows from those commitments.

And so we need you to sanctify us we need you to take out of us those natural sinful impulses that remain and draw us close to Christ.

[32 : 59] I pray this in his name. Amen.