

## 1 Peter 3:9-12 'Flee Evil: Pursue Peace!'

Last time we looked at v8 of 1 Peter 3: 'Harmony: Love as Brothers', I called the sermon. And I explained that after all of that submission instruction, (to authorities, to employers, wives to husbands and with them responding to that loving submission by loving, respecting and honouring their wives), Peter began to draw this section of teaching to a close by telling us about love among the brethren: Christ body, His church! V8. "Finally, all of you live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."

And I also explained that firstly Peter instructs us to "live in harmony with one another," and then he gives us the main tools to do so. And I said the key to it all, was the last one of those characteristics which he mentions, "humility!" Yes, what Peter does is get us to look beyond our own nose to the benefit and blessing of the other, or the others. And within the context of "living in harmony" with our brethren, that other is that one with whom we are having difficulties or differences!

But first I began by saying, that Peter does not in any way call us to "harmony" at the cost and compromise of our biblical and spiritual integrity. Because that is the abyss, which has taken many a good man or woman down the path of destruction and hell. It is a price that is eternally too high to pay! And those four characteristics are aimed away from ourselves and to all those whom we are called to love in Christ. Yes it's all about the other, and genuine "humility" is the key. Because only with "humility" in our hearts, that self- less- ness, (in the shadow and steps of our Lord) will we have "sympathy, compassion, and love for our brothers." Putting our pride and vain-glory aside, and choosing to take ownership and responsibility for any given situation, whether or not we are in the right or the wrong! And it's all, (ch 2:13) "For the Lord's sake," and for His Body the church!

And again, we do it all through that key of "humility." To "love as brothers" is not to be self-seeking and self-serving, but seeking the good of others, because that's what Jesus did for us!

And we pick up the letter as Paul continues to wrap up this section. 1 Peter 3:9-12: 'Flee Evil: Pursue Peace!' So having instructed us as to how we ought to "live in harmony with one another," and then giving us the tools to do so, those tools of selflessness as he continues with this loving of our brethren, Peter now explains the dangers of not doing this, by telling us what not to do! And again he gives us the tools so to speak, so that we stay in the right way: the way of Jesus! V9. "Do not repay evil with evil."

Friends, can you see how he subtly explains what happens when our pride and vanity gets in the way and we fail seek our brothers good? V9: "Do not repay evil with evil." V10: "He must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." Yes, can you see what can happen when we inject our pride and vanity into the equation? When it becomes, not about the good of our brothers or sisters (who we are called to selflessly love in Christ because He gave His Blood for them also)? Yes can you see what can happen when it becomes not about the other? With our tongues and our actions, we are prone to repaying "Evil for evil." What Peter means is that we can possess that heart, that mindset, (and if we do so Satan zeroes in on us to tear the harmony of Christ's Body His church apart) yes we can have that mindset of thinking; Well if he or she is going to say this or do that about me, then I'm going to say or do this about them! Or as I'm sure we have all heard in the playground amongst the children. They might have started it, but I'm going to finish it! And if we follow Peter's

thinking here, clearly, he is showing us that though this problem might be between only two people, when we think only of self, and our need for vindication, in whatever that situation might be, the first thing that we are going to do is to go looking for backups!

That is why, to stop this thing from becoming worse and spiralling out of control, and becoming a catastrophe in the church, he says, "He must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." He is speaking about spreading gossip and slander, isn't he? Backbiting and poisonous vicious words. Now if you haven't done this, let me pre-apologize. But I'm sure, (while sincerely not wanting to offend any of you) I'm almost certain that at some time in our lives, all of us, have been guilty of this sort of thing! A situation occurs, and then we go to someone who we know will take our side! Did you hear what he said about me? Can you believe that? It's all lies. That's not what happened. Let me tell you what really happened! And then of course we proceed to do so, but of course from our own biased point of view!

Again Beloved, can you see? That Peter is warning us against that natural progression of having, (not the heart which is seeking to abide in that Christ-like selfless harmony) but is all about self! As I explained last time, harmony cannot exist, when pride, vanity and our own ego are part of the equation. No "Sympathy. Compassion. Humility. Loving as brothers) this is what we are called to do. But when these things are not present within our heart by God's grace, then clearly, the opposite occurs! "Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult, but with blessing (and look at the words) because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing."

Now Peter has used these words, "to this you were called," once before in this section in ch 2:21 "To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps." And the context dear friends is the same. Being prepared to take a hit in the face or the wallet or the ego perhaps, for our faith in Christ! In Matthew 5:38-39, when explaining God's true intent of the Ten Commandments in His sermon on the mount, Jesus put it this way: "You have heard that it was said eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

But this verse has been so misused, misunderstood and abused over the years. Is Jesus really saying that if someone belts you on one side of your head, (after coming to your senses and getting up on your feet) you say to them, 'Hey mate, this side has no bruise'. Is this what Jesus really means? So we are to be the willing punching bags of the whole world? No. In the context of our passage, Peter is saying, that if we happen to suffer an injustice or mistreatment for our faith; ch 2:20 "if you suffer for doing good and endure it this is commendable before God."

V21: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." And then he uses Isaiah's words from ch.53:9 which foretold the very suffering and cross of Jesus, as the foundation of his reasoning here. 1 Peter 2:22-24: "He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate, when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness, by his wounds you have been healed."

And now again he uses those words. And remember the context is the same, not repaying evil for evil and insult with insult, "because to this you were called." But what is it specifically, that we have been called to here? Well it's that "turning the other cheek" Again, it's being prepared to suffer injustice. Being prepared to take a hit, even physically if needs be, for the sake of His Name, yes, for His Name's sake. And our faith in the Name of our Saviour Jesus Christ! And why? Well of course this

is exactly, (and yet infinitely more so) which Jesus did for us! So to “follow in his steps,” to “follow his example and endure it,” this, yes this, “is commendable before God” Peter is telling us!

What better reason do you have to conduct yourself in the manner of “humility and meekness” (and remember that meekness is not weakness)? Yes what better reason do you have to turn the other cheek for the sake of your brothers and sisters, other than this is what Jesus did for you! And you will reflect your Saviour’s character, of the humble, faithful, willing, suffering servant when you do!

And friends, where it says in v9 “or insult with insult, but with blessing,” John Calvin explains that in this context, it means with “prayer.” Or in other words, we are to pray for them! In Matthew 5:43-45 we read. “You have heard that it was said; love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your father in heaven.” Yet when Jesus said these things, He was speaking of the whole world in general. In Romans 12:17-21 Paul put it this way: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, it is mine to avenge I will repay, says the Lord. On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

But how much more then does this apply, when we are talking of our brothers and sisters who are with us, part of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ! Yes how much more then should we be prepared to love this way. And Peter even gives us another reason for doing so. “Because to this you are called so that you may inherit a blessing.” And then in v10-12, he injects a direct quote from Psalm 34:12-16. But I'm going to begin from verse 11 because I believe it gives us the correct context to properly understand, these things which follow, that King David wrote! V11 “Come my children listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” Yes the reason that Peter uses these words of instruction to us of treating our brethren with love and selflessness is because we need constantly to have a reverent fear of God in our hearts. Because his eyes are always upon us!

Again v11: “Come my children listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” David’s son king Solomon wrote these words in Proverbs 9:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One this is understanding.” So King David sets the course of what he's about to say of, “living in the fear of the Lord,” and then Peter lays hold of what the great king says next. But firstly, he places the word “For” in front of David's words. Meaning: The reason that I have just said everything in v8-9 to you, is because of this! “For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.”

Friends, it is as though Peter is using king David's words almost to add weight to his reasoning here. Because David is telling us what “living in the fear of the Lord,” what living with a reverent acknowledgement of who God, is really looks like. Yes this is what “living in the fear of the Lord” looks like he's saying.

Firstly, it is a tongue that is bridled. It’s disciplined. It's kept in check. Its` owner has full command of its direction. It speaks no slander. No coarse language. No words in anger. No deception. Now “insult” verse 9. Only truth in love! He must “turn from evil and do good.” So whether this speaks of a heart that is ever ready with repentance, when wrongdoing does occur in viewer v8, “sympathy, compassion, humility, to love as brothers” or it means to turn from sin and follow God, follow

Christ, the sentiment is the same. It speaks of a renewing or a changed heart. A heart that is being sanctified. A heart that is daily "being transformed by the renewing of our mind" the scripture says! And yet it is not only "turning from evil" but "doing good." So it's not only a passive change of direction, but actively doing the opposite to what we were doing before! No longer burning with anger and resentment in our hearts and slander upon our tongues when differences and difficulties occur, no. We must "seek peace and pursue it."

We read in Romans 12 "that as far as it is in our power we are to live at peace with everyone." And yet Peter takes it even further. We are not just to live at peace passively, but to "seek peace and pursue it." In the case of conflict between brethren, "we must pursue peace." This is not optional. We must chase after peace as though it were our prey until we capture it! Even as though our spiritual life depended upon it. So that Satan won't gain a foothold in our heart. Jesus, the very "Prince of peace" Himself, said in Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." So he or she who "lives in the fear of the Lord," recognising and confessing what Jesus has done that we may have "peace with God" "pursues peace" with our brothers and sisters, and seeks to "live at peace with everyone" in general where possible!

Beloved at this point, I need to make a confession about what happened to me on the very day that I put this message together. Because it were as though the Lord was preparing my own heart, for this sermon about "peace" And "living in the fear of the Lord." About not "repaying evil for evil" or "insult with insult." About "living at peace with everyone" when it's in our power to do so! On Monday morning I was out surfing with a few guys, when a young fellow came out, hungry for blood, we call it. Well he was all over and around everyone and everything in the water. And when I had had enough, and was trying to keep my cool and get one in, he performed, what in surfing terms is called the snake manoeuvre! This is basically a sneaky snake like way of paddling behind your back, while you are paddling for a wave, so that they end up on the other side of you so then they supposedly have priority. We call it being snaked! So as you can well imagine words were exchanged. But not in any Christlike manner, I say ashamedly. And then not long after that, I came in. But what you do need to know though, is that every time I paddle out into the water, my prayer is for the safety of everyone in the water. That I conduct myself in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord, and also, that God might give me Providence to testify to His glory and what He has done in my life through Jesus and His Holy Spirit! Well I did bear witness that day. But not to God's glory. It was all to my own pride and vanity.

So the next time I see that young fellow in the water, I must swallow both of those things and seek peace with that guy. It is never easy to eat humble pie. But prayerfully, and with Christ's Grace and strength I will do this very thing! And my reason for doing so, as King David pointed out v12 "for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayers."

Friends, in Revelation chapter 5:6 we have this bizarre picture of Jesus. Now remember, the Book of Revelation is not to be read literally or chronologically, it's all about symbolism and imagery. But again, in chapter 5:6 we have this bizarre picture of Jesus. He is called the "lamb that looked as if it had been slain with seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God." Now the image conveys the truth, that Jesus has authority (thus the seven horns) over all things and that also He sees all things. Nothing, is ever hidden from His sight. And before us, specifically, His gaze is never taken from His people! "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous." Not the self-righteous, but "the righteous." Yes those who have been made right with God, by the Lord Jesus Himself! But Beloved, the picture is not one of an angry Deity ready to pounce, no. It is one of that loving heavenly Father, who is concerned for His children.

Again look at the words. "And his ears are attentive to their prayers." We've seen it many times over the years, Malachi 3:16. "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard." Yes the "Lord listens" as the loving Father with his ear to the bedroom doors of his children. "Listening attentively." Yes Beloved, this is what living in an upright fear of the Lord looks like, both David and Peter are telling us! Keeping our tongues from evil. Actively turning from evil. Seeking good. Pursuing peace. With the comfort and knowledge that the eyes and ears of our heavenly father are always upon us and near to us! "But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." It's a different picture isn't it. God is the adversary of the evildoer.

Yes friends the Almighty sees and has authority over all things, and the evildoer will not stand come the day of judgement when the books are opened, because "God's face is against them." No they will not stand in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords! So Peter presents king David's description of "living in the fear of the Lord," as part of his exhortation for us to "live in harmony with," to "love as brothers," to keep our tongues in check, to "flee evil," to "pursue peace," because not only is this what the "fear of the Lord" looks like. This is what genuine love for our brethren looks like. This truly is loving our neighbour as ourself! Beloved, we must in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ "Flee Evil and Pursue Peace."

Let`s Pray!