

1Peter 3:8-12

Returning Blessing for Evil

First Peter is written to instruct churches on how to live as foreigners in a hostile world that increasingly rejects believers.

How do we live successfully in increasingly perilous times?

What we are witnessing in the deterioration of the quality of life, and the deterioration in the justice and integrity of governments, is the judgment of God against the persistent ungodliness of man.

Romans chapter one describes for us the way God's wrath (judgment) against sin transpires.

People typically imagine that God's wrath is God wielding a big club with which He is beating the wicked in His anger.

But Romans chapter one portrays a God, who has created everything, and whose gracious involvement in His creation sustains it and holds back the tide of wickedness from taking over.

However, as mankind persists in their rebellion against God and His ways, in judgment the Lord incrementally withdraws a measure of His preserving grace and He gives men over to experience the consequence of their rejection of Him.

And as God withdraws more and more of His preserving grace, evil rushes in to fill the vacuum.

It is as though God says, "You want Me to get out of your life and to leave you alone, so I will step back and let you experience a measure of life without My grace, and see how you like it. You can decide if you want to continue rejecting Me, and I will give you more and more of a taste of life without God.

Satan's activity on earth, in place of God's grace, is God's instrument of wrath, meant to bring a rebellious people to repentance and turning back to their creator.

Romans 1:18-22, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Professing to be wise, they became fools..."*

Romans 1:24-25, *"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie..."*

Romans 1:26, “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions...”

Romans 1:28-31, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful...”

This Romans 1 pattern has always historically happened in a society that has rejected God.

However, this giving over of the population to destruction is today happening on a global scale—something that has never happened since the flood of Noah and the tower of Babel.

And there are many prophetic signs being fulfilled all over the world that all point to the likelihood that God’s global, end time judgment is on its way.

The increase of Satan’s work in the world is one of God’s instruments of judgment. Man has rejected God, so they will be ruled by Satan, who will be cruel.

The global nature of this crisis, and the globally united response of the nations, indicates to us that this withdrawal of God’s preserving grace through this Covid crisis, may very well be leading up to God giving the whole world over to the Antichrist.

When we see God withdrawing His preserving grace from this world, don’t fear, He is not going to leave us.

This was the hope and the promise of the letters of First and Second Thessalonians, which we recently studied.

Before that final judgment of God comes upon the world, Jesus is going to come and take His church home to be with Him.

1Thessalonians 4:16-18, “

In this context of judgment that we are entering into, we will see a growing contrast between the believer and the unbeliever—even within the church, it will get harder for the nominal Christian to blend in among the true saints.

2Timothy 3:13, tells us that evil men and imposters (fake Christians) will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

So, Christian, how does God want us to live in this environment of approaching judgment? What will the Spirit of God do through us if we trust Him and yield to Him?

This is the message of First and Second Peter.

Verse eight describes for us how believers are to relate to each other as family of God.

Verse nine describes how believers are to respond to opposition from the world that views us as foreigners, and as a threat to their way of life.

Then verses 10-12 give us the Biblical basis for this teaching.

1Peter 3:8, “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous [humble]...”

When living as foreigners in a land that is not your home, it is important, especially in times of opposition, to have a family of people like you that you can get together with and receive encouragement, support and refuge from the pressures of the world.

Having a group of fellow citizens of heaven that you can meet regularly with during this time of crisis is so important.

But in order for our times together to truly be a source of support and of refuge there are certain qualities that need to characterize the family of God.

The terms that Peter uses in verse 8 are terms that were commonly used to describe the intimate relationship of family members toward one another. The implication of this verse is that believers have a responsibility to relate to one another as close relatives—as family. (*Jobes, p. 214*)

Your faith in Christ and the change of identity that resulted may have caused separation between you and your biological family, but God’s word here teaches that our new life in Christ has brought us into close relationship with a whole new family.

And we need to make the most of that family relationship in times of trouble.

Verse 8 does not describe our relationship with the world in which we live as foreigners, but it describes our relationship with fellow pilgrims who, like us, live on mission, far from home as foreigners and strangers in this world.

The first characteristic of our relationship with each other in verse 8, is that we are to **be of one mind** (like minded, or to have unity of mind).

This means that we are to recognize that we share a common heritage of faith and ethical tradition that is completely different from that of the world. (*Jobes, p. 215*)

When we meet a fellow believer, we share a common spiritual history, common ethics and values. We have and know intimately the same Father, the same Brother, and have experienced the same life-transforming salvation. We share the same love for God, the same hatred of sin, we have the same purpose on earth, we believe the same things to be true...

The next characteristic vital to nurturing the family of God is, **“having compassion for one another...”**

Compassion is a word that expresses empathy and emotion. It is to enter into the other person's suffering and to feel their pain, almost as if it were your own, and to then be compelled, by that sense of sharing their hurt, to do something to relieve them as if it were your own suffering.

One with compassion cannot simply stand by and watch another brother or sister suffer, they are moved—motivated to do something to alleviate the suffering.

1Corinthians 12:24-26, *“But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it [you feel their pain]; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”*

Matthew 9:36, *“When [Jesus] saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”*

Mark 1:40-41, *“Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”⁴¹ Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.”*

“Love as brothers...” is the next exhortation. This kind of bond is born out of the realization that we have been born of God into the family of God and we are therefore brothers and sisters with each other.

This is what God declares us to be—family. Therefore, we need to stand upon the word of God and embrace one another as brothers and sisters because this is who God has made us and declared us to be.

1Peter 1:22, *“...in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again...”*

1Peter 2:17, *“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood...”*

In this Covid isolation, distancing and limiting of numbers, the enemy, among many other destructive things he is doing, is attacking the family of God and seeking to separate and scatter brothers and sisters from each other.

“...Be tenderhearted...” or it can be translated as, **be sympathetic**.

This means you have made the effort to understand them, to get to know how they think about the situation, how they feel about what is going on, and to understand the motive of their heart.

This is similar to the expression we saw in verse seven, “Husbands...dwell with your wives with understanding—get to know them well so that you can understand how they feel and what they think.

Again, this affection is born out of relationship, you can sympathize with someone only when you have been in their shoes, and when you understand what they are thinking and feeling because you have

either been there yourself or because you have spent time with them and have grown to understand what they are going through.

And once again we are brought face to face with the importance of being in close fellowship with each other. These affections that are described in verse 8 are simply not possible between casual acquaintances.

The final characteristic is *to be courteous*, or *to be humble*.

This is to place the comfort and well being of the other person first ahead of yourself. It is to give them the biggest piece of the pie.

Or, like Abraham did for Lot, humble courtesy is to give them the first choice when you have a strong preference; to help them at your own expense when they are in need.

Jesus exemplified this when He took the towel and basin and washed His disciples' dirty feet.

Jesus exemplified this humility when He took our place on the cross; He paid our penalty, He suffered our shame, so that we wouldn't have to.

Living this way in our relationship with the rest of the body of Christ will definitely identify us as being a totally different breed and nationality of people than those we live among in this foreign world.

How can we possibly live like this toward one another? Only Jesus can live this kind of life. Only those who have His Spirit living in them, and who yield their lives and trust and allow Jesus to express His life through them, can ever live such a superhuman life.

Now in verse nine, the word of God will describe for us how we, as citizens of heaven, and foreigners in this world, should respond to the people of this world who reject us, and who persecute us because we are not like them.

1Peter 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."

Verse nine identifies this as our calling—this is our mission.

Remember that we have a different King than the people of this world. And this world is in rebellion and at war against our King. So when they see in our lives the characteristics of our King, there will often be a negative reaction.

Especially, those whose lives are strongly under the control of Satan, will be most strongly opposed to seeing the life and the words and the love of Jesus expressed through us.

1Peter 2:20-21 further describes our calling.

1Peter 2:20-21, *“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”*

Now again, we pilgrims, when mistreated and rejected by the citizens of this world, because of our ethnicity—because we are children of God and citizens of His Kingdom, we are not to be surprised.

We are called to let the life of Jesus shine through us in a world that loves the darkness.

We are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus—the way of escape, in a world held in bondage by demonic powers and by sin.

And when we go as sheep among wolves on a mission that their master hates, they are going to react against us.

And when they attack us, verbally or physically, we are to expect it and we are to take it patiently, knowing that this is part of the mission that our Master has called us to.

We are called, not to get into conflict with them, but to rescue their souls from the spiritual prison that they are locked in.

1Peter 3:9, *“...not returning evil for evil or reviling [insults, verbal abuse, tearing down one’s reputation] for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”*

Only one with the Spirit of Jesus will be able to do this. Human nature is to retaliate and to fight back. Our flesh feels compelled to defend our honor and our reputation.

But the word of God doesn’t simply say, “Don’t return evil for evil...don’t just bite your lip and hold your tongue.”

The word of God goes on to say that we are to bless those who insult us—we are to bless those who hurt us, who persecute us, those who betray us, throw us in prison, or even kill some of us.

We have been called to bless those who persecute us—it is our assignment to bless them.

What does it mean to bless them? It means first and foremost, to pray for them to find mercy and favor with God.

To pray for their forgiveness and salvation. To pray that they would become friends with God and become a loving brother or sister who would join your family.

1Peter 3:10-12, *“For “He who would love life and see good days [Suffering is not our lot in life—fullness of joy and pleasures forever more in the presence of Christ is our lot in life—that is our blessing that we will inherit. But while we are here on mission we have some challenges to face],*

let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. [No reviling when we are reviled.]

11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. [This is returning good for evil]

12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous [we are the righteous—we are the rescuers sent out on mission. The Lord is watching over us to protect us and to ensure the success of our mission—this gives us confidence.],

and His ears are open to their prayers [This means that God hears and answers our prayers—our prayers for those who are persecuting us. This is their hope of salvation—when we pray for them, God is listening.];

but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

This is their danger, they are under the judgment of God. And God has sent us to rescue those who will respond to the love and truth of Jesus.

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