

Called To Bless

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[0 : 00] Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and humble mind.! A tender heart and 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 amen I want you to look back at the beginning of verse 8 notice just the first phrase that Peter uses finally all of you he says now I always perked up as a kid whenever the preacher would use a term like finally it usually meant that he was about to wrap things up and I was going to be able to move on with my day and enjoy my time with my friends let's be honest we all know what it's like to grow a bit weary or distracted throughout the course of an extended monologue and the relief that we sense when we get one of those signal words like finally or lastly but alas those tricky preachers they don't always mean that they're wrapping up the sermon when they use a word like this sometimes they just mean that they're wrapping up that part of the sermon and you've got a little way still yet to go and that's basically what Peter's doing at this point in his letter we get to this verse and he says finally doesn't mean to signal that he's beginning the end of the letter but rather he's drawing a conclusion to this section of the letter that he began all the way back in chapter 2 in verse 11 remember it was in verses 11 and 12 that we said those were functioning as something of an introduction to this section kind of like a doorway into the house that is this section of the letter and he moved on from there and he's covering different things well now we get to 8 to 12 and this is really functioning as something of a conclusion or a summary to the section that we've just walked through it's also functioning as a bridge that gets us into the rest of chapter 3 and chapter 4 where really the focus is on suffering suffering so in this part of the letter Peter has been instructing Christians on how to live in the fear of God while also living under the authority of men and of course the focus of living under that authority is not just of men but even especially of wicked and unbelieving men the theme of the section is submission

Jesus Jesus is the example of the section and it is his suffering for our sins his atonement that provides the hope of the section so Jesus shows us how we are to suffer righteously and it is his suffering for our sins that reassures us of a future hope beyond this exile beyond this time of suffering injustices and then of course Jesus helps us to endure that suffering as we face as we face it for his sake in this life now after addressing these specific circumstances of Christian citizens and then Christian slaves and then Christian wives as we covered last week in this concluding section Peter addresses all of you notice this is very simple isn't it this is just clear from your English classes right what's happening here in the literature he's addressed three specific categories of people and now he's saying in case you didn't get any of that let me just make it clear

I'm talking to everyone now all of you and no matter what their specific circumstances may entail he has something for them to hear and it actually serves as a fitting summary for everything that he's been saying in the last few passages so what exactly is it that Peter's concerned to say to all of us the emphasis of this final instruction is on the Christian's responsibility to bless others and it's not only a responsibility to bless others it's a responsibility to bless all others no matter who they are no matter what they've done and we see this theme of continuing here where Peter is instructing us over and over in the difficult circumstances of life as you face suffering for the sake of the gospel as you're dealing with wicked people in many occasions as you're dealing with unbelievers as you're dealing with oppressors and abusers in your life over and over he says don't retaliate don't retaliate and stoop to their level there's a different way that God intends for you to live that's essentially what

he's been saying these last three sections now he's qualifying that again here and he's saying all of you bless others no matter who they are and what they've done and the point is that as God's people in the world we are called to bless the people of the world and we do that in light of the fact that we are on our way to the blessing of God this future inheritance that is undergirding this whole letter as we go through this time of exile everything we covered in chapter 1 that blessing that is to be obtained by God's people we bless others in light of that truth so again at the heart of this instruction is what?

[6 : 17] it's the gospel isn't it? it's the gospel that Jesus has provided a way for us to be at peace with God that God in his loving grace has called us to be his own he has chosen us he's regenerated us he's called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light we are headed to an imperishable and unfading inheritance and in light of that we're going to live to bless other people even those who are not themselves headed toward that same inheritance now the call to bless comes in actually in verse 9 the second half of it he says on the contrary bless for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing now the primary command here is clear isn't it?

rather than do evil to others rather than speak evil of others Christians are to bless them but the question is what does that actually mean?

what does it mean when Peter says that we are to bless that we are to bless other people I don't want you to think about this blessing in the scripture in this formal sense is a priestly function it involves going to God on behalf of someone else to seek his favor and grace on their lives and then it is taking the truth of God and pronouncing a blessing on the recipients of that blessing in accordance with the truth you see it's you go to God on behalf of someone else you seek his favor on their lives and then you take his truth and you communicate that truth you communicate the blessing you pronounce the blessing in accord with what God has said and who is at that function to do this on a regular basis it was the priest who did this it was a priestly function in the home fathers to bless their families it's a priestly function of course in the nation of Israel the priest operating this way and then we see here in chapter 2 of 1 Peter verses 5 and 10 what is it that he calls Christians he says that we are a holy priesthood as God's priestly representatives in the world we are called to be a blessing to others to seek

God's favor to seek God's grace for them and then to pronounce his blessing in accord with his gospel and notice this this call to bless is not separate from it's actually rooted in the call to believe and I've said this many times in this study calling in the New Testament never refers to vocation or gifting we use the term that way it's not a problem to use the term that way but that's not how the New Testament scriptures use the term calling in the New Testament is always rooted in the effectual call of God to salvation and then there's all these implications that flow out of that call because God has called us to salvation because he has effectually effectively that means that it achieves its end when God does his saving call he affects the end of that call which is to grant us faith and repentance when he does that he also calls us to a life of righteousness and holiness so when Peter comes here and he says that you are called to this you are called to bless he's not talking about a calling that is separate from your salvation he's actually talking about a calling that is rooted in your salvation that because

God has called you to be his own he has also called you to be his priestly representatives to bless the people in the world to bless the people around you Terry just read it a moment ago did you pick it up at the end of Romans chapter six maybe just flip there real quickly I think it would be helpful to set our eyes on it again just at the very end of Romans chapter six and what Terry read a moment ago in verse was it six that you read Terry it was six wasn't it yeah so verse 20 when you were slaves of sin you were free in regard to righteousness but what fruit were you getting at the time of those things which you are now ashamed of for the end of those things is death but now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God the fruit you get does what leads to sanctification and what is the end of sanctification eternal life is that not what Peter's saying here in in this section he's saying

[11 : 23] God has called you to sanctification this act of of holiness which is to bless others to represent and will in the world and that blessing comes with a blessing from God and that is the blessing of eternal life but it would be inappropriate to say well we receive that blessing from God and that eternal life on the basis of how well we bless others that would be a work salvation that's not what Peter's saying which is why we need to understand this word call will it's the same thing Paul's saying in that verse in Romans 6 it's rooted in the call to salvation and the implications of that

is that there's a way that God intends for his people to live the evidence of their faith and the outworking of that is the obtaining blessing of the blessing of this future inheritance God has called you to this when he called you to himself and it comes with this promise doesn't it God calls us to bless so that we may obtain the blessing not the blessing of men but the blessing of

God the truth is there's no guarantee that people will reward your kindness toward them but there is a 100% guarantee that God smiles on his people when they seek his favor and grace on others you know make God smile you live as his people in the world and part of what it means to live as his people in the world is to be a blessing to the people of the world and what greater motivation could there be to bless than to obtain the blessing of God he has called us to this so that he might smile upon us now you guys know that our family through the years has enjoyed vacationing at Walt Disney World I know that is not everybody's cup of tea we like it one of the things that we like about it the girls are getting excited dad's talking about Disney world one of the things we like about it they've trained in the culture of what they call cast members their employees to go out of their way to make the experience for their guest as enjoyable as possible and so every once in a while it's not something you can make happen it just kind of just happens an employee will just go out of the way to do something really significant or special for your family something that they're not doing for everybody else it just kind of happens it's an exciting moment they call it pixie dusting right it's just adding just a little touch of magic to somebody's vacation and Julie and I have often talked about you know what an awesome job it would be to go to a place like that and just your company has just empowered you to just do this all you do is pixie dust people right all you do is be a blessing to people all you do is take the authority from your bosses and go and try to make everybody else's life better and to be empowered to do that do you see that's what

Peter is saying that God has called us to as his people in the world essentially God almighty has set us apart and he said part of what I want you to do in the world until I return is I'm empowering you by my spirit to just go be a blessing to people just go do good to people go and seek my favor and my grace on their life what a privilege that is right what a privilege it is to be God's instruments of favor and of grace in the life of others what a privilege to serve as God's priest seeking his favor pronouncing his favor through his word God has called this to be a blessing to other people and what a privilege it is for us to do that but who exactly is it that we are to be a blessing to I think we can discern at least two groups of people in this particular text first we're to bless one another to bless one another look at verse 8 finally all of you have unity of mind sympathy brotherly love a tender heart and a humble mind

Peter's clearly speaking about our spirit and conduct toward other Christians at this point isn't he these traits they demonstrate what it looks like to be a blessing to other believers in the life of the local church let's just walk through them quickly this word that's behind unity of mind it's the word for harmony which is a common instruction in the New Testament it doesn't mean that we never disagree that would be impossible wouldn't it what it means is that our pursuit even in disagreement is to live in harmony with one another as God's people as the church harmonious living and that happens only harmony when our unity is rooted deeply in our union with Christ and his gospel you know what tends to happen in churches when this spirit of unity this unity of mind begins to falter it's because they've lost focus on the most essential things they've lost focus on the gospel they've lost focus on the truth of

God's word and they've begun to root their fellowship with one another in all kinds of peripheral things they've rooted their fellowship with one another in a common style of worship perhaps or they've rooted their fellowship with one another in a cultural hegemony right that just we're all alike we all have the same kind of things or maybe they've rooted their fellowship with one another in life stage well I just want to be a part of a church where there's just more families like my family or there's more people like me or more people that think like me and inevitably whenever other people who aren't like that begin to come in because your fellowship's been rooted in that your unity's been rooted in that what happens the unity goes away because it was never really about the gospel it was never really about union with Christ this kind of unity of mind only happens when we're gospel focused on what we're doing when we keep the main things the main things and the essential things the essential things of which our unity is rooted together that's how we bless one another we pursue this kind of harmony that's rooted in the gospel to have sympathy is to care deeply about the needs and joys and sorrows of other

[18 : 28] Christians it's to rejoice with those who rejoice it's to weep with those who weep which requires that we be attuned to one another personally invested in one another's discipleship isn't that one of those other core values we talk about we talk about gospel focus we also talk about a discipling culture I think that's what's at the heart of this here making such a personal investment that you understand the cares and the needs and the joys and the sorrows of the people with whom you've made a covenant with in a local church and you pursue that kind of sympathy you invest in it can't just help you with some easy ways to do that you know on Tuesday mornings when that church email goes out the first thing it has on there is that prayer guide every week Becky and Sarah are doing such a great job to get on the phone with each of you it's a different member family every week just trying to figure out what's going on in your life writing that down prayer requests things like that you know one of the easiest ways to be invested in one another is just to read that prayer guide and pray pray for one another and then when you show up at church on Sunday morning you show up at the ladies group or the men's group or the teen group or whatever it is you show up and you say hey I read in the thing this week how's that going how's the Lord working in this situation

I've been praying for you that's what's behind this term here that's what's behind sympathy! it's hospitable toward others it's making relational investments it's not seeing church as something that I do on Sunday and then I've got this whole other life the rest of the week no it's understanding that this is essential it's seeking it out it's mutual discipleship that shows itself in deep care and concern for one another brotherly love as we saw in chapter one and verse 22 is the fruit of genuine conversion Peter said it's to be the earnest pursuit of every believer Jesus said this is how the world will know that you actually follow me is when they see the way you love one another this familial term is coming to the surface again here Peter is saying this is how you bless one another you love each other compassion may in this context refer to gentleness and mercy toward those who are suffering in some way think about those three categories he just went through

Christian citizens who are suffering underneath the leadership of a wicked ruler like Nero in his day Christian slaves who are suffering under abusive masters and they're stuck in a situation they're trying to do what's right and they're being beaten for it Christian wives who are trying to be faithful to the Lord and pursue righteousness in their lives while they live with a monster at home compassion tenderness tender heart and then a humble mind of course seeks the good and interest of others above oneself somebody said one time humility is not thinking poorly about yourself it's just not thinking about yourself it's just thinking about others isn't it now those of you who are Bible structure nerds and like to follow people like me like Jim Hamilton you will appreciate that Tom Schreiner points out the chiasmic structure of these five characteristics here notice how they pair together unity of mind pairs well with a humble mind doesn't it isn't it a humble mind that's actually necessary to achieve harmony wasn't that

Paul's entire deal with the Philippians chapter two before he gets into that amazing Christology what is it that he says don't think of your own things think of others better than yourself be of the same mind he says and then we see sympathy and compassion are so closely related they're almost hard to distinguish from one another aren't they it's the practical outworking of love but right at the heart of the whole thing what all of those things are kind of circling around is this brotherly love that keeps coming up in the letter love is at the heart of it all what does it mean for us to bless one another as God's people it just means to love one another well it means to love one another well we need to learn to do that now one of this here it almost feels out of place to me this particular verse this address for relationships in the church you know what

I really think it is I think essentially it's this Peter saying life in exile is hard enough without us being at war with one another maybe I'm off on that but I think that's what he's getting at here how are we supposed to thrive in exile if we can't even figure out how to get along with one another and how to have the right focus together if we don't even understand what it looks like to be God's people together how in the world are we going to show the world God's glory how in the world would they be attractive to a gospel that doesn't produce brotherly love and sympathy and compassion and unity and humility right now everyone is preaching empathy and compassion and sympathy but none of it is rooted in the true gospel which means none of it can actually be achieved and here we are church we have the one thing that can actually produce that it's the gospel of

[24 : 39] Jesus and the spirit of God at work through the word of God we have it we must pursue that if we are to demonstrate God's glory I think that's why he says it and we've got to get this right

but to get it right requires constant diligent pursuits of love and unity and I don't sense that we have a problem with this right now it's just this is what the text is on about so I fear it must be what the sermon must be on about can I just say that we might uniquely tested we've all heard the horror stories of churches that fall apart over trivial matters petty disagreements we're going to have a lot of opportunity in the next few months to divide over carpet!

colors if we get distracted by those things buildings budgets and programming and how we want things to go it's got a real chance of causing us to falter in the love and the compassion the sympathy and the unity and the humility that Peter is telling us that we need to possess here for the glory of God and I say it because I think it's a problem right now I say it because I don't want it to be a problem later for us to just get this right be committed now to pursuing harmony that's rooted in the gospel to prioritize mutual discipleship and care for each other to pursue love and compassion and demonstrate humility this is how God has commanded us to bless one another but it's not just other

Christians that he calls us to bless here there's a in verse nine but we don't need to press that too hard one reason is because he doesn't say that explicitly I think it's implied but he doesn't say it explicitly we also shouldn't think that there's never going to come a time in your life when another Christian or somebody you go to church with doesn't treat you with some kind of evil or reviling you ever had that happen you ever been hurt by a church you ever been hurt in a church of course you have why because we're all just people at the end of the day aren't we so we don't need to press that too hard but

I do think that the implication here the idea is outsiders but the truth remains no matter who is mistreating us because the command is to refuse the temptation is always going to be to treat others the way they treat us we learn the golden rule do unto others as you would have them do unto you we don't typically live that way we do unto others as they have already done to you right that's our nature that's our flesh some people will even pride themselves on being the ones that should never be crossed because their Peter reminds us it's never right to commit evil it's never right to slander someone it's never right to revile someone even those who deserve it the most but the shocking aspect of this command is not that we are to refrain from repaying evil for evil if you've been a

Christian at all you know that that's common in the scriptures isn't it not to do! you know what's shocking about this command is not what we're not supposed to do it's what he says that we are supposed to do it's the part where he says that we're actually to show our enemies favor and grace we're to ask for God to show grace to those who have done evil against us to those who have reviled us we train ourselves typically and probably wisely to walk away from those God seems to be saying stay and bless them instead that's a hard thing to do but isn't it what Jesus taught isn't Peter just saying what Jesus said Luke chapter 6 27 to 29 Jesus said I say to you love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who abuse you if one strikes you on the cheek offer the other one also the one who takes your cloak don't withhold your tunic or your shirt either that's a radical way of thinking that's a radical life that's a hard life but that's how

[30 : 31] Jesus lived that's how Jesus taught us to live he didn't only teach it he modeled it even as the Romans were in the process of nailing him to a cross he prayed for their forgiveness father forgive them they don't even understand what they're doing forgive them that's what it looks like to bless our enemies it means to pray for God to do the same saving work in their lives that he's done in our lives that's what it means to bless them it means showing kindness and compassion when given an opportunity to do so and praying that God would use that act of love and compassion to draw them to Jesus not necessarily just to make your life easier but so that they might see Jesus through you that's what it means to bless them it's choosing to seek their salvation over their destruction to bless them in this way

Peter says is not only what you're called to it achieves the smile of God and it will lead to your blessing in the future and then Peter supports all of this in verses 10 to 12 he roots the argument in the scriptures let's read it verse 10 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 so Peter's rooting his whole argument here in the scriptures which we're!

grateful supported by the quote itself what is being said but I think we can find support also in the person who wrote the psalm so let's just take each of those in turn the entire psalm really emphasizes if you were to go back and read it this afternoon psalm 34 it's emphasizing how the Lord rescues his people when they suffer and judges the wicked who perpetrate evil against them so it's God blessing the righteous and judging the wicked and meanwhile in the psalm the righteous ones those who are trusting God they demonstrate their trust and hope in the Lord by refusing to do evil against the evil people by refusing sin renouncing sin and doing good instead now Peter means to comfort us here you need not take matters into your own hands when you suffer he means to say why because the eyes of the

Lord are on the righteous in other words he sees you he knows the ears of the Lord are open to their cries he hears you he knows and what's the final part of that his face is set against the wicked those who do evil what's being communicated there trust the Lord trust the Lord he sees your suffering don't do evil leave it to God and trust that he will rescue his people and he will judge the wicked that's the point God gives life to those who repent and trust him so we bless others and refuse to do evil against them but then I think there's something for us to consider about the man who wrote

Psalms 34 the circumstances that gave rise to this writing was David if you were to go back and read the Psalm you'll see the superscription at the beginning of it it gives us a context clue David wrote this Psalm during a period of his life when he was constantly on the run from King Saul I want you to think about that if you remember the stories God sends his prophet to the house of Jesse Jesse eventually brings David the runt of the family perhaps and Samuel says this is God's chosen but it's not time for David to inherit the kingdom yet is it he's God's chosen he's God's elect the promise is sure God will be faithful to it but it's not time yet and David has to go through his days trusting that God will be faithful to the promise that he made as he looks forward to the promise being fulfilled in the kingdom now that sounds an awful lot like 1 Peter to me we are

[35 : 42] God's chosen he has called us he's promised us a future inheritance that's unfading and undefiled and imperishable he says that he is keeping us and guarding us through faith for the return of Jesus Christ for our salvation to be revealed but it's not time yet in the meantime we're here and like David we often suffer the fullness of the kingdom has not yet come the full experience of the inheritance is still ahead of us and what are we left to do trust the Lord trust that he will be faithful and do good and obey him and refuse sin now what did that look like in David's life King Saul is threatened by him doesn't appreciate that David is God's chosen and he seeks to kill him over and over and over and over it's not just that he's saying bad things about David 1 Peter we're just talking about reviling Saul's trying to kill him on two different occasions

David has a wide open opportunity to take matters into his own hands he can kill Saul which all of us would look and say that's justifiable it's defense self-defense he could have done that taken the kingdom on both occasions David refuses to do that on both occasions he lets Saul know that he refused to do that my favorite one is David's hiding out in a cave Saul doesn't know it Saul shows up to go use the bathroom and in the middle of that David sneaks up cuts a part of his garment and then sneaks back in the cave Saul has no idea Saul eventually leaves the cave David stands out and he calls out to him and he says look I could have taken your life today but you're God's anointed and I'm not going to do that I'm not going to sin against God in this and you know what Saul does is 1st Samuel 24 Saul turns to David and he says God bless you you have done me good rather than repaying me evil sounds a lot like 1st

Peter 3 when Peter uses this passage not only is Peter thinking about the things that David wrote that God inspired him to write in Psalm!

I'm convinced that Peter is probably thinking about David's life at the time that he wrote it so that David Helm says in David's obedience Peter has found the one who prefigured Christ and his sufferings he's found the one who emulates the point he's been making and the church now has proof that God does reward the righteous so we press on and doing good because we've seen again and you need to be like David really need to be like Jesus I've called the series as we've been studying through 1 Peter thriving in exile and I know we say it every week but has it hit you yet what it means to thrive it's not probably what we initially assumed!

Is it? It doesn't mean ease it doesn't mean comfort it doesn't mean success as far as we can measure it from worldly standards thriving just means faithful it means enduring it means holiness it means gospel hope it means living as God's representatives in the world even when it comes to

suffering and when that suffering does inevitably come it means renouncing sin trusting God's promise and seeking his favor on the very ones who hurt us that's what it means to the right and you know we can do this with joy and with hope as we look to Jesus he models this righteousness and faith that we are to have but he also prayed for us to receive the father's grace and favor even though we were the evil ones deserving of his judgment and are you not grateful that that is the heart of

[40 : 07] Christ so when Peter says that God has called us to bless and even to bless our enemies he's really just telling us to have the heart of Jesus Jesus has for us and in doing that we'll glorify God and we'll show the world the glory and goodness of the gospel let's pray