

Don't Retaliate - Bless

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[0 : 00] Let's turn just for a little to 1 Peter chapter 3 and reading at verse 8. 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.

Now as we know, the Christians that Peter was writing to were going through a very hard time.

Peter talks a lot about trial, and indeed he terms it a fiery trial.

And that's not something any of us would like. None of us want trial in our lives, but trial is inevitable. As Christians, it's inevitable.

In fact, I would say that trials in one shape or other are inevitable in every person's life, whether they're Christians or non-Christians. But the Christian life is a life where trial is part and partial of what we go through.

[1 : 15] And it is through the trials and through the temptations and the tribulations the Lord works. And he breaks us through so many of these things. And the Christians that Peter was writing to were living at a very tough time.

It was a time of where the fires of persecution had broken out, and they were intensifying, and the Christians were being scattered to different areas. And that's who Peter is writing to, to the scattered Christians.

So they're living in a world that many parts of this world could identify completely with the way it was for these early church Christians.

We, although our Christian environment is being suffocated more and more, year by year, there are attempts made to stifle the Christian faith, to suffocate the faith, Christian faith out, to try and eradicate and remove its influence from society.

There are many people with that sort of agenda, and they're trying to infiltrate all the different places of importance and prominence in our land with this aim of removing the Christian faith.

[2 : 24] And the more that that happens, the harder it's going to become for the Christian. Our privileges, which we grew up with when we were young, we could never imagine where we're at today.

But even although things are becoming increasingly difficult, we don't face the fires of persecution that some Christians are facing in parts of the world today.

And that's how it was for the Christians that Peter was writing to. And so Peter is giving advice to them as to how they are to live.

And his advice is very personal. It's very practical. And I suppose it's very easy when Christians come together, and particularly if you're going through a hard time, and particularly if people are giving you, if particular people are giving you a hard time, it'd be very easy when you're grouped together as Christians to really lay into them as it were, one amongst another and just put down on what they're doing.

Well, Peter is saying to us as Christians that our spirit and our attitude mustn't be one of retaliation. And this goes right against everything that we are by nature, because it is natural to retaliate.

[3 : 40] And Peter is saying that there has to be another way. And Peter has just been talking in the first section about husbands and wives and living together.

And he says in verse 7, Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way. And that is a very important instruction. And I would say it's not simply to the husband, but also to the wife.

And I would say that it is important in every relationship. That our relationship within the church, our relationship within our home, our relationship within our workplace, our relationship within the community, we should be seeking to live in an understanding way with others.

Because a lot of the problems, a lot of the troubles that arise in life is because people are not prepared to understand. They don't want to understand. And people live in a very self-centered and selfish way.

It's my way or the highway. And they don't try to understand others. So Peter is saying it's very important that we try to understand one another. And he speaks a lot about unity.

[4 : 50] And so the Christians ought to be people who are united. Because that's what he goes on to say in verse 8. Finally, all of you have unity of mind. Now, Peter isn't saying that every single one of you should have the same opinion about everything and that in every single thing that you should have the same likes and the same dislikes.

Of course we don't. We're all individuals. We all have our own individual characters, our individual personalities. And maybe what half a dozen of you hear.

Your tastes are different in life. The way you view things are different. And it's important that we have these things. That's not what Peter's talking about.

But he's talking about the way that we live our lives. It is vital to have a unity. And first and foremost, this unity must be in the things of God. That we must be united together in who God is.

In God as the creator God. As God, the God of redemption. We must have a complete unity of mind in the way that the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ to our souls.

[6 : 03] We must have a unity of mind with regard to all the teachings of the Bible and have the whole word of God as the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy it.

We must have a total unity of mind with regard to heaven and with regard to hell, with regard to the resurrection and the last judgment. All these things that are taught to us in the word of God.

It is imperative that the Christian has a unity of mind in these things. And also, all the teachings in the Bible, all these great doctrines and theological teachings, open out into practice so that the unity of mind will bring us into seeking to live reflecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

That should be our great purpose. And if all of us have the unity of mind seeking to be Christ-like in our walk, in our witness, in our way, then it will bring a harmony, it will bring a strength, it will bring a united purpose, and it will be of great benefit not only to us personally, but also to the witness of the church.

So, Peter is very strong on this unity of mind. And then he says, we ought to have this sympathy and brotherly love, this sympathy, that so Christians, Christians should not be hard-hearted.

[7 : 35] We're one family. Every believer is part of the family of God, the church of God, of the body of Christ. We all belong to him. We're all one.

And when one hurts, when one is going through a difficult time, it's not right that any Christian would say, well, that's his problem or that's her problem. I'm not going to get involved with that.

That's there on their own. I have enough to think about. We have to identify with those who are struggling, with those who are going through difficult times.

We are to, as we're told elsewhere, we are to weep with those who weep. And that indeed ties in with a tender heart, the brotherly love, a tender heart which has the idea of pity in it.

That was one of the great things about the Lord Jesus Christ, that there was a pity in his heart, a compassion in his heart. We often read about that, how he was moved with compassion when he saw the multitudes.

[8 : 38] He saw them as sheep without a shepherd and he was moved with compassion towards them. And so there ought to be this sense of pity, of brotherly love, of sympathy within our hearts, one for another.

We belong to one another. And that's what the apostle is highlighting. And so there's this sense of unity, of togetherness. We belong to one another.

That's very, very important. One of the things about Peter is, and that's a great thing, when you look at Peter and John's life with Jesus in the Gospels, and then you read Peter and John's letters, you can see how in these years the Lord has worked.

Because right away, you don't think of Peter as being someone who was very loving and gentle and somebody who was really tender-hearted and somebody who was full of pity.

because you've got this idea of this quite brash, harsh kind of individual at the time when he was with Jesus. And you see, Jesus has been working in Peter.

[9 : 53] And the Holy Spirit has been applying the word of truth to Peter right throughout the years. So that Peter who's writing later on in life has been changed.

He's been changed more and more to the image of Christ. And we're changing as well. We shouldn't be, you know, if somebody says, as a Christian, you know, I don't see any change, any change at all.

Well, at one level, sometimes it can be. Some Christians seem to be that permanently seem to be in the same place. And it can sometimes be a wonderful thing to see Christians who have a lovely walk.

And that's always the case. That's not what I mean. But there should be, we should be aware ourselves. That we are, that there's a maturing going on.

That we're mellowing with age. That we're becoming more sympathetic. That our hearts have more compassion in them. That we're becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10:56] And then he says, there should be this humbleness of mind. So that we don't think much of ourselves at all. We think more of others than we do of ourselves. And most of all of Jesus Christ.

And then Peter turns from the way that he, how we deal with one another to really how we deal with people in general. And he says, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless.

For to this you are called. Now as we said, these were tough times and they were living in when they were the victims of evil words and evil actions.

And it's not easy what Peter is saying to them. It's not easy sometimes what Peter is saying to us as well. You see, there are three ways that we can operate in this world. First is this.

We can choose to return evil to those who do good to us. Now you say to yourself, that's an awful thing. Well that's exactly what the Jews did to Jesus.

[11:58] When Jesus came into this world, as he came in, he did nothing but good. His whole life was one of the most superb teaching and preaching.

His whole ministry involved reaching out to those who were in a poor state. He healed. He healed the lepers and the blind and the mute and the paralyzed and even raised the dead.

And he did nothing but good and crowds followed him. Everything he did was good from start to finish. And what did they do? They took Jesus and in spite of all his goodness and all his grace and all his love towards them, they beat him up, flogged him and crucified him in the most awful way.

So it's hard to really imagine anything really worse than that. So that's one way that people can operate which is the way that I hope that nobody would is return evil for good.

The second way that people can operate is the one that most people do. It's the one that the world really tends to operate on most is that when good is done to you, you tend to think good or you're ready to return good to that person.

[13:25] And when evil is done to you, you think evil or you intend to return evil to retaliate against that person. That is kind of the natural instinct that is within human nature.

It's the natural instinct that you'll see in children. So you see little children growing up and one will hit one, the other will hit back. There's always a retaliation. Very often there's a retaliation.

And it's just they don't have to be taught that. It's just something that's there. And that's what human nature is. But then there is a third way and this is what Peter is highlighting here is that when evil is done towards us then we in turn return good.

And that's again the example of Jesus. That's what Jesus did. When they did so much evil against him, when they took him and when they reviled him, it tells us that he reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

And what an example that is by our Lord. Because that is what we are to do. Not to take the matter into our own hands, but to commit the matter to the judge of all the earth.

[14:53] And you know, the Lord is a way of dealing with these things. and when we hand it to the Lord and the Lord deals with these things, then our conscience is not only is our conscience clear, but we receive blessing from the Lord in doing this very thing.

Now it's not easy. This goes right against our nature. But Jesus, as we said, is a prime example of that. As they hammered the nails into his hands, he said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

the first martyr Stephen took the example of Jesus. And as they poured the stones down on him, he prayed, Lord, lay not the sin to their charge.

These are prime examples of what Peter is here talking about. And so we must depend and lay upon the Lord.

And we are to operate on the basis of God's mercy. And what I mean by that is before we retaliate against anybody who says anything against us or does anything or we feel a slight by what people do.

[16 : 05] And you know, sometimes it's all too easy to take the huff or take the hump about this or that. Just stop and think. I must stop and think about the way we have dealt with the Lord.

When you think over all the years and particularly when we were in the far country and when we think of how gracious God was to us and of all that he provided for us and all that he gave us and day by day we took so much from his hand and never acknowledged his goodness to us and so many times we turned away from him and yet he didn't deal with us by pouring evil upon us but he continued with long suffering to be gracious and to be merciful to us and how thankful we are that that's the way he dealt with us and that's how we in turn are to deal with one another and of course in his great love he eventually wooed us and won us and so this is how we are to do we are to hand the thing over to the Lord we are to by grace and let me stress it's by grace by grace we are to meet evil with good and leave the things that matters to the Lord because the Lord has a way of dealing with these things and he will give you blessing not just in the world to come oh yes you have blessing and glory awaiting but he will bless you in this world too we're told that that you may obtain a blessing 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 by blessing your enemies you in turn are going to bring God's blessing upon yourself which is an enriching experience and that requires faith from on our part to actually do that and then just in a word Peter goes on to quote from Psalm 34 and that's where the next verses are from verse 10 down to verse 12 from Psalm 34 and I love this because this in a sense is almost a commentary on these words you know there are some people who say the New Testament and the Old Testament are so far apart the New Testament has nothing to do with the Old Testament you cannot be more wrong than that the New Testament and the Old the Old Testament and the New Testament are the two lips of God from the one mouth they both that's the God's word from from where God says let there be light to the beginning of Genesis right to the very end of Revelation it's all God's word so here's this commentary on what Peter is saying from David and remember this Psalm

Psalm 34 is a Psalm that was written at the time when we believe when David was being chased by Saul and you remember what was happening there David had only done good he had killed Goliath he had chased the Philistines off the land he had been absolutely loyal and faithful to Saul how was Saul trying to repay him the very first one we said repaying good with evil so how does David then deal with it does he go to two number two to retaliate no he goes to number three where he seeks to repay Saul with good rather than evil you remember in the cave there's a couple of times there were two or three incidents you can read about it in 1st Samuel and remember when Saul was in the cave that David was hiding in and Saul David said there's Saul go and kill him God has put him into your hand David says

I won't lift my hand against the Lord's anointed and rather than kill him he allowed Saul to go and then he called him afterwards and he said Saul why are you harassing me I could have killed you but I didn't and Saul at that moment he was stricken in his heart because of his own attitude but that didn't last long he was pursuing David again but what David did was he committed the matter to the Lord and the Lord dealt with it and there came a day when Saul was killed and he ended up falling upon his own sword we read all about that in the battle with the Philistines and David makes this wonderful lament about Saul but you know this to his dying day David would have been so thankful that he never raised his hand against the Lord's anointed and so David's is a commentary

[21 : 15] Psalm 34 is a commentary David's life was a commentary on the very thing that Peter was saying here so David had the spirit of Christ Peter had the spirit of Christ and may we seek also to have the spirit of Christ as well let us pray Lord we we pray that you will bless us tonight and we give thanks for the way your word challenges us and so often brings before us a different way of living and we pray for the grace that will adapt and the grace that adopts your word and adapts our life into what you say we pray for that faith that will be able to see you as a judge of all the earth and be able to see that even although we cannot sometimes understand your ways and purposes that you're the God who does all things well oh Lord be with us we pray and take each one of us to our homes and safety we pray for those who are weak and in need we pray

Lord your blessing upon them do them all good and take away your sin in Jesus name Amen