

Good Days

1 Peter 3:10-12

One thing you should always remember when you read an Old Testament quote in the New Testament, is that when the New Testament writers quote a verse or two, they are usually making reference to the whole context. Seldom do the New Testament writers simply provide a proof-text for a particularly point, a single verse that they use as definitive proof of whatever specific point they are trying to make. Instead, they are bringing the whole context of the particular passage into view, even if they just quote one verse.

That is very much the case in our text this morning from 1 Peter 3. Peter quotes Psalm 34, actually several verses, verses 12-16, but in order to understand what Peter is teaching us, you really do have to consider the whole of the Psalm. That's the reason I have used Psalm 34 as a theme for our worship service this morning.

The Psalm begins with praise, as I read as a call to worship, Ps. 34:1 "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together."

So let me remind you about the context of Psalm 34. The Bible actually gives us its own explanation by way of introduction. We read in the text, "A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed."

We find that account in 1 Samuel 21. The name of the king is identified as Achish, though he was also known as Abimelech, a

common name for the kings of the Philistines. Sort of like Pharaoh as a name for the kings of Egypt. So David pretended madness before Abimelech in order to save his own life.

1 Sam. 21:10 "Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11 And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?'" 12 Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13 So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. 14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? 15 Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

Gath was a major city of the Philistines, and the king was jealous of David's success and popularity. So David pretended to be insane so that he would be allowed to escape. It worked.

Now, why all that detail? We're studying 1 Peter 3, and Peter quotes Psalm 34, and that has reference to 1 Samuel 21. Why such a boring introduction to my sermon this morning? Because all of that context is necessary in order to understand what Peter is teaching us! David is in danger of his life, due to the wickedness of men. And yet he writes, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." And the basis of that praise is the realization that the Lord has protected him.

Ps.34:4 "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears...6 This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles."

Thus I used Psalm 34 a few moments ago as a reading of the gospel, a declaration and reminder of the promises of the gospel that are made so perfectly clear in Jesus,

Ps. 34:8 “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.”

Then, David writes in the Psalm,

Psalm 34:11 “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

That’s where Peter comes in as he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” That’s where I come in, as I preach this sermon to you this morning, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

So, David has great troubles, and he writes this Psalm to teach us a valuable lesson. Peter anticipates great troubles for his readers, and so he quotes this Psalm to teach us a valuable lesson. And we have great troubles, too, don’t we? So as I preach I hope to teach you a valuable lesson.

None of you are being chased by the King of the Philistines. None of you has to flee from your home under the threat of death, being forced to pretend to be insane. But still, you have troubles. Some of those troubles affect the whole church, during this time of transition and uncertainty. Some of those troubles affect your health and strength. Some of those troubles affect your family, your children or grandchildren. Your parents. Or your friends. Some of those troubles affect your work and employment, or even your sense of the well-being of our country

in the midst of this time of political unrest as we await a presidential election in which both major candidates are deeply disliked by a wide range of people.

Maybe your troubles are personal, financial, emotional, relational or spiritual. Whatever the troubles might be, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” That lesson begins with the definition of,

I. A WORTHY GOAL.

v.10

That’s something of a curious phrase, isn’t it? It almost sounds selfish. “Love life.” Is that a good thing? “See good days?” Doesn’t that sound a bit self-absorbed? Yet Peter presents those things to us as a good thing, even as the blessing of God. David describes the goal of life with those words, in contrast to the life of trouble he was experiencing.

So what do they mean? First, as a worthy goal for you as a Christian, what does it mean to,

A. Love life.

First, if you are wondering if there are any special Greek words being used, the answer is no. The ordinary word for love is used, agape. Selfless love. So also the ordinary word for life. And Peter’s words mean that this should be our goal, this love of life. It should be our determination, our will or purpose. The Greek word refers to something you are resolved to pursue and accomplish. It’s not something that just happens, but something that set out to achieve. It is your goal, a worthy goal.

It is an interesting expression, isn’t it? “He who would love life.” Perhaps we could translate it, “be happy.” “Whoever would

like to be happy...” Yet that is a bit simplistic, and in the context of our culture, a bit selfish. But the idea is sound. Would you like to be satisfied in life? Would you like to “enjoy” life in the sense of finding meaning and purpose? Would you like to find pleasure in life, contentment, gratification? Happiness, rightly and properly understood? The love of life!

Those desires may be universal, yet they are elusive for so many people. For many, life is misery. Life becomes a burden. A cause for depression. Disillusionment. Even despair.

To the contrary, Peter asks, would you like to love life, to enjoy the fullness of life? That’s the desire that we begin with this morning. And that is the goal I lay before you as a minister of the gospel. The gospel isn’t designed to make your miserable. The design is not to stifle your joy, but to promote it. And as part of the message of evangelism, that is a useful connecting point with unbelievers, especially those who feel the disastrous burdens of life deeply. Do you want to love life?

Here is the answer. Jesus’ own words,
John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

So how many of you are unhappy with life? Some of you might be ready to raise your hand. You might be unsettled with life. Discontent, anxious, troubled or distressed with the circumstances of your life. In that context, I say that the desire to be able to love life is a proper one.

Remember the context of Psalm 34. “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

So this love of life, this satisfaction of life, is not directly tied to

your outward, external circumstances. Remember, David is fleeing for his physical life! The love of life is not the selfish pursuit of personal pleasures, rather it begins with the fear of the Lord. The desire to honor the Lord. And we’ll see in a moment just what that requires of us, but for now, let me present it to you as a worthy goal. “Would you like to be able to love life?” And,

B. See good days.

I need to be careful, because “good” here again cannot be defined merely as the fulfillment of all of my own selfish desires. “Good” doesn’t necessarily rich or successful or healthy. “Good” doesn’t mean I am able to gain everything my heart desires, for, quite honestly, many of those things aren’t good at all. It doesn’t mean “happy” in the superficial and often sentimental experiences we so often crave. I am not offering the promise of the prosperity gospel, as if God designs to give you health and wealth at your bidding, making you rich and famous if only you would be faithful to him. That is the deceptive message of so many televangelists, who seduce you into sending them lots of money with the bogus claim that God will give you all the tangible benefits and blessings in this life which you could possibly imagine.

That’s not what I’m talking about. That’s not what Peter is talking about. But he is talking about the ability to enjoy good days! Good days. Not empty, meaningless days. Good days. Blessed days. Prosperous days, in all the fullness of what that word rightly means. It is to experience what the prophets describe in places such as,

Is. 40:31 “But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”

And just so you remember all of this is not simply a promise of material and financial success, we read in,

Hab. 3:17 “Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls-- 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.”

Do you want to see good days? Do you want to love life, to enjoy life, to be satisfied with life? That is a proper desire, a godly desire, a worthy goal. But look at what we are told about the way in which you can achieve such a goal. Peter identifies,

II. AN APPROPRIATE RESTRAINT.

So if you would pursue the blessings of a meaningful life, learning the fear of the Lord, then you are given some restraints. Interesting, how different that message is from the message of the world, which is to the contrary. According to the world, if you want the blessings of a good life then indulge in whatever feels good! Do whatever you want to do, satisfy your own felt needs and desires, with little or no sense of the priority of others around you. Look out for number 1. Maintain your own self-esteem. Just do it!

But that isn’t the godly way to gain satisfaction in life. Indulgence isn’t the biblical definition of happiness! Instead, to use Jesus’ words,

Mat. 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”

So what does all this mean? What does Peter identify as a first priority, quoting David in Psalm 34?

A. Guard your speech.

Watch what you say. Peter seems to be agreeing with James, isn’t he?

James 1:26 “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.”

James 3:2 “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

The apostle Paul also emphasis your words, doesn’t he?

Eph. 4:25 “Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another...29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”

Paul continues,

Eph. 5:3 “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting

for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

Beloved, if you would love life wish to see good days, then guard your speech. Secondly, more generally,

B. Turn away from evil to what is good.

Simple, isn't it?

v.11 “Let him turn away from evil and do good.”

None of this has to do with how you are saved. None of this has to do with any ground upon which your justification is based. You are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. But to those who have received that gift of salvation, let me urge you to heed this very direct and straightforward exhortation. Turn away from the evil you now tolerate in your life.

So what is that evil? I just mentioned several possibilities. Perhaps gossip, talking badly about someone behind their back. Do you tolerate such evil?

Perhaps it is bitterness, a grudge you bear in your soul against another person, unwilling to forgive. Perhaps it is simply untruth, lying. Are you willing to lie to get your way, to get what you want? Children, are you willing to lie to your parents to get what you want? Turn away from such evil.

Maybe it is moral purity, the impurity of thoughts. The impurity of lust, the desires of your eyes. Perhaps you stimulate those desires with pornography. Turn away from such evil.

Sexual immorality is so frequently mentioned in Scripture. Turn away from all such evil. Maybe it's stealing, or the unwillingness to work and labor diligently for your material

sustenance and financial gain. Maybe it is rebelliousness, rebellion against your parents, children. Turn away from that evil. It could also be rebellion against your husbands, including the willingness to manipulate and to seek control within a marriage. Or maybe it is sabbath breaking, for God didn't give us nine commandments, he gave us ten.

v.10 “He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; [Finally] Let him seek peace and pursue it.”

Do you want God's blessings upon your life? Then,

C. Seek peace.

We read as well,

Rom. 12:18 “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

Similarly,

Rom. 14:19 “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”

Is that your goal? Always? Beloved, turn away from the evil of causing divisions and dissension, especially within the church. Pursue peace. Don't just wait for it or wish for it. Pursue it. And how do you do that? Well, that brings up the last week sermon.

v.8 “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be lowly minded; 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.”

Mat. 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”

Do you wish to love life? Do you wish to enjoy good days? I hope you do! I expect that you do! And that’s a good thing.

Here is the path God has prescribed. There are no shortcuts. And no alternate routes. The pursuit of righteousness is that path. But don’t miss Peter’s encouragement! Don’t miss the encouragement of Psalm 34. For we are given the promise of,

III. AN ENCOURAGING BLESSING.

That’s what the Psalm is all about. Thus, that is Peter’s intention as well. Encouragement, in the midst of those troubles. A very practical encouragement as well. First, that,

A. God opposes those who do evil.

Now, we need that encouragement because all too often we don’t see the evidence of that. All too often, we see the evil succeeding. We see those who do evil prospering, not being held accountable. That can be very exasperating, and distressing. It can even challenge your faith. But here is the promise. Here is the encouragement. Here is the truth.

v.12 “But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Psalm 34 goes even farther,

Psalm 34:16 “The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Ultimately, this will come to pass. Ultimately, even though the wicked may prosper for awhile, they shall be condemned, utterly and eternally.

Do you remember the struggles expressed by the Psalmist in,

Ps. 73:3 “For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. 5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men....16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me—17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”

Now he understands! God will bring his judgment upon the wicked. “The face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” And in perfect consistency with that,

B. God attends to the righteous.

v.12a “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers.”

Go back to,

Ps. 34:6 “This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.”

That’s the promise. And even when the outward circumstances of your life would seem to contradict that promise, it is still true. Even if that sense of God’s justice is delayed, it is still real. And that’s the encouragement, to look beyond what is right before you. To look beyond the immediacy of present circumstances.

Such faith is needed in order to gain the encouragement, “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to

their prayers.”

God will hear. Now, we know that God doesn't have ears. God doesn't have eyes. He is a spirit. But he is represented to us with words appropriate for a human being, with human attributes, in order to communicate what is true and real. He is a spirit, without a body, but with all his being, he grants us his faithful and personal attentiveness. He sees. He listens.

So, do you ever think that God isn't listening to your prayers? Do you feel that he is not paying any attention to you? Maybe your prayers consistently unanswered? Sometimes, and I want to emphasize this, sometimes it is a matter of God's own sovereign providence, in which he determines that his grace will be sufficient for you while leaving you afflicted or in need.

Yet this blessing of answered prayer is a proper desire. And a rich reward to the faithful. Seeking the blessing of the favor of God's response to your petitions is a godly objective. And the promise that God is attentive to your prayers is the encouragement of our text. It is the encouragement of Psalm 34.

Psalm 34:11 “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

You see, even when the Lord allows affliction to come, even when there is trouble in your life, the Lord will deliver you. And even if that deliverance awaits until the last day of God's perfect judgment upon the wicked, it will come. The deliverance will come. And your promise and hope, if you believe in Jesus, is that you will never be condemned.

Let me end as Psalm 34 ends, with the promise of the gospel.

Psalm 34:17 “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, And

delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all. 20 He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked, And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. 22 The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.”

Or, in the words of,

Rom. 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

You who believe in Jesus, there is your encouragement! And with that encouragement, may you love life and see good days.