

## Mark Series: Let the Gospel Tell the Gospel

### LEARNING THE JESUS WAY, PART 3: **CALLED TO BLESS**

Spirit-enabled, we seek to bless both friend and reviler, sharing the blessing of our hope in Christ with clear consciences, gentleness and respect.

Covenant Presbyterian Church

**1 PETER 3:8-18**

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#### Our context and Peter's

Peter encourages his readers to endure suffering and persecution ([1:6-7](#); [2:18-20](#); [3:9, 13-17](#); [4:1-4](#), [12-19](#); [5:9](#)) by giving themselves entirely to God ([4:19](#)). They are to remain faithful in times of distress, knowing that God will vindicate them and that they will certainly enjoy the salvation that the Lord has promised. The death and resurrection of Christ stand as the paradigm for the lives of believers. Just as Christ suffered and then entered into glory, so too his followers will suffer before being exalted.

*ESV Study Bible, 1 Peter, Purpose, Occasion, and Introduction*

Peter lived in a pagan world increasingly threatened by the God of the Jews and the growth of his Gospel. Western Europe and North America are increasingly pagan and blind to past blessings from people who knew the Word and Spirit of God and are now seeking to throw off what they see as shackles of bondage to a God of the past (Psalm 2).

The Proverb is still true (8:35-36)

<sup>35</sup> For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD,  
<sup>36</sup> but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death."

#### TWO: Honor Christ as your heart-Lord-of-all-circumstances, blessing others regardless of secondary circumstances.

**3:8-9; 13-14a**

**3:8** Humility means, of course, that others are considered more important than oneself (Phil 2:3–4) and that pride does not fill one's life (cf. Acts 20:19; Rom 12:16; 2 Cor 10:1; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; Jas 1:9; 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). Humility was scorned in the Greco-Roman world, and hence the distinctiveness of Christian vision for the moral life emerges. It seems that there is an A B C B' A' pattern in this verse, so that the verse functions as a chiasm.

A Harmony

B Sympathy  
C Brotherly Love  
B' Compassion

A' Humility

**Harmony and humility belong together, for the primary means by which harmony is disrupted is pride and self-assertion.** Sympathy and compassion are closely related and even hard to distinguish from each other. Brotherly love is the middle term, showing that it is the most important of all the virtues and that the other virtues are embraced in the call to love one another as a family.<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis added) Out of covenant, new family, love we are called to bless.

**3:9, 13-14a** Called to bless: we are to pray the grace of God on folks that we have graciously received. We act towards all in the Jesus Way. Regarding being reviled and spoken badly of see: Matthew 5:10-12 & Luke 6:22-23.

In many regards we in North America are having to learn again how to live in a culture where we are the minority. It has been so at root for a long time, for the foundations have been decaying, but now the fleshly fruit is showing more fully.

At times it seems incredibly dark and it may get darker, but Jesus' disciples look to their hope and stay the course:

"Frodo sighed and was asleep almost before the words were spoken. Sam struggled with his own weariness, and he took Frodo's hand; and there he sat silent till deep night fell. Then at last, to keep himself awake, he crawled from the hiding place

<sup>1</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. The New American Commentary (Vol. 37, pp. 163–164). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

and looked out. The land seemed full of creaking and cracking and sly noises, but there was no sound of voice or of foot. Far above the Ephel Dúath in the West the night sky was still dim and pale. There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, **Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him.** For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach."

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Return of the King, Book VI, Ch. 2, "The Land of Shadow."

**THREE: Freely share the reason for your hope, but with gentleness and respect, by living in the Spirit with a clear conscience.**

**3:10-12, 14b-18**

3:10-12 This quotation from Psa 34 does not teach that we earn eternal life by behaving in this manner, rather that this is fruit that flows from embracing God and his covenant grace. See 1 Peter 1:3: *he caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* 1:23: *since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.*

The context of the Psalm fits the context of Peter's readers/hearers. The Psalm begins: *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* V. 7 reads: *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.* V. 21: *Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.*

3:14b contains an allusion to Isaiah 8:12-13 where the northern tribes seek to defeat Judah to strengthen their hand against their enemies. Thus, the literal rendering of 1 Pet 1:14b is *Do not fear their fear.*

3:15 We fear & trust our God & his Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ we honor (NAS: sanctify; NIV revere) as set apart, holy, worthy of worship & fear. Our quiet confidence when abused or suffering will lead some to ask how we can be this way. We are to be ready to tell them of the Christ we honor who is our hope. Out fear of God we show respect to all.

3:16-17 **good conscience** (also 3:21) we are to walk with integrity letting God convict us and cleanse us anew (3:21) from sin, so that it is not for our own evil that we suffer. We live and bear fruit for him even in difficult times. See 1 Peter 4:2. We're called to bless out of our poverty and his riches, especially the poor (emotional, relational, spiritual, economical).

3:18-4:2 This in some ways difficult section is in other ways a straight-forward statement of the warrant, the reason, the justification for why we live seeking peace in our hope in Christ.

18 Christ died once for all to bring his own to God. He did it by dying in the realm of the flesh (his earthly born, first-creation body). He rose and was made alive in a new creation body (the realm or sphere of the Spirit).

19-20 it was in this realm of the Spirit he preached through Noah (see 1 Peter 1:10-11 <sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. The *spirits in prison* is difficult but may refer to forces who put men in spiritual bondage in these violent times that led to the flood. See the ESV Study Bible for more on the options.

20-21 Noah preached hope and was the hope of those who boarded the Ark. In the same kind of picture Christ the hope is preached and is the Ark of safety. Baptism is not so much about the waters which judged the wicked as it is about our identifying with Christ's righteousness that gives us clear consciences (standing) before God.

4:1-2 Christ died to the realm of the flesh. As you think and live in him and suffer when necessary you cease to be bound to the power of sin and live for God.

Wrap up: Mark: Jesus is our way as well as our truth who gives us life. 1 Cor 2: we preach the fullness of the cross: Jesus' death brought condemnation to all flesh; only those with new birth of the Spirit in him are spiritual men. Christians can behave like mere fleshly men and women, but we are spiritual. We evaluate with new creation eyes.. We don't boast of the victorious Christian life; we are always apprentice followers; we boast of our victorious Christ.

Ask newcomers not *When did you become Reformed?* Or even *When did you accept Christ?* ASK, *Where are you in your journey of seeing all that God has done in Christ.* Then tell them about your learning of the way of Jesus.

We're not as far ahead of others as we think, but we know our Christ has gone ahead and will return for all who come to him, trust alone in him and his work on our behalf and seek to walk in his ways.