

Wednesday
February 16th, 2022
FOLLOWING JESUS
IN A HOSTILE
WORLD



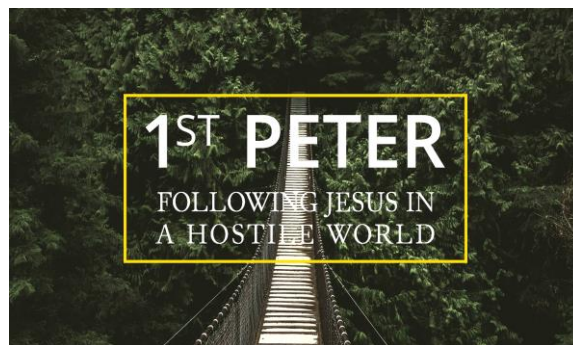
1 Peter 3:8-12

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”



POLITICAL LEADERS • MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL



This fallen world under the influence of the “prince” (John 14:30) and “ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2) is a hostile environment to God’s people. To thrive under this reality it is imperative that God’s children live and act consistency with Scriptural truth in order to shine the Light of Christ among the lost.

The passage today begins with a verse that teaches how the Christian should conduct themselves within the family of believers, followed by some practical principles for living peacefully in a hostile pagan culture. I hope you will notice that these verses present an ideal picture of the life of a church. Peter begins with the target audience **“all of you”**. This has expanded beyond husbands and wives to include everyone in the church... all ages, both male and female, shepherds, and sheep. Peter also opens with the Greek word *“telos”*, translated to *“finally”* or end, signifying the conclusion to the teaching in 1 Peter 2:11–3:7. In verses 8-9 and what follows is the goal of how we can live godly lives among those who know Christ and those that don’t, those who are saved and those who are lost and I might add living quite comfortably in an ever-increasing godless culture.

➔ **Peter’s concern is Christlike behavior, increasing Christian maturity and the positive witness we can demonstrate to the world around us.**

A) Be Like-Minded – Like-minded is also translated as “of one mind, harmonious, unity of spirit, agree among yourselves, unity or oneness of thought”, and therefore a unity based on being of the same or similar mind or thoughts. Specifically being like-minded refers *“to the faith”* – what we believe as the uncompromising tenants of our faith. That is what is the most destructive aspect of disunity that Paul, Peter, and Jesus Himself would refer to as a false gospel. The best witness we are pivots on the agreement to the doctrines revealed within Scripture. Doctrine by definition is the set of beliefs revealed in the Bible. If believers cannot live in unity, the transformative power of the gospel comes into question. As a result, the gospel message may lose credibility among unbelievers. While various denominations of Christianity have some various beliefs on what is generally referred to as non-essentials, there are essentials that must be believed, such as the authority of Scripture, the Trinitarian Godhead, the divine nature of Jesus, the fallen nature of man and salvation by grace through faith. Linked to being like-minded in doctrine is being like-minded in purpose.

Philippians 1:27, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.” Furthermore, Paul writes in ***Philippians 2:2, “then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”*** The early church needed to be pure and of *one mind* when it came to the essentials of the faith to which indeed “love” was one. Being *like-minded* relates first and foremost to love, a love that has been revealed by God in Christ and which has been accepted. In other words, Paul is calling the church to love like Christ loved us! Further Paul pens in ***Romans 15:5-6, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** The level of love that Jesus extended to humanity through the Cross (John 3:16 & 1 Jn. 4:10) is the aspiring level of love every believer should offer other believers.

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Following Jesus in a Hostile World

1 Peter 3:13-18

“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.”

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B. Be Sympathetic – Believers are to be “sympathetic”, caring deeply about the needs, joys, & sorrows of others. Be aware of the spiritual & emotional state of your Christian peers at the Capitol and step in where needed. *You may well be on opposing sides on a debate, hearing, or bill on the floor, yet may I encourage all Christians to keep the big picture of the Kingdom in view.* Romans 12:15, **“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”** 1 Cor. 12:26, **“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”**

C. Love God and Each Other – “Love one another” (v.8) is literally brotherly love (*philadelphus*). It is the love between believers specifically. *There needs to be an understanding within the body of Christ at the Capitol that you are spiritually closer to each other as brothers & sisters in Christ than the lost, because your common relationship with Christ inducts you into the same family.* Indeed, evidence of genuine Christian faith is a warm love for brothers & sisters in Christ (1 Jn. 2:9, 4:12, 20). We should as the Holy Spirit enables (fruit in Gal. 5:22-23) that we go the extra mile for the family of God. Gal. 6:10 reads, **“let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”**

➔ Are you acquainted with your fellow believers at the capitol?

➔ Have you divulged yourself as an active follower of Jesus Christ?

Romans 12:10, **“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”** John 13:35, **“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

D. Be Compassionate – Believers are also to be full of compassion to those who are experiencing pain. This can be physical, emotional, or spiritual pain. The Greek derives from a root word meaning, “inward parts” which indicates not a superficial compassion or care but deep rooted in our inner being. In Eph. 4:32 such compassion is rooted in the mercy experienced in the forgiveness of sins. **“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”**

E. Be Humble – A distinctive moral life emerges from the follower of Christ when humility is elevated, desired, and then demonstrated, for as humility was scorned in the Greco-Roman world so today in our world and in our culture, humility is not the virtue that is generally respected. Rather the world pushes us to the top of the ladder, which tempts us to believe we are actually better than everyone else. **Pride!** Remember that pride is the original sin and it makes perfect sense that the Devil will continue to use this sin to keep man from coming to salvation or to become counter productive to the advance of the Kingdom. In 1 Timothy 3:6 speaking of Overseers/ Elders/ Pastors we read, **“not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”** Pride is No. 1 in the Devil’s playbook against mankind. Proverbs 16:18 states, **“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”**

F. Repay Evil with a Blessing – If v. 8 focuses on relationships among fellow believers, it seems that v. 9 directs attention to how believers should respond to unbelievers who mistreat them. Those who inflict evil or hurl insults at you should not be repaid in kind, as tempting as it might be to strike back. Paul’s injunction in Romans 12:17, **“Do not repay anyone evil for evil.”** **So what must we do?** Instead of insulting others or responding in kind, believers are called on to bless others & by “blessing” Peter means that believers are to ask God to show his favor & grace upon those who have conferred injury upon them. Matthew 5:45, **“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”** May you daily at the Capitol shower the hard to love with the goodness and kindness of God that is meant to lead them to repentance and true faith in Jesus Christ. **(Romans 2:4)**