

## Good Days in Tough Times

### I Peter 3

Take a look at I Peter 3:8-15. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

The key to today's message is in verse 10 where it says, "For he that will love life, and see good days..." We're going to talk about good days in tough times. Peter is actually quoting David from Psalm 34. David lived in some tough times, but he learned how to see good days in tough times.

David had a son named Solomon. Solomon didn't live in tough times. He saw bad days in good times. He said in Ecclesiastes 2:17, "I hated life..." He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he hated life. But his father, David, was just a shepherd boy who came up the hard way and said, "I love life."

I think we give our children way too much. Someone said, "The first generation generates, the second generation speculates, the third generation dissipates, and then it's all gone."

Today we have a lot of folks like Solomon. Their full of gloom, despair and pessimism. But that's not what God intended. Jesus said, "I have come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly." He didn't come so we could escape life or endure life, He came that we might enjoy life.

Peter mentions three things about this. Number 1, if you would have good days in tough times, you must ***cherish your friends***. Number 2, you must ***confront your foes***. Number 3, you must ***communicate your faith***.

First, if you're going through tough times, nothing will mean more to you than a good friend. You might say, "I don't have any friends." Well, if that's true, you're telling on yourself. Proverbs 18:24 says, "If a man would have friends, he must show himself friendly." That's an Old Testament illustration of a New Testament truth in Galatians 6:7 which says that what we sow is what we reap.

The reason some people don't have friends is because they've never learned how to be a friend. There are 5 qualities in verse 8, that if you exercise them, you'll not only be a friend, but you'll have friends. And you'll learn how to cherish your friends, and they'll help you turn your tough times into good days.

The first principle is ***harmony***. He says, "Be of one mind." In other words, live in harmony with your friends. You don't have to sing the same note, but you do have to live in harmony. To live in harmony you need commonality in Jesus Christ. Christians need to seek friends among the children of God. The Bible says that two cannot walk together unless they be agreed. The Bible says that we're not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. We need to be of one mind so there can be harmony.

There also needs to be ***sympathy***. Verse 8 says, "...having compassion..." If your friend is hurting, learn how to hurt with them. In 1Corinthians 12:26 Paul says, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it..." When one part of your body hurts, you hurt all over! Your whole body starts dancing around when you smash your finger. Right? Do you hurt when your friend

is hurting? The world is waiting for people who will have compassion.

But not only do we need harmony and sympathy; we need **fraternity**. The next thing Peter talks about is "...love as brethren..." We're to love the lost, but there is a special kinship we have with our friends in Christ.

Did you ever fight with a brother or sister? It was alright as long as it was just the two of you fighting....but if somebody else jumped in and started fighting your brother or sister....they might as well have jumped on you! Right? Your brother or sister might not be perfect, but they're your brother or sister! That's what we're to have in the church.

People are always joining fraternities or sororities when they get to college. Other people will join a lodge where you get a special hat or clothes to wear, or some special handshake, or ring, or whatever. But there is no brotherhood like the brotherhood we have in Jesus! Every other relationship is superficial, but in Christ, we're out of the same womb! We are brothers and sisters in Christ!

God's people at their worst are better than the devil's crowd at their best! And God forbid that we should ever forget the brotherhood we have in Christ.

Do you want to be a friend? Is there that harmony, that sympathy, that fraternity? And the next thing is **pity**. The word for "pitiful" here comes from the same word that we get our word "spleen" from. The reason for this is that ancient people thought that your emotions came from your gut. We do the same thing. We might tell our girlfriend, "I love you with all my heart." Or, if we're disgusted with someone we might say, "That person makes me sick to my stomach." If someone is brave we say, "He's got guts!"

Peter is just telling us that if you're going to be a friend, you're going to have to learn to feel deeply.

The last thing is **courtesy**. Courtesy is humility that puts the other person first. If you're constantly asking, "How can I get this other person to do something for me?" then you're not being

courteous. Try to make someone else successful and influential rather than yourself. A friend puts others first.

Do you know why we don't like egotists? It's because they talk so much about themselves that we can't talk about ourselves!

If you don't have friends, then put these 5 words on the mirror and look at them every morning. Ask, "Am I the kind of person who can live in harmony, in sympathy, in fraternity, in pity, and in courtesy?" When you can answer, "Yes" to those questions, you'll have friends.

But not only must we ***enjoy our friends***; we ***must encounter our foes***. Not everybody is going to love us. In tough times, you'd better stick with your friends because you're going to have a heap of enemies. That's the way it ought to be. This vile world is no friend to grace. When you live for Jesus and mention His name, you'd better learn to duck or pucker! People are either going to try to kiss you or take a swing at you!

We are a brotherhood in Christ Jesus. That's why Peter takes the next three verses to talk about the evil we're going to have to face. Look at verses 9-11. "Not rendering ***evil*** for ***evil***, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from ***evil***, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew ***evil***, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

We are not to return evil for evil. There are three levels of living. The first level is to return evil for good.....that's satanic...that's what the devil did. The second level is to return evil for evil...that's human. But the third level is to return good for evil....that's divine. The first level is unnatural, the second level is natural, and the third level is supernatural.

You say, "I'm going to get even!" That's exactly what you'll do. You will fall to their level and be even with them.

A man got a phone call from his neighbor at three in the morning. The irate neighbor said, "I want you to know that your barking dog

is keeping me awake!" The man thanked him and hung up. The next morning at three in the morning he returned the call and said, "Good morning. I want you to know that I don't have a dog!" And he hung up.

There's something in all of us that wants to do that. A doctor was examining a lady when he suddenly got a concerned look on his face. She said, "What's wrong, Doc?" He said, "I hate to tell you this, but you have rabies."

She immediately took out a notepad and pencil and started writing. The doctor asked, "Are you writing your will?" She said, "No, I'm making a list of people I want to bite!"

That's the human nature in us. But the Bible says that we're not to return evil for evil. But then verse 10 tells us not to repeat evil. "...refrain your tongue from evil..." Proverbs 21:23 says, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles."

Psalms 141:3 says, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." A tongue can turn good days into bad ones.

Peter says, "If you want to have good days in tough times, **don't repay evil, don't repeat evil** and then, **don't respect evil**. Verse 11 says, "Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

The word "eschew" means "to turn from." Don't dabble in evil, turn from it. Keep your life separate and pure from sin.

You say, "Pastor, if I don't repay my enemies, if I don't repeat what they do to me, if I don't speak to them, if all I do is turn from them, they're going to get away with it." No they aren't! Look at verse 12. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

You don't have to repay them because God will. An example of that is in I Peter 2:21-23. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he

suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Jesus didn't repay evil, He just said, "Father, you take care of it."

You wouldn't steal money out of the offering plate, would you? You say, "I would never steal from God! That money belongs to Him!" Okay, God also said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." If you try to take vengeance, you're stealing from God. Besides that, God will do a better job of it than you ever can!

If you're going to see good days in tough times, you must cherish your friends, and confront your foes with love. Repay evil with good.

Thirdly, **communicate your faith**. Look at verses 13-15. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

He's talking about the communication of our faith. If we're going to have a communicated faith, we must have a **demonstration of our faith**. That's what verse 13 is talking about. We're not to have a "take it or leave it" attitude toward that which is good. Are you on fire to do good....no matter what people call you? We are to have **a full faith**.

Not only that, we're to have **a fearless faith**. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

You say, "Okay, nobody can harm me." But then verse 14 says, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye." You say, "Wait a minute! Isn't that a contradiction? One verse says, 'Who's going to harm us?' and the next verse talks about us suffering."

What he's saying is that suffering is not going to harm you. They may hurt you, but they can't harm you. As a matter of fact, the suffering will make you happy.

You are to have a fearless faith. Don't be afraid. Let me ask you this: How many of you have truly suffered for your faith? I haven't suffered a lot for Christ. But when I have suffered and I knew it was for Jesus, those have been some of the happiest times of my life. Jesus will never be more real to you than when you take abuse because of your stand for Him.

Next, have **a firm faith**. Verse 15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." When you set Him aside as Lord, He's not just your fire insurance to keep you out of hell.... He's your Lord! When that's true, it doesn't matter how tough the days are, you're going to have good days.

If a person says, "I don't have this thing that Christians call 'joy,'" that person has never let go of this world with both hands and made Jesus Lord of their life.

But after you have a demonstrated faith, then comes **the defense of your faith**. Verse 15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

He's talking about giving a verbal defense of your faith like a lawyer presents a case before a judge. Can you defend your faith?

Two things are necessary. First, **you must be ready**. If somebody challenges your faith today, are you ready to give a defense? Some of you don't even understand what you believe.

A man asked a woman, "What do you believe?" She said, "I believe what my church believes." He said, "What does your church believe?" She said, "It believes what I believe." He said, "What do you and your church believe?" She said, "Oh, we believe alike."

Peter says, "Be ready!" Suppose you're on your way home after church and you come upon an accident. A person is lying on the pavement and their life's blood is pumping out on the ground. They look up and ask, "Are you a Christian?" And you say, "I'm a member of Webb Baptist Church." He says, "I'm dying. Can you

tell me how to be saved?" And you say, "Wait just a minute, I'll go get Pastor Gary."

Are you kidding me?!?

When you start to return good for evil, when you control your tongue and have Christ set aside as Lord of your life, when you're living in victory with your friends, someone is going to ask you, "What makes you different?"

If you want to go door to door sharing the Gospel, that's fine. But when's the last time someone stopped you and asked you about your faith? If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Peter says, "When you're living like this, people are going to ask you about the hope that's in you." When they do, you're to be ready.

You're also to be **reasonable**. Give a **reason** of the hope that's in you. You're not right with God if you can't immediately give the plan of salvation by memory when God opens an opportunity for you.

First, there's going to be a demonstration of your faith. Secondly, you must be ready to give a defense of your faith. Finally, you are to give **a declaration of your faith**. The last part of verse 15 says that you are to do this with meekness and fear. The Bible is a great sword, but it's a poor club. Don't beat people over the head with your head full of truth. No one has ever been argued into Heaven.

When you present the Gospel, people need to see the beauty and love of Christ in you with meekness and gentleness. When you learn to share the Gospel like that, God will make you a fruitful soul-winner.

As we live a separated, godly life, and as the world comes to us and asks us about the hope that's in us, we can tell them that it's Jesus who enables us to have good days in tough times.

If you don't know Him, you can today.