

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Good Life 1 Peter 3:8-12 Part One

What is the good life? This is an extremely important question. If you don't have the answer to this question it could easily result in you expending your life in what eventually will turn out to be simply an illusion. Something that looks good but in reality does not give you what you really need.

What is the good life? What are some of the popular answers that might be given to this question if we were to get honest and truthful answers from people in general?

I believe that many people have a fascination with money and the things that money can buy. I believe that there are many people who almost begin to salivate when they see the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes colored pictures of all the things that they could buy with their winnings. They show this large mansion type house. They show fancy cars and fast boats. They show exotic vacation locations. There are many people when viewing these pictures, I truly believe see the “good life.” Is having lot's of money and the things money can buy the good life? The answer is absolutely categorically no! These things are not evil in and of themselves, and in fact these things can under the right circumstances actually be enjoyable but they are not by themselves the good life.

I believe that many people believe that the pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure is the good life. Indulging the pleasures of the flesh. Not denying whatever is pleasant to their senses whether that involves the sense of sight, smell, hearing, taste or touch. Is the indulging of the pleasures of our flesh the good life? The answer is absolutely categorically no! These things are not necessarily evil in and of themselves and in fact, these things can under the right circumstances actually be enjoyable, but they are not by themselves the good life.

I believe that many people believe that leaving behind something tangible that can be seen and enjoyed by others is the good life. A so called productive life. Is simply leaving behind the footprints of our accomplishments the good life? The answer is absolutely categorically no! This is not necessarily evil in and of itself and in fact a productive life can under the right circumstances actually be enjoyable, but they are not by themselves the good life.

If there was a man who would personify the good life as the world perceives the good life it was Ernest Hemingway. With little regard for any thought of sin he pursued those things which the world desires. And as a result he had fame, prestige, adventure, pleasure without restraint and ultimately in the end he literally blew his head off. Those things which are continually being marketed to us by the world as the good life and which might offer momentary relief from a very unsatisfying existence in reality is not the good life at all.

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If it is not this then what is it? It is a life lived in humble submission to the Lord of glory. Solomon summed it up in Eccles. 12:13 as “fearing God and keeping His commandments.” If we do not understand this truth we will never experience what it really means to live. I don’t care how rich we are, how much pleasure we indulge ourselves in, how many tasks we are able to complete, apart from a life committed to obeying the Lord we will not enjoy the “good life.”

How might this good life manifest itself? We see this outworking of the good life in **1 Pet. 3:8-12**, “To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; (9) Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing (the blessing involves what? The good life! How do we know this? Let us read V. 10. (10) For, “Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and His lips from speaking guile. (11) And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. (12) For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

For those who would “love life and see good days” clear instructions have been given. Not to pursue riches, not to pursue pleasure, not to pursue accomplishments, but rather to pursue righteousness.

If we would commit ourselves to live a life pleasing to the Lord, it doesn’t matter what kind of difficulties we might be encountering the “good life” can be ours. Not a life free of trials, but a truly abundant and meaningful life even in the midst of our trials. If you are here this morning and you are having health problems you can have a “good life” in the midst of your bad health. If you are here this morning and you are having problems in your business, you can have a “good life” in the midst of your business problems. If you are married and having marital problems, you can have a “good life” in the midst of those problems. If you are a young person and you don’t feel as if you have any friends, you can have a “good life” in the midst of this problem.

If there is any doubt about what I have just said all you have to do is consider the recipients of this letter. What kind of lives did they in fact have? They had a life full of difficult circumstances this is clear from **1 Pet. 1:6, 2:11, 2:20-21, 3:14, 3:17, 4:1, 4:12, 4:19, 5:8, 5:10.** And yet though this was true of their lives Peter takes time in **1 Pet. 3:8-12** to reassure them that even though their lives may be tough if they would simply remain humbly obedient before the Lord, if they would simply be committed to the pursuit of righteousness they would in fact see the “good life.” AS WE HUMBLE OURSELVES BEFORE THE LORD WHAT KIND OF BEHAVIORS WOULD WE SEE IN OUR LIVES WHICH WOULD IN FACT RESULT IN SO CALLED GOOD LIFE? AS WE WOULD SEEK TO BE OBEDIENT IN OUR LIVES TO THE LORD HOW WOULD THIS OBEDIENCE WORK ITSELF OUT THAT WE MIGHT ENJOY WHAT THE SCRIPTURES CALL THE GOOD LIFE?

THE TESTIMONY OF PETER

Peter outlines for us in **verses 8-9** what we in fact might see. He begins with the phrase, “to sum up.” Peter in these few verses is summarizing for us a larger section of scripture which began in **1 Pet. 2:11-12** “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

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(12) Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Peter is calling Christians to live in such an excellent way that even their harshest critics might be positively impacted for Christ even perhaps receiving Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Peter then systematically identifies three specific groups of people he felt we needed to be particularly concerned about. They were our governmental leaders, our employers and spouses. After he spelled out for us the excellent behavior that he felt was appropriate for these three groups he now makes a much more broad sweeping statement. So let us continue to read. **“to sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; (9) not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”** What we notice very quickly is the fact that Peter begins with those things which should be found in our lives and then moves on to those things which should not be found in our lives if we really are going to enjoy the good life.

BEHAVIORS TO BE PURSUED

HARMONIOUS BEHAVIOR

“To sum up, let all be harmonious.” The word harmonious which is the Greek word HOMOPHRONES literally means, “same thinking.” When it talks about “same thinking” it is not so much talking about a unity of opinion as much as a unity of disposition or attitude. And what should our disposition or attitude be as Christians? **Phil. 2:5-6** is very clear, **“Have this attitude (this disposition, this way of thinking) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who although He existed in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (7) but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant.”** To be harmonious is to have the mind set of a servant.

Does a mindset of a servant tend to lead to harmony? Of course it would!!

It certainly would in respect to our governmental leaders. We are commanded in **1 Pet. 2:13** to submit ourselves to those in authority over us. Governmental leadership is not easy. What good is it for me to resist them or oppose them? This will not serve them or our community. If they in fact have been empowered to make certain decisions and they make those decisions, my responsibility as a Christian who is seeking to be harmonious or to have a mind set of a servant would be to submit to their decisions by supporting them to the best of my ability both in word and deed. This would be true as long as my submission to those decisions would not lead to personal unrighteousness. Having the mindset of a servant toward our governmental leaders clearly is the outworking a harmonious spirit.

It will lead to harmony in respect to our employers. We are commanded in **1 Pet. 2:18** to be submissive to our masters. An employers role is not an easy role. What good is it for me to resist or oppose my employer? It will not serve him or the company which we are a part. If our employer in fact has the power to make certain decisions concerning the manner in which things would be done in the workplace it is my responsibility as a Christian employee to support those decisions to the best of my ability both in word and deed.

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We have not been called to stir up strife, we have been called to be harmonious. If we are going to enter into the blessing of the good life we need to humbly bow before the Lord and seek to be harmonious, looking at things the way Christ would look at things. Looking at people with the mindset of a servant.

SYMPATHETIC BEHAVIOR

“To sum up let all be harmonious, sympathetic.” The word translated “sympathetic” is the word *SUMPATHEIS* which literally means “to suffer with.” It connotes that readiness to enter into and share in the feelings of others. It is *SUMPATHEIS* that allows us to rejoice with those that rejoice and sorrow with those that sorrow (Rom. 12:15).

We are as God’s children in our pursuit of humbly pleasing the Lord, to actually not only open ourselves up to entering into the feelings of others, but we are even to pursue it. Is sympathy as we are defining it for you a powerful thing?

It is a wonderful thing when you are hurting to have someone come alongside of you and sympathize with you, to enter in and share those feelings with you. How many times have you been struggling with something only to go to a Christian brother and get a lecture or a rebuke? Now a lecture or a rebuke may be needed at some point to be given, but whenever it is given, it typically will have been much more effective if we would have sympathized with them.

It is a wonderful thing when we are excited about some happening to have someone come alongside of us and be truly happy for us. Not jealous, not envious, not looking to themselves but rather only to us. I take it as a wonderful complement when you share your good fortune with me. I take it as a complement because it must be that you are convinced that I truly will enter into the joy of the occasion with you.

We have not been called to insulate ourselves from the sorrow and joy of others but rather to feel with them. If we are going to enter into the blessing of the good life we need to humble ourselves before the Lord and sympathize with those the Lord has placed around us.

BROTHERLY BEHAVIOR

“To sum up let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly.” The word for “brotherly” is the word *PHILADELPHOI*. In secular greek the term was used of the love of physical brothers and sisters. But in Christian literature the usage is always figurative, denoting “the mutual love which is the bond of brotherhood in Christ, not of an all-embracing ‘brotherly love.’”

This interpretation is reinforced by the context of the book. **1 Pet. 1:22** states **“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.”** And then again we read in **1 Pet. 2:17**, **“Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”**

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When Christ was told that his mother and brothers were outside wanting to speak to Him what did Jesus say in **Matt. 12:48-50**? **“But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers? (49) And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “behold, My mother and My brothers! (5) For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”**

It is a concern to me when people within this fellowship choose to become involved in all kinds of things in this world and not become more closely tied to this fellowship.

If we would humble ourselves before the Lord and would desire to enjoy the good life we must not only seek to live harmoniously and sympathetically but our lives need to be brotherly.

KINDHEARTED BEHAVIOR

“To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted.” The word translated “kindhearted” is the greek word EUSPLANGCHNOI which comes from the root SPLANGCHNA which refers to the internal organs which was thought of as the root of the emotions.

Whereas “sympathetic” places upon us the responsibility to sharing in the feelings of others. Here “compassionate” calls us to open ourselves up for an affectionate sensitivity toward the needs of others.

In the gospels the verb is generally used of Jesus Himself in the sense of being deeply touched “moved with compassionate tenderness.” This may be a quality that you may find to be hard to come by. And the reason is quite simple it is strongly emphasizing emotions. It is very difficult to produce these kind of feelings. But this is where hopefully over time we would experience not less but even greater affectionate sensitivity toward the needs of others because we are being conformed more and more into the very image of Christ.

Don’t discard this! We have been called to this and it is also described as a part of the good life which hopefully we would be privileged to enjoy and lastly

HUMBLE BEHAVIOR

“To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.” The word translated “humble in spirit” is the word TAPEINOPHRONES it literally means “friendly minded.” The KJV translates it “courteous,” but it really is most likely best understood as it has been translated in the NAS as “humble” since it marks the inner attitude of those who are voluntarily submissive to authority over them. It is the opposite of haughty and high-minded, and it does not brag about and push self.

This word is closely linked with harmonious. Before we can be “same thinking” in respect to having a servant mentality we must be “low thinking.”

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CONCLUSION

DO YOU WANT TO LIVE THE GOOD LIFE THEN WE NEED TO HUMBLE OURSELVES BEFORE THE LORD AND SEEK TO WORK OUT THE BEHAVIORS THAT HAVE BEGUN TO BE LISTED IN THIS VERSE.

IT IS BETTER TO PURSUE HARMONIOUS BEHAVIOR THAN FAME. IT IS BETTER TO PURSUE SYMPATHETIC BEHAVIOR THAN FORTUNE. IT IS BETTER TO PURSUE BROTHERLY BEHAVIOR THAN PLEASURE. IT IS BETTER TO PURSUE COMPASSIONATE BEHAVIOR THAN ADVENTURE. IT IS BETTER TO PURSUE HUMILITY THAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

DO YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE GOOD LIFE? PETER SAYS IT BEGINS WITH HUMBLING OURSELVES BEFORE THE LORD AND PURSUING THE BEHAVIORS OF 1 PETER. 3:8.