

*Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

**The Good Life  
1 Peter 3:8-12  
Part Two**

Let us read 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. (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.”

As we already noted the key to this passage is found in V. 10 where we find the phrase, “**let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue etc. etc.**” This passage of scripture is telling us what we must do if we are going to love and enjoy the good life.

Solomon was also very interested in this topic. In fact we see him carrying on his own personal research project.

In Eccles. 1:13 it tells us that Solomon set his mind to pursue wisdom “**And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven.**” And what was his conclusion? In VV. 16-18 Solomon says, “**I said to myself, “Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.” (17) And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. (18) Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.**”

Then in Eccles. 2:1 it tells us that Solomon set his mind to pursue pleasure “**I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.” And behold, it too was futility.** Expanding on this evaluation he goes on to say in VV. 2-3 “**I said of laughter, “It is madness,” and of pleasure, “What does it accomplish?”** After this Solomon pursued materialism as we see in Eccles. 2:4 “**I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; (5) I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; (6) I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. (7) I bought male and female slaves, and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. (8) Also, I collected for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men -- many concubines. (9) Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. (10) And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. (11) Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.”**

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No one was in a better position than Solomon to explore all of these pursuits to the fullest than Solomon, and yet in the end he saw all of these pursuits as chasing after the wind. He saw all of these things which the world around us are so committed to as foolishness. In fact as Solomon looked at the emptiness of the pursuits of man while at the same time observing all of the trouble that mankind endures in this world he says in **Eccl. 4:1-3** **“Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. (2) So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. (3) But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.”**

This is an extremely depressing evaluation. But this is exactly how Solomon in fact saw life. And yet Solomon was not yet finished. He concludes the book with a very simple but powerful statement in **Eccles 12:13** which says **“The conclusion, when all has been heard, is fear God and keep His commandments”** Solomon is saying to us in words incredibly clear that apart from seeking to live a life in humble submission to the Lord it would be better for you to never have been born. It is a life lived in humble submission before the Lord which truly offers to us the GOOD LIFE!!

In **1 Pet. 3:8-12** simply expands on this premise by giving to us the kind of life those seeking to live the good life should be living. The passage of scripture that we are now examining allows us to see the visible expression of what constitutes the good life. This passage allows us to see the specific actions that would be taken by those who are seeking to a life in humble submission before the Lord.

We began with the testimony of Peter and looked at the behaviors that should be pursued in **V. 8**. If we would love life and seek good days then we need to pursue being harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit. Having given us the behaviors that we should be pursuing Peter now goes on to give us the behaviors to be avoided in **V. 9**.

### BEHAVIORS TO BE AVOIDED

#### NOT RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL

Those who Peter was writing too were in the midst of a very severe persecution therefore it is not surprising at all that Peter would take time not only to encourage these believers to pursue certain very positive behaviors but that he would also encourage them to avoid certain very negative behaviors especially those negative behaviors that associated with unjust treatment. It is so easy for us when wronged to want to retaliate.

There is an expression that I have heard shared in recent years which goes something like this, “Don’t get mad get even.” This last week we heard in the news about a man who worked for the county of Los Angeles who had been receiving unfavorable evaluations at work. He apparently felt that these evaluations were an unjustified attack upon his person, he therefore in his rage felt justified in killing the four men he felt were responsible. This may be what our flesh may want to do, but it is totally unprofitable to approach life in this way. If we truly want to live the good life we

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can't foster this kind of behavior. Therefore we read in **V. 9**, "Do not return **“evil for evil.”** The word for "evil" is the Greek word KAKOS which speaks of whatever is evil in character. That which is inherently bad.

If someone has treated us in an inherently bad or evil way we are not to feel that it is OK for us to then treat him in the same way that they treated us. Now it may be that we have not murdered anyone recently in retaliation for what they may have done to us. But I would be very surprised that you have not battled feelings of retaliation in respect to your husband or wife, your mother or father, your brother or sister, your employer, classmate or friend. It is so easy for us when hurt to want to strike back. But the scriptures are clear. Do not return **“evil for evil.”** This is a very basic biblical principle. In **Matt. 5:38-41** it says, **“You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” (39) But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. (40) And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. (41) And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.”** In fact the passage goes on in **V. 43 and 44** and says, **“You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. (44) But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.”**

Someone might say well there must be some point along the way where revenge is appropriate. Men may think this, but this is not what the scriptures teach. In **Rom. 12:17** it says, **“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.”** We are never to act with a retaliatory or vengeful spirit treating others in the same evil way we believe they have treated us. Paul reiterates this in **1 Thess. 5:15** **“See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.”**

Peter has been talking about evil acts so far in this verse. Now Peter moves to the area of speech and identifies another area to be avoided.

### NOT RETURNING INSULT FOR INSULT

Let us again look at **V. 9** **“Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult.”** We are not only not to retaliate with evil acts, but evil speech.

But someone may say, but we need to expose evil. Certainly there are times when evil needs to be exposed, but we need to be discerning about when that would be profitable. Certainly in respect to the unsaved community we would have a responsibility to expose the false teachers. Certainly Christ felt the freedom to do this and we need to follow His example, but apart from this there is no need for us to go about doing this. And in respect to the church we are called to confront sin in respect to individual members but this should never be done in a spirit of retaliation returning insult for insult but out of genuine concern for our sinning brother.

To engage a war of words, returning insult for insult is a very serious matter. People who do this could easily be labeled a "reviler." A reviler is simply one who speaks abusively. In **1 Cor. 5:11**, it says, **“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler.”**

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We are not to associate with people who have mouths which are foul, who feel the freedom to abuse others with their tongues, inflicting damage upon a person or person's reputation simply because we have been provoked by something they have done or said.

Paul even makes a stronger statement in **1 Cor. 6:9-10** "**Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, not adulterers, not effeminate, nor homosexuals (10) nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.**" We have not been saved by works but as Eph. 2:8-10 tells us so clearly we have been saved unto good works. God has not brought us into his family so that we can remain the same revengeful, foul mouthed person we had been. Hopefully as we grow and mature in Christ we will discover a totally new dynamic dominating our speech, and what might that be?

Let us continue on in the passage. Let us look again at **V.9**. What does it say, "**not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead.**"

What does this mean? The term is the term we get our English word "eulogy" and it literally means to "speak well of ." What could this involve? We can actually answer this question by tracing it's usage in the New Testament.

1) To bless someone can refer to invoking blessings on "behalf of that person." Or in other words to pray for that individual for good things might happen to him. We see this word used in this way in **Luke 6:28** where it says, "**bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you.**" We are not to return evil for evil or insult for insult but rather we are to bless. We are to desire good things for them and thus we "bless" them by praying or "speaking good things" to the Lord for them.

Are you doing this? Are you praying for those who have mistreated you? Or are you in anger and with a spirit of retaliation striking back? If you are then you are outside of God's will for your life.

2) To bless someone can also refer to actually "being thankful for them." We see this usage in **Luke 9:16** where it says, "**And he took five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them.**" The term "bless" in scriptures often times mean "to thank." Therefore another way for us to bless those who do evil toward us or insults us is to thank the Lord for them.

Are you doing this? Are you thanking the Lord for those he has permitted in your life? Who have made it so difficult for you. Believing that through them God is doing a great work. Or are you in anger and with a spirit of retaliation striking back? If you are, then you are outside of God's will for your life.

3) To bless someone can finally mean "to speak well of them." Consider the story of Mary and Elizabeth in **Luke 1**. The Bible tells us when Mary was pregnant with Jesus that she went to visit Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist. And when Elizabeth saw Mary she exclaimed, "Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" What did Elizabeth do? She spoke well of Mary.

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She spoke well of her. Or in other words she “blessed” her. In the context of this passage we are being called not to return evil for evil or insult for insult but rather to render a blessing. Or in other words to speak well of the person who is causing us difficulty.

This does not mean that you have to lie to them or about them. It just means that you are careful how you speak about them. And if you speak to them or about them that you speak “good things.”

Are you doing this? Are you speaking well of those who have caused you difficulty? Not only speaking well of them to them but speaking well of them to others. Or are you in anger and in a spirit of retaliation striking back.

Now let us look quickly at the last phrase of this verse. It says, “**For you were called** (elected for salvation) **for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.**” We have been given a gift that we did not deserve. We were elect by God for blessing. The point is if we have been freely given a blessing from God without merit rather than vengeance from the God we have offended certainly we should understand how to do this. We offended God. Did he give us vengeance? No! Then why would we treat others who we feel are mistreating us so poorly. Returning evil for evil or insult for insult. We need to greet them in the same gracious way in which we have been treated.

An example of this is found in **Mt. 18:21 (topic of forgiveness)**.

### CONCLUSION

Do we want to live the good life? Then let us pursue certain behaviors.

Let us pursue being harmonious.  
Let us pursue being sympathetic.  
Let us pursue being brotherly.  
Let us pursue being kindhearted.  
Let us pursue being humble in spirit,

Do we want to live the good life? Then let us avoid certain behaviors.

Let us not return evil for evil.  
Let us not return insult for insult.

But rather let us give a blessing instead.

This is what God has called us to “Let us therefore fear Him, and keep his commandments.”