

# How We Should Treat Others

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Date: 28 May 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] First Peter chapter 3, and as I was saying, as we began, this is a letter. It's a letter from Peter to Christians in AD 65, AD 60, 65, right now about that, 30 to 35 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And it's a letter that was written to Christians who were scattered in places like Cappadocia, and yet it's a letter that's equally relevant to those who are in Carly.

We know the letter writer, we know it's Peter, and we know Peter well as a disciple because I think for most of us who are Christians, Peter is somebody who we have a great affection for because he's full of zeal, he's full of enthusiasm, and yet he's somebody who failed and who fell.

And that comes through in his letters. He's one who knew the blessing of walking close with Jesus, but he's also one who felt the hand of Jesus upon him after he fell and had to be picked back up. Peter's writing to those who are Christians, he's writing to those who have been chosen by God the Father. I think the last time I was here, that's what we looked at, although I don't expect you would remember that.

[ 1 : 26 ] But what is a Christian? A Christian is somebody who's chosen by God the Father. We see our sin, we begin to hear the gospel, and because God is reaching out to us, he's choosing to reach out to us as he is tonight. A Christian is someone who is cleansed by God the Son.

We've come to the cross, we've asked for that cleansing in the blood of Jesus, and a Christian is somebody who is being changed, all through our lives, by God the Holy Spirit.

And Peter, in this letter, he takes much of the time in it to think through what it means and what it looks like for us to be changed, to be sanctified, to be made more like Jesus.

And in this section that we read, Peter, he addresses us as Christians within the church, and first of all he speaks to us about how we are to be towards each other within the church fellowship.

And then he widens the angle of the lens, and he addresses us as to how we are to be as we go out from the church and into the world with the Great Commission.

[ 2 : 44 ] So where we begin tonight is we begin with our first point, I don't know if I gave the points to those on the screen, I think I might have. The first point is that we are those who are to rejoice in grace. And that came through in the first prayer, and that's something that we should be doing each day, we rejoice in grace.

And you might think, where is that in verse 8? Well let's just take a moment to think about verse 8. Peter says, Finally, all of you have unity of mind, the NIV says live in harmony, with one another, be sympathetic, have brotherly love, tender heart, compassion is another translation, and a humble mind.

So if we want to see a church that is working well, this is what we should see.

In a sense it's as if Peter comes in and there's a POV, there's a Pastral Presbyterial Oversight visit, and he has a list of things he's looking for, and he's not looking for a packed notice sheet, but what he's looking for in the church, what Jesus is looking for as he gives Peter this mission, is he's looking for Christians who live in harmony with one another, who are sympathetic towards each other.

We feel for each other, that's what that means. We love as brothers and sisters, so there's a closeness, we're compassionate, we see need, we respond to need, and we're humble.

[ 4 : 37 ] And that's what should be seen within a church fellowship, whether it's in Tarber or Calaway or Cappadocia or Bethany or whatever. And you only have to live with us for two or three minutes tonight.

We spent a week thinking this through in Harris. We stepped through the different words. Last week we thought about what it looks like to live in harmony and what it really means to show sympathy to

each other and how we can love each other as brothers and sisters of God's family, and how we can be compassionate and what humility looks like. But even if we don't dig into it, but we just read what's on the surface of the verse, it's challenging.

You know, as we look in the mirror of God's Word, there is a challenge that comes through this verse. And even if we were to think back through the last few days and ask ourselves the question, to what extent have I lived out verse 8?

It wouldn't take us long to have to come before the Lord and confess that we fall and we fail. We think about some of the things that we've done and some of the things that we've left undone.

If we think about some of the conversations that we've had, if we think even about how the Lord scans our thoughts and he reads our motives, then we know that we fail and we fall.

[ 6 : 21 ] And so when we read verses like verse 8, we might feel the sting that comes through our reading of it. So what do we do?

When we look in God's law, when we see God's standard and then we assess where we are at, what do we do with that? We rejoice in grace. That's what we do.

See, Christian life begins on the day that we ask for forgiveness. We see our sin. We see how we fall short. We come before the Lord. We tell Him about our sin. We ask for His forgiveness. We ask for His grace. We receive His grace.

That's where Christian life begins. But that's just the beginning. And day by day by day by day, we keep coming back to the Lord, asking for fresh supplies of grace.

Because we keep falling and we keep failing. We are far from perfect. And so we return to the Lord Jesus time and time again, confessing our sin and asking for fresh supplies of His grace.

[ 7 : 47 ] And as we receive them, we rejoice in them. We rejoice in the Lord Jesus. We rejoice that we can keep coming back to the cross. That we can keep seeking that cleansing from our sin.

As the hymn that we sang goes, when Satan tempts me to despair and verse 8 could very much drive us to despair. When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him, Jesus there.

He made an end of all my sin because the sinless Saviour died. My sinful soul is counted free for God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me.

So we rejoice in grace. Young ones at the back rejoice in grace. I think I was 10 years old. I told you this before. The first night that I really felt that I had to come and seek forgiveness on my sin.

And so I came and received grace. So maybe for some of us here tonight, maybe we're 80. I don't know you. But maybe there's someone here tonight who needs to come for the first time to the Lord. And say I fall short. I fail. I fail. I sin. I see it. Please forgive me.

[ 9 : 24 ] Please give to me your grace. Please save my soul. And when we do that, we're giving the assurance that we are saved.

And we can rejoice in that grace that saves us. And for those of us who are in Christ, what do we do day by day? We keep coming to Jesus. We keep telling him about what's going on in our lives.

And when we fall, when we fail, even when we're in the depths as the psalmist was in Psalm 130, we're reminded of the plentiest redemption, the fresh supplies of grace that is found in Jesus.

So we begin by that need which is constant to rejoice in the grace of Jesus.

And the second point we come to here as we think about how we're to live within the world. We are called to repay evil when we experience evil, when we face evil. We're called to repay evil with good.

[ 10 : 33 ] So Peter in verse eight, he's talking about how we're to be towards each other within the church family. And now he says, the world is going to be a difficult place. Sometimes you're going to get hurt and sometimes you're going to face evil. But this is how you're to respond.

So verse nine, Peter says, do not repay evil for evil or reviling insults for reviling. But on the contrary, bless for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.

So we're to repay evil with good. And Carlyle and Tarber, whatever we are, whatever we work, whatever environment we're in, whether it's school, whether it's education, whatever, when we face evil, we're to repay evil with good.

One of the commentators, a guy called Jonathan Cruz, he said Christians are not yoyos. Boys and girls, have you ever used a yoyo? Do you know what a yoyo is?

You know what it is? Yeah, you do know what it is. You know these yoyos. You get a yoyo, it's on the end of a string. If you throw a yoyo down with force, it comes back at you with force.

[ 11 : 53 ] But if you just throw it down gently, it just kind of comes back gently. And the commentator, he's saying Christians are not yoyos.

You know, somebody throws words at you with force. Our fallen tendency is to want to throw words back at them with force.

If somebody addresses us in terms of an insult, we tend to want to respond in the same way. That's our fallen nature.

And Peter is saying to us, that's the way of the world. Someone throws harsh words at you, you want to throw them back. And the old Peter knew all about that, and we can read the accounts of that in the Gospels. But if Jesus speaks through Peter, he says, don't be like that, repay evil with goods, repay insult with blessing.

And it's a challenge. You know the old quote from Mark Twain. He says, it ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me.

[ 13 : 06 ] It's the parts that I do understand. There's nothing here that's hard to understand. But this is hard to live out. This bothers us.

And yet Peter is saying, this is our mission. Daily we are to ask the question, how can I bless those who are evil to me?

And as we accept this mission, God can use us to be a blessing. And we also receive a blessing as we seek to follow the way that Jesus teaches us.

And if we want an example of what this looks like in action, we look to Jesus. Remember how Jesus was insulted all through his ministry. Remember the way that people spoke about him.

Remember as he approached the cross and how he was insulted. And as the trial was set up and it was underway, the insults flew in from the religious officials and from the legal officials and the crowds gathered together and cried out, crucify him.

[ 14 : 25 ] Remember how evil men drove nails into the hands and feet of Jesus. How did he respond?

Well, he didn't respond by showing evil. He didn't respond with insults, but he prayed even as he was hanging on the cross.

Father forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing. They're to repay evil with good.

Remember the apostle Paul in a jail in Philippi in Acts chapter 16. He's there with Silas.

He's facing the reality of evil having been battered and thrown into a jail cell. And in the middle of the night when people would expect Paul and Silas to be complaining and bitter and miserable, they're praising God.

And then when God opened the doors of the prison with an earthquake, how did they respond? Did they run out the doors of the prison, throwing insults and laughing in the face of the jailer who had treated them cruelly?

[ 15 : 43 ] No, they stayed behind. And they ministered to him. They blessed him. They led him to Jesus.

And this is our calling. We are to repay evil with good. And if we take this in, and if we seek to relive this out, it gives us a different perspective on suffering.

Because when we suffer and when we face evil treatment for Jesus' sake, when we seek to do something in obedience to God's will, when we seek to honour God in what we're doing and we face insults and we have to suffer in terms of responses to that, when we suffer evil treatment for Jesus' sake, the natural response to that is to want to withdraw from that person and complain.

And say, why do I have to deal with all this? But Peter is teaching us here that the supernatural response is to ask the question, how can I repay evil with good?

How can I be a blessing in this situation? How can I bless this person who only wants to throw punches at me?

[ 17 : 08 ] This is our calling. St. Lufvergesson says it's never easy being demeaned, but there's great fun in being a Christian.

There's great fun in taking the world by surprise and seeking to be a blessing. So we're to rejoice in grace, we're to repay evil with good.

And the third thing here is we're to relish life. And in verse 10, Peter, as he quotes from Psalm 34, he talks about loving life, he talks about seeing good days.

He's quoting from Psalm 34, and that's a Psalm that's full of life and joy. And that's exactly what these believers needed to be topped up with. Because remember, this letter was sent to believers

who were scattered, verse 1 of chapter 1, those who were of the dispersion it says in the ESV. These Christians, they had been driven out of their homes, they had been disowned by their families and their friends, and they were suffering for Jesus' sake. And Peter understood the pain of that, and Peter knew all about the difficulties of being a Christian. Soon Peter would be crucified upside down, because he remained faithful to Jesus.

[ 18 : 37 ] Peter knew what it felt like to be an alien and a stranger in this world. Peter, he knew and he reminded these believers that our home is in heaven. That's what we long for.

But Peter is bringing some balance into our perspective in this world, and he's teaching us in this section that this world isn't just a miserable waiting room, that we have to endure until we get to heaven.

It's not how we're to look at this world. I was in a waiting room on Thursday for four or five hours called Edinburgh Airport.

After being at the assembly, trying to get back to Harris, I arrived at the, a little bit early for the plane, and I was hardly in the door of the airport where I got the text telling me it was delayed. And it was delayed for one hour, two hours, three hours. I think it was about four hours. So I was sitting about in Edinburgh Airport, and I have to be honest, I was sitting about impatiently.

My mood was not good. All I wanted to do was get out. I just wanted to get back home. I had things to do. I didn't want to be just sitting in this waiting room. And Peter doesn't want these Christians to be sitting about in this world with long faces. Just waiting impatiently to be freed from this world and to go home.

[ 20 : 05 ] And so he reminds him, this is God's world. And every day that we're given is God's gift to us.

So love life says Peter. There's a future dimension to this. He's thinking about heaven. But he's telling those Christians, live in this world in light of the heaven that is promised to you.

Live with hope. Live with joy. Love life, because you know the creator of life. Enjoy good days, because you know how all this ends.

There should be joy and there should be relish in our lives here as we walk close with the Lord. We're to relish life. And the example is Jesus, because when we see Jesus, he didn't spend 33 years in a spiritual retreat, telling everybody that he couldn't wait to get out of this sinful broken world.

Jesus lived a full life. He lived an abundant life. He worked hard. He laughed. He cried. He was a friend to so many people.

[ 21 : 36 ] He went to dinner parties. He mixed with all kinds of people. As some people shook their heads and said he shouldn't be out there. He shouldn't be with that type. And yet he was, because he loved people.

He had come to seek and to save people. And our mission is to be like that. We come in to the church. We worship God. We take the encouragement of being with each other. And then we go out into the community to be with the people.

And to work hard, whatever it is we're doing, and to work cheerfully. We go to the football. We watch Carlyle get beaten and harassed.

We go to the shop. We go to the gym. We go to the funk. We're called to be in the world. But to be like Christ.

And how can we be like Christ? Well, we can be like Christ by being with Christ. John 15, again. We become like Christ as day by day we come back to Him and we receive and we rejoice in the fresh supplies of grace that He gives to us.

[ 23 : 02 ] So we're to relish life. The next thing is we're to repent continually. And in verse 10 and 11, Peter says that the Christian must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.

He must turn from evil and do good. And this is not a new teaching. But it's a need for a reminder. We are to be always repenting. Day by day by day by day we're to be repenting.

Martin Luther said when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said repent, he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance. Repentance is to be the Christians continue boster. And probably the area where we are most conscious that we need to repent is the use of our tongue.

And Peter knew that. And we know that. I think there's a particular temptation when we're living in villages and we're so close in community.

We can do damage with our tongues. Our tongues, James tells us are like wild animals that they're hard to tame. Our tongues are drawn to evil. Our tongues are quick to just speak a little bit of gossip.

[ 24 : 36 ] Our tongues are quick to be critical of others rather than seeking to lift them up. Our tongues very, very quickly can be deceitful. We hear ourselves saying something to get ourselves off the hook and make ourselves sometimes look better.

And in turn we make somebody else look worse. And this is what we're to repent of. Peter is saying our tongues are not to be used for evil and deceitful speech.

What are our tongues to be used for? What's the opposite of evil and deceitful speech? It's truth. And who is the truth? Jesus is the truth. John 14.6.

So repentance when it comes to our tongues is not just keeping quiet and avoiding evil and deceitful speech. Repentance involves using our tongues to tell people about Jesus.

We're to be always continually telling people about Jesus. If it's only Thomas that tells people about Jesus, he's got 25 minutes, a shot, twice a week.

[ 26 : 04 ] We're to be all of you in different places, different work spaces. You have different relationships. Some are in school, some are in offices, some perhaps in the hospital, some are in education.

We have all these connections. And God has put us in particular places. He's surrounded us with particular people so that we will use our tongues and our lives to tell them about Jesus.

If you find that difficult, take encouragement from Bob Ackroyd in his speech at the General Assembly. Let me quote a little bit of it. Bob says, many of us feel ill-equipped for presenting the gospel. We do not do it that well.

Don McLeod often quoted this aphorism. If a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing badly. Whether eloquent or not, articulate or not, passionate or not, we proclaim the gospel, even if we do it badly. George Whitfield said, other men may preach the gospel better than I, but no man can preach a better gospel.

[ 27 : 18 ] To repent continually is to keep evil and deceit out of our mouths, and it's to keep Jesus and his gospel in our mouths.

Bob went on to say, the message of the gospel is come. You are welcome. Jesus says, come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Whatever care we have for the lost, Jesus cares more. Whatever effort we make to reach the lost, Jesus does more. Whatever cost we experience in proclaiming the gospel, Jesus incurs more, much more.

Our message is come. I fear, says Bob, that many within our wider audience feel like the messages go, as in go away.

So we need to make every effort to warmly welcome people to the good news of Jesus Christ, to assure them the welcome mat is out.

[ 28 : 23 ] So we repent continually of the falsehood, of the misuse of our tongues, and we keep Jesus and his gospel continually on our tongues.

The final thing, and I'll just give you the heading and close, is we're called to righteous living. That's a kind of summation of everything that we've been going through so far.

Righteous living, it takes us back to the old word, holiness. We're called to do good. We're called to seek peace verse 11 and pursue it.

We're active doing words that require strength and determination. We're to put everything into living righteous lives. It's not what saves us, because we're saved by grace, Ephesians 2, 8 and 9.

But we're saved by grace for good works, that's Ephesians 10, 2, 10. We're saved by grace, that's what Jesus did.

[ 29 : 41 ] But we're saved for works, we're God's workmanship in this world. He has things for us to do. We're saved by the redemption of Jesus, but we're saved for righteous living.

And when we see the cross, when we understand the love that Jesus had for us, even in some small measure, when we understand that, the right response, the only response is to say, love's so amazing, so divine, it demands my soul and my life and my all.

I must live for Him. And this is our mission. No one gets to say, well, my life is pointless, I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing. If only I had some mission the Lord had given me to do, this is your mission and mine.

We all have a mission and it's to live for Jesus. It's to live lives that are righteous. It's to live lives that reflect something of the character of Jesus, so that people who don't read the Bible and don't ever come in the door of this church or any church, that these people, even through our lives, would learn about the love that Jesus has for them, through the things we say, the things we do, our actions, our reactions, our countenance towards them.

And Peter finishes this section by simply saying, by way of, I suppose, challenge and encouragement, he says, remember, the Lord is watching, the Lord is listening.

[ 31 : 28 ] So let's keep on on mission, let's live our lives in such a way as to please Him. So may God enable us to hear His Word and to do His Word in the world that He has put us in.

We'll pray.