

“That You Might Inherit a Blessing”
(1 Peter 3:8-12)

Introduction: I think that all of us would admit as Christians that we desire to have the blessing of the Lord on our lives. No one likes to face difficulty constantly. All of us would like to see fruit from our labors. We all want to see the signs of His favor attending us throughout life, in all the things that we do. Jesus said, “I came that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly” (John 10:10). And we want to obtain this abundance of life. There is certainly nothing wrong with that.

However, some professing Christians have the wrong idea of what it is and therefore go about trying to get it in the wrong way. Those of the health and wealth movement are certainly on the wrong track when they say that this abundant living is having an abundance of the world’s goods, and having the good health to enjoy it. Certainly it does mean having some of the world’s goods, at least enough to meet our needs. And it does mean having a measure of health, for you cannot enjoy what you have unless you have the good health to enjoy it. However, they neglect the fact that God forbids the pursuit of these things for the wrong ends. Jesus said, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). This is the way of the world, and the way of the one who controls the world system. Our life is to be used in the pursuit of the true riches, in a rich relationship with God. But since their idea of the abundant life is wrong, their method of gaining it is wrong as well. They say you should be willing to give up your money to get more money. More particularly, you should give it to them, and they God will give you more. One such teacher in this movement said, after reading the passage of Scripture regarding Elijah and the widow of Zerahath, that you must make him a cake of bread first, you must give your money to him first, and then God will bless you with more. But you can see that this is the wrong way to go. This is man-centered, man-glorifying, and motivated on both ends by greed, something Jesus said we should beware.

But our text this morning puts our feet on the right path to inherit the true blessings of God. It is the path of godliness, holiness, or in a word, Christ-likeness. This always has been, and always will be, the true road to blessing and success, not only in this world, but, more importantly, also in the world to come.

Peter now ends this section of personal exhortations by giving some more general principles on how we might experience the blessings of God. And what he tells us is that,

If we would enjoy life and see days filled with the goodness of the Lord, we must seek to do good to those around us, even when they do evil to us.

I. First, Peter Tells Us What We Should Strive After If We Want His Blessing. He Says, “Let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead.”

A. These Godly Characteristics Are What the Spirit of God Produces in Our Lives, but They Are also Things which Must Be Cultivated.

1. He says first, "Let all be harmonious."
 - a. To be harmonious means to be of one mind, to harmonize together like so many musical notes in a symphony.
 - b. We are to have the same mind, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now, I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).
 - c. We are to have the same mind. But the same mind as whom? As the pastor? As the elders? As particular members of the congregation? Obviously not, unless their minds happen to be in accord with the standard.
 - d. The same as whom then? Christ, obviously. We are to think like Him in everything we do.
 - e. Paul says, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). That mind, that heart, that will is given to us by the Holy Spirit at conversion. And we must cultivate it.
 - f. And so, if we would inherit the blessing, we must be harmonious.
2. Secondly, he says we must be sympathetic.
 - a. Harmonious means to share the same thoughts. Sympathetic means to share the same feelings. It means that we must be compassionate.
 - b. The Scripture says that we are to care for one another because we are members of one body. When one member suffers, we all suffer. When one rejoices, we all rejoice. The same is true of your physical body. When your toe hurts, for instance, your whole body is affected and rallies to comfort that toe.
 - c. And it should be the same in Christ's church. You are to share in the concerns of your brethren. You are to sympathize with their weaknesses and strengths. You are not to condemn, but to show compassion.
 - d. This will keep you from the pharisaical attitude of superiority. Those of you who are stronger ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not just please yourselves. In their weakness, you must be their strength.
 - e. And by so doing, God will bless you.
3. Thirdly, you must be brotherly.
 - a. This means that you are to have a loving disposition toward your fellow - believers.
 - b. You are to treat them as your own flesh and blood. It is the same word from which we get the name "Philadelphia", which is supposed to be the city of brotherly love.
 - c. Paul writes, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor" (Rom. 12:10).
 - d. The author to the Hebrews writes, "Let love of the brethren continue" (13:1).
 - e. And Peter writes, "In *your* godliness, [supply] brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted,

having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble” (2 Pet. 1:7-10).

- f. Do you want the assurance that you are Christ’s? Then look for this quality or characteristic in your life.
4. Fourthly, you are to be kindhearted.
 - a. This literally means that your inner being goes out after another.
 - b. You are to be well disposed towards others.
 - c. Paul writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:31-32).
 - d. This is the way to the abundance of life Christ was referring to.
 5. And fifthly, you are to be humble in spirit.
 - a. You are not to be proud, but to have a low opinion of yourself.
 - b. If there is anything which the Lord teaches us through the Gospel, it is this.
 - c. We can do nothing of ourselves. In ourselves we are wicked sinners, rebels against a gracious God.
 - d. We had no power to even bring ourselves closer to God. We could never have saved ourselves. And even now we can do nothing apart from God’s grace that has any value in His sight.
 - e. We should therefore be humble before God, and not exalt ourselves as Lucifer did, who was cast out of heaven and lost his blessedness from God.
 6. This is the way to blessing. And God wants us to be blessed. This is why He puts the Spirit of God within us to produce these fruits. These are, by the way, the very things which characterized our Lord Jesus Christ. We must therefore put them on as a part of the image of the new man. We must cultivate what is already there, if we are to enjoy the favor of our Sovereign.
- B. But Secondly, Not only Are We to Cultivate and Put On These Practices, Peter also Tells Us what It Is that We Are to Put Off.
1. He says, “Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult.”
 - a. When someone does evil to us, we are not to do evil back to him.
 - b. When someone insults us, or speaks evil about us, we are not to do the same, lest we show ourselves to be no better.
 - c. The Lord calls us to a higher standard.
 2. We are to return a blessing instead.
 - a. Paul wrote, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not” (Rom. 12:14).
 - b. Jesus said, “And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to

sinner, in order to receive back the same *amount*. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:33-36).

- c. We must not only not hate those who hurt and persecute us, but actually love them instead.
- d. This is a very important truth. Because we still have sin in our members we are apt to offend and hurt one another. If we retaliate, we will probably create a schism which will never be healed. But if we return a blessing for evil or insult, the rift will be healed before it has a chance to develop.
- e. The same should be true of us in our relationship to the world. Paul wrote, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ says the Lord. ‘BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD’” (Rom. 12:19-20).
- f. The Lord will avenge you, either within the church or without. God is just. He will recompense to every man according to his deeds. He will either exact it from them on the day of His righteous wrath and judgment, or He will exact it from Christ, or more accurately, he will already have exacted it from Him, and it will be applied to him when he turns to Christ in faith and repentance.
- g. You know that just this past Monday, Mark Horn was accosted by a couple of bullies who injured him. In a case like this, the Lord would have him to have an attitude of forgiveness, to not hold a grudge or to seek vengeance on them.
- h. This doesn’t mean that he shouldn’t seek justice. Justice is good and holy. The just penalty for them would be to ask forgiveness for their offense, make restitution for the damages and Mark’s lost time and work, and to do everything that is necessary to nurse Mark back to full health.
- h. Dick Nielsen told me of an instance he read in history where a man was out hunting with his cross-bow and accidentally killed a man. Wanting to honor the Lord in this tragic situation, he vowed to support the man’s wife and children for the rest of their lives to make up for the loss of their husband and father.
- i. Brethren, we must not return evil for evil, or insult for insult. This is the world’s way. The world says, “Don’t get mad, get even.” But the Lord says give a blessing instead.

II. Peter Tells Us, “For you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.” To Inherit the Blessing, You Must Qualify for It.

- A. There Is a Principle in Scripture which Says, “The Lord Will Give Back to Us What We Give to Others.” This Is Again the Principle of Justice.
 1. If you do this thing, you will get that reward.
 2. It is the principle of equity, of equality.
 3. For instance, Solomon writes, “He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered” (Prov. 21:13). If you will not listen to the

pleading of the poor when he asks for food, the Lord will make you poor and men will not listen to you.

4. But if you give to the poor man, the Lord will give it back to you. Again, Solomon writes, “He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed” (Prov. 19:17).
 5. The same is true with regard to forgiveness. Jesus says to us, “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matt. 6:14-15). If you will not show the mercy which the Lord has shown to you, then He will withhold His mercy from you.
 6. Compare the parable in Matthew 18 about the slave who owed the 10,000 talents, who was forgiven by his master, but who refused to forgive a much lesser debt of 100 denarii to his fellow-servant. His master withdrew his mercy and handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. Jesus said, “So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (v. 35).
 7. When God shows us favor, He requires that we show others favor as well.
 8. For the Christian, the Spirit of God is working this fruit within you, so that you will do righteousness and receive the rewards of righteousness. Paul says “For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).
 9. That is why the final judgment will be based on what we have done, and not on what we have professed. Our works will reveal what is really in our hearts, much more accurately than what we say.
 10. We are not saved by those works. They only indicate what kind of a tree we really are.
 11. And when we do the works of righteousness, we show that we are God’s children and therefore entitled to the blessings of God.
- B. And Finally Peter Quotes from an Old Testament Passage to further Show Us that This Is Truly the Mind of the Lord. He Writes, “For, ‘LET HIM WHO MEANS TO LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS REFRAIN HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING GUILF. AND LET HIM TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; LET HIM SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. 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’” (3:10-12).
1. Notice that Peter draws this point from the Old Testament, which reminds us that it is not an antiquated collection of books which have no relevance upon our lives. But it is the Word of God, which “is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), and also “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 2. And secondly, notice that he quotes it to show us that the same truth was at work in the Old Testament church as today.
 - a. The blessing was there of life, both a long natural life and a supernatural life

which would never end.

- b. The blessing was also there of a life filled with good days.
 - c. And the way of life which would qualify you for it is the same: not using your words for evil purposes or deceit; turning away from evil and doing good, and seeking after peace and pursuing it.
3. And the reason this is still the same is because the Lord never changes. It is an axiom that, "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."
- a. The Lord delights in the way of the righteous man. The psalmist wrote, "The steps of a man are established by the LORD; and He delights in his way" (Psalm 37:23).
 - b. The Lord hears the righteous when they call to Him. "*The righteous* cry and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17). James tells us that it is the prayer of the righteous man that avails much with God.
 - c. But it is not so with the wicked. The psalmist writes, "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (1:6).
 - d. The Lord will not hear the prayers of a sinner. The psalmist writes, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (66:18); and Isaiah writes, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He does not hear" (59:1-2).
 - e. And so would you inherit the blessing? Do you desire to love life and to see good days? You won't find it in the way of the health and wealth men, but only in the way of true holiness. If you have the Spirit of God, then the desire to be holy is there, the power is there, and the fruit will be there also.
 - f. Be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted and humble. Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult, but give a blessing instead. By this you show yourselves to be the true children of the risen Christ, for this is what He is like.
 - g. But if that fruit is not in your life, if the Spirit of God does not dwell in you, then you must come to Christ for His grace. You don't have the power to produce the fruits of godliness. You might make a good looking counterfeit, one which can fool most everyone around you. You might even be able to hide in a church congregation all of your life. But you will never attain real holiness, and therefore you will never inherit the blessing. You must come to the Lord and ask for His mercy, if you are ever to qualify for His blessings. He alone has the power to change your heart and make you willing.
 - h. Won't you come then to Jesus this morning. He offers Himself to you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Amen.