

1 Peter 3:8-12

1Pe 3:8 (NKJV) **Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."**

What we studied last week is that Peter is shifting gears to the idea of why living the way that he has taught so far is able to bring great “**blessing**” into our lives. If there is anything that we should desire for our life, it should be that we have God’s blessing on what we are doing. After reading a couple of these verses, it should be obvious, however, that God’s blessing often come at a cost to us personally. The truth of the matter is that we should not want God’s blessing on our life just so that we can be personally blessed, but rather that God may be honored in our life. In v8-12, Peter provides a list of different areas of our life that are important for receiving God’s blessing on our life. Notice those things in v8-9: to “**be of one mind**”, to “**have compassion for one another**”, to “**love as brothers**”, to “**be tenderhearted**”, to “**be courteous**”, and “**not to return evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing**”. I.e., when people do things to you personally, when they do evil against you or when they revile you, at that moment you return that treatment with blessing. He actually says that we are “**called to this**”. Whenever we do what God has called us to do, it is then that we are able to receive His blessing on our life. So, Peter says that if we live this way that we will “**inherit a blessing**”, and this blessing is from God. It is one thing for people to bless you, but quite another for God to bless you. What God honors with His blessing in our life is what we are willing to do that actually honors Him.

The word for “**blessing**” is the Greek word “*eulogeō*” and in this specific context it refers specifically to God’s activity in people’s lives and His intervention to accomplish His will in their life. Contrary to what many seem to believe, God’s blessing on my life is not me getting what I want, but rather it is God giving me what He wants me to have. This is crucial to understand because if I am always seeking what I want from God and what I want God to give me, in all likelihood I will never enjoy God’s blessings for my life. To have God’s blessing on our life means that God is acting in our life to accomplish His purposes through our life rather than simply allowing us to always have our own way. It is God supernaturally acting on our behalf for our good as He knows what is best for us as opposed to what our desire may be. The way that God actually blesses us is by supernaturally intervening in our life, by interrupting our life, by intruding into our life, by prevailing in our life. The very last thing that God is going to do is always be giving us what we want. In fact, I would say that that is the quickest way not to have God’s blessing on our life. Just to highlight this, look at [1 Peter 4:12-14](#),

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.**

Here is a verse where Peter is encouraging these believers not to be surprised when a **“fiery trial”** happens in their life. No one, absolutely no one, enjoys a **“fiery trial”**, and they are going to ask the very obvious question as to *“how can a fiery trial actually be a blessing for my life?”* To the natural mind, it does not even make sense – saying that we need to rejoice in the trial and that ultimately it is a blessing for someone to have a very painful trial that they have to endure. It simply does NOT compute to the natural mind. However, Peter says that the purpose of the trial has a very specific purpose in mind – to **“try you”**. The Greek Interlinear reads **“as a test for you”** – which is the best translation. The NASB says **“which comes upon you for your testing”**. The ESV says **“comes upon you to test you”**. The AMP says **“which is taking place to test your quality”**. The ASV and RSV use the words **“to prove you”**. I actually think that the ASV and RSV capture the meaning the best because the word for **“try you”** is the Greek word *“peirasmos”*. In most of the translations it actually seems to read as a verb – to try, to test, to prove, but in reality, it is a noun and could be translated as **“do not be surprised at the fiery trial which is a test”**.

Now, what is important about this word is that when God is the agent, this word is always for the purpose of proving someone.¹ It is a test that validates and proves a person’s character and their virtue. If I can say it this way, God wants both yourself and others to have a way of validating that you are a person of character and integrity. Nothing is more important to your life than the fact that you are a person of character – nothing. We have no ministry and no significance as a Christian if we do not have character. Christians who forfeit their character for any reason become vessels of wood, hay, and stubble, and virtually unusable in God’s kingdom. Now, I am sure that the average believer is not going to be thrilled with these verses and may think to themselves *“This is terrible that God is going to test me and prove me with a fiery trial.”* To be perfectly honest, many Christians may even become resentful when something difficult like this happens to them. The last thing anyone wants is a **“fiery trial”**. The NIV calls it a **“painful trial”** – simply not what most people are looking for when they get up in the morning. The simple point in all of this is that how God actually blesses us may not always be what we were expecting.

Now, at the most basic of levels, what God did to bless us in the greatest way was to send us His Son, and then by His Spirit, to intervene in our lives with salvation and what He had planned for us before time began.² [Acts 3:26](#) says,

Ac 3:26 (NKJV) **To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.**"

If we exegete this verse properly, it should be obvious that one of the ways that Christ blesses believers is by turning them away from sin in their life. I have no explanation for it, but it seems that many people who profess to be Christians never have any intention of turning away from their sin. They are absolutely determined that they are going to do what they want to do, and they are not going to let much interfere with them in the process. If they want to live in obvious sin, if they want to knowingly violate God’s Word and God’s commands, it seems that little to nothing is able to stop them. The problem with that kind of attitude is simply that the believer’s sin and God’s blessing simply are not compatible with each

¹ Zodhiates, 1135.

² Zodhiates, 677.

other in any way. They actually oppose each other, are contrary and contradictory to one another at every level. I would go so far to say that they are antagonistic to one another and always clash. I think that v8 especially is one of those verses that reveals how Christians often choose to live – they refuse to be of one mind and always have to have their way. They lack compassion for people who just need some patience and understanding. To some people, everything is black or white, and there is never anything in the middle. They fail to truly love and care for other Christians who are different than they are, or they fail to be tenderhearted and considerate and sympathetic. They fail to be courteous and humble with other people, but are always asserting themselves inappropriately into other people's lives. Listen very carefully. At some point in our life, we have to choose what we want – our sin, our way, what we want, or God's blessing on our life. At some point in time, I have to make that decision if I am ever going to be successful in my life and enjoy God's blessings on my life. This is really a very simple decision that we each have to make – my way or God's way.

Look for a moment at [Ephesians 1:3](#) and what it says. This full passage of Scripture is generally considered to be the greatest passage on God's blessings on a believer's life – and all of them are completely undeserved.

Eph 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

I have said it so often, but one of the worst things that God can do is to simply let us have what we want, to simply let us do what we want, to let us have our way. If there is anything that you should desire for your life, it is simply that God is constantly intervening in your life, constantly changing how you think, always interrupting your plans and replacing them with His plans. This is the practical pinnacle of God's blessing on our life – not giving us all of the things that we want and all of the things that we think that we need and must have. In fact, stated another way, we could say that God's richest blessing is Him not giving us what we want, but replacing our desires with His desires for our life. That individual who genuinely understands what God's blessing really means is that person who is always saying to God "*not my will, but Your will, not what I want Lord, but what you want for my life*". If you truly want God's blessing on your life, then you cannot avoid this. You cannot have God's blessing on your life when you always have to have things your way. None of that works.

Now, I do not want us to miss the little phrase in v9 that says "**knowing that you were called to this**". There is a significant difference in the translations that is important to appreciate. The NKJV uses the word "**knowing**", but the vast majority of the other translations do not. In some of the Greek texts from the older manuscripts simply read "**because to this you were called**". I.e., the Greek Interlinear that those translations used did not have the word "**knowing**", so it is not included in their translations. The oldest manuscripts only have the word "**because**" and leave out the word "**knowing**". However, in the Greek Interlinears and manuscripts that the KJV and NKJV used it reads "**knowing that to this you were called**", and the word "**knowing**" was included. The word "**knowing**" is the Greek participle "*eidotes*" from the Greek verb "*oida*" which simply means to know fully, to understand, and to recognize.³ Either way that it is translated, this is still something that believers must know, something that they must learn, and something that they must acknowledge is God's best for their life. There are

³ Harris, *oida*, ep.

simply things in the Christian life that every believer must know, and how to obtain God’s blessing on our life is one of those critical elements that we must all learn. The word “**called**” is in all of the translations, and it refers to a divine summons.⁴ You could refer to it as your business in life. The overriding sense of “**called**” in this context is that of being called into a particular kind of life, a very specific lifestyle. It is a life that has responsibilities and obligations. This cannot be escaped.

I am always somewhat amazed at how often people criticize the Christian life when it comes to this because they think that God’s commands impose and invade their personal freedom and their personal choices. However, if you have a job and you are working for someone else, you always have specific responsibilities and obligations, and do not consider that awkward or wrong. Could you imagine going to a job interview and asking the potential employer what your job description was and they said “*Oh, you can do anything you want. We do not really care when you get here or when you leave or what you do while you are here. You are on your own when it comes to what you do.*” You would think the people were crazy – and rightfully so. However, when it comes to living out the Christian life under God’s ordained responsibilities and obligations, people constantly accuse Him of being overbearing and demanding. We have been spiritually “called” to a specific kind of life, to a specific way of living out our life in a world that is completely opposed to almost everything that we do.

So, what is the same in all of the translations is that this way of life described so far in [1 Peter 2:11-3:7](#) is a way of life to which we have been “called”, to which we have been summoned. This is how God has designed me to live and how He has designed my life to have the greatest level of His blessing. Listen to these verses on God’s calling on our life that reiterate this. [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#) says,

1Th 2:12 (NKJV) that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

[2 Timothy 1:9](#) says,

2Ti 1:9 (NKJV) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

This is God’s calling on our life. It is not something that we can just casually ignore because we are too lazy or too preoccupied with other things in our life. God has “**called us with a holy calling**” and because of that we are to “**walk worthy**” of that calling on our life. This is the Christian life and what Peter is teaching us in these verses is absolutely critical to what it even means to be a Christian. It cannot be overlooked and disregarded and unheeded. What God calls us to do, but we disregard as being unimportant or unnecessary, actually becomes a kind of spiritual curse on our lives. Being disobedient to the revealed will of God is always a recipe for spiritual and emotional emptiness, barrenness, and futility – and especially in a marriage. If you want to live a meaningless, purposeless, and futile kind of life, then simply ignore God’s commands and summons on your life. Just take it lightly, just keep forgetting about its importance in your life, and just keep ignoring it. It is like that sign I see on the ceiling of my dentist’s office that says “Just ignore your teeth and they will go away”. Just ignore what God says brings about His blessing on your life and you will never have any of His blessings to enjoy. Please never forget that God’s blessings on your life are what change you, what motivate you, and what

⁴ Harris, *kaleo*, ep.

actually help give you His life. If we want to have what v10 communicates when it says, “**love life and see good days**”, then we had better get this one right. If you want to love the kind of life that God has created for you and if you truly want to see “**good days**”, then fully embrace what Peter is going to tell us in this passage. He says many things to us, but the goal is so that we might ultimately enjoy the rich blessings of God on our life that He intends for us to have because of personal and genuine obedience to His Word. You can choose to do your own thing and to live however you choose, but if you do, then do not blame God for the pain, anguish, heartache, and loss that you will suffer because of your unwillingness to fully yield yourself to His revealed will for your life.

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