

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."**

1 Peter 3:8 concludes with a trilogy of godly attributes that Peter is using to help the believer identify the kind of lifestyle that God desires for his life. He says that we are to “**love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous**”, and then he adds “**not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing**”. All of these attributes become a kind of litmus test and a measuring rod for the Christian life. These attributes are the targets, the goals, and the objectives at which the believer is to be aiming. It must be appreciated at the very outset of a passage like this that none of these elements and aspects of the Christian life are easy to achieve. It is a misconception to think that living out the Christian life with all of its spiritual demands on a person’s life is easy. Every part of our the believer’s life has to be calculated, intentional, and purposeful. Christians live in a culture that has a worldview that is completely opposed to everything that they believe. Then to make it worse, the world, the flesh, and the demons of the unseen spiritual dimension are all working feverishly to prevent the believer from developing these qualities in their life because these are those traits that imitate and reflect Christ in the believer’s life. These are those qualities that have what we could call a kind of spiritually magnetic pull to them, attributes that draw other people to Christ.

Now, the first attribute of the trilogy is that believers are to “**love as brothers**”. This is not the “*agape*” love that is so often spoken of in Scripture, but this is the Greek word “*philadelphos*” which stands for having a brotherly love. The prefix “*philos*” means friend, and the root word “*adelphos*” means brother. It means to have a brotherly affection for one another.¹ This is the only place that this particular word is used in the New Testament. The idea of how to see this word comes from the word “as” that the translators use to convey the meaning. We are to love other believers just as if they were one of our actual blood brothers or sisters. **Romans 12:10** says,

Ro 12:10 (NKJV) **Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;**

1 Thessalonians 1:9 says,

1Th 4:9 (NKJV) **But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;**

The first use of the word “**love**” in this passage is “*philadelphia*” and literally means “**brotherly love**” as it is translated, but the second word for “**love**” is “*agapao*” which is a reference to the kind of love that God has for the believer.

¹ Zodhiates, 1444.

The best way to understand the term in [1 Peter 3:8](#) is as an encouragement to “be loving brethren”, or to “be brethren who are loving”. This is a different word than the word “love” in [Galatians 5:22](#) that is listed as the first fruit of the Spirit. This is simply having a deep and abiding affection for one another. Peter has already addressed this issue in a similar manner in [1 Peter 1:22](#) when he gave this encouragement,

1Pe 1:22 (NKJV) Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

What was seen in that verse was that the second verb “love” in v22 is in the very unusual grammatical structure of being an aorist imperative verb. The aorist imperative carries a stronger sense, a more compelling sense than a normal imperative tense verb. An aorist imperative verb is always viewed as the strongest verb in the sentence which means that all of the other verbs or participles simply complement and reinforce this particular verb. So, the phrase “**to love one another fervently with a pure heart**” was the governing phrase of the passage.

It cannot be minimized that one major characteristic that Peter is identifying for believers is that everyone who is a part of God’s church is to have a deep and abiding affection and love for other Christians in that fellowship, as well as elsewhere. He first speaks of it as “**in sincere love of the brethren**”. We as the body of Christ come together for many different reasons, but ultimately we come together on a consistent basis because God has commanded that we do so in [Hebrews 10:25](#) which says,

Heb 10:25 (NKJV) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

The word for “**forsaking**” is a very strong word. In this context it clearly means to leave behind, to desert, to depart from, or to abandon.² What makes this participle so strong is that it is in the present tense meaning that it could be translated as “**not continually forsaking or neglecting meeting together**”. Everyone will miss at times, and that is perfectly okay. There are more than legitimate reasons why people are not always able to fellowship with other believers, and it is okay. As a church, we are not trying to wear people out by being at the church every night for some event. In the summer people have vacations, they have illness at times, they have loved ones in other cities that they visit, and often times work demands that they come in for some reason. However, without sounding overly critical, it is my firm pastoral belief that it is a fatal flaw for a believer’s spiritual well-being to continually just “casually forsake” their fellowship with other believers. At a personal level, I am always amazed at how many things serve as distractions and diversions away from those things that have both eternal and lasting value. It has become normal and expected in the spiritual culture in which we live for believers to develop all kinds of reasons, rationalizations, and excuses as to why they believe that they will not reap what they sow, but it should be clear that God will not be mocked. He will not be used as some kind of cosmic genie to sooth every hurt and fulfill every need that the uncommitted and the unfaithful begin to experience. Spiritual mediocrity is the curse of this church age in which we live. A casual flippancy of a believer’s devotion to Christ, His divine Word, and His church is the bane of the modern church’s

² Zodhiates, 499.

existence today. It was what destroyed the church in Sardis where Jesus said this about them in [Revelation 3:1](#),

Rev 3:1 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Do you remember the story about Samson? What ultimately led to his spiritual demise was that he broke a Nazarite vow that he had made to God. In practical terms, he lost his commitment to the things of God. He took them lightly and just casually broke his Nazarite vow. Because of that simple decision, he lost his strength, his eyesight, his God ordained divine ministry, and he spent the rest of his days in chains and hard labor. Listen to how the result of all of this is described in [Judges 16:20](#) when the Philistines came on him after he had lost his strength,

Jdg 16:20 (NKJV) And she said, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

What an incredibly tragic statement that he did not even know that the Lord had departed from him. I think that could characterize many in Christian churches today – they have no idea that God may have already written a kind of spiritual “Ichabod” over their life which means that “the Lord has departed”. I.e., their life simply is not making an impact for God’s glory, and in reality that never even occurs to them. When anything other than God begins to grip our attention, our affections, and our choices, it will not be long before any of us will have drifted so far that it is almost impossible to recover. As a pastor, I have watched this for years, and I am always saddened at how carelessly believer’s often are with their spiritual priorities. There is so much to lose, and believers will lose God’s blessing on their life unless they repent of their indifference and return to God in humility and contrition. Samson was just careless with what God had given to him, as well as what God wanted to do with him. I have said it often, but we do not get a chance to live today over. Once opportunities are lost, they are often lost forever. Once spiritual growth is lost, it is often lost forever.

Now, what we did not look at previously was [Hebrews 10:24](#), or the verse preceding v25. Listen to what it says. It is about stirring up love in one another and for one another.

Heb 10:24 (NKJV) And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

The problem is that we have to be with other Christians in order to actually be able to do this – to stir up their love for God and their willingness to allow Him to use them. This is exactly why every Christian should be devoted to being with other Christians when they meet in a local fellowship of which they are a part. It is simply because God Himself has encouraged us to do so. It is His protection to our foolish choices and rationalizations that diminish His glory. The reasons are obvious and intuitive. Believers come together and meet as a church for mutual support, to be edified, to be built up in their faith, and to be encouraged in their walk with Christ. Believers meet to demonstrate Christ’s love for other people. When any church meets there should be an extraordinary love for one another and for those who are in our midst who may be lost. Study after study has revealed that visitors to a church have actually made up their mind whether or not they will revisit that church within 5 minutes of their initial visit, and it is

all based on the way that the individuals in that church have actually greeted and received them. I am always shocked at how difficult it seems for people in a church to get up out of their pew and go introduce themselves to someone who is visiting.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.