

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."**

This morning we begin the study of v9 and the biblical issue of “**not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling**”. There are many other examples of being reviled throughout the New Testament.

Mt 5:11 (NKJV) **"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**

1Co 4:12 (NKJV) **And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;**

1Pe 3:16 (NKJV) **having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.**

We have already studied much of this in [1 Peter 2:23](#) which speaks of Christ and says,

1Pe 2:23 (NKJV) **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;**

We have to see [1 Peter 2:23](#) as the key verse in this entire book, so it has to help govern our understanding of v9. Clearly, Christ is our example, He is our model, He is the standard for which a committed believer is always striving. If Christ did not revile or threaten someone when He was mistreated and misunderstood, then neither should the believer. The clear command in v9 is that of “**NOT returning**”. Technically, this word is a participle (ending in “ing”) that is in what is known as the imperative sense. We would call it a command. It is also in the present tense, active voice which means that the believer is to constantly as a lifestyle not be returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling. This is not a passage that provides other options for the believer, and because it is in the active voice, it is clearly something that the believer is to do. It is not something that God is going to do for them. Every believer has to make a conscious and intentional choice that they will not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling. In reality, this decision has to be made before the conflict ever arises in the believer’s life. It has to be a settled choice, a determined path for their life. If that choice is not made prior to the conflict, the believer will naturally default to doing exactly what this verse says not to do – that of returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling. They will default to “**an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth**”, and feel justified in doing so. Unfortunately, this happens in marriages all the time, and this can be the place where the consequences and the damage are the greatest.

The word “**returning**” is the Greek word “*apodidōmi*” and simply means to give back, to pay, or in this case to pay back.¹ “**Evil**” or “**reviling**” simply are not to be repaid. This is the second time that this has

¹ Vine, *apodidōmi*, ep.

been iterated so far in [1 Peter](#). In the modern vernacular, the believer is not to take any form of revenge. In [1 Peter 2:23](#), the principle that Jesus provided was that He “**committed Himself to Him who judges righteously**”. He made a very deliberate, intentional, and conscious choice that He would not take on any form of revenge or retaliation, but what He did was to simply commit that which was difficult, painful, and even abusive to Him personally into the hands of His Father. The word “**commit**” in [1 Peter 2:23](#) is “*paradidomai*” and simply means to hand Himself over. It means that Christ was more than willing under a very difficult circumstance to do the following – to deliver Himself over to the charge of and to the care of His Father. In the general sense, and especially a deep spiritual sense, it means to entrust yourself to someone else.² For the average believer, this is very difficult. Why is that? It is because we want to be in control, we want to be in charge, and we want to be the one calling the shots and making the decisions. Unfortunately, we much too often believe that we are smarter than God, and when that happens, we simply miss out on God’s blessing and God’s work in our life. The clear command in this passage is “**not**” to exact our way or to retaliate and seek revenge, not to exert ourselves in lieu of letting God determine the outcome. Here is the issue that must be appreciated – God’s ways simply are not our ways. God does not resolve issues in the same way that we may choose to resolve them. Until a believer learns that lesson, he is destined for both pain and failure in his relationship with those people that may create conflict in his or her life. Every believer has to make the ultimate decision as to who they want controlling their life – either God or themselves. That sounds rather insensitive to our feelings and emotions, but in reality, it is the ultimate decision that needs to be made in a believer’s life. The issue is simple – do I really trust God with my life, or does He need my help in the process? How we answer that question will ultimately determine many of the outcomes that conflicts produce in our life. [Proverbs 16:7](#) says,

Pr 16:7 (NKJV) When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

This is something that only God can do. Your enemies may hate you, despise you, and resent even being with you or near you. They will be inclined to say false things about you. They will demean your character and distort almost everything that you may have said, and what you will find is that the more you defend yourself against them, the more it will excite them to resist you. From a purely human perspective, what often seems right and inevitable for us to do to protect ourselves can very often be the exact opposite of what God desires that we do. For the believer, one of the worst things that they can do is to simply react to what is happening to them. Self-control in conflict is vital to being able to respond in a biblical way, but it requires a premeditated and deliberate, intentional decision on the believer’s part that they will not retaliate or react to what is happening to them – even when they believe that they are correct. Unless you make that decision before the conflict, you will miss God’s best and God’s blessing for your life. The issue here is not whether or not you are right or wrong. That is not the issue at all. It is not a matter of whether or not we are justified in our reaction or even in our response to someone who is working against us personally. The issue is whether or not we are going to let God have His way in our life, and whether or not His Word will take precedent over our personal whims, ideas, and especially our will. This is why everything regarding a subject like this has to be premeditated and predetermined on the believer’s part. Every believer has to make deliberate decisions about how they are going to live

² Zodhiates, 1103.

and whether or not they are willing to take God and His Word seriously. Remember that His ways are not our ways.

So, exactly what do the words “**evil**” and “**reviling**” mean, and what does this passage imply in relation to what someone is doing to the believer? “**Evil**” is the Greek word “*kakos*” and indicates the lack in a person of those qualities which should be possessed; it means to be “bad in character”.³ It means that someone is actively trying to harm someone else, trying to make life very difficult for them. It denotes someone being bad and doing destructive things that are damaging and unjust towards someone else.⁴ The Greek word for “**reviling**” is “*loidoria*” and it is just as intense as the word for “**evil**”. It means to slander, to reproach someone, to defame them, and to try and disgrace them.⁵ It has the idea of heaping abuse on someone.⁶ Reviling implies an abusive attack prompted by anger or hatred, and refers to scolding someone using harsh, insolent, or abusive language.⁷

Obviously, the implication of these words is something that immediately puts the victim of this kind of “abuse” into a defensive mode, a self-protective mode, a very cautious and distrustful mode. Now, I know that someone is thinking to themselves that “*I have the right to protect myself, to protect my family, and to protect my personal resources. I personally do not agree with this so far. I am not going to just let people take advantage of me.*” I completely agree. In fact, to just arbitrarily let people take advantage of us just for their personal benefit or gratification is not being a good steward of the wisdom or the resources that God has given to us. There were times when people tried to take advantage of Christ, but He did not allow it.

However, that is not what this passage is talking about. The passage is not talking about letting people unnecessarily take advantage of us or use us for their advantage. In the case of Christ in [1 Peter 2:23](#), it was talking exactly about that at His death. It was a part of God’s perfect plan of salvation, and Christ, who could have called down a legion of angels, simply submitted Himself to His Father’s perfect will. Even in some very difficult circumstances it may be the same for us. There may be that time in our life if we are truly following Christ when we are called on by God to “**suffer for righteousness sake**”, and to allow ourselves to be mistreated. In fact, the idea of suffering is a predominant theme in [1 Peter](#), as much as any book in the New Testament. Listen to these four verses,

1Pe 2:20 (NKJV) For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

1Pe 3:14 (NKJV) But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

1Pe 3:17 (NKJV) For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

1Pe 4:19 (NKJV) Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

³ Vine, *kakos*, ep.

⁴ Precept, *1 Peter 3:9*, ep.

⁵ Zodhiates, 926.

⁶ Harris, *loidoria*, #3033, ep.

⁷ Precept, *1 Peter 3:9*, ep.

For those of us in America, the idea of suffering is a very uncomfortable and foreign idea. However, in other parts of the world, this may be expected, even normal for believers. However, [1 Peter 3:9](#) is not talking about suffering. It is a verse that is aimed to teach us how God has chosen for us to live before an unbelieving world that is engrossed in itself and in sin.

The issue of [1 Peter 3:9](#) is that of ridding ourselves of an attitude of revenge and retaliation, of having to pay people back for how they may have treated us. If we are not careful, we will simply become like those people that have used and mistreated us. Rather than becoming Christlike, we become like those that are evil and do harmful things to others. The goal is always Christlikeness. I have said it so many times, but the Christian life is always about transforming the believer from what he was like to what God wants Him to be – to be like Christ. Everything is to be transformed in the believer's life – their personality, their disposition, their attitudes, their speech, their goals, their lifestyles, their ideas, their behavior, their temperament, their individuality, their approaches to life, and their character. Everything is to be changed. Everything is to come under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. For the believer who resists this and who is constantly clinging to what they want for their life and how they want to live their life, they will never experience God's true blessings on their life. How does Peter say this? He simply says in v9,

1Pe 3:9 (NKJV) **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.**

Called to what? We are called to “**not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling**”. We are called to “**be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous**” (v8). From a pastoral perspective, the most important word for me as a Christian in this verse is the word “**called**”. I have to ask the question as to whether or not I really believe that this is how God has personally called me to live. Someone may read these two verses (v8-9) and say to themselves that “*this is all well and good and certainly ideal, but I am not sure how far I am to take this kind of teaching*”. The key to all of this is understanding the word “**called**” and how it applies to my life personally. It is the Greek word “*kaleo*” (indicative, aorist, passive) and it means in this context that God has called the believer into a particular way of life, into a specific manner of responding to that which pleases God. Because of the parsing of the word, it means that God is the One who has called us, it is a fact that He has done so, and He did this when He made us to be a part of His family. His desire is that we properly reflect His calling on our the life. Too often the believer agrees with the external fact that God has called them to be different and to live according to His Word and His precepts. However, there is something vital that is often lost in the transition from our intellectual knowledge of what God desires to the actual application of that calling into our life. We confess the correct thing, but then actually fail, and at times even refuse, to consciously and intentionally incorporate that calling into our life. We know what God wants from us, but we simply refuse to do what He says. At that point, His blessing on our life is lost, diminished, and devalued as unimportant to us. We would never confess that, but it simply is a matter of not being fully committed and yielded to the perfect will of God for our life.

So, what do we lose in the process of just ignoring obedience to God's will? We lose His “**blessing**”. We lose that supernatural work that makes us Christlike. We lose the opportunity to reflect Christ to unbelievers. We lose the desire to be faithful. We lose that which is God's way of motivating us to a deeper relationship with Him. The word “**blessing**” refers specifically to God's favor on our life, and to

all of the benefits that that favor provides for us. It is not possible to quantify or even define what those individual blessings may actually be for the believer, but whatever they are, their design is to enrich their life, to deepen their walk with God, and to enhance how He uses them in His kingdom. Everything about God's blessing on an individual is that it greatly benefits them. It is God's reward for obedience and for being yielded to Him.

It should be obvious to anyone who is discerning that many Christians seem to lack God's true blessings on their life. They are constantly complaining, never satisfied, always blaming, forever irritable, and never growing and progressing in their Christian life. This individual simply misses what God desires to do in them. So, if we ever desire to be a blessing to others and to be used by God, then we must learn how to receive God's blessings on our personal life, and that happens when we respond biblically to the very difficult moments that often happen in our life. We simply do not retaliate or seek revenge against people who are unkind and ungracious to us. We do not revile back when we have been reviled. We do not treat people the way that they may treat us, but we simply reflect Christ in all that we do. We do it deliberately, intentionally, and with an understanding that when we do that God's richest blessings are given to us so that we can be a blessing to others.

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