

Our Calling  
I Peter 3:8-12

severing of the nation into two kingdoms. “He chose poorly.”

“Let me give you some free advice.”

Sounds familiar doesn't it?

You probably heard that growing up or while working or used it yourself.

You may have heard it from a parent, grandparent or other relative.

You may have heard it from a teacher or coach.

You may have heard it from a boss or co-worker.

Wherever you heard it, the person most likely had good intentions to offer to you some counsel on something they observed or heard in which they want to offer some opinion on how to change what you are doing that will help shape you into a better person or worker or student or athlete. What you then do with that advice is completely up to you. You can take their advice in a positive way and alter what you are doing so that you improve your performance.

Or you can consider their advice to be infringing on how you live or what you are doing. You may think that how you do things has worked just fine and you have no intention of changing. You may not only ignore the advice but decide you are going to do the complete opposite.

It's really all up to you on what you do with it. Take it or leave it.

We need look no further than the Old Testament account of King Rehoboam who inherited the throne of Israel from his father Solomon. He wanted some advice about how to run the kingdom so he asked his father's advisors. They gave him what seemed to be favorable advice that was meant to endear him to the people of the kingdom. He then sought the advice from his peers. Their advice was to make life harder for the Israelites. He considered the advice of both and chose to follow the counsel of his peers which resulted in the

As we come to our passage in I Peter 3, Peter is going to lay out some advice. Sure, we can take it or leave it but if we know what's good for us, as it comes from the Spirit inspired Word of God, we would do well to take it and apply it as truth that will benefit our spiritual lives.

For a quick review Peter spent some time speaking to specific groups of Christians in Asia Minor. The counsel he gave was about submission.

Christians everywhere were to submit to all authority so that by doing good they would silence the ignorant talk of those who would otherwise accuse them.

A Christian slave was to submit to his master even if mistreated. They were to follow the example of Christ who suffered for doing what was good.

A Christian wife was to submit to her unsaved husband so that her unsaved husband might be saved by her godly character, rather than persistent nagging about the gospel. Behavior not badgering would win them to Christ.

A Christian husband on the other hand was to be considerate and respectful of his wife so that the prayers of the husband would be answered.

In I Peter 3:8-12 Peter is going to summarize for these Christians how to conduct themselves both within the Christian community and with those who were not Christians. Their treatment of each other in the body of Christ would be a testimony of the gospel to the watching world. We will look at verse 8 today, 9-11 next week and verse 12 in 3 weeks

He begins this section with one word – “finally”. It doesn't mean that he is wrapping up the letter. At the end of a speech or sermon you might hear the speaker say “in conclusion”. That's an indication to the audience that the speaker is coming to the end of his talk. At that point you may begin to consider

what is next. You start to go through the mental gymnastics of your agenda. Is it lunch or shopping, another class or lecture to sit through?

What Peter means is that he is wrapping up this particular point, but will have more to say. He has been addressing different groups within the body of believers, but now he wants everyone to pay attention to what he has to say. What he just said may not have been applicable to certain groups so he's bringing all of them together as a group to hear his advice. All the believers in his audience should take note of and apply these principles regardless of their status in the church or community.

It's free advice, but with the advice Peter also includes benefits for doing what he suggests. And even though it's free, this advice is valuable. Let's see what he has to say. It's a Christian's call that if obeyed will lead to experiencing the blessings God wants us to enjoy.

#### I. A CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO EXHIBIT RIGHT BEHAVIOR – v. 8

There are five overarching virtues that the Christian should exhibit if he or she is to live a God honoring life. These are internal characteristics or attitudes that will be evident in how we act toward others.

Frances Schaeffer and Chuck Colson have book titles that are very similar and their titles alone emphasize *How Then Shall We Live?* or *How Now Shall We Live?* Those are good questions to ask – how should we live in a culture that is increasingly hostile to Christianity?

Let's be clear about one thing when it comes to our nature. It comes from the pen of Paul who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the following: "If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Corinthians 5:17)

I hope you have the fact that you are a new creation

engrained in your noodle. You may not feel new at times, but according to Scripture, which I hope you believe, you are new.

Verse 18 begins this way: "All this is from God..." That's important to understand. Your new nature came from God the moment you trusted Christ as your Savior. He made it happen.

What Peter has to say is in line with what Paul wrote. These five virtues come from God as part of the new nature. Peter will write in his next letter that by our being in Christ we participate in the divine nature.

So, here is virtue number one.

#### A. We Are To Live Harmoniously

It's a word that speaks of unity, rather than being in discord. When Elaine sits down at the piano there is harmony in the notes. If I were to sit down at the piano and play, well, let's just say dogs would be howling. One is harmony the other is discord.

The word literally means being of the same mind and refers to working together for a common goal. In the Greek it is a compound word meaning to be together in understanding. It is not uniformity, but cooperation in diversity. Think about it in relation to the body of Christ. In I Corinthians 12 we read about the various spiritual gifts that are within the body. There are different gifts, but when they work together to build up the body there is harmony. There is the common goal working toward the common good of the body. When the body isn't working together there is pain. Corinth experienced that because they emphasized certain gifts to be exclusion of others. Not spiritual.

John Piper notes that the idea Peter is expressing is having a common mindset, not necessarily all the same tastes or gifts or habits, but the same thoughts and assessments of the essentials of life—God,

salvation, virtue.

We have been on a search for replacing the chairs in the sanctuary that are some 35 years old. We purchased a wider chair without arms. Some of you liked it without arms while others of you preferred chairs with arms. We purchased a chair with arms and found it was very similar to our current style with a bit more padding. We went back to looking.

We purchased three additional chairs, two have arms, one has no arms. We are looking at alternating them so that everyone will be in harmony regarding the selection.

Back in Genesis 13 a family squabble arose between Abraham's shepherds and Lot's shepherds. The passage indicates that there were a lot of sheep, so many that the land couldn't sustain them all, so they fought about the fields and watering holes. Abraham stepped into the middle of the bickering and offered a solution. Lot could choose the direction in which he would dwell and Abraham would then head in the opposite direction. His compelling argument to settle the dispute was this: "Aren't we all brothers?"

Think about that in what Peter is saying in our text. Because we are all part of the body of Christ there shouldn't be any bickering – we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Romans 15:5-6

I Corinthians 1:10

Think about this for just a moment in what Paul said in Romans 15. I'm going to put a little negative spin on this. If we as a body of believers aren't in unity, harmony, fellowship or whatever you want to call it, *we cannot glorify God*. Harmony is necessary to give Him appropriate praise. IF there is not harmony we are not following Christ. Unity is what Jesus prayed for the church in John 17.

In the latter passage that was one of the sobering

messages to the Corinthians. They were at odds about teachers and spiritual gifts and observing communion and to put it in modern day vernacular Paul says knock it off. Stop it. Live in harmony. You're all part of the same body.

How can a church body be a testimony about Christ to a non-believing world if we are at odds with fellow Christians?

Harmony in the body was evident in the early church (Acts 2:42-47) and resulted in others being saved and added to the church - daily.

Living in harmony is the first virtue.

#### B. We Are To Live Sympathetically

The KJV uses the word "compassion" and comes from the Greek word which is translated "sympathy" (NIV). It means to feel what others feel so that you can respond sensitively to their needs in a way that not only sees but does. To put it another way, Peter is saying that we shouldn't be hard hearted, but instead live with eyes wide open so we can notice when others are hurting. Sympathy means to suffer with and to enter into their experience with the intent of seeking out how you can help.

The writer of Hebrews writes about Jesus that He is a High Priest who knows how to sympathize with us. (Hebrews 4:15)

I would much rather see a doctor who sympathizes with my pain and meets me where I am at and works to get me some relief than one who comes in, looks at my chart and coldly orders some more tests to be done without spending time with me.

Romans 12:15 "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep."

A pastor friend once told me that he made two hospital calls one afternoon at the same hospital.

He rejoiced with one young couple who had just welcomed their first child. After that visit he wept with the second young couple one floor up because they were just told they would never have children.

The first miracle Jesus did was to enter into the joy of a couple at their wedding and perform the miracle of making wine for the celebration.

The last miracle Jesus did was to enter into the grief of a mother who had just lost her son and was taking him to be buried. Jesus sympathized with her grief and raised him back to life.

God sympathized with our plight called sin and was moved to do something about it sending His Son to die in our place for us. It was something He did not have to do but chose to do because He sympathized with us.

Sympathy is recognizing God's grace in our life so that we in turn are able to sympathize with others.  
Matthew 25:34-40

I Corinthians 12:26 speaking of the body of Christ: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Hebrews 13:3 "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

James 1:27 "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

I saw on YouTube last week a story about a guy who was doing a social experiment. He went to the homeless and offered them the chance to select one item from three. They could choose food, money, or beer. One guy chose the food. He said he wasn't sure when the next time he would eat. Another guy didn't want any of the three items. He said people will give him food or money so that didn't appeal to

him. What he wanted was someone to talk to. He was lonely and no one would stop just to talk with him. Too busy or too afraid or too something. To them he was invisible.

Where is our sympathy? Where is my sympathy? That's the kind of attitude we are to have. That's what we are called to do as Christians. Think for a moment about the many organizations through the years that have been started by Christians who sympathized with the plight of others and moved them to do something.

Sunday school started in London as a way of giving an education to London's children who were forced to work at an early age forgoing any kind of education.

George Mueller ran five orphanages in London. Compassion International and World Vision, and Samaritans Purse reach children with needs like food, clothing, water, education.

Youth Haven Ranch began when Morey and Dorothy Carlson saw kids hanging out on the streets of Detroit and they sympathized with their need to hear about Jesus.

The Salvation Army founded by William Booth met social needs.

It is an almost endless list of ministries that began when someone sympathized with another.

John Piper says that "true sympathy never says 'I know how you feel' it is rather a fairly quiet, time-intensive, presence-intensive way of being."

Our being intentionally missional in outreach stems from this attitude, being sympathetic.

Does that characterize us?

C. We Are To Live Lovingly

Peter uses a term that speaks of the kind of affection one has for a close relative and is exhibited in unselfish service. Don't be strangers.

I spoke with someone not long ago who said that when he first started attending the church he goes to he was very content to slip in and slip out without connecting with anyone else and it seemed to him that others were content not to reach out to him. It wasn't until grandchildren started attending that connection began to happen.

Referring once again to the early church in Acts 2 we notice this was paramount to their growth, both spiritual and numerical. They devoted themselves to fellowship which can only mean they lived lovingly with each other.

It is the kind of love that Peter expressed to Jesus as they sat by a fire on the shore of the Sea of Galilee one morning. It's the kind of love that shows a watching world that we really get along because we are a close family. And yes, even close families can have the occasional scuffle, but they patch things up and move on.

We are called as Christians to love one another.

#### D. We Are To Live Compassionately

This word is very similar in meaning to sympathy. The KJV translates it pity while in the ESV it speaks of having a tender heart. The only other use of this word is found in Ephesians 4:32. We could just as easily translate it kindness. It has more to do with your attitudes than your actions. The original word meant belly which was considered to be the seat of emotions. A literal rendering would read 'be generous in your belly.'

It is tenderness or showing kindness to others which was not a character trait admired by the Romans. They considered it a flaw. The person was considered weak.

We see Jesus exhibit tenderness throughout His minister.

He was moved with compassion when He saw the people of Israel as sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

He was tender toward the woman brought to Him by the religious leaders demanding that Jesus condemn her for being caught in adultery. John 8:3 His compassion is heard in His cry compelling all those who are weary and burdened to come to Him for rest. (Matthew 11:28-30)

We live in a harsh and unforgiving world. It is a world that so desperately needs the hope tenderness conveys. We are to live compassionately as Christians.

The last virtue mentioned by Peter is to live humbly.

#### E. We Are To Live Humbly

For each of the preceding attitudes to be evident in our lives as Christians we need this last trait to be the catalyst. To live harmoniously, sympathetically, lovingly, and compassionately, we need humility. It takes a humble spirit.

It requires an honest assessment of self before an all knowing God, to acknowledge what God already knows about us.

Humility is required to serve with the right motive. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Humility helps eliminate strife and creates harmony in the body. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Humility doesn't puff itself up or inflate its abilities.

Humility is exalted by God while at the same time He resists the proud. (I Peter 5:5-6)

Humility encourages others and applauds their successes.

Humility does not judge others when they have fallen or judge those who have needs.

Those with humility receive God's grace.  
(Proverbs 3:34)

Are there any you need God's Spirit to help you develop?

Humility serves the needs of others with genuineness.

We cannot truly serve one another without a humble spirit as exemplified by Jesus.  
(Philippians 2:5-11)

I don't know if it made the network news a couple weeks ago, but it was an exhibition of humility for our President to retrieve the hat of that Marine standing at attention and attempt to put it back on his head in strong winds. I don't think it was a photo op, I truly believe he considers himself a servant of the people of this country and that takes humility.

I think Peter is also saying that you need to exhibit humility when you are suffering for doing good.

There is one last thing about humility that I want to mention. Humility has a complete dependency on God recognizing that everything comes from Him. Our very breath and life are held in His hands. The humble will know that.

Our intellect, emotional stability, even our safety are from Him. The humble will acknowledge that. It takes humility to understand how unworthy and sinful we are and in need of a Savior.

It is humility that grabs hold of God's grace and accepts the free gift of salvation recognizing that we bring nothing to merit His gift of eternal life.

However you want to look at humility it is a necessary attitude as part of the Christian's call.

These five virtues are an all-encompassing list of right attitudes that when portrayed exhibit themselves in our behaviors. It's what we as Christians are called to do.