

Our Calling – Part 2

I Peter 3:9-11

In last week's message we began to look at some advice given by Peter on how we as Christians should live in community with other Christians and with the outside community of non-Christians in order for them to be drawn to Christ through the attractiveness of our godly character. The kind of calling we are encouraged to display is to exhibit right behavior. We noted from Peter five essential virtues as part of the Christian's call.

1. We are to live harmoniously.

Romans 15:5-6 "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I Corinthians 1:10 "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."

We are all part of the same body of Christ. I have never had my left hand get in an argument with my right knee and start fighting. Everything works together in unity. 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 because we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now when Paul wrote to the church in Rome he essentially says that if we as a body of believers aren't in unity or harmony *we cannot glorify God*. Harmony is necessary to give Him praise. If there is no harmony we are not following Christ. Unity is so important that we read in John 17 that Jesus prayed that for the church, His body, you and me and all believers to be in harmony.
How are we doing?

In the Corinthian passage that was one of the sobering indictments to that church. They were at odds about teachers and spiritual gifts and observing communion. To put it in modern day vernacular Paul says knock it off, there shouldn't be any discord or friction among you. Live in harmony because you're all part of the same body. We are to live harmoniously.

2. We are to live sympathetically.

Look out for needs within the body and beyond and help meet them. Romans 12:15 "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Enter into their joy and their sorrow. Acts 2:45 – "as anyone had need."

3. We are to live lovingly.

That refers to a family relationship, which means from time to time we have to work out squabbles, encouraging each other and so on.

4. We are to live compassionately.

We are to take Jesus as our example who, when He saw the multitudes, was moved with compassion because they were lost, wandering around without any direction. (Matthew 9:36)

5. We are to live humbly.

Without humility it is impossible to have these other virtues developed in our life. It is humility that allows the Holy Spirit to begin and continue the work of making us like Christ in character and it is humility that then serves others through these five virtues as opposed to insisting on our being served.

We covered in verse 8 a Christian's call to exhibit right behavior.

I. A CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO EXHIBIT RIGHT BEHAVIOR

Today we will look into verses 9-11 and discuss a Christian's call to experience right blessings.

II. A CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO EXPERIENCE RIGHT BLESSINGS – vs. 9-11

There is first of all a negative injunction.

A. A Negative Injunction – v. 9a

1. Don't repay evil with evil manners

The word used here comes from a word that emphasizes natural depravity. It is that natural desire to do wrong. Paul said that what he should do he didn't and what he shouldn't do he ended up doing and then called himself a wretched man.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote poetically:
There was a little girl, who had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead,
And when she was good, she was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was horrid

There is that natural inclination to do wrong. Isaiah says that the wicked are like a troubled or turbulent sea, restless and angry. There is no peace with God. This person is morally corrupt and plots evil against others.

Solomon writes that the wicked pours out evil and the soul of the wicked desires evil.
(Proverbs 15:28; 21:10)

Jeremiah 17:9 – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

You don't have to look very far to see this kind of evil in the world. In the US alone, according to the FBI's Crime clock a murder occurs about every 30 minutes in the US alone.

Think about some of the stuff that's going on.

ISIS and Al-Qaida

MS-13

People shooting police

Robbery

Fraud/embezzlement

People are bent on doing evil to others and what's worse is that they enjoy doing it. And Peter says don't retaliate in the same way. If someone does evil to you don't respond with evil.

Considering what Peter is saying here there are three ways in which we can respond to someone who does evil to us.

a) The first is what we might call the demonic response.

That is when a person returns evil for good. Sitting in study hall one day as a freshman, a senior came up and without provocation flung his wad of chewing tobacco all over me.

You may have seen in the past year that knock out game where someone will walk up behind another person and haul off and hit them to knock them out.

b) The second is what we might call the human response.

In this response it's purely motivated out of our human nature. If someone does something good for us we'll respond by doing something good for them. If they do something evil against us we'll respond by doing something evil in return to them.

Romans 12:17-19 “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is Mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

A person doesn't like getting cut off in traffic so they retaliate.

I worked with a guy who got mad in High school because his girlfriend broke up with him so he went and did donuts with his car tearing up their lawn.

Retaliation is a natural human response and Peter says we shouldn't respond in that way.

There is a third response.

c) The third is what we might call the divine response.

This is where you return good for evil.

Romans 12:20-21 “On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Does that mean we should just roll over and let others take advantage of us?

Not at all.

If necessary, seek legal recourse.

But if that isn't a viable option, always remember that God sees what has been done to you and He will avenge you for the evil done to you. He may not bring justice to bear in this life on those who do evil to you, but there is a day of reckoning for them when this life is over. But also keep this in mind; sometimes what happens to them isn't what you thought or what you wanted.

How many Christians do you think prayed that Saul would be stricken down by God for all the hostility he inflicted on the early church? He wanted to annihilate them. God instead, in His patience, chose Him to be an ambassador of the gospel. Paul was a recipient of God's wonderful grace rather than receiving God's wrath.

How about Jonah? He wanted God to strike down the Assyrians for all the evil they brought on Israel. Instead God spared them and many learned to fear and trust God. Jonah rightly concluded that God is “a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.” (Jonah 4:2)

Let me ask you a question to think about because your answer will tell you where your heart really is.

When someone does evil against you would you rather see them suffer for what they did to you or would you rather see them get saved? That doesn't

mean salvation mitigates the wrong. There are still consequences for wrong actions.

A follow up question would be this: How are you praying for your enemies?

Jesus taught the same principle in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:38-39

In this passage Jesus was referring to Exodus 21:23-25, which has been called the law of retaliation.

One author stated: “This law was given to protect the innocent and to make sure retaliation did not occur beyond the offense.” People would use this law to justify taking the law into their own hands when someone did something wrong to them. In essence, though, the law really meant that the punishment should fit the crime. But Jesus invoked the law of love as a way of correcting a common misunderstanding of this Old Testament law. The author goes on to say: “Jesus pointed out, however, that while the rights of the innocent were protected by the Law, the righteous need not necessarily claim their rights. A righteous man would be characterized by humility and selflessness.” Such a person would more likely go the second mile to bring peace. Instead of retaliating, such a person would bring his case to the Lord who will one day make it right.

John MacArthur concludes that if you aren't repaying evil for evil, don't start. If you are repaying evil for evil, stop.

If we are applying the virtues of verse 8 to our lives we won't seek to retaliate by getting even.

Peter gives a second negative injunction.

2. Don't reply to insults with an insulting mouth

The word “insult” here means an abusive verbal railing or attacking against another person. It can refer to using strong language to curse at someone

or about them or speaking evil against someone. It's more than gossip. It is a vile fomenting abusive speech meant to inflict deep emotional pain through a verbal attack. They vomit bitterness, anger and hatred that spew out with a nauseating stench.

Such evil speaking should never come from the mouth of a Christian.

Ecclesiastes 5:6 "Do not let your mouth lead you into sin..."

Proverbs 4:24

Proverbs 19:1

Ephesians 4:29

Colossians 3:8

Some of you may remember singing in Sunday school as a child a song that reminded us to watch what we say.

Oh be careful little mouth what you say.

Oh be careful little mouth what you say.

For the Father up above is looking down in love.

Oh be careful little mouth what you say.

Jesus gives us the proper response and reason when we are insulted and have evil done to us by others.

Matthew 5:11-16

The Christian should never talk or act in a way that brings reproach to the gospel and causes disdain by an unbeliever. We are to let the light of our faith shine so that God may be praised and others are drawn to Christ for salvation.

Choosing not to retaliate demonstrates forgiveness, love and concern for the other person.

Don't repay evil for evil.

Don't reply to insults with insults.

Those are negative injunctions.

Peter then speaks about a positive inheritance.

B. A Positive Inheritance

An inheritance is something typically given to another by virtue of birthright. It is generally something that is tangible like property of personal belongings – furniture or jewelry or other goods.

Peter says that instead of responding negatively we should instead respond with a blessing because we will inherit a blessing.

The grammar in this verse is a bit challenging because it can actually have two different meanings or possibilities. Here's how John Piper puts it: "Does the 'calling' in verse 9 refer to the act of blessing those who insult us? Are we called to do this? Or does it refer to our inheriting a blessing? Does the verse mean, 'Bless those who insult you, because you were called to live this way; fulfill that calling so that you will inherit a blessing'? Or does the verse mean, 'Bless those who insult you, because you were called to inherit a blessing'? Does the 'calling' refer to what comes before (giving blessings to others) or to what comes after (inheriting a blessing)?"

One implies a condition in order to receive our inherited blessing. But we know that there are no conditions on how to get to heaven. You don't earn eternal life by blessing someone else. Any blessing we receive is inherited by grace not earned by good works.

So I believe that Peter is saying here that instead of retaliating in some way for wrongs done to us we are instead to bless them and pray for them.

Many centuries ago there was once a family caught up between the battle lines of a war that was being waged on their home land. During the fierce fighting a little girl was ripped from this family and taken as slave. She lived in a foreign land with a prominent family in the nation, among a people with a foreign language and foreign customs. In the course of time her master became sick with an incurable disease. The mortality rate was 100%.

Now I am only guessing here, but I would suspect that many in this girl's circumstances would secretly remark that it served him right. I hope he does die. But the character of this little girl was remarkable and shows us what it is to respond to evil with good. This unnamed, inconspicuous girl went to the wife and told her of a man in Israel who could cure him. We find the account in II Kings 5. If you know about Naaman, you know the outcome. In this way the servant girl blessed her master.

Blessing essentially is saying something good about that person. It may also include wishing some good to come to that person. Blessing someone else also implies sharing with them the gospel.

If we want to speak a blessing then we need to fill our heart with God.

“The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.” (Psalm 37:30-31)

We read in Psalm 34:1 that if our heart is filled with God then His praise will be on our lips.

A heart that is right with God will not speak words that are impure. They will instead give a blessing because he understands he is receiving a blessing.

Peter has some thoughts.

1. Tame our tongue – v. 10
 - a) Tame our tongue from depraved speech
 - b) Tame our tongue from deceitful speech

For 35 years my brother has taught anatomy and physiology at both the High school and college level. Part of his lecture series on the senses deals with the digestive system of which he includes the tongue. He talks about it being primarily made up of skeletal muscle like biceps, quadriceps and hamstrings, which are used to move the body. The key he emphasizes in his lecture is that we have

control over these kinds of muscles unlike smooth muscle fiber that lines many of our internal organs and blood vessels. We do not have control over smooth or cardiac muscles, but we do over the muscles that make up things like the tongue. That means when we open our mouth to speak we have a choice to temper what we are about to say or just let it fly and speak our mind. The tongue is something we can control. We read about that from James. James 3:1-12

One key Peter says to living a good life is refraining from speaking evil and deceiving others. Loving life is an act of the will.

Warren Wiersbe says: “We can decide to endure life and make it a burden, escape life as though we were running from battle, or enjoy life because we know God is in control.”

Pastor Don used to say “Our response is our responsibility.” You can choose how you respond to injurious actions and insults. It's a matter of the will.

Again from the pen of Warren Wiersbe he writes: “Many of the problems of life are caused by the wrong words, spoken in the wrong spirit.” Psalm 141:3 “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

If anyone knew about hasty and inappropriate speech, it was Peter.

When Jesus said He was going to Jerusalem to die, Peter rebuked Him.

When Jesus said Peter would deny Him, Peter said he would never do that and then denied Him three times and cursed while doing it.

Jesus said that whatever is in our heart is what will come out the mouth. “For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34) Good or garbage.

Instead of speaking words that are evil or deceitful
we are told we should speak the truth in love.

(Ephesians 4:15)

Speak encouraging words

Speak comforting words

Speak guiding words

Speak affirming words

Speak loving words

Speak compassionate words

Speak unifying words

Speak joyful words

We are to tame our tongue

We are to turn our path

2. Turn our path – v. 11

a) Practice what is moral

b) Pursue what is peaceful

The KJV uses a term we don't hear much today.
The word "eschew" (not a sneeze) means to avoid
or to abstain from, to shun. The NIV uses the term
"turn from". That's what repentance is – to turn
from the path of sin to follow Christ and the path of
righteousness. Here Peter says to turn from doing
wrong and go instead in the path of doing right.

This isn't just a bias against sin. The word strongly
implies that there is a hatred and loathing of sin.

Romans 12:9 "Hate what is evil."

Psalm 97:10 "Let those who love the Lord hate
evil."

I Thessalonians 5:22 "Avoid every kind of evil."

When we love God with all our heart, soul, mind,
and strength we will avoid evil. It means to be alert
to it and flee from it.

Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 119:9, 11

Instead of doing what is evil, he practices what is
Moral and right and Peter adds a second virtue of
the Christian. He pursues after peace.

Hebrews 12:14 "Make every effort to live in peace
with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one
will see the Lord."

I Thessalonians 5:13

Seeking peace is in a Greek tense that means it's a
continuous action on our part, a command that
appeals to the will. The word also conveys an
intense and aggressive action. It's not something
that is automatic, but is gained through our effort,
something we must choose to do. It was used to
describe a hunter pursuing his prey. That's the
intensity with which we are to seek peace with
others, especially those who would do evil to us or
insult us.

Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends
on you, live at peace with everyone."

In Matthew 5:9 Jesus says that peacemakers are
blessed. The result is a condition of tranquility even
in the middle of storms that settles our hearts and
keeps us from being anxious.

Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on Thee because He trusteth
in Thee."

If we would experience and express a right blessing,
we need to heed the negative injunction Peter gives
by not repaying evil with evil manners; not replying
to insults with an insulting mouth; tame our tongue
and turn our path to do good; practicing what is
moral and pursuing what is peaceful at all costs.
That is our calling as a Christian.

So how are you doing? Where will you begin this
week to let God's Spirit transform your life so that
the watching world will sit up, take notice, and be
drawn to the Savior?