

### 1 Peter 3:8-12

*To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; <sup>9</sup>not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup>For, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. <sup>11</sup>He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup>For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

In today's lesson, we turn our attention from talking about specific people (husbands, wives, servants or workers) back to the whole body of believers. Peter continues his letter by giving more instruction on our attitudes and how we should behave. He tells us that we are to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit. Let's dissect each of these to get a better understanding of what is being said here.

Harmonious: This word is used in many different instances including relationships, music, and more. The simplest definition of the word is “in unity”. This unity spans the whole human life. For the Christians, it means to be in unity in mind (as other translations put it), spirit, sentiment and action. We often hear worship leaders or pastors say “Let us worship the Lord in one accord”. Romans 15:6 says “so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This word denotes a sense of oneness. In music, harmony indicates multiple notes working together to create a beautiful sound. All of this can translate to the Christian life. Not only are we live in a sense of oneness with one another, we should also come together as many parts of the body to praise God and accomplish His work (see 1 Corinthians 12).

Sympathetic: When looking up the definition for sympathetic, you will find “to have sympathy”. While that is a definition, it isn't very helpful. To have sympathy or be sympathetic is to share the feelings of another. If you look at the origin of the word, you find that it generally means to suffer with. We sympathize with someone when we have a sensitivity to their emotions typically when they are suffering or going through a difficult time. We must be aware of the things our brothers and sisters in Christ are going through. Often difficult time create raw and intense emotions in someone. If we can sympathize with those emotions, we can better understand what they are going through, possibly counsel them through it, and have an understanding for the reason behind their atypical behavior.

Brotherly: Other translations say “brotherly love” or to “love as brothers”. We have many commands in the Bible to love one another (ex: John 13:34). We have one example in particular that comes to mind when I read this verse.

*John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*  
We need to have a love for each other that puts us aside and elevates others. This should be especially true in our interactions with other believers or “brothers”. Think about your relationship with your siblings if you have any. There is a different kind of relationship there that you typically do not have with others. We should have this special relationship with all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Kindhearted: This is also translated as having a tender heart. This term generally means to be kind and compassionate toward others. I think it is quite simple to see how we should apply this to the life of the Christian.

Humble in spirit: For this phrase, I am going to work backwards and start with “spirit”. The word spirit is used to mean many different things. For our context, it means the immaterial, invisible part of man. It is our very being. Our spirit is the consciousness that we cannot see or feel but is very real and is impacted by the things around us. The spirit is the very core of the human being. Now let’s move to the word humble. To humble means to bring low or to be low-lying. Digging a little deeper, we find that it can mean to express submission to a superior or elder. This term is here to remind us of our true place. If we honestly examine our lives, we very quickly realize how sinful we are and how undeserving we are of God’s love and forgiveness. To humble ourselves is to bring ourselves back down to the level we belong. The world will build us up and train us to put ourselves on a pedestal. Another word for this is pride. The Bible tells us time and time again of the sinfulness and dangers of being prideful. We must realize that we are sinners just like our fellow followers of Christ. We must not elevate ourselves to a higher position than others. We are no better than any other human on this earth. The only difference between us and the non-Christian is that we have been saved from the eternal consequences of our sinfulness and they have not. When interacting with others we must be sure to not become full of pride and elevate ourselves.

The rest of the passage for this lesson continues to give us instruction for how we are to behave. We are not to return an evil act for an evil act. We are not to return insult for insult. In other words, we cannot let ourselves give a sinful response no matter what our situation may be. I find it very compelling that we are to bless or pray for those that treat us poorly. This calls to memory the account of Jesus on the cross who prays for those who are persecuting Him.

When all is said and done, we must find ourselves on the side of righteousness. God has nothing to do with evil. He turns His face from it. When Jesus took on our sins at the cross, He was for the first and only time separated from the presence of God. He cries out “My God, my

God why have you forsaken me?" When we do not act in a holy and righteous manner, we create a gap between us a God. He turns His face from us. Thankfully forgiveness is available to us and the relationship is restored upon confession and repentance.

#### Application Questions

- When interacting with others, fellow believers or not, have you reacted in an unrighteous manner?
- What changes can you make in your life to help sympathize with others?
- Can you recall the last time you hurled an insult at someone when they did something hurtful and treated you poorly? What caused you to act this way?
- Do you desire life? If so what changes do you need to make in your life to ensure that God does not turn His face away from you?
- When is the last time you truly confessed your sins to God and repented of them?

#### Final Remark

It is very important that we live according to the example that Christ set for us. We are sinful humans and will fall short of that example. However, that must not hinder our pursuit of a holy life. We must continue to examine our lives to see what areas God can grow us in. It is only through His power that we can accomplish this task. John 3:30 "He must increase, I must decrease". Take time out of your day and have an honest conversation with God. Confess your sins to Him, ask Him for forgiveness and ask Him to reveal the areas of your life that need some help. Do not be afraid of this. No one wants to hear that they aren't doing well or that they are failing, but this is the only way will grow in righteousness.