



## **1 Peter 3:8-12**

### **Called to a Different Life**

**November 14, 2021**

We are continuing in 1 Peter 3 today.

Peter is writing to his readers scattered throughout the Roman Empire, particularly in Asia minor (modern day Turkey). But the Spirit of God inspired this book not only for them but for us, because all Christians need what they needed. We need to learn how to live a Christian life in non-Christian surroundings.

Peter's first readers were the first generation of the Christians, and they were encountering a new reality: their faith made them strangers in the world around them, so they had to learn to relate to the world, to a non-Christian government, to a non-Christian master or boss, and sometimes even had to learn how to live in a non-Christian home. And these are all things most of us need to learn as well.

Because before becoming Christians we were like our neighbors. Becoming Christians didn't make us superior to them, but a new ultimate love and a new ultimate hope came in. And now, because we are aiming for different targets, there is some distance between us. We don't share all of the values of the world around us or the ideals of the world around us. We have a different hope, we have a different story that gives us our identity, we believe different things about the future. We don't fear what they fear, we don't find meaning and joy in the same places.

If we have become Christians, we were born into a whole new way of life that is different than the way of life of our ancestors:

**1 Peter 1:18 “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers...”**

We were ransomed from the old futile ways of life and given a new way of life.

So becoming a Christian can never just be a private, secret thing for us. Christianity isn't something that only affects the deepest part of our heart, it brings with it an alternative way of life and empowers us to live a very different way.

We wouldn't feel out of place in the world around us at all if being a Christian was just a private thing. In fact, almost nobody would have any problem with us having a faith that is just between me and God and that doesn't have any affect on my values or life.

Worship whoever or whatever you want in private - who cares?

But Peter knew his faith had to affect all of life, because he knew Jesus. He spent time with Jesus. He was there at the tomb when Jesus rose from the dead and he knew this had to change everything.

Soon after writing this he would be publicly executed, and it wasn't because of a private secret spirituality that he practiced, it was because he believed Jesus is Lord and therefore Caesar isn't, Jesus gets to shape our lives with His values, and therefore the culture around us doesn't.

He knew that being a Christian couldn't just be a private and invisible thing.

On top of the changes it makes in us individually, it also connects us to a real, visible, gathered real life community, a group of people who all publicly profess Christ.

When we become Christians, we are not now just individuals who are going to heaven when we die, but we are connected to this new community that exists to publicly display the excellencies of God and the ways of Jesus:

**1 Peter 2:9 "9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

So Christians are joined together with the church, and together they exist to bear very public witness to Christ and to the totally alternative way of life that He brings.

To become a Christian is to be given this new identity: a person for God's possession, part of the people of God.

We exist to be priests, individually, people who stand between God and the world around us (going to God in prayer for our neighbors and being like God to our neighbors with

service and speaking truths about God to our neighbors.) That's who we mainly are now. That identity has been given to Christians by God.

Our culture is obsessed with finding our true identity - and we tend to ask "who would I be in a state of nature?" or who would I be if I hadn't been taught anything by my parents or my church, who would I be if I weren't trying to conform to society, whoever I am with no external constraints, that is my truest self.

But Christians comes at identity a totally different way. We believe identity is given from the outside by God. When we become Christians, we have been made children of God, and we are striving to conform our lives to Jesus (not try to be who I am in some fictional state of nature).<sup>1</sup>

Christians are not on a quest to find our truest self, we are on a quest to be like Christ.

**Matthew 16:25 "25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."**

We lay down our lives and pick them up again in Christ. And now who we are is wrapped up on Him.

And that's what makes us different - it isn't a sense of superiority, and it isn't that we're trying to not fit in, we just have a different Lord. A different quest. A different goal.

*An early critic of Christianity in the second century named Celcus said that Christians are essentially just contrarians. They are just people who decided to be what everybody else is not. And he joked that if everybody in the world became a Christian, the Christians would decided not to be Christians just to be contrarian.*

But Peter doesn't tell us too much not to be like our neighbors. He focuses on being holy like God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

And he doesn't warn us too much about the evil in the people around us, he warns us more about the evil that is in us (1 Peter 2:11). There's not a lot of talk about "don't be like them," but there is a lot of talk of "don't be like you were" and "watch out for evil in you."

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this, read Carl Trueman's [The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self](#).

And without provoking any conflict with our world directly, these differences are enough to make us not fit. But Peter calls us not to fear (3:6, 3:14), to submit to authorities, and to be the kind of fearless tranquil people who can win others without manipulation and without pressure (3:1).

And that out-of-placeness in the world can make us feel like resources are scarce. What we've lost can make us resentful, if we let it. We can get cold and hard-hearted, and sometimes the pressure of life in a fallen world can lead us to even do damage to the Christian community, the one place where we do fit in.

So Peter calls us to a different way of life out there, and to make sure that we also work to cultivate a different kind of community in here:

**1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep 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 prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

**1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.**

So Peter has spoken to slaves, to wives, and to husbands specifically. And now he says, “All of you - everyone - have these virtues.”

And the first one is **UNITY OF MIND.**

This is the only place this greek word is used in the Bible. It comes from two root words - one meaning “same” and the other meaning “understanding.”

Christians are to strive toward unity with one another by continually improving our understanding of God and the world. The scriptures talk elsewhere about Christians striving to have one spirit (Philippians 1:27), one voice (Romans 15:6), one mind (Philippians 1:27). Which doesn't mean agreeing on every small issue, but does working to study the scriptures more and being transformed as our minds are renewed.

The story of redemption is in large part the story of God uniting people who were divided:

Early in the Bible's story in the book of Genesis, we come to the tower of Babel. God told them to scatter and fill the earth, but the people instead were building a tower to reach to God in their pride. So in judgment God divided their languages and they scattered, unable to be unified anymore.

Then on the cross, God reached down to us in humility. And shortly after the resurrection of Jesus, people from among all of those scattered nations were in Jerusalem at Pentecost. And people started speaking in those languages proclaiming God's word to all the nations there. And those who believed it were united as one new people again. With one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

And then at the end of the story of the Bible, at the end of history, in Revelation 5, people from every tongue, tribe, and nation are gathered together. And they are unified not because they macgyvered together a tentative peace, but because Jesus tore down the walls between them and now they are all focused in the same place - on the lamb of God.

**Revelation 5:9-12 “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” <sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”**

Jesus unifies His people.

Jesus has made us one new kingdom, one new family, one new community. And we are called to live out what is true of us. We are called to live out that unity.

Which is not easy. It is a God-empowered endeavor, but there are always threats to it. Which is why we see some strong language in scripture about those who cause divisions. He says to watch out for them and avoid them. Because they are working against what Jesus is working for.

We drift toward disunity. There are always groups and interests and factions. There are always natural divisions and distinctions among the people that would threaten to divide.

There is an unlimited number of ways we could, and often do, divide a church - by age, by race, by gender, by education, by economic status, by musical preference - and while the gospel doesn't wipe out all of those distinctions, it does make them small in comparison to what we have in common in Christ.

It gives us far more in common than what separates us, and good reason to overcome the barriers. We all have something bigger now: a bigger God, a bigger purpose, a bigger identity than we had before.

If God is removed from the picture, then the biggest thing that makes me who I am is my identity as part of a group - age, race, gender, etc. With God in the picture, those characteristics don't dissolve: I'm still a middle-age, middle-class, white, male, father, with a Master's Degree.

But all of those characteristics are now greatly outweighed by the biggest facet of my identity that there is: I'm a son of God by faith in Jesus. And I now have more in common with another Christian that doesn't share any of those other classifications. So those characteristics still exist, they still provide flavor to the body of Christ, but they no longer separate.

But while we are given that new identity in a moment when we first believe, we grow up into that reality over a lifetime. We are being transformed by the renewing of our minds. We are being sanctified, we are being changed, into who we are.

We are holy people who are becoming holy.  
We are secure people who are becoming secure.  
We are unified people who are becoming unified.

But we aren't there yet in practice. So Peter says strive for it, strive for unity of mind.

Peter next calls for **SYMPATHY**.

This root word is only used a couple of times in the Bible. In Romans 8:17 it means "to suffer with." And in 1 Corinthians 12:26 it says:

**1 Corinthians 12:26 "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."**

"Suffer together" is the same root word as "sympathy" in 1 Peter 3.

Peter wants us to have lives that are so joined together with the lives of some other Christians that if one Christian is suffering, others else feels that.

And this is a very different value that we see embodied in the world around us. It's a dog-eat dog world. It's like we're all trying to outrun the zombies and if one gets you, that means it didn't get me, so I live another day.

But we should have people in the church that we don't have much in common with outside of Christ, but our hearts have been so knit together with theirs that we suffer with them.

If their child is struggling, we feel it. If they're struggling financially we try to help to spread that suffering around. If they're sick, we're meeting the needs we can to lighten their load. If they sin, we feel the weight of the damage it is causing their soul. If they're doing too much, we lend a hand. If they're heading toward spiritual danger, we're warning them. If they're discouraged, we feel the responsibility to encourage them.

We bear one another's burdens, and this is the unique way of Jesus that the church testifies to.

Jesus didn't come to us because of any need He had.

But, compelled by love, He came and lived with us. He got weary with us. He experienced betrayal with us. He never sinned Himself, but took on Himself the weight of our sin. He went to the cross and took on Himself the suffering that we deserved, the

wrath of God that we deserved, the damnation that we deserved. He took our sorrow. He took our guilt. He carried our load. Perfect sympathy and “suffering with.”

And we become Christians not by pulling ourselves up by our moral bootstraps, but by throwing ourselves on the sympathy of Christ. And we find that He is entirely sympathetic, carrying our load completely.

That’s the Gospel. It’s believing in that that makes us Christians.

We become Christians not by doing more, but by trusting that Jesus carried our sin and shame and sorrow. He took the suffering we deserve, and if we grab on to that by faith, we are forgiven and freed.

And now Peter says that all of us should be like that in the world. Burden lifters, who feel the burdens of others.

He goes on in verse 8 to call for **“BROTHERLY LOVE”**, *philadelphos* in the Greek.

There are a number of facets to this love. But we all know that the love for a brother is greater than the love for a friend or an associate.

Our love for a friend or an associate is fairly conditional - we can be loving toward co-workers till we get a different job, then we’re just elsewhere and not connected anymore so the love stops. We aren’t enemies, we just aren’t there.

We have a certain level of concern for friends, but most of our friends could also fall outside of the group of people we feel connected to. I think I have one close friend that I had in high school.

But a brother or sister is someone we will always feel a connection to. Sometimes we do lose those relationships, but when we do we feel that loss and that absence. Because normally that should be a permanent relationship, we feel responsibility for them, we grow into who we are alongside of them. It’s hard to tell our story without telling their story.

And Peter says to love one another like that. It’s worth asking, “Do I have those connections?” And if not, why? Do I see this as optional? Do I so quickly alienate people that I can’t maintain friendships? Have I gotten too busy for brotherly love? Is there



something in me that makes me want to hide or not get too close to others because I don't want to change?

Then Peter calls for a **TENDER HEART.**

When he tells us to be tenderhearted in Ephesians 4:32, Paul says this:

**Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”**

People who are tenderhearted practice radical forgiveness that looks like the forgiveness we have in Christ. And when Christ forgives, he cleans us, he pays our debt, he accepts, he calls us His bride, he restores us completely.

That heart that Christ has toward us in the kind of heart we are called to have toward one another. Which, again, will make us distinct in the world where you get cancelled with no hope of restoration.

Every society that thinks it is in a crisis looks for a scapegoat: somebody to blame, but also somebody that has to be destroyed to restore the peace and harmony. And cancel culture is looking for a scapegoat - whose blood can we spill today for the guilt of our culture?

And, of course, it never satisfies, so we always look for the next one to cancel, always hoping it won't be me.

But Christians believe Jesus did die for our guilt, His blood was spilled for the restoration of peace and for our redemption. Which means we don't have to be on the hunt for blood.

We have been shown radical grace. We have been forgiven much - most of us wouldn't want to admit how much we've been forgiven publicly, not in any detail, because it really is worse than we're letting on.

But Jesus died to forgive all of that. He was tenderhearted toward us. So we, in turn, have to be tenderhearted, eager to forgive and restore. If we're not, we've forgotten the gospel.

Then Peter says to have a **HUMBLE MIND.**

Later he will write, “**clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility**” (1 Peter 5:5).

Humility is a virtue that Peter repeatedly says all of us should be wrapped in.

Look at the growth in the life of Peter! This is the guy that, when he was younger was always the first to talk, quick to grab a sword, eager to fight, striving to be the greatest, and he has learned that the Christian life is a life of striving to be the least.

Which nobody in their day admired. Christianity brought a whole new virtue to the Roman world with repeated calls for Christians to be humble, and they’re all over the bible. Humility was a sign of weakness in their culture, not a virtue. But again and again we are called to humility.

In Philippians, Paul says that humility is counting others more significant than ourselves.

If others are more significant, then I won’t be:

Arrogant, thinking I’m always right about everything and can’t be taught or take advice.

Impatient- because my timeline isn’t the most important one.

Stubborn, insisting on my own way.

Easily offended - I’ve been snubbed, I’ve been slighted, I’ve been insulted, I’ve been overlooked.

Superior, believing that I’m the template of an ideal a person and nobody else measures up to me.

Jealous - always wanting what they have, I’ll want them to have more.

A Mocker - putting other people down so I can climb up.

Self-Pitying - because while a “woe is me” attitude may look humble, it’s actually proud, saying “I deserve better than this.”

Peter goes on:

**1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.**

He says that we aren't to repay evil for evil. And the reason is because we were called to it.

Don't make the mistake of confusing a calling from God with "a feeling some get and others don't." We might say "I don't feel called to summer camp ministry," and that can be valid, God hasn't called everyone to do everything. But we can't read this verse as something God calls some people to.

He isn't saying, "Some of you have been called to this radical form of the Christian life where you don't repay evil for evil. And others may not be called to it."

He says you were, definitely, called to it. When was I called to it? I don't remember that calling.

We were all called to it when Jesus said this:

**Luke 6:27-36 "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. 32 "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**

This isn't a way of living for Seal Team 6, elite Christians. This is the calling of Jesus in Christian life.

One reason we might resist this, and that Peter's first readers certainly were tempted to resist this, is because of cultural norms.

In our culture, we are hesitant to try to love an enemy because we use the word love to mean a feeling. And in our culture, we have been told you can't change how you feel.

Well, you can change how you feel, and love isn't just a feeling. Love is not just a more intense version of liking someone, in scripture it is acting for the good of someone regardless of the emotions we are feeling.

In Peter's day, the readers were generally steeped in a shame and honor culture. So it wouldn't only be hard to do good to an enemy, it would be thought of as wrong to do good to an enemy. It was a moral weakness and not properly opposing evil, allowing people to believe lies about you, not caring about the name and reputation of your family.

And shame in their culture would have been one of the worst things you could have associated with you.

So you had to strike when struck. It felt wrong not to.

We underestimate how wrong Christianity seems to most cultures it enters. Because it doesn't follow the norms.

Peter, again and again, calls for Gospel-believing people to subvert the norms in the culture. What would it be like, if beginning with the church, we didn't participate in the same and honor culture? What if Jesus really carried our shame so we didn't have to strike to undo it?

Peter didn't say, "In our culture we have learned that you have to retaliate." He said, "We are going to be a counter-culture that is so strange that it seems wrong from the outside, but it all makes sense in light of Jesus."

The norms of our culture are not reasons to disobey the commands of Christ.

Another reason we might justify not obeying these commands is that we don't have the personality type for it.

I'm a fighter. I am not the type to just take being spoken against. I'm not patient. I'm not that kind. I'm a shoot-first, ask questions later kind of a guy. I'm an enneagram 7 (or whatever). I'm an Aries.

We can hear a command of Jesus, ask if that command lines up with our perceived identity, and then allow our identity to determine which commands we will follow.

So I'm an introvert, I can't do getting together with people.  
I'm a very important, busy person, I can't do community.  
I'm an extrovert, I can't do quiet solitude and devotions.  
I'm an angry person, I can't do kindness.  
I'm a person with desires, I can't do chastity.

So God gives a command, and we assume that the type of person we are trumps the command. But it doesn't work that way.

On the one hand, the Bible does make the argument that the type of person you are, that your identity, should determine your behavior.

But then it makes the case that your deepest and most significant identity is that you are a Christian. The first and foremost type of person you are is a son or daughter of God.

So we could say, "I'm a Christian, I have to have relational connections with people."

"I'm a Christian, I have to hunger for God's word."

"I'm a Christian, I have to be forgiving."

"I'm a Christian, I have to consider the good of others before myself."

Our identity does determine our behavior, and our deepest identity is that I am Christ's.

And other dimensions of our personalities and histories matter. But they are never a reason to disobey.

And to say that "who I am" is more important than what God tells me to be or do is to say that we have a different god.

This is the (pagan) theory behind horoscopes. A person who is an Aries, for example, was born under the sign Aries or Mars. And Aries is the god of war. So you're, in a sense, ruled over by Mars, and that's why you are more impatient, why things have to be done your way, because you are ruled over by an impatient and domineering sign.

But throughout history Christians have rightly said that astrology is to be avoided as a false religion.<sup>2</sup> It is to say that you're ruled by an ultimate force other than God, it is to say

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 17:2-7, Isaiah 47:13,

some other force holds the key to your future. It is to have another Lord, something else that determines your destiny.

And Christians are people who say Jesus is my Lord, Jesus holds my future, Jesus commands me, the ways of Jesus determine how I live. Not some other force out there, not some aspect of my personality or history.

We are people with a different story. A different remedy for shame. A different God and Lord.

And then Peter quotes from Psalm 33 in verses 10-12 again.

**1 Peter 3:10-12 “10 For  
“Whoever desires to love life  
and see good days,  
let him keep 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 prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

Psalm 33 was written by David when he was living in exile among the Philistines, people who worshipped a false god and were opposed to the people of God.

And Peter quotes some verses from this Psalm not only so we would look at these verses, but so we would link to the whole Psalm.

And this is a Psalm of deliverance.

**Psalm 33:16-22 “16 The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. 17 The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, 19 that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. 20 Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our**

**shield. 21 For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. 22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.**

Just as God delivered David, he will deliver Peter's readers from the afflictions caused by their faith in Christ. They are God's people that have the eye of the Lord on them just as much as David did.

So just like David refused to let his enemies define him, these Christians are to not allow their enemies to define them, and instead, they are to bless. They are to suffer for doing good if necessary. They are to forgive.

Because we are waiting on the Lord. He is our help and our shield. He'll deliver us and rescue us just like He did David. So we don't need to avenge ourselves, prove ourselves, clear our name.

The Lord hears our prayer. He will take care of evil. He will allow us to see good days again, because He is in control. So we can be very different than people who think they have to be.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Partially Adapted from the Prayer "Loving Enemies" in the book Prone to Wander (p.136).

Father we confess that we don't love like you've called us to. We find it difficult to serve even our friends and family, but impossible to love those who grate at us or our enemies. We aren't sympathetic, demanding mercy for ourselves but offering little to others. We want to be treated well by others andt we are easily disappointed or resentful when we aren't treated how we think we deserve.

But thank you for your perfect Son, who loved his enemies even as he was punished for their sin. Thank you for the love of Jesus toward even the most ungrateful and evil people. Help us to become like Him - kind and merciful lovers of each other. Open our eyes to your love and generosity toward us, and make us like that toward others. Help us to see ourselves as sinners in need of grace, so we never feel we have moved beyond the need for the cross so that we consider ourselves better than others.

### **Questions for Sermon Discussion**

- 1) How has your understanding of the Christian identity as exile changed or grown as we've studied 1 Peter?
  
- 2) How does understanding our identity as a royal priesthood impact the way we live day to day?
  
- 3) In what ways do we sometimes allow my sense of “who I am” to over-ride the commands of God for our thoughts and behaviors?
  
- 4) What does it mean to have unity of mind? What would this look practically in relationship with other Christians?
  
- 5) In what ways do we neglect to show sympathy toward each other? What can we learn from Jesus' example?
  
- 6) Read Psalm 33. What themes do you see there that are similar to themes we have seen in 1 Peter? Why do you think it is significant that Peter quotes this Psalm?