

3, we'll be looking at verses 8 through 12 this morning. 1 Peter 3, verses 8 through 12. Well, since chapter 2, verse 13, Peter, writing by divine inspiration, has been showing how following Jesus changes all of our social relations. He showed that following Jesus transforms the way that the Christian relates to the civil authorities. He has showed how following Jesus transforms the way the Christian slave relates to masters. He has shown most recently how following Jesus transforms couples in the context of marriage. And now he'll begin in verses eight through 12 to bring this section of his epistle to a close.

And as he comes to this final section dealing with different relationships and how Jesus Christ transforms them, he addresses all of you, he says in verse eight, finally all of you. And that means when he wrote this to his original audience, Everyone in the churches that received this letter needed to pay attention because it didn't matter if they were married or if they were a slave or if they were talking about their relationship to civil authorities, this dealt with everyone. The littlest in the churches that would have received this letter and the oldest, those middle-aged men, women, everyone would have been addressed with this portion when he says, finally, all of you.

Now it's true of his original hearers, but it's also true for Second Presbyterian Church here this morning in Yazoo City. This portion of the letter has special application for all of you. No one is exempt. So with this in mind, let us pray and ask God to bless now the reading and the preaching of his word. Almighty God, the angels of heaven could sing beautifully the glories of the gospel. The greatest saints in church history could be raised from the dead and we could hear them behind this pulpit instead of me this morning, but it would be of no effect if Christ Jesus, you were not pleased to bless this reading and preaching of your word by your spirit. And so we pray that the spirit of God himself would come down in mighty measure this morning through the reading and preaching of the word that the saints would be perfected, built up in Christ. and that those who may not know Christ among us might be saved. We pray this all in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

We hear now the word of God, 1 Peter 3, verses 8 through 12. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you are called, that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. 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. Sends reading of God's holy word. May he bless the reading and now the proclamation of it to our lives.

Well, how do you define the good life? How do you define the good life? What is the good life? Well, I asked my friend this week that question, what is the good life? My friend, you may know him, Mr. Google. I asked him this question, what is the good life? And Mr. Google gave me three answers. Here were Mr. Google's top three answers to what is the good life. First, the good life is a life of luxury, pleasure, and material comfort. Second, the good life is a way of living that is moral, satisfying, and worthwhile. Third, the good life is a way of living characterized by simplicity, self-sufficiency, living off the land, and rejection of consumerism. This was Mr. Google's answers to the question. And we could go through each of those and pick them apart. But one thing that just deals with all of them in his brief is this. The good life, according to Google, has nothing to do with God. God is not seen in the good life. Eternal matters aren't considered. Spiritual concerns, your soul is not apparently important. You don't need to worry about eternal things. You don't need to consider God. You don't need to be thoughtful about your soul in any of the ways that Mr. Google defines a good life.

Well, the good news for us is we don't have to rely on Google to define the good life. The good life is not defined by you and the good life isn't defined by me. The good life is defined by God. God is the one who defines what the good life is. And in our text this morning, I want you to see the good life according to God. It's our main proposition, the good life according to God. And we're going to look at this under three headings. First, inside the church. Second, outside the church. Third, under his word.

So first this morning, the good life according to God inside the church. He addresses those inside the church and the way they relate to one another in verse 8. And he does this in verse 8 by bringing up five graces. He says, unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. These are the five graces that should characterize the way we relate to one another inside of the church. We're going to look briefly at each of these. He begins with unity of mind. Now why do you think Peter begins with unity of mind? Wouldn't it have been better for Peter, who's trying to address the way we relate to one another inside of the church, wouldn't it have been better for Peter to address something more practical, to say something more practical than unity of mind? Why doesn't he say, to those inside of the church, be kind to one another. Why doesn't he say feed the poor? Why doesn't he say be nice, put a smile on your face?

Well, the reason Peter begins with unity of mind is because Peter knows that all of our actions ultimately stem from our convictions, from the way that we think, from what our minds are convinced is true. Out of what your minds latch onto as truth, that which you are most deeply convicted about will flow out in the way that you act. So Peter is actually going right to the root issue of unity. He says you need to be unity, unified in mind. This, for example, is one of the reasons, among others, that we have a confession of faith each week in our worship service in the morning at Second Presbyterian Church. Because we are trying to foster unity of mind. If we have significant doctrinal disagreements with one another, it will play out in the way that we live. And so by going through these core doctrines of our faith each week in our confession, we're Lord willing fostering something like unity of mind.

This unity of mind does not actually create division. These doctrines, these confessions don't create division. They create unity of mind. But if we simply have unity of mind without humility, we will still be greatly divided. And so I want us to actually jump down to the fifth, the last of the five graces he lists in verse eight. He begins and ends with a focus on the mind. Verse eight, at the start he says, unity of mind. And then at the end of verse eight he says, a humble mind. Let us consider these words a humble mind.

If you are going to truly be united in your mind and your thinking you need to also be humble in your mind or in your thinking in the way that you carry yourself with those convictions. There needs to be a sense of humility.

One author I read this week said, when the truth of Christ is affirmed in arrogance, it is denied. We've all seen that in our lives at some point or we've been the ones guilty of it perhaps at some point in our life. If you are puffed up in your own mind, in other words, you might have the truth but it will show that you don't hold that truth very well in the way that you live.

If you are puffed up in your mind, if you are full of yourself, the Apostle Paul says somewhere, I believe it's in Romans chapter 12 that he says, do not think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think, but think of yourselves with sober judgment. That's what Paul says in Romans 12.

So one that has a humble mind is one who is remembering as he gets to more clarity in his doctrine that he's dealing with God. So what will help foster us as a church will help foster you in a humble mind is to remember when it comes to doctrine and theological conviction that the only reason you have a better grasp on theology than someone else, than your neighbor or someone else perhaps even in the church, is because God has granted you that grace.

You're not inherently better than anyone else in your ability to think theologically. You're not, by nature, a more sound theologian than someone else. Your doctrine isn't automatically better than someone else. It's all been God's mercy. And so when you remember that reality, it doesn't mean you don't hold to your convictions and even hold to them firmly where you ought to, which you ought to do, but you can hold them with a firmness and yet a humility knowing that I know this, that perhaps my brother or sister doesn't know for no reason other than that God opened my eyes.

I have nothing for which I can boast on this. lack of humility in our mind on theological matters can creep in in all sorts of ways. And maybe you felt it. There was one time when I was in seminary and my roommate at the time, he had this theological question. He wanted to ask me about purgatory and why the Roman Catholics believe in purgatory. My roommate did not believe in it. And I explained to him where they make it up from the Bible, because it's not actually in the Bible. They have a few places where they fabricate it. It's clearly not in the text. It's absolutely unbiblical. Purgatory is a man-made doctrine.

But I did my best to explain to him. And I remember thinking in that moment, I remember I had this passion. I felt I really liked being the guy that someone would come to to ask a theological question. I was proud. I could feel it in my heart. He didn't know this. And it was a very real feeling though. And I knew that it was evil. It was not appropriate the way that I felt internally in that moment about how I just felt like, oh yes, I'm the one he's coming to. Maybe you felt that way in your theological precision. And that's sin. It's pride. It's wickedness. And we need to repent of it wherever we see it in our own hearts. It can happen in our own hearts. So we need to be on guard. But he says, the way that you can also be helped in not having a proud heart with your theology is by remembering that you're contemplating who God is. Nothing should humble you more than considering who God is. If you're contemplating the doctrines of God and the glories of salvation and the need that you have for a savior, That should never puff you up, it should always humble you. The higher and more accurate your theology is, the lower you should view yourself and the more you should praise God.

He moves on though to sympathy. Unity of mind, sympathy, he says. This word, it means to enter into one another's sorrows as well as into one another's joys. We live in an individualistic culture and even in the church we can be tempted to adopt that way of thinking, not wanting to enter into one another's sorrows, not wanting to enter into one another's joys because the world around us is so hyper individualistic. But that is not the way that we should operate as Christians. We should be wanting to enter into one another's sorrows. We should be wanting to rejoice with one another where we can rejoice with them.

Oftentimes we put ourselves first, others second, and God last. And this is the exact opposite of what the scriptures command. We ought to put God first, others second, and ourselves last. That's sympathy. It's entering into one another's sorrows. And the reason you ought to desire this, above all other reasons, is simply because this is what Christ has done for you, hasn't he? Christ has sympathized with us in our weaknesses. He is our high priest. Hebrews chapter four verses 15 and 16. And since he has sympathized with us and our weaknesses, we following him ought to sympathize with one another.

He goes on though to mention brotherly love. Now brotherly love here is not natural love. This is supernatural love. What do I mean? I mean it's supernatural because we're not talking about general love for fellow image bearers. Should you love all people made in the image of God? Yes. But specifically here in the text, it's brotherly love. It is those who have been born again. Regeneration is actually presupposed in the phrase brotherly love. You cannot have this sort of brotherly love with those who are not united to you as brothers and sisters in Christ. It's talking about the love that you have for your fellow blood-bought believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you've all had probably, you don't have to raise your hand, you've probably all had an uncle or an aunt or a cousin that you know is a little rough around the edges, but you still love them. You get together at Thanksgiving or Christmas and you still treat them kindly, and you might even have a sincere affection for that person in your heart, even though they're a little rough around the edges. Why? Because, well, they're family, you say to yourself.

Well, in the body of Christ, we're family. And if we can have affection appropriately and love appropriately, our biological family, some of whom may not even be blood-bought family by the blood of Christ, they might not even be united to you for eternity in Christ. If we can endure and even love those in our own families biologically, how much more so, family, should we love one another? We've been bought by the blood of Christ. We're all a little rough around the edges. We need to love one another, encourage one another.

And then he goes on to mention a tender heart. This is the idea of compassion or the idea of pity. It's a deep feeling in the gut for someone else. I'm sure you've felt that at some point. You've received some news, and it's like it hit you in the gut, even though it was someone else's bad news that they heard. Or it's been good news for somebody else, and it's hit you in the gut with joy because you love that person. Even though it wasn't you who technically were the recipients of this positive thing, you felt it in your gut. That is the idea of having a tender heart.

but it is actually more than just a deep feeling, that is certainly part of it, a deep feeling in the gut, but it's related to that word compassion used by the Lord Jesus when he reaches out with compassion to the leper in Mark chapter one, verse 41. It's that same word used to describe the way that the father ran to embrace the prodigal son in the gospel of Luke, or the way in which the good Samaritan came along and helped the man with compassion who was beaten and stripped and left for dead. In all of these cases that this similar word is being used, you see that it is a feeling, but it is a feeling that also leads to an action. It is a deep feeling in the gut that also produces some sort of response by the person. They want to do something to help. That's what is being said here.

What is one of the ways that This could look in your life here this morning if you have this tender heart. What is a practical way this could look? Here's just one example, and there could be a billion of them. A brother or sister in Christ at the church comes to you and confides in you some sort of sin struggle. Well, a tender heart is not going to look down on them. It's not going to be condescending. It's not going to reject them or run away from them. A tender heart is going to want to enter into that struggle with that brother or sister in Christ, not gossip about them, not want to tell other people about it to hear what so-and-so did. It's going to want to say, I want to run with you and alongside of you in this battle that you're having against some sin. And I want to encourage you in the war. I want to pray for you. That is a tender heart. And again, you could just think of a million other examples.

But while there are five different graces listed here in the text, in verse eight, that we are to show one another inside the body of Christ, it's been rightly observed that they're all really united to one another. Yes, they're distinct, but they go along with one another. One author said it's sort of like a hand with five fingers on it. You've got one hand, but they're all connected. The five fingers are all connected to that one hand. And so these five graces are all connected to this one source. What is that source? The source of these graces is the love and grace that God has shown you in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the source of these graces.

And I do want to say that I see these graces here at Second Presbyterian Church. And it's something for which I am very thankful. And yet all of us have room to grow in these graces because none of us are yet in glory. So all of us can think of how can I mature in brotherly love? How can I grow in a tender heart? How can I become more sympathetic? All of these different things. How can I have greater unity of mind and a humble mind? We can all grow, and so let us strive for growth. And how do you grow? Well, you pray. That's how you grow in these graces. But secondly, the good life according to God outside the church. We just saw how we interact with one another, but what about outside the church?

This is verse 9. Peter writes here, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling. Now, while these words, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, certainly have a context inside the church as well. We certainly don't need to repay reviling for reviling inside the church or evil for evil inside the church. Most commentaries, and probably rightly so, think that he shifted his attention now back to outside of the church, the sort of reviling and suffering they would have been enduring, the sort of evil that they would have been the recipients of by those who did not like the Christian faith.

And when you've been reviled, which every one of you probably has at one degree or another, when you're reviled, your natural instinct, it's called sin in the flesh, is to want revenge. You want to at least get even with them. And frankly, sometimes you might think to yourself, I'm going to go above what they've done because I want to teach them a lesson, right? I'm going to teach them. They don't do that to me. That's not the way you're going to act. You're not going to act like that to me, right? That's not the way that Christ acted, and that's not the way that you as a Christian are supposed to act.

1 Peter 2, verse 23, already told you, when he that is Christ was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. This is to be the attitude of the Christian.

But not only do you get to not revile, which is your natural fleshly instinct, to not seek revenge, positively, you have to do more than that, according to the text. But on the contrary, Peter writes, bless, for to this you were called. So negatively, don't revile, don't return evil for evil, but on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called.

And Jesus gave this same command. This wasn't something Peter made up. Jesus himself said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. And listen to what Jesus says in Luke chapter seven. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. That was Jesus' command in Luke chapter seven.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, how on earth am I supposed to respond that way? Pray for those who curse me? Do good to those who abuse me? That's an absurd command. I can never obey that command. How could Jesus ask me to do such a thing?

Well remember, Jesus did that very thing on the cross. What did he do on the cross? Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. You see, Jesus never gave a command that he didn't perfectly follow himself. He never asked you to do anything that he himself hasn't already been willing to do in perfection. He's not that football coach that perhaps you had in high school, or ladies maybe played volleyball or tennis or something, who asked you to run sprints, and you're sitting there thinking, you've probably never run a sprint in your life.

No, Jesus did every single thing that he ever asked his followers to do. He gets it. He understands that it's going to be hard to not want to revile those who revile you, to resist the desire for revenge, and even positively to pray for those who persecute you. He understands. And he says, this is what you're to do. Peter puts it this way, And it's plural here, so I'm going to say y'all. To this, y'all were called. In other words, I'm trying to stress that this isn't something for just the exceptional Christian out there somewhere. He's writing to all the Christians and he says all of you were called by God to live this sort of way towards outsiders.

Now someone could perhaps object at this point and they could say, well, of course Jesus could obey that command because Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity in flesh. It's no wonder that he could obey that command, but I'm just an ordinary Christian. But remember, Stephen in Acts chapter seven, do you remember what happened to Stephen? Stephen as a deacon in Acts chapter seven, And he is stoned to death for following Christ. And he says this, these are his last words, at least recorded in scripture, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

Now, again, you object, you say, yeah, but I'm an ordinary Christian. You forgot about the ordinary part. Okay, I'm not a deacon in the early church. I'm not a special Christian like that deacon Stephen in the early church. Well, I want to tell you a little story that I read this week, actually listened to this week by a man named Richard Wurmbrand. You probably know Mr. Wurmbrand. He was a man who was put in prison for his Christian faith in communist Romania many, many decades ago. And he spent 14 years there, locked up in prison, often, often, often beaten, horribly mistreated. He didn't get to talk to his family. He didn't know if his wife was still alive for that 14 years. His wife had been informed that he hanged himself in prison, all these horrible things, for 14 years in this incredibly awful prison.

I was listening to this interview this week, and here's what the interviewer asked Mr. Wurmbrand. He said, did you feel anger or bitterness about your situation? Mr. Wurmbrand responded, 14 years is a long time. I do not remember ever to have had a desire for revenge or hatred. I pitied the communists. I loved them. And I did the little which I could to bring the communists, even the torturers, to Christ. And I believe that all Christians have these feelings.

I was near to death, he goes on to tell this story. I was near to death at one time. I had a pastor to my right side. He talked about how this room was full of 200 inmates in this tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny room. He said, I had a pastor to my right side who had been so beaten and tortured that he was also near to death. To my left side, I had the communist who had tortured him. He explains why this could have happened. He says, because the communists put into jail not only Christians and Jews, they put their own people in jail. They just hated everybody. When they had a squabble, one puts the other one in jail and they torture him even to death. So it happened that the communist torturer was in the same cell as the one whom he had tortured to death. And he himself was also being tortured to death.

During the night, he would awake and say to the man that he had previously tortured, he'd say to the man, Pastor, please pray for me. I cannot die. I have committed such horrible crimes. The pastor then sat at the bedside of his murderer. and caressed him on his head and spoke to him such beautiful words. Quote, you have been young. You did not know what you do. I have forgiven you from all my heart and I love you. But he said it like Romeo speaking with Juliet. I love you from all my heart and I can assure you that all Christians you might have tortured, they all have loved you. And even if we who, and if we, he said, who are only human can love like this, then more so Christ, the son of God who taught us love. How much more he loves you. He wishes you to be in heaven with him more than you wish to be in heaven. He wishes you to, he wishes to forgive you more than you wish to be forgiven. He wishes to save you much more than you wish to be saved if only you come back to him."

This is what the pastor who had been tortured by this man said to the man who had tortured him. Mr. Wormrand goes on, and when I overheard in the cell in which there was no possibility of privacy the murderer confessing all his murders to the murderer, the murderer telling him about the forgiveness of God, they prayed together, they embraced each other, and then the pastor went back to his bed. They died both the same night. It was a Christmas Eve.

So how, dear ones here this morning, are you to not show revenge or reviling to those who are evil towards you? And how are you to even go further, like the text commands us to do, to bless them, to pray for them? How are you to do this? Well, the same exact way that Stephen was able to do this, The same way that Mr. Wurmbrand was able to do this. The same way this unnamed pastor in this prison was able to do this. It wasn't anything in themselves. It was the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It was their knowledge that they were wicked sinners who had been saved by the grace of God. And if they had received such forgiveness, It was not only their duty, but to some extent, we could really say their delight to forgive those who had wronged them.

He then closes in verse nine with this point, that you may obtain a blessing. Now, what is this blessing here in verse nine that you will obtain? Well, this blessing is really just a blessing of obedience. Obedience, it has been said, is its own reward. The joy of obedience isn't so much the result of what you might get on the other side of obedience. It's the fact that you're getting to obey and live for the God who created you and redeemed you by the blood of his son. Obedience is its own blessing. It is its own reward. The blessing of obeying God is just the very fact that you are obeying God. And that's what he's saying. He says, you will get a blessing. It may be a beating, it may be a torture, Mr. Warren Brand, I assure you would say, for I listened to his interview this past week, but it's a blessing because you're obeying God.

Thirdly, though, this morning, the good life according to God under his word, under his word. This is verses 10 through 12. He begins in verse 10, quoting this Psalm, which we have sung from Psalm 34. He says this, verse 10, whoever desires to love life and see good days. So he is talking about these good days, this lovely life in verse 10. And essentially what Peter has done is a bit backwards to, of course, how we would ordinarily preach, but in some ways he has just preached Psalm 34, in verses eight and nine. And now he's showing you the text from which he is drawing the sermon he has just preached. So verses eight and nine, he's telling you about the good life, the good life inside the church, the good life outside the church. And then he's sort of saying, we could put it like this, in verses 10 through 12. And you know where I got this idea? It was from the Bible. So he's saying, this good life that I have just articulated to you in verses eight and nine is not Peter's idea of the good life. This isn't the good life

according to Peter. This isn't the good life according to the latest philosophies or the most trendy things in the culture or the brightest thinkers. This is the good life, Peter is saying, according to God's word, the good life under God's word. And so he begins to show that by quoting this psalm.

And in this psalm, there are a number of things that we could look at. He mentions the call to do good. Verse 11, he mentions the call to seek peace and pursue it. Verse 11, but at the end of the day what makes this good life so good is that God is for his people. That's what makes a good life so good is that God is for his people and God is with his people. It's not unlike Romans 8:31, if God is for us who can be against us? And he gets at this in verse 12. Look at verse 12. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.

When he says here that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, you get the picture that God's eyes are on his children. That God is looking after his children. And his eyes are upon his children not to condemn them, but to protect them, to guard them, to lead them. You might think of it the way that a mother's eyes might be on her children as they get close to the edge of a cliff. Her eyes are closely watching her children. They are on her children, but they are on her children so that she might protect them and guard them and lead them. In the same sort of way, by quoting this psalm, Peter is saying God's loving eyes are upon his righteous children.

And he adds this in verse 12, and his ears are open to their prayer. Now, the pastor under whom I was raised was commenting on this verse when it says, and his ears are open to their prayer. And he made the point, and he's right about this, if you look at the original Greek, here's what it literally says, and his ears into their prayers, and his ears into their prayer. The word open isn't even actually in the original. And my pastor made this comment, and I think he's absolutely right about this.

The picture that Peter is presenting to you when you read it this way in his ears into their prayer is this. It's as if the father's taking his ear. Now children, you know that the father doesn't actually have ears. It's to help us understand that he hears us and cares about us. It's as if the father is taking his ears and he's bringing them down to the prayers of his people. He's stooping down so that our prayers are right into his very, very ear. And the picture is, is beautiful because you think of the way a parent might want to communicate with a young person or their own child or certainly trying to communicate with a small child. You get down so you can get your ears really close to him so you can make sure that you can hear them. You want them to speak right into your ear.

The imagery here is that your heavenly father, just because he loves you, just because he has that much compassion, he wants to stoop down, metaphorically of course, but stoop down right up close to your prayers. so that he hears every word. And of course he does this through our mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so as you go through your life and you pray and you feel like your prayers don't make it through the ceiling, well, his ears have come down through the ceiling to your prayers in Christ. Your prayers are heard. He cares about his children.

Well, today we have seen the good life according to Jesus inside the church, outside of the church, and under his word. But that's not all the text says. What is the bad life according to God?

What is the bad life according to God? Look at the final, final words of verse 12. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. The word do here is a present participle, active participle, which just means that it's ongoing. Might say those who are doing evil. The meaning then is this, if you make a practice of doing evil, if you rejoice this morning in wrongdoing, that's the joy of your heart. The face of God is against you, according to the end of verse 12.

And the good life will never be found outside of Jesus Christ. Come to Jesus Christ and have this good life that Peter has been articulating. Come to Christ and have this good life which we have been contemplating. This good life may entail torture, and this good life may entail death, but this good life is the good life because through it all, God promises to be with you.

Let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that we get to have a good life, O Lord. O Father, we praise you that we get to be with one another in the body of Christ, that we get to show toward one another a unity of mind, a sympathy, a brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind that we get to show to those outside of Christ, outside of the church, who may revile us and seek to do us harm.

We get to show even to them the love of God and the forgiveness of God that we have received in the way that we treat them. We pray that you would grant us the grace in whatever measure we might be facing that, or we may face that in time, we pray that you would grant us the grace to even bless those who curse us, and to not revile those who revile us.

Oh Lord, we thank you that we don't get to define things like the good life, but that you tell us what it is, and it is indeed a good life, for you are with us, and you are our God. and we are your people and we praise you for it. In Jesus's name, amen.