

Friday: *Blessing*

Read: 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.”

Reflect:

Personal experience (not just mine) as well as Scripture indicates keeping our tongues under control is difficult. In fact, James seems to indicate it is basically impossible (Jas3:6-12). Yet this doesn't mean we can simply quit trying, we are called to imitate God (Eph5:1) and Jesus (1Cor11:1).

These verses are practically verbatim from Psalm 34:13-16. That's interesting because David wrote that Psalm during a time when he was regularly in the presence of Abimelech (cf. 1Sam21:10f). During that time he pretended to be mentally deranged....

Psalm 34 emphasizes the saving power of God several times (cf. vs5,7,10,18,19,20). It starts with a statement of praising God “no matter what happens”. How appropriate that attitude would be for Peter's audience since they were living in times of uncertainty? Is it appropriate for us as well?

Respond:

How are you at controlling your tongue? What about your thoughts (Ps19:14; Lk6:45)?

If someone observed your life, would they think you were deranged based on what you do for God's glory?

Have you been praying for the new president-elect? Read 1Tim2:1-4 and revisit last week's insert if you haven't been, or need reasons to do so.

Pray: Pray for this Sunday's meeting between the elders and Brent; pray for their wisdom and ability to discern God's direction for New Life. Praise God for His protection. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Saturday: *Meal Time*

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Reflect:

Tomorrow is New Life Christian Church's Thanksgiving Dinner. I hope you plan to attend; it should be a really good time. I also hope you plan to come and worship with your church family. Gathering together for the purpose of focused worship is a blessing.

Tomorrow we will be taking a short hiatus from 1 Peter, but for good reason. We're going to look a bit closer at the Lord's Supper. It's foundational to the Christian faith. Yet how often it is taken and the views of the elements it contains (for us juice and crackers) vary.

We observe it weekly. I almost wrote “celebrate” – but do we really celebrate it? I realize one sermon isn't going to address all the questions about the Lord's Supper. I have a lot of them. Yet I do believe tomorrow will be a good time to in fact celebrate it.

Respond:

Do you have big Thanksgiving plans? Will you be around non-Christians? Have you already begun praying for them and your “way of life” (1Pet1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1,2,16) when your around them?

Do you have questions about the Lord's Supper?

Pray: Pray for those God is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow to be obedient and come. Pray that what we do tomorrow is pleasing to God and that lives will be positively impacted by the interactions we have, the singing, preaching, and teaching...pray for a God-honoring day. Thank God for His love.

Contrary to our Instincts

November 9 – 15

Doing “just what comes natural” seems to be advice many will give others when they don't know what advice to give. Of course a problem with that is “just what comes natural” to one may be “unnatural” for another and lead to difficulties...

Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to “just do what comes natural”. Yet that seems to be the equivalent of the advice I have often heard given by one Christian to another (albeit in a sincere way). Sadly, I think I've likely given it as well...

The sermon this week seems to be very “unnatural” – but that doesn't mean it is “untrue”. In fact, the more contrary to what “natural” Scripture seems to be for us, I think is an indicator of just how much work the Spirit has to do in our lives. Put another way, it is an indicator of how much cooperating we have to do with the Spirit as He continues the process of sanctifying us.

Perhaps 1 Peter 3:9 can give us some direction. He says, “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.”

Now we may think that Peter is not talking about an immediate-type of blessing, but more along the lines of the blessing of salvation – when we die. However, let's look at a few of the other places in Peter where action (right conduct) is followed by a blessing in this life.

- 1 Peter 1:8 loving Jesus →
 - unutterable joy...
- 1 Peter 1:9 keeping the faith →
 - temporal (i.e., now) and future (i.e., ultimate) salvation of your soul
- 1 Peter 2:19-20 enduring suffering when you haven't done wrong →
 - God's approval
- 1 Peter 3:1-2 submitting to husbands →
 - God works on them for you and they convert
- 1 Peter 3:7 living properly with your wife →
 - God doesn't hinder your prayers
- 1 Peter 5:9-10 resisting the devil →
 - God will strengthen you

God is such a gracious and loving God. The more we live according to His will the more He blesses us. Yet we must not confuse “blessing” with physical comfort and luxuries. Our blessings from God tend to be more spiritual, psychological, and interpersonal.

However, if God does in fact bless you with physical comfort and luxuries (which I'm certain He has), how are you ensuring those blessings continue to be a blessing by “blessing” someone else with them? If you don't, your blessing(s) will turn into a curse (e.g., you pursue them and not God)...

Monday: Wives

Read: 1 Peter 3:1-2¹ Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,² when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Reflect:

These verses continue a specific section (i.e., household rules) in Peter's letter that started in 2:18 and continues through 3:7. In antiquity the household was widely thought to constitute the basic unit of society. A well ordered household was deemed necessary for a well ordered state.

Therefore, it's easy to see why New Testament authors also included "household rules" as well (e.g., Rom13:1-7; Col3:18-4:1; Eph5:22-6:9). If "the church" is to function how it ought to function, those who **are** the church ought to live properly at home. This is why Peter said women were to be submissive to their husbands. It's what Roman society expected and if Christians were to be attractive to their society then they had to conform where God's word allowed them to conform.

Peter basically says, "Wives, if you want to win your husbands to the Lord, then shut-up". That sounds harsh, but in antiquity women really had no voice. Just because they have recently been made aware of their worth (cf. 1:18-19) doesn't mean their non-believing husbands want to be told all about it. So, Peter says, "Allow God to change your husband through how you live..." It's contrary to us; we like to talk about Jesus, at least in the home and at church...

Pray: Pray that your "way of life" can be used by God to convict non-Christians of the truth. Thank God for the privilege of worshipping Him with your brothers and sisters in Christ yesterday. Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Respond:

How important is the household to the survival of America?

Don't allow verse one to grate against you if you're a woman. Remember a reason for this is 2:12, which is followed by 2:13.

How noticeably different would someone's behavior have to be in order to convert someone without speaking?

Tuesday: Priorities

Read: 1 Peter 3:3-4³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Reflect:

We all "know" it, but do our lives reflect this knowledge? We all know that physical things are only temporary...but how often do we focus on the physical at the expense of our souls?

I suppose a reason we do it is because it's easier to work on what is external. It seems many can learn discipline to 'whip their body into shape,' anyone can get credit for expensive clothing – but submitting to the Lord takes a whole new level of discipline. A discipline to submit and trust that He knows best.

Note that these verses don't say "don't be totally unconcerned about your appearance". Peter's just trying to make sure our priorities are straight. Besides, to take these verses literalistically (i.e., **no** hair braiding, etc.) would also mean that women would have to get rid of all their clothes and go nude. I don't think that is akin to the "pure conduct" of verse two.

Pray: Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews; elders at New Life. Pray for the unity and purity of New Life. Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Respond:

What does your checkbook reveal? How much is spent on 'cosmetic' stuff verses helping those in need or giving directly to a church?

Keep in mind, Peter's advice is to women with non-Christian husbands (cf. the sermon).

How much time have you spent 'getting ready' this week vs. reading the Bible and praying?

Wednesday: Husbands

Read: 1 Peter 3:7⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Reflect:

Even though the ratio of these verses are 6:1 – with the women getting a lot more direction than the men – that doesn't mean the men are getting off easy. Due to families following the religious lead of the husband (except when a wife converted to Christianity, cf., 3:1) it is assumed their wives are believers (cf. "fellow heirs").

These verses don't state women are inferior. You won't find that way of thinking in the Bible. However, many ancient cultures did believe men were superior to women in all ways. Yet Genesis tells us it was **both** male and female that were made in God's image (Gen1:26-27).

That a woman is "weaker" indicates a couple of things (both generally speaking). They are physically weaker than men (e.g., men can push them around). Also, they are more emotionally sensitive (e.g., conflict and inconsiderate behavior has a harsher impact on them). Men had better pay attention to these facts if they want God to hear their prayers...

Pray: Pray for Ed Asbury, Mike Haag, and Keith Krause; deacons at New Life. Pray for the Youth as they meet tonight; pray for continuing effects of last weekend's Oasis Conference. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Respond:

Pray that the men of New Life will grow stronger in their faith.

How is God's Image seen in both women and men?

Read these verses (Mt5:23f; 6:12,14-15; Jas4:3) about hindrances in our relationship with God. Is there anything you need to do in light of them?

Thursday: Family

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-9⁸ 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.

Reflect:

With the words that comprise "finally," Peter has transitioned from specific Christian duties (e.g., slaves, wives, husbands) to more general Christian duties. So, on either side of the "household rules" (i.e., 2:18-3:7) are commands for all Christians (i.e., 2:13-17; 3:8-12).

Furthermore, all of this falls on the heels of 2:12 – living an honorable life so that others will be converted when God "shows up" in their lives.

These verses prompt an interesting and important question. If we (i.e., "the church") can't get along with each other, how are we going to be a good witness to the outside, hostile world? Yet we must do much, much more than merely "get along" within the body of Christ.

The words Peter chose show a heavy involvement in the lives of others. "Sympathy" indicates 'suffering with' someone – entering into their pain and being there for them. A "tender heart" indicates a heart that is not only 'moved' but one that is 'moved to act' on behalf of others. The words in verse nine should bring to mind words of Jesus (e.g., Mt5:43-48) which undoubtedly influenced Peter (here) and Paul (e.g., Rom12:9-21). When we live in these ways, God blesses us.

Respond:

How often do you pray for New Life's unity?

In what ways do you see New Life as unified? Do you see any indicators there may be disunity? What can be done if there are any?

The word "obtain" (v9) is also translated "inherit". The wonderful thing is we can "inherit" now (e.g., Mt21:38; Heb12:17).

Pray: Confess to God the last time you violated something in these verses. Pray for the upcoming National Missionary Convention. Pray for Brent McCrory; preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.