

## Basic Christianity in a Hostile World 1 Peter 3.8-12

Well, this year has been many things — **frustrating**, grievous, **disorienting**, sad, boring, **bothersome**, **wearisome**, **worrisome** — and we could add to the list: “**strange**.”

**It has made the show Stranger Things seem ... not that strange!**  
**- Oakland A's - buy a seat/win a foul ball...**

For different reasons, **Peter's audience was also living in strange times.**  
**Frustrating times, fearful times.**

- They had been **exiled** from their homeland (Rome) due to persecution and scattered across modern day Turkey.
- **Things had to seem strange, frustrating and disorienting.**
- **Psalm 137:4** — “How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?”

Despite these trying times, **Peter doesn't give them anything out of the ordinary related to Christian living.**

If anything, he has been **reiterating the basics.**

**He envisions Christians living out basic Christian life in less than ideal circumstances.**

**We today are in less than ideal circumstances and yet we are called to live out this same vision of the Christian life.**

- We too have “trials of many kind” and by God's grace we are called to faithfulness.

### Overview

**If you're new with us, or have not be present during our study, allow me to catch you up.**

**5:12** — Peter clearly articulates his purpose: to communicate the true grace of God that we may stand firm. Be faithful.

The letter is written by the same **Peter** we read about in the gospels/Acts.

- **That in itself is a testimony of God's transforming power.**
- **Peter, the fisherman, stumbled and failed, but was used by the Lord big time.**
- **God often puts his hand on unlikely people and uses them for the good of his people and the glory of his name.**
- **Last week: After two days of Cornhole, what do you do? ... “How did that happen?”**
- **You too — how did this happen?**
  
- **Chapter 1** tells us — born anew to a living hope
- **God has redeemed us through the blood of Christ (1:19)**
- **He has made us family 1:22ff.**
- Now we have **new cravings** and **affections** and a **new identity (2:1-10)**

Then we get to **2:11-12** which provides us with the general instruction to this central section of the letter (2:11-3:12) — to live as sojourners honorably.

- There's something to avoid: passions of the flesh.
- There's something to do: living honorably.
  - Government
  - Slaves masters
  - Husbands wives

Now, he concludes this section by including everyone **“all of you.”** (3:8)

## Observations

### 1. **He still has in mind our corporate testimony before the outside world.**

- We need to give the right impression to the outside world.
- **John 13/John 17:20-21**
- Great arguments for the faith: how we love one another and how we respond to opposition.

### 2. **Peter uses Psalm 34 to give added support to his teaching.**

- Peter is relying on Psalm 34 for much of his exhortations.
- This Psalm was **sung** by the early Christians, and it have been used as an **early Christian catechism (to disciple people)**
- This illustrates the beautiful unity of the Bible.
- What is being taught here is **consistent with the rest of Scripture**.

### 3. **Peter is reflecting our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.**

- It's also strikingly similar to Paul's teaching in **Romans 12:15-21**.
- So this teaching is being emphasized and reemphasized throughout the Bible.
- It's basic instruction.
- The basics doesn't mean easy to do!
- It means it's important, **foundational**, and something you should return to.
- **You remind your kids to wear floaties; to wear a helmet when they ride a bike...**
- You have to keep reminding people of **essentials**.
- **Baseball players still bat off of a tee to review the basics.**
- And this is a great review for **basic Christian teaching on relationships**.

**The first verse is mainly about our relationships within the family of God; and then verses 9ff refer more to our we relate to hostile society.**

## **#1: How to Relate to Your Church Family (3:8)**

I think Schreiner is right in pointing out that the text contains a *chiasm*.

Look at these **five Christian traits**:

- The outer edges correspond (**unity of mind/humility - mindset/attitude**)
- The inner sections correspond to each other (**sympathy/tender heart – emotional**)
- The bullseye is **“brotherly love.”** (Goal)

These traits are not produced in our own power, but through God's redeeming work in us.

## 1. Harmony (Be Like Minded)

### A. Jesus prayed for this (Jn 17)

- To be **moving in the same direction**
- It doesn't mean we have the **same interests, favorite teams, same background, or same business philosophy, same taste in food, music or leisure.**
- But we are to **think the same way about the gospel!**
- We put the gospel first, and work toward **common fellowship and mission.**

### B. The early church displayed this (Acts 4:32) - incredible

### C. The Apostles consistently taught this.

- **Romans 12:4-5** — “<sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”
- **How much of your body goes to the bathroom when you go to the bathroom?**
- Eph 4 — marvelous section

One of the biggest challenges today in the church is unity: There are many things that can divide churches.

- **Politically**
- **Socially (race/ historically music but now masks)**
- **Emotionally**
- **Spiritually**

**Resolve to be united: Pastor Ray: (1) Pray, (2) courageous, (3) stay together - no more losing friends...**

**This is why we need God's help**

**This is why unity makes an impact on the world — it's counter-cultural.**

**A diverse people united together in Christ is a powerful apologetic.**

## 2. Sympathy

Be sympathetic (**not pathetic!**)

- It has to do with sharing spiritual **emotions** with others; to be stirred by the same things.
- **This cannot happen when you are preoccupied with yourself.**
- **Preoccupation with me and sympathy with you cannot coexist.**
- **Sympathy involves us getting underneath the burden of others.**
- **This is part of basic church membership**
- **Some Christians are good at arguing and terrible at sympathy.**
- **You don't have to share the same political opinions to sympathize w/one who is hurting.**

It looks like:

- “Weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice” (**Romans 12**)

## 1 Cor 12:26

<sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

## Hebrews 13:3

<sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

**Sometimes we need to learn more in order to sympathize more.**

**We need to imagine what it would be like to be in someone else's shoes.**

- **Grisham, The Guardians**

## 3. Love (Philadelphia)

- Family is obviously important to Peter (**1:22; 2:17; 5:9**)
- Our common bond is that we're in Christ.
- Let there be warmth, affection, and care.

## 4. Tender heart

- A word that speaks to the internal organs: **guts (*eusplanchnoi*)** ("moved with compassion")
  - **Eph 4:32** — where this comes from
- <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

## 5. Humility

- the key to **harmony** is us not having a self-inflated view of ourselves.
- It requires us to consider others more significant than ourselves.
- Much to say about this: 1 Pet 5

## #2: How to Relate to a Hostile Society (3:9-12)

**How do we respond to those condescending looks when we talk about the faith?**

**Or the dismissive attitudes we receive in academics and politics?**

**Or insults from those who mock our faith?**

## A. Bless; Don't Retaliate (9)

This remarkable teaching is stated elsewhere:

## Luke 6:27

<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

1 Thessalonians 5:15: See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

## Romans 12

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is

written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**So we don't return insult for insult, punch for counterpunch.**

- **Christians are tempted to play emotional and verbal volleyball with others.**
  - **I love a good game of volleyball where two teams get locked in this back and forth.**
  - **That's fun in volleyball but forbidden in relationships.**
- It's important to see that the goal is **not simply to “not retaliate” but it is to actually bless our enemies.**
- How? The gospel.
- **Jesus loved us while we were his enemies; he gave words of blessing while on the cross!**
- **The way of Christ is not repaying injury for injury.**
- **It's not to be easily offended and claim victim status.**
- **It's to bless.**

**Footnote:**

- This verse and verses like Romans 12:14 have **be used to cover up abuse but we must not make this application.**
- Romans 12 is followed by Romans 13, which affirms the good and protective nature of government, telling us to submit to its authority.
- **Part of obeying the law of our land is reporting abuse.**
- That's a **different issue here.**
- **We're talking about people insulting you for your faith, shaming you, mocking you, or even persecuting you.**
- **Here's the radical life Jesus calls us to: blessing, not retaliating.**
- **Overcome evil with good!**

**Motivation:** “To this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing.”

- **In the Old Testament, this blessing was the Promised Land ... in 1 Pet 1:4-7, Peter says this blessing is now a glorious inheritance of eternal life with all of it's blessings.**
- **You will be rewarded for trusting in Jesus and walking in his ways.**
- **Recall in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus ties such behaviors with eschatological blessing:**
  - **“the meek will inherit the earth”**
  - **“the pure in heart shall see God”**
  - **“peacemakers will be called sons of God”**
  - **“Those persecuted for righteousness sake ... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**
- **We have to take the long view to react in these ways.**

**B. Do the Things that Facilitate Purity and Peace (10-12)**

Now, he draws on Psalm 34.

He begins with “if you desire to love life and see good days” that is, have a measure of happiness and fulfillment in this life (and he may envision this being eschatological as well), then **do the things that facilitate purity and peace.**

### **i. Pure speech (10)**

- Keep your tongue from “evil”
- Keep your lips from “speaking deceit”
- Similar to 1 Pet 2:1
- Put away gossip, slander, lying, rudeness, etc.

### **ii. Purity of life (11a)**

- Turn away from evil and do good.
- Right behavior involves turning away from sin, but it also involves **“doing good to others”**
- **“doing good”** appears just 12 times in the NT, and 6 are in 1 Peter.
- This is active, outward facing aspect of our faith.
- It involves an attempt to reverse a bit of the evil in this world.
- To do that which enables people to flourish.

### **iii. Be a Peacemaker (11b)**

From here he talks about peacemaking.

Elsewhere purity of heart/speech and peacemaking is tied together.

### **Matthew 5**

“Blessed are the pure in heart” is immediately followed by blessed are the peacemakers.

### **Romans 12**

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

### **Hebrews 12**

<sup>14</sup> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

### **James 3**

<sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

- **The 1st step to seeking peace is checking our hearts before the Lord.**
- **Jesus makes us pure, through his cleansing sacrifice.**
- **And we daily go to him for renewed fellowship.**
- **To be a peacemaker requires us to deal with our hearts.**
- **Once we’ve dealt with our hearts, then we can pursue peace.**

“let him seek peace and pursue it.”

- **When my heart is captivated with Jesus – with his reconciling love – with the truth of his word, it’s amazing how that affects my relationships with others.**

What does peacemaking look like?

I remember grabbing Corlette Sande’s book *The Young Peacemaker* early on in our parenting our kids, and thinking through this image. Here’s what to avoid and what to pursue:



Our world needs Christ’s peace, and Christians can be its givers.  
Let’s aim to love our neighbors well as we seek to be peacemakers.

As much as it is possible, live peaceably with everyone.” (Rom 12)

“Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with everyone” (Mk 9:50)

- **III: Butterfield’s Hospitality book**

### **Live before the Eyes of the Lord (12)**

Peter concludes that this kind of life brings God’s blessing.

**It must be nice to have “Washington” on your side.**

**What’s better than having a leader’s favor is having the Sovereign Lord’s favor.**

It sounds like **Numbers 6:24-26:**

24 The LORD bless you and keep you;

25 the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord **hears** our prayers!  
- life connected to prayer: 3:7; 4:7

But there's more than a blessing here. Notice **"the Lord is against those who do evil"**

- This is **vindication**.
- We **"leave it to the wrath of God" in the words of Paul**.
- God will have the last word on those who attack, insult and persecute the church.
- **Knowing this, we don't have to attack back.**
  
- Instead we can live like **Stephen in Acts 7** --- he sounds like Jesus praying "father forgive them" and Saul watched him (and it had a profound impact on him).
- Or later like **Paul and Silas in Acts 16** – persecuted, and what did they do? Blessed people with prayers and songs.

That kind of life changes the world.

**This is made possible through Jesus.**

**He has given us the pattern for his life, and through our union with him the power for it.**

<sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

**Amen.**