

The Old Paths

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“An Exposition Of I Peter 3:8-15”

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Exposition is defined as: *“the act of expounding, setting forth, or explaining ... a detailed s t a t e m e n t o r explanation”* (Webster’s). With this in mind, my intention is to use this issue to explain, set forth, and expound on I Peter 3:8-15. Let us study this section together, and make some pointed applications to our lives, gleanings spiritual truth from the inspired words of Peter.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (v. 8).

Peter is concluding a line of thought which began in 2:13 concerning submission. We find Christians are to be submissive: to the laws of men (2:13-15), to masters (2:18-20), wives are to be submissive to their husbands (3:1-6), and now he sums things up by saying *“Finally...”* (v. 8). What must happen? Christians need to be *“of one mind.”* This is what Paul commanded, too (I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27, 2:2). How can we be of one mind? We will be of one mind when we agree to follow the same standard, the Bible (II Tim. 3:16-17)! We must be full of pity/compassion (i.e., *“pitiful”*), and courteous toward one another. Many of the problems and hurt feelings in local congregations would not exist if we took the time to be compassionate and courteous (i.e., *“humble-minded,”* Thayer’s) toward each other, rather than *“back-biting”* and harming each

other by allowing every personal petty problem to fester and boil up into a major fight. Shame on us for allowing the worldly attitude into a congregation which says: *“Let’s tear down others to make ourselves look better.”* (see: Gal. 5:15)

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (v. 9)

Our Lord, when He was upon this earth taught men, *“resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matt. 5:39-41, 44). Paul taught the same when he told brethren, *“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Rom. 12:17-18, 21). Are we doing this? Or do we look for opportunities to *“get back”* at those who *“wronged”* us? Many brethren do this, and when they do, they are sinning, and will lose their souls if they do not repent and turn from that sinful practice!

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that

they speak no guile” (v. 10).

Do you wish to have a happy, enjoyable life? Do you wish to see good days? Then, follow the divine plan laid out in this passage! What is interesting to me is that verses 10-12 were first spoken by King David some 1000+ years before Christ (Ps. 34:12-16)! His son Solomon made a similar observation as he looked back on the life of man (Ecc. 12:13-14). Do you wish to *“love life”* and *“see good days”*? We all do, I know. Notice that the answer is not to hurt others, *“steam-roll”* your way over people, lie, cheat, and steal to get to be #1. Rather, it is to be honest and upright before others. Not speaking evil, or deceitful words is a necessary trait for loving life and seeing good days!

“Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.” (v. 11)

To *“eschew”* is to: *“shun ... decline ...avoid”* (Strong’s). Some versions say *“turn away from evil.”* Are we doing this? A good example of one who did what Peter (and David) described is Job. Job was described as a man who *“feared God, and eschewed (shunned) evil”* (Job 1:1, 8, 2:3). Notice, too, that in the New Testament, we do not merely find people being told to *“shun evil.”* They are told to *“shun evil”* AND *“do good”*! When men stop doing that which is sinful, they must replace that sin with righteousness. Paul wrote in this style (Col. 3:10-17), and our Lord taught in this way as well. Let us never forget that it is not enough with God that men merely stop the evil, but we must replace it with righteousness!

Further, let us *“seek”* peace and pursue it! Peace with whom? Peace with God! While peace on earth is a great thing, our first responsibility is to have peace with God! Our sins separate us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), and keep us from having peace. However, for those who are Christians, Christ *“is our peace”* (Eph. 2:14). When we have peace with God, then, we will

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk

strive for peace with everyone else who has peace with God. Truly, this is the way to realize “world peace”! It is not through promises to stop making bombs, or by saying we’ll just ignore our differences. But, when men and women strive for peace with their maker, then they will also strive for peace with one another. Thus, this shows us yet another reason why we need to be urgent in the effort to save souls (II Cor. 6:2; Jn. 4:35): Those who are seeking peace with God will seek peace with others.

“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”
(v. 12)

A former blind man understood this truth, for he told the Pharisees: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (Jn. 9:31). It is “sins” and “iniquities” which hide God’s face from men (Isa. 59:1-2), but when we have been forgiven of our sins, God’s eyes are over us, and His ears hear our prayers. This describes a close fellowship which cannot be enjoyed in any other way. Let us decide today whether we want God’s eyes over us, or His face against us! The only way we will enjoy God’s favor is when we become His child, and serve Him faithfully all the days of our lives (Mk. 16:16; Acts 22:16; Rom. 8:16-17; Rev. 2:10). Otherwise, He’ll be against us. Do you want this? I don’t!

“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (v. 13)

Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt.

10:28). What is the worst someone could do to you because you serve the Lord? In this country, one might try to kick you off of their property, or something similar; but the worst one could do to stop you from serving God or spreading His word is to kill you. But, what then? They cannot touch your soul! Yet, our Lord can! Therefore, don’t fear men (or even governments) when you’re simply doing what is right. God is on your side, and He will use you according to His will, and there is nothing on earth that can thwart His will! (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32, 5:21; Amos 4:13)

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” (v. 14).

Again, in the case where one meets with opposition, if one is suffering for righteousness’ sake and not for being evil (I Pet. 4:15), then rejoice in this (see: I Pet. 4:16). Peter himself was someone who did not merely “say the words,” but he lived through the very thing he was writing about. Remember Acts 5:40-41? “When they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” Therefore, Peter had experienced the very things he was

encouraging those Christians to endure! He knew what it meant to suffer for God.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (v. 15).

To sanctify carries the idea of setting apart as special. Sometimes, God’s people are called sanctified (Jn. 17:17, 19; Acts 20:32, 26:18; I Cor. 1:2, 6:11), but in this case, he says to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Set Him apart as special in your hearts. By doing so, then be ready always to give an answer to those who ask you. Many times, it seems that Christians don’t want to talk about salvation, the Lord’s church, or many other spiritual matters. Yet, Peter encourages these people that in spite of persecutions, threats, etc., to always be ready to give an answer. Are we ready to give an answer to others in our land of plenty and religious freedom?

Conclusion

This passage has much more which could be studied. However, may these words help us all and encourage us in living the life of a Christian. Do we wish to “love life” and “see good days”? Peter, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us how this is possible. Let us not take these words lightly, but truly meditate on them, and live our lives so as to please the God of Heaven.

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