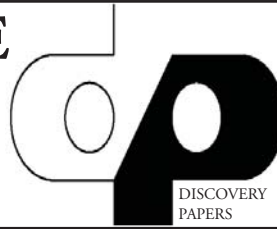


# LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

*SERIES: BELOVED EXILES: STUDIES IN 1 PETER*



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1 Peter 3:8-4:5  
6th Message  
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The Thanksgiving holiday has a wonderful purpose. Beyond food and football, it calls us to be grateful for what we've been given. How we receive God's gifts, His blessing, is the subject of the text we are going to consider this morning, beginning in verse 8 of chapter 3 of 1 Peter.

We've recognized that this is a book written to sojourners—citizens of an invisible kingdom called to serve their neighbors. The question we'll consider today is how sojourners receive blessing from the Lord as they live among those who don't believe.

We are going to cover a lot of material today and will have to skip over some points, but I think we will find the themes compelling. In the first section, beginning in verse 8, we are described as those who are eager to do good. Rewarded for compassionate choices, we “inherit a blessing.” On the other hand, the paragraph beginning in verse 14 reminds us that generosity is often resented, and “even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”

1 Peter 3:8

**<sup>8</sup>Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup>Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup>For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. <sup>11</sup>He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup>For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” <sup>13</sup>Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?**

Verses 10-12 are a quotation from Psalm 34<sup>1</sup>. They

address the universal human longing to love life and find each day a delight. Loving relationships, success in work that is worthwhile, emotional security, and growing to maturity are some components of the life we all seek.

Peter teaches here, quoting David, that selflessness leads to joy in life. The compassionate and humble, those who will take an insult and offer a kindness in return, have discovered the secret of happiness. In grasping, I lose; in giving, I gain. People who live this way inherit a blessing from God.

The Golden Rule<sup>2</sup> (Matthew 7:12) was once commonly believed. Today we are more often taught to value data and technique, skills, training, or self awareness as the way to a good life. We are taught to pay close attention to how we feel and to be concerned mostly with what benefits us. Yet such priorities do not result in “good days.” Is it still true that repaying evil and insult with kindness is the path to blessing? The ancient wisdom has not been repealed. Honest speech, generous deeds, and the pursuit of peace lead to joy in life and the blessing of God.

However, this teaching can easily be misunderstood as an impersonal formula or a quaint fairy tale (nice people have happy lives) that causes warm feelings, but fails in the real world. In fact, verse 12 makes a clear point, “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.” It is the active presence of God which is central to this instruction. The nature and timing of His blessing is personalized for each of us—the process is not mechanical. “Being eager to do good” means going beyond giving spare change to beggars or canned food to soup kitchens. It will involve connection to the deeper needs and messier hurts of folks we come to know. Turning from evil and pursuing peace requires persistence over time and a commitment of the heart. Such people honor the Lord and are upheld by Him.

A second reference to blessing from God is found in verse 14, “But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”

Peter adds to the lesson of Psalm 34 (righteous choices lead to “good days”) by acknowledging that sometimes when doing the right thing you are punished, not rewarded.

1 Peter 7:14-18

**<sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” <sup>15</sup>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup>It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**

“Do not be frightened” when you are opposed for righteousness. The Lord draws near to us in suffering, and His power is made perfect in weakness. But, fear causes us to pull back and closes us off from God.

Acts 16 records the story of Paul and Silas in Philippi. Having ‘done what is right’ in freeing a girl from demonic oppression, they are set upon by a mob. In a denial of Roman law, they are beaten severely and forced into painful stocks in the inmost cell of the jail. At the darkest hour (midnight), in the darkest place, with unwashed wounds, in grievous pain, with no voice of God from heaven or miracle of deliverance, what do they do? They sing and pray!

“In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.” (1 Peter 3:15) Paul and Silas worshipped and enjoyed the inward presence of God before a miracle changed their circumstances for the better. They had an answer when they were asked the reason for their hope (Acts 16:30). In suffering for what is right, we discover His power, His

presence, and His blessing. In eagerness to do good, we serve His purposes and inherit a blessing

We will only touch on the final verses of chapter 3 and the first part of chapter 4. In each of these sections we find obscure references (though these were probably familiar ideas to his first readers). Each of these paragraphs, 3:19-22 and 4:1-6, has a main idea that is clear and important for us to recognize. The triumph and unchallenged reign of Christ is proclaimed. Jesus is honored when we suffer for righteousness. Wicked authority will one day be destroyed, and Jesus’ servants will be vindicated.

The phrase “he went and preached to the spirits in prison,” (1 Peter 3:19) is a reference to demons, or the offspring of demons, imprisoned at the time of the flood of Noah. Chained, in hopes that the execution of the Messiah would release them to further evil, they heard the risen One proclaim His victory and their doom. He has now gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him—all in submission to Him.

The opening verses of chapter 4 also anticipate the reign of Christ. Verses 3-5:

1 Peter 7:3-4, 5

**<sup>3</sup>For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. <sup>4</sup>They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.**

You are not who you use to be, and former companions abuse you for this reason.

**<sup>5</sup>But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.**

You don’t need to defend yourself; you have a defender.

So where does blessing—“good days” and the approving nearness of God—come from? First, we enter a

world of broken and hurting people with an eagerness to change things for the better, making peace and offering grace as an answer to insults. Righteousness and joy belong together.

Second, we suffer without fear for what is right—in our behavior and our message. The Lord is especially near to us in such times. We know that one day evil will be destroyed, and that our Savior will raise us up.

He is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him.

Lord, thank you that blessings don't come from our acquisition and accomplishments, nor gathering of what we want to ourselves. Blessing comes from giving our lives away and living with what hardship comes our way, knowing that we will find You there. Help us to be eager to do good Lord, we are so often not. Change us Lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 34:12-14, <sup>12</sup>“Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, <sup>13</sup>keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. <sup>14</sup>Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

<sup>2</sup>*The Golden Rule*, Matthew 7:12, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”