

## Putting our Faith on Display

1 Peter 3: 8-11

As we continue our series in 1 Peter, we need to be reminded of the volatile environment in which the believers existed. Sever persecution had forced many of them from their homes in and around Jerusalem. They were scattered throughout various regions beyond Israel, largely to the north and northwest. They held on to their faith, but they faced many new and difficult obstacles. They were forced to adapt to a new culture and co-exist with those foreign to the faith. Peter sought to equip them to be effective in living out their faith in a new place of residence.

It is interesting that we find the word *finally* in the middle of Peter's first epistle. While he had begun to wrap up his thoughts, he still had much to share. This transition reveals that he will share a common theme throughout the remainder of this letter. His focus from this point forward will be Christian conduct in the midst of a world that doesn't embrace the faith.

While we are much removed in location and time from those whom Peter originally wrote, the principles he shared are timeless for the believer. The life expected of believers within the early church continues to be expected of the modern church today. We need to apply and model the same characteristics within our culture. I want to examine the [characteristics](#) Peter described as we consider the challenge of: [Putting our Faith on Display](#).

**I. The Believer's Conduct** (8-9a) – [Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:](#) <sup>[9]</sup> [Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing.](#) Peter revealed several characteristics that must be displayed openly if the believer was to be an effective witness for Christ. These characteristics should be displayed through our daily conduct as well. Peter admonished them to display:

**A. Unity** – [Finally, be ye all of one mind.](#) There were already enough distractions brought about through the struggles of daily living without the church creating more among themselves. Peter knew the church desperately needed unity in order to survive and portray an effective witness. They had to be all of one mind in every facet of life – in doctrine, deed, and desire.

- Local congregations and smaller sub-groups within the church can overcome many obstacles, but unity is essential in every situation. The church can survive any difficulty she faces when the body is united in doctrine and purpose, but she will face great difficulty apart from unity. We could never expect others to desire to be part of this local fellowship if we lacked unity.

**B. Compassion** – *having compassion one of another*. Along with unity comes the need for compassion within the body of Christ. This speaks of “*sympathy, to feel with others, sharing in their difficulties.*” The believers needed to share in the struggles of others, bearing one another’s burdens. When one rejoiced, they all needed to rejoice. When one wept, they needed to weep with them. When there was a need, they must be willing to share the need, no matter how great or small.

- In reality, these two go hand in hand. It is impossible to possess unity within the body and yet fail to show compassion toward the needs of others. A healthy congregation, portraying an effective witness, will always display compassion toward the needs of others. Jesus modeled this for us as He lived and ministered upon the earth. We find that He was moved with compassion toward the needs of others. Healthy congregations must display compassion!

**C. Love** – *love as brethren*. This should go without saying, and yet Peter sensed the need to remind them of the need to display love for one another as well. They were to love one another with a brotherly love. This was not just superficial or in word only, but a genuine love for those within the body of Christ.

- These characteristics are foundational to the Christian faith. They set us apart from the other religions and philosophies of the world. If we are united in purpose, having compassion for others, love will be a natural by-product. There is a great need for love to be shown within the church today. No doubt we all love each other, but sometimes we fail to show or express our love.
- Love binds us together, forming an inseparable union. Love overlooks the failures of others and seeks the best in every situation. Love compels us to action on behalf of the good of the church, defeating our selfish tendencies that often get in the way. Love is present here, and we must ensure that it remains!

**D. Pity** – *be pitiful*. This goes hand in hand with compassion. While they are similar, they reveal separate actions. It means “*to be tenderhearted; to be sensitive and affectionate toward the needs of others; to be moved with tender feelings over the pain and sufferings of others.*”<sup>i</sup> Peter knew pity toward the needs of others would edify the church and promote the Gospel.

- Pity does not encourage or condone sin or rebellion, but it is sensitive to the needs of others, sensing their great need and compelling us to act on their behalf. It is easy to become busy and often desensitized to the great need others face. We need a heart of pity toward the needs of those around us. This includes those within the church and the world at large.

**E. Courtesy** – *be courteous*. This speaks of *humility among men, being lowly in mind*. It means to offer oneself as lowly and submissive; to be of low degree and low rank; not to be highminded, proud, haughty, arrogant, or assertive. <sup>ii</sup> Peter knew arrogance and pride were detrimental to the health of the church and her witness before the world. Humility was essential if they were to prosper among a world that closely watched their every move.

- We need to be reminded of the need for courteous humility in our day. It is easy to develop an attitude of self-righteous arrogance. We are all nothing more than sinners saved by grace. We too have received far more than we could ever deserve. Had Christ not shown compassion and grace to us, we would yet be in our sin. The church does not exist to serve those who make it up, ensuring our needs are met; we exist to honor the Lord, serving Him in humility and grace!

**F. Restraint (9a)** – *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing*. Many within the early church suffered greatly because of their faith. It would have been tempting to lash out and treat others the same way they had been treated. The believer was held to a higher standard and expected to respond in grace, even when mistreated. They were to offer blessing, even to those who had wronged them. Peter knew such restraint would bear an effective witness for the Gospel.

- This is one of the most difficult aspects of Christian conduct, even for mature believers. Our flesh wants to lash out and respond in a manner unbecoming of Christ. We must resist the urge to repay evil with other acts of unkindness. We must always act in grace, even when we feel it is undeserved. Christ offered much grace regarding our sin. He endured much on our behalf as He faced the agonies of the cross. We are expected to show the same grace and possess restraint.

**II. The Believer's Conscience (9b)** – *knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing*. While living out such conduct is often contrary to the desires of the flesh, Peter reminded the believers that they had been called to a life of righteousness before men. They were not expected to present such an example through the abilities of the flesh, but according to the power of the Spirit working within. They had been redeemed from sin and justified in the eyes of God. They were now being sanctified in Christ, being conformed to His image. This was now the life they were expected to live before others. They had been set apart, called of the Lord, and with their calling came specific obligations.

- I will admit that living out these expectations can be difficult. We continue to inhabit a body of flesh that was not redeemed at salvation. The flesh continues to rise up and lash out at times. However, we must continually seek to crucify the flesh in order to live pleasing to our Lord. We are

called to a higher standard. We must display a form of conduct that is different from the world. We are now citizens of a heavenly country and are expected to represent our King.

**III. The Believer's Constraint (10-11)** – Here Peter discussed again our restraint from the ways of this world. We must resist the urges of the flesh and portray a Christ-like example to the world. This constraint involves:

**A. Our Words (10)** – *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.* Like James, Peter knew the tongue was the most unruly member of the body. A harsh or hurtful word could cause irreparable damage to one's testimony and relationship with others. As they walked among men, they had to guard their tongues and refrain from unbecoming speech.

- This struggle continues and it will remain as long as people inhabit this earth in its current state. We often speak before we think. Our words reveal what is within our hearts. This is why it is so important to walk closely with the Lord, filling our hearts and minds with His grace. We can do more damage with one word spoken in anger than we could repair in a lifetime. *James 3:5-6 – Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!* <sup>[6]</sup> *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*

**B. Our Witness (11a)** – *Let him eschew evil, and do good.* The believer is expected to avoid or turn away from evil, always seeking to do good. Peter knew this would present an undeniable witness for the Lord among the world. In a world that promoted and encouraged sin and wickedness, those who avoided such activity would be recognized for their commitment to Christ.

- We must continually be aware of the witness we present before others. Our actions not only affect our reputation, they also reflect upon the Lord and His church. As we live upright before men, we bear witness to the change Christ has made in our lives and our commitment to serve Him. We must refrain from all appearance of evil. If any activity is questionable, I would urge you to refrain from it!

**C. Our Walk (11b)** – *let him seek peace, and ensue it.* The believer's life is to be lived in light of the holiness of Christ. We are expected to seek peace with those around us, continually pursuing peace, even with those who mistreat us or have no desire for peace. Restraining the desires of

the flesh will aid is in such pursuit. When we are committed to pleasing the Lord and bearing witness of His grace, we will have much less desire to confront others and engage in sin.

- Peace doesn't come without effort. We must be willing to put forth the necessary effort to obtain peace. This will not always be easy, but if we are to portray an effective witness, we must seek peace and pursue it.

**Conclusion:** As I studied this passage I saw room for improvement in my life. I want to live a life that conveys the love and grace of our Lord, and yet I realize I fail many times. Such living requires walking closely with the Lord. Are there needs in your life? Does your life reveal the saving grace of our Lord? Are you willing to put your faith on display for others to see? If you were the only Gospel witness this world had, would it be enough to win them to Christ?

If you are unsaved, having yet to repent of sin and receive Christ as your Savior by faith, I urge you to respond to the leading of the Spirit. Come and be saved today!

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<sup>i</sup> Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – 1 & 2 Peter; 1, 2 & 3 John; Jude.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid