

Preparing Your Heart for Conflict (Preparing Your Heart for Persecution)

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Our Identity in Christ

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Our section this morning is 1 Peter 3:8 to 12, resuming our exposition of 1 Peter. The title of the message is, "Preparing Your Heart for Conflict," and I want the title to say "Preparing Your Heart for Conflict" as you write it down, but you could put it in a parenthesis, "Preparing Your Heart for Persecution." Preparing your heart for persecution because this is essentially what Peter is writing to do in this section. He is preparing the hearts of those to whom he writes to be persecuted, to experience times of great difficulty in their Christian lives.

So 1 Peter 3 verse 8,

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. 11 HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. 12 FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

I'm going to read on down just to set more context.

13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You this morning, Lord, for the privilege of coming to Your word and to having the opportunity to hear from You in the pages of scripture. We come knowing we need grace, we need the Spirit of God to work in our hearts to help us understand the word of God and so we rely completely upon the grace that is in Jesus Christ. We pray that You would help us to see the things we need to see from Your word, to see our hearts, as we prayed earlier, to make our repentance deeper and more full and make our faith more pleasing to You. And we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

So preparing your hearts for conflict, spiritual conflict that is inevitable in the Christian life. Paul says in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 13, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. It's actually chapter 3, verse 12, not 2:13. Transpose that 2 and 3. But chapter 3, verse 12, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, and to remind ourselves as we come back to 1 Peter today, the overall purpose of the epistle of Peter. Peter writes, we believe in 63 AD at a time of growing tension in the life of the church across the Mediterranean world. There's increasing cultural hostility, growing spiritual animosity, mounting structural and governmental opposition to the church, to Christians in particular. The times are becoming ripe for persecution and in fact, within a year from the time Peter writes, a massive persecution will break out emanating outward from Rome itself at the direction of the emperor, Nero. Widespread persecution will break out. Martyrdom will be common. A great number of Christians will lose their lives, including the author of this book himself, Peter, will die in that persecution, the Neronian persecution that begins in July of 64 AD. So he writes this letter in the providence of God, though he doesn't know the future, this Holy Spirit does, and he writes this letter to prepare the people of God for suffering. In fact, suffering is a key concept, a key word that's repeated. We read it in the verses that we read today. He writes to Christians he knows that are going to face, already are facing opposition and are going to face increasing opposition. He writes to tell them how to bear up in the midst of a dark and turbulent world. As things get darker and more turbulent, how do we bear up? That's the question that Peter is seeking to address in this epistle.

Essentially, we've noted that the larger outline of the book, essentially two main sections of the book, the first section, chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 2, verse 10, Peter focuses on our identity in Christ essentially saying, if we're going to bear up in the midst of opposition, how do we do that? We must know who we are spiritually. You must be firmly grounded and rooted in your identity in Jesus Christ. So he starts with that, the identity, who we are. He talks about the greatness of our salvation. Our identity is as those who are called to be holy. He sums up that section with a wonderful picture that we are a chosen race, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God, that if you have given your heart to Christ, that's now who you are.

So you have to know who you are, but then the second section of the book, 2:11 to 5:14, he focuses not on identity, he focuses on responsibility. What are we called to do? Know what you are called to do. You must know who you are, your identity, and you must

know your responsibility, what you're called to do. Who you are, what you're called to do. And essentially this section, he leads in this section with a subsection that we're kind of completing today, 2:11 to 3:12, which is basically the theme of that is live, live your life in such a way that people will see the goodness of God. Live your life in such a way that people will see the goodness of God. To live as a Christian in an increasingly dark anti-gospel world is by its very nature disruptive and offensive. You and I just living out what God says is the way to live will be increasingly weird to the people around us. But Peter is saying, listen, keep living according to God's beautiful design because you keep doing it, even though they think and they malign you as evildoers, they look at your life and say, what's wrong with you, you're weird, you're whacked out, you're antiquated, you're outdated, you're messing up the world with your thought forms and your beliefs. He said, just keep living out the gospel because over time people will see the beauty of it. In fact, he began this section with a really key verse to me in the whole understanding of the book of 1 Peter is chapter 2, verse 12 and it introduces a key word in the book. He says, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." Keep your behavior excellent. I'm reading the New American Standard. The NIV says, live such good lives among them. The ESV says, keep your conduct among them excellent.

So the idea is the way that you live, in fact, the key word is the word translated in the New American Standard, behavior, the ESV, conduct. It occurs seven times in the book of 1 Peter, this word. It's from the verb form occurs a number of times on anastrophe. A-N-A-S-T-R-E-P-H-O would be the way you transliterate that and it means to turn again, literally. Strapho means to turn, ana means again, and the idea is, it's used then to speak of the way that you live. You turn this way, then you turn that way, then you turn this way, then you turn that way. It means way of life, it means conduct, it means behavior and it's translated into English in 1 Peter in the New American Standard in all three of those ways. But it occurs seven times and he's basically saying your way of life is a key to making impact in this dark world, the way that you live.

Let me just show you how he uses this word. Chapter 1 verse 15, he's going to use it three times in four verses at the beginning of his letter. Here, 1:15, "but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior." That's the word anastrophe, from anastrophe. Be holy yourselves in all your way of life. Look what he says next, "because it is written, 'You shall be holy for I am holy.'" Verse 17, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear." That's the verb anastrophe, conduct yourselves. Same word as behavior in verse 15, here in verse 17. "Conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth," verse 18, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life." That's the same word anastrophe. You had before a feudal way of life, but now you're called to a new way of life. God has given you a new identity and you're called to a new way of living. We are called to exhibit in our lives the change that Christ has made in us. We live different than the world.

And so he picks that same word up as in chapter 2, verse 12. I told you that one of the key verses to me in the whole book is 2:12, keep your behavior excellent. That's the word anastrophe day again. Your way of life. Now, as the Gentiles, that is unbelievers, look at your life, your way of life, what do they do? Chapter 2, verse 12, they slander you as evildoers. They think that your way of life is doing evil and doing harm. They think you're hurting the natural order by the way you live. To insist on the Bible's statements and directions about marriage and family and how we live, they think that is evil for you to live that way and to articulate that. And that they'll slander you as evildoers, but because of your good deeds, chapter 2, verse 12, as they observe them, they'll come to glorify God in the day of visitation. The idea is initially they slander you because what you're doing is so foreign, and yet as you keep living it out, many of them, not all of them, but many of them will come to see what you're doing is right because they were created by God to live this way themselves. The hope is, and the reality is that for some, they will come to see, though they first look at you and think you're crazy, as they keep looking at your life, they will come to see you are living a beautiful life. "You are living just," this is the unbeliever talking now, "you are living just as I was intended to live." The power of our lives, that's what Peter's emphasizing.

A couple weeks ago, Patty and I had the opportunity to go to a pastor's conference in North Carolina at the Cove, the Billy Graham Training Center. Someone had given some money and they had pastors come in at almost zero cost for a couple of days, a couple of nights and three days at the Billy Graham Training Center. And they do a lot of good work up there. Franklin Graham and his son, Will, I think are or even more solid in the way they think about things and stuff. Anyways, good opportunity. Well, we heard Al Mohler. Al Mohler was the speaker and the topic was preaching, the predicament of preaching in a post-Christian culture. The predicament of preaching in a post-Christian culture and what Dr. Mohler was basically articulating is, hey, we now, if we face the music and reality, we live in America in a post-Christian culture. It is no longer a Christian culture. That is the underlying thought forms and beliefs that are widely held in society are not those that are fostered by Christianity anymore. It's really more of a neo-pagan worldview that people have. It's not the belief in the one true God who gives a law and we receive his revelation outside of ourselves. No, it's all about you and what you feel and you determine your reality. Basically, it's returned to paganism. Everyone does what's right in his own eyes, culturally.

And so, we have the predicament of preaching the gospel when we're preaching to people who don't think the way we think anymore. In America, for a couple hundred years, the normal way of thinking was, several hundred years, was the Christian world and life view. Western civilization has its problems and there are things in it that were not godly, but largely it's the only civilization in the world that was informed by the Christian worldview. The large culture, Europe and the United States, biblical fundamental principles. And so you could start, you knew that you had a starting place with someone. They believed that there is a God who created everything, who has authority. They knew about Jesus in some way. They probably had heard the gospel. They may not be a believer, but you had a starting point. Now, all bets are off, especially with the younger

and younger generations. You have the changing cultural landscape. You have the way technology has transformed everything.

And so he was basically saying, hey, we're preaching in a post-Christian culture and that's kind of a depressing topic, just like, hey, preparing your heart for persecution. Oh boy, can't wait to get to church today. The predicament of preaching in a post-Christian culture. Well, it was a tremendously encouraging time because essentially what he reminded us of and taught us was that to preach in a post-Christian culture is really identical to preaching in a pre-Christian culture. When the gospel went out, when Jesus came, gave his life on Calvary, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, sent down the Holy Spirit and said, "Go and be My witnesses," the people were going out to be his witnesses into a pagan world where no one thought like a Christian would think. Everything they were doing was radically different. And so we're in essentially the same place that the first century church was and that not only the first century church, but as the church continued to expand over the centuries up into Europe and other places into Asia, it went into places where there was not a Christian culture and the message was, hey, what's our hope? Because have you not ever felt this? So you're talking to somebody and you feel like they're so different in the way they think, how can I get there from here, right? How can we get there from here? Where do I start? And you can feel hopeless, helpless, and give up. But not if you're thinking biblically because essentially, what they did in the pre-Christian cultures that they encountered, you know what they did? They preached the gospel.

Now, you do have to start with who God is. You see the good example of this in Paul's preaching at the Areopagus in Greece, in Athens. Normally, Paul is preaching in Acts that we have, he's preaching to Jewish audiences in the synagogues. That's what we see a lot. A lot of his preaching, a lot of his sermons are to Jews. Well, they have the same work presuppositions. You see, they're coming from the same place. But when he's preaching in Greece at the Areopagus, he's preaching to people who don't have the same presuppositions. So what does he do? He starts with God. He says, "I'm going to preach to you an unknown God." He saw they were idolaters, idols everywhere. "I'm going to preach to you that you're worshiping an unknown God." There was one idol over there. It was to an unknown God. It was basically the Greeks in their pagan, polytheistic fear, being worried that they might be missing out on one God. So let's just put a thing up in case there's anybody we missed, we have a place for him too. And he said, "I'm going to tell you that unknown God is the one true God, and I'm going to tell you about Him. And He made all men," and he starts there, "and He determined where we would live. He set everything up. He's in authority." And then he preaches Christ and the resurrection and there are some who get saved, and there are many who scoff. But some get saved. And that's what happened. They went out and they preached the gospel.

So we don't have to be discouraged by how far people are away from things. We just tell them who the Bible says God is, who the Bible says man is and what our problem is, who the Bible says Jesus Christ is and what he's done, and what the Bible says is our required response, repent and believe, and you just do that and you trust that God by his Spirit will save souls and you know, he will do that. Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel,

for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and after that, the Greek." The gospel, it's enough. It's more than enough.

Now, what Peter is saying is a complement to that. He's adding, listen, not only preach the gospel, he's saying live the gospel. Live the gospel. And you can say in one sense, your life, as you live according to God's design, you're living out, you're essentially saying God is good. That's one way of summarizing the gospel. You need all the points we just talked about, who God is, who man is, what sin is, our problem, who Christ is, what he's done, and response. Those are the four main points. But if you want to sum it up, the gospel, the good news is that God is good and that he invites sinners to be saved. But he's good, he can be trusted. The lie that Satan introduced into the world and wrecked everything with was the lie that God is not good and God cannot be trusted. And man, when he sinned, bought that lie and now sinners separated and alienated from God have deep distrust of God. Even though they may profess to worship him, unless they've been given a new heart, they cannot truly do so and they get a new heart by the Spirit of God through the gospel, the preaching of the gospel. But they don't believe God is good and so you, by your life, if you live according to his design, you can be living out the message, God is good, God can be trusted. That's what Peter's calling us to. He's saying, just live out the life.

So he said, keep your behavior, back to chapter 2, verse 12, to show you the structure here again, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so then the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." Keep your way of life excellent, good, and the word excellent here means good in the sense of beautiful, aesthetically beautiful. Live according to God's design and your life will be aesthetically beautiful. They won't initially see it as beautiful, but God always sees it as beautiful, and the reality is it is beautiful to live according to God's design. But many will come to see it. He's saying, preach the gospel with your life. Now, preach the gospel with your words too, absolutely but he's saying, don't just preach it with your words, preach it also with your life. In fact, preaching with your life will help frame it, the words that you say and give power to them. It doesn't mean you wait till that you live it, no, you do both.

Now, so that's the basic mindset that he begins in chapter 2 verse 12, and then he says, look, okay, let's talk about what that looks like, and so in chapter 2 verse 13 to 17, he says, this is what it looks like to live a God-honoring life in relation to government and governing authorities. "Submit yourselves to the Lord for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether the king as one in authority or the governors as sent by him, chapter two, verse 13 and 14. It goes all the way through verse 17. Then chapter 2:18 to 20 says, submit not only to the government, but submit to your employer. "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable." Have an attitude and be different in the way you relate to government, be different in the way you relate to your employer, and then he has a subsection here, 21 to 25, where he says, look at Jesus. The key to all of this is look at Christ. He's the example. He's the power. But he comes back to the third section, chapter 3, 1 to 7, and he says, look in the family. So not just the way you respond to government,

not just the way you respond in employment, but also the way you respond at home, and the idea is you're likely being mistreated in each of these areas. If you're a Christian, it is normal for you to be, Peter's saying, misunderstood, misrepresented, mistreated, and maligned. This is common. This is what you should expect. So you'll be misunderstood, misrepresented, mistreated, maligned in the area of government. The police officer that may give you a hassle because you are articulating truth, you're speaking truth in a way that other people find offensive and he shows up and he's going to punish you for that. Well, the way you respond to him, don't respond in kind to him. He's going to get at, don't return evil for evil or insult for insult, that's what he's going to talk about in this next section. But he's saying you're going to experience difficulty, conflict, persecution in all these areas. Be different. You're going to experience it in the workplace, not only your boss, but also your coworkers are going to misunderstand, misrepresent, mistreat you, and you'll suffer unjustly. And in your home, even the supreme difficulty of being married to an unbeliever who may reject you in a sense of reject your faith, but live in such a way that that person can see the goodness of God in your life. That's what we looked at in chapter 3, verses 1 to 7.

Now he's basically, he's hit these three areas and he's saying keep your behavior excellent in all these areas, and then he comes to chapter 3, verse 8, "To sum up." Other translations say, "finally." In the Greek, it's actually a word which means to the end or to the result. I think it is to sum up. He's summarizing what he's been saying in this section. He's not summarizing the whole letter. He's not ending the whole letters. It's not saying in conclusion, you know, like it's the letters over. I remember hearing when I was in seminary class, don't say "in conclusion" until you really mean "in conclusion." Sometimes I forget that. But anyway, he's saying to sum up, and he's summing up this whole section. He's basically saying, "To sum up all of you." What he's saying is, listen, whether you're experiencing persecution from government or whether some of the others of you are experiencing persecution in your employment, and some of the others of you are experiencing persecution in your family, to sum up, all of you had these attitudes. And verses 8 to 12 are basically telling us the kind of the cultivation of heart and attitudes and a response that we're to have no matter where we are experiencing the conflict and persecution. That's the mind of God in this passage.

So what he's going to do in verses 8 to 12 is he's going to basically tell us to prepare our hearts for conflict and persecution. He's going to tell us how to do it. He's going to tell us how to respond. In fact, he's going to tell us in verse 8, prepare your heart. In verse 9, he's basically what you see, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit," five adjectives that all focus on the heart. And then he's going to say, "not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing." Then he's going to talk about the response. So the first thing is have the right attitude, verse 8. Verse 9, have the right response. And then 9B, he transitions through 12 to have the right reason or rationale behind it. So you're going to talk about the attitudes of our hearts, then he's going to talk about the response of our mouths, and then he's going to talk about the rationale behind it all. That's the big picture of chapter 3:8 to 12.

Now, what we're going to focus on today is verse 8, the first of those big points, which is the right heart, preparing your heart for conflict. You've got to start with the heart. It's interesting, we just were looking at Ephesians 4:29 to 32, a lot of resonance with this passage and that passage; that was our passage that framed our discussion the last three Sundays about the tongue, sins of the tongue. And you remember that the way Paul calls us to deal with the sins of the tongue, which Peter's dealing with the same thing here, sins of the tongue. He wants us to move from the sin of returning evil for evil or insult for insult, to stop doing that and instead give a blessing. Same issue that Paul was dealing with though Peter's focus is with unbelievers where Paul was talking more about in-house. I mean, in both places, you can draw applications both places, but here, Peter's more focused on the way we respond to those who are hostile toward us from the outside, the context tells you that. But think about that, though. They're both dealing with sins of the tongue and how did Paul deal with it? Remember, he starts off saying in verse 29, "Let no unwholesome speech proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification." So he says, think about, stop that coming out of your mouth. And then we looked at the larger structure of that passage and we saw verse 32, he says, well, he says verse 31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander along with all malice be put away from you. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God also in Christ forgave you." And we pointed out, he starts with the mouth, but then he quickly goes to the heart. If you're going to change what comes out of your mouth, you've got to change what's going on in your heart. So Paul starts with, hey, look at what's coming out of your mouth, stop it, deal with the heart. Peter says, look at what's going on in your heart so that it stops what's coming out of your mouth. They come at the same point, the same basic principle is here, both places. It all begins in the heart, they just come at it from slightly different angles. I love how scripture does that. Scripture says so often, in fact, I remember hearing one of my professors mention in preaching class, or one of the other things that I heard in preaching class way back all those years ago was that essentially every Sunday you're preaching the same thing. Every Sunday. You're preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and you're reminding people of what they already know. The pastorate is a ministry of reminder. Sheep need to be reminded. And so anyway, so you see the Scripture is constantly dealing with the same things and when you read the Bible carefully, you see that God looks on the heart. It's not enough to try to just change our behavior, you have to change the heart and then we see this with Peter.

So now today we're looking at this idea of preparing your heart for conflict. Two points this morning. The first is, we're looking at verse 8, how do you prepare your heart for conflict? First of all, you recalibrate your mind. Recalibrate your mind. You recalibrate something, you take something and you adjust it to the standard, right? You recalibrate your watch. You take your watch, it's losing time and you adjust it to the standard. This doesn't seem as accessible for young people because you're used to your phone telling you everything and your phone's constantly recalibrated, you don't have to do it. In the old days, you had to have a watch, your watch would lose time. Kind of be with me on that? Some of the older people acknowledge it. And you had to change your watch, right? My watch is falling five minutes behind suddenly. You just turn it ahead. Well, even though you don't have to do that to your cell phone, we need to do that to our hearts, particularly our minds, and biblically, the heart, the reason I'm using the word heart, is

the biblical picture of the heart. When you look at all the Bible says about the heart, it consists really of three different components: your mind, your emotions, and your will. That's your heart biblically. The heart thinks. The heart's where you do your thinking. Now we know our brains are involved as well, but the Bible speaks of the inner man. It's the invisible part of you is your heart and your thinking is above just your brain. Your brain's a computer that the inner person, the invisible "you" uses. You need a good computer, you need a good brain. Yes, but that's not who you really are in your thinking. Your thinking is inside your heart spiritually, the inner man. The heart thinks, the heart feels. The desires of the heart, it wants, it feels. And the intentions or purposes of the heart, it wills and chooses. These three things are in the heart and what Peter deals with in chapter 3, verse 8, is the thinking and the feelings and he's essentially saying he's going to deal with the will right after that. But verse 8, he's saying if you want to prepare your heart for conflict, for persecution, you first of all need to recalibrate your mind.

Now there's five adjectives I mentioned in verse 8. "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit." I'm reading from the New American Standard. These five words, I think there is actually an interesting structure Peter uses here. It's not evident in the English the way it is in the Greek, although the ESV kind of gets it almost right here. It's hard to get it better than they did in English. And that is because the first and last words of these five adjectives, I mentioned in the New American Standard, it's harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, humble in spirit. Harmonious, the first one, and humble in spirit, the last, actually in the Greek, have the word "mind" in it. The first word is literally same-mindedness. When it says harmonious, it literally says in the Greek to be same-minded. It's homophronas. Homo means same, phronos means thinking or mind or mindset. Have the same mindset. The last word, humble in spirit, is the word tapeinos combined with phronos and so it means lowly minded. So be same-minded and be lowly minded. That's the first word and the last word in the list. It's about the mind. It's about your mindset, you see?

And the first and last are the same or the same issue, deal with your mind. The second and fourth, I think also are connected. The second, sympathetic, and the fourth, kindhearted, both speak of compassion and they're really about the feelings, the emotions. To be sympathetic means to suffer with, to feel what someone else feels, that's to have sympathy. To seek to feel what they feel. The word translated kindhearted in the New American Standard is actually a word which means it's from the bowels. It's the idea, it's a word we looked at, Ephesians 4:32, to be tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Tender-hearted, same word here. It's a word which means good bowel, literally. It was a way they spoke of the deepest emotion that you could feel coming from the very deepest part of the human being.

So he's saying be sympathetic and have this deep compassion. Do you see that? Same idea. And then in the middle of the chiasm, chiasm or chiasm, A, B, C, B, A, familiar with that? First and last are A, they relate, second and fourth relate, and then the third is unique in a way, right? So have the mind, same-minded, lowly-minded, that's A and A, sympathetic and kindhearted, compassionate, same idea, and then brotherly, brotherly affection. So we're going to consider them together. I think that's how Peter wants us to

think of this. So we're going to talk about the mind. That's the first, the first and fifth adjectives here together in this point to recalibrate your mind. This idea of the word used for mind here from the word phroneo to think, it really pictures a mindset, that is, an established pattern of thinking. Think about that. It's not just what you're thinking, but it's a deeper word, which means the established pattern of thought. A habitual mental attitude or orientation of thinking. That's what he's getting at. We need to recalibrate the way we think about things. That's there in the first and fifth word, that word, phronos, from phroneo. We need to really think about our mindset and we can change our mindset. That's what he's saying.

The first idea is same-mindedness, that is, be of the same mind, have the same mind of one another. All of you in all these different situations where you're encountering persecution, we all need to work together to have the same mind. We're all called to the same task, which is to endure persecution with grace and kindness and love. So you need to have the same minded. You're going to have to work together on this is the idea. And then he says, and you're also to be lowly minded. That's the fifth word, humble in spirit. The NAS translates it humble in spirit. Literally lowly minded. It means a humility and lowliness of mind where we esteem ourselves small in as much as we are small. That's one of the theological dictionaries. We esteem ourselves small because we are small. We have a correct estimate of ourselves. We are lowly. If we're thinking rightly, biblically, that's how we should think and we should work together to have this same mind of lowliness among ourselves so that when we go out into the world, we come together on Sundays to worship God, to lift up him, his glory, to see the greatness of God and the smallness of ourselves, and we go back into the world with a right view of ourselves, we're lowly.

A lowly person is not easily offended. A lowly person can have other people trample on them and not be indignant about it. You may have to say something, of course, you have to deal with it, but there's a sense in which a lowly person deals with it with grace and gentleness, like Christ. In fact, a great passage that really just parallels this is Philippians chapter 2. Paul in Philippians chapter 2 is dealing with the same concept Peter's trying to help us get in 1 Peter chapter 3. Listen to what Paul says, this glorious passage of Scripture, 2:1 to 11. "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion." Paul says, listen, you say you're a Christian. Okay, do you have any encouragement in Christ? Do you have any consolation of love? Do you have any fellowship of the Spirit, any affection and compassion? Then do this. The idea is, of course, you know that you have encouragement, you have consolation of love, you have fellowship, you have affection and compassion but he says, this is what I want you to do, make my joy complete by being of the same mind. The word phronos is there too, not homo, but phronos, same mind. Different word for same. Maintaining the same love, united in spirit. That is one soul. Be one-souled, have the same soul as it were. Intent on one purpose, there's the word mind again, actually in the Greek, phronos again. One mind, one mindset, have this mindset.

How do you do this? Look at verse 3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." Put off selfishness, empty conceit, and regard other people as more important than yourselves. Verse 4, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." And here, Paul does exactly what Peter did in chapter 2. He says look at Jesus. If you want to be like this, look at Jesus. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The humiliation of Christ leads to the exaltation of Christ and Paul is saying, have the same mind in yourselves, which was in Jesus when he came into this world to be humiliated, to be humbled. Though he was worthy of all honor every moment of his life, he was worthy of every angel, every human being, everything in creation, falling down and worshiping him the same way that it's going on in heaven right now, they fall down before the throne of the lamb and worship him, he was worthy of that every moment he breathed on this earth. He was worthy of that. It should have been happening. It was unjust that it was not happening and yet he came, he didn't come to be served, he came to serve. His whole life was a life of being treated with what should have made everyone around him indignant that they were not doing what they should be doing. His whole life was that, his ministry. He says, have this mind in yourselves that it's like Christ. See yourself as a slave, as a servant. A slave has no rights. A slave doesn't determine what he's going to do. You do what your master says.

I mean, think about how that changes the way you think. This is what we have to recalibrate. We have to think like this. So when we encounter persecution or conflict, we're not so upset that someone is mistreating me, "How can they say that to me?" That's not the way we're to think. We're to say, "My Master has led me into this situation. What does He want me to do? What does faithfulness to my Master look like in this circumstance, which He has ordained, He has called me to?" See, that transforms everything, doesn't it? He says you have to cultivate that, you have to recalibrate your mind, your mindset, and we're to help each other, we're all to think like this. This is to be the thing we share, lowliness of mind. Boy, that's so hard, isn't it? This is not natural. Pride is natural. Indignation at how we're treated is natural. Concern about our reputation is natural, isn't it? But that's not what we're called to and when we realize that, it's really freeing. We just, we're a servant of Jesus. Just got to be obedient to him. And when we lay that down, we lay down, just like he did, he did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. This is not saying he ceased being equal to God. It's saying he did not regard being regarded as equal to God a thing to be held onto because like I said earlier, he was never regarded that way in his whole life. I mean, occasionally somebody would get it right, right? And they'd almost get it right. I mean, even the best moments, Peter,

you know, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus is like, "You've got it." But still, Peter's going to mess things up just a few minutes later. It's never perfect the way it should be, but he wasn't holding on to what he was owed or what he deserved. He laid it down and he just thought about fulfilling the will of his Father. And you and I are called to do the same thing. You and I are called to walk as Jesus walked. That's what Peter's saying. Cultivate the mindset of a servant, a slave. Be spent to serve others. Help each other have this mindset.

When we see ourselves being easily offended, that's a red light going off. "I've forgotten who I am. What do I have to be offended about?" I mean, think about that. You know, when people mischaracterize or misrepresent us, I said that, you know, they misunderstand, they don't understand us, they misrepresent, right? Well, when they misrepresent us and they say things that maybe aren't true about us, the reality is if they knew us better, they could come up with a whole lot better stuff to criticize us about. You haven't even began to see what's wrong with me, right? But God knows all of it and Christ has covered all of it so that even though those things are true of who we are in our flesh, who we are in Christ, we are perfect in Jesus, regarded as if you had lived his perfect life. That's how God sees you if you're in him.

So recalibrate your mindset. Recalibrate your mind. Secondly, cultivate your emotions. Cultivate your emotions. Second main point is our last main point. Cultivate your emotions. There will be two sub points. We tend to think feelings and emotions are entirely passive. We really believe this. I know I do, and I'm confident you do too, if you're honest with yourself. We say things like, "I can't help how I feel." And in reality, it does seem like that. Think how quickly emotions rise. You don't sit there and think if something happens, you don't sit there and think, "I'm going to really get mad about this. I'm going to choose to get mad about this." It naturally comes. Somebody cuts you off in traffic, you don't have to stop and have a moment, "Should I get mad about this or not?" It comes, right? It seems like emotions are passive responses, involuntary, unconscious responses to stimuli but Scripture says you can change your emotions through the grace of Christ. You can and must. You and I can, we must.

We're called to cultivate our emotions. That's what he's saying here. Back to 1 Peter chapter 3, he's saying, be sympathetic, be kindhearted. He's saying when you see other people suffering, be sympathetic. Cultivate a heart that willingly embraces suffering with them so that you actually feel naturally deep sympathy; it becomes a part of you because you've cultivated it. You cultivate deep compassion. These are things we can cultivate. And in fact, I think the reason there's two sub points, we're going to talk about this, cultivate your emotions. First of all, cultivate deep compassion. That's your first sub point, 2A, and 2B is cultivate genuine affection, because I think that point about being brotherly is something we also cultivate. It's an emotion. So the first two are about the mind and the three in the middle are really about emotions with the second and fourth being directly related.

So first of all, cultivate your emotions, 2A cultivate deep compassion. Now we're looking at the words, be sympathetic, be kindhearted. Be sympathetic. I said that means to suffer

with. Literally, that's what sympathy is. If you look at the etymology of the English word, it comes from the Greek word, actually transliterates the Greek word, which is the same way, *sun* means with and *pathos* means suffer. Suffering, suffering with. To feel sympathy is to enter into someone's suffering. You enter into their suffering so that you can be with them in the moment and support them and we're to cultivate this, we're to cultivate this for unbelievers. We're to have a mindset of a servant, like we talked about in the previous point, we're to recalibrate our minds for the sake of impacting unbelievers. It's going to make a difference in the church too, of course, but mainly so we can deal with people when they attack us. We've recalibrated our mind to see ourselves as servants and now we cultivate emotions to have compassion for them and it starts by working on being sympathetic.

Another passage that speaks of this powerfully is the book of Hebrews. Just turn back toward the front of your Bible, past the book of James to the book of Hebrews and chapter 4, verse 15. So many tremendous passages in the book of Hebrews, this one, verse 14, verse 15 has a key word in it, but I'm going to start at verse 14. Hebrews 4, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." He's basically saying, since we have a high priest who can sympathize, draw near to the throne of grace. Go to him. You can go to Jesus because he can sympathize with you in your weakness. This is what he's saying. I love how he says it, it's a double negative. We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize. He could have just said, we have a high priest who can sympathize but it's more powerful to say, we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize.

Jesus can sympathize with you. That is mind-blowing. The God that we worship can feel what you feel. He really understands. He can suffer with you. What a Savior. He was willing to come and experience all he needed to. In fact, turn to chapter 2, Hebrews 2, verse 14. Look at the glory of our Savior. This is Hebrews 2:14, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham." Look at verse 17. How can he sympathize? Verse 17, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Look at verse 18, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."

Jesus knows what it's like to be tempted. He knows what it's like to wrestle with temptation. Now he never failed, but it's harder to wrestle with temptation and not fail. Think about that. Isn't it much easier just to give in? It's when you keep fighting that it's so hard. his whole life, he fought and fought and always won, but he knows what it's like

to wrestle as a man with temptation. He did that so that he could sympathize with you and me. He enters into our suffering so he can come alongside us. That is so amazing. Worship him, love him more. But what Peter's saying back in our text is be like him. He's saying if you have a Savior who did this, then we should cultivate a heart of sympathy to unbelievers and lost people. They're in the dark. They don't know. They don't know what they don't know. They don't know what they're doing. And we do know what it was like and we know that only because of grace that we're not where they are, and we're to have heart that seeks to feel their pain. We're not just to tell them the gospel in an emotionally distant way and just send gospel bombs to them. I mean, that's great. At least you're giving the gospel to them. But it's so much more powerful if you really care about them and you think about what they're going through, you listen to them, you hear their suffering, you invite them to tell you what's going on in their life, and then you speak the gospel to them. You feel with them and you can relate, even if it's somebody who's dealing with sin that you can never imagine having been in your life, but you know, there's stuff that they, if they knew you, they could never imagine what's in my life, what I've had to deal with. They didn't have it. But I know, we all know what it's like to wrestle with sin, and so we can come alongside them with compassion and then we speak the gospel, we feel, we suffer with them, they're ready to hear it. Someone has said that no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.

And Peter's saying, listen, the way we make a difference in a dark world, it's not just that we have the message they need to hear, and we do, the message is Jesus and the cross and the resurrection. It's the only hope. But we also have experienced what they need to experience. We've come to know God, he's changed our hearts, and he now is enabling us to have an ability to care about another human being that they've never experienced that like this. That's part of our message. That's what he's saying, be sympathetic, but not only sympathetic, he adds to it the word kindhearted, which I said, good bowel. It means from the depth of your being, there's compassion for this person. It doesn't mean compassion does not fail to speak truth. True compassion will speak truth, but true compassion also cares deeply about the person. That's the balance. We need to care deeply. I don't know about you, but I know I don't care enough. I tend to be too much about myself and I miss people around me that are suffering and hurting, and that's why I need to stay close to Jesus, because Jesus is not like that. And if I can stay united to Christ and focused on him and asking him to love this person through me, asking him when I'm meeting with someone that I find to be, they're already being negative to me, they're being harsh and critical, I can sense they're being disapproving, they think I'm a nut. I can tell it. They don't have to say it. I know it. "Lord Jesus, give me Your compassion for this lost person. Give me Your mercy for them. Let me know. They must be suffering things that I don't understand, but You know exactly what it is. Love them through me. Give me the ability to listen and to enter in as much as I can by Your grace into what they're feeling. And now empower my words and show them the love that You have for them." Because we don't preach ourselves, we preach Christ.

It's all about Jesus and when they ask you, "How do you care about me?" Think about it today. There's such an opportunity. I mean, everybody's on their phone all the time. Isn't it amazing? You go out to dinner and people sit across the table from each other, both

looking at their phones. I mean, just think about that for a minute. Hey, let's go hang out together. Okay, so they go and they meet and they eat somewhere. No, that's good, in a good restaurant, that's good, but they don't actually talk. They're posting stuff to the internet, they're looking, liking things, whatever they're doing. They're not communicating, they're not fellowshiping. You hear more and more that young people don't have conversations. Well, we can be people who ask questions and actually look at them, look at them and listen and care, and in doing that, we will shine like lights in the midst of this dark world. And if we genuinely are putting on Christ and having deep compassion for them and then unashamedly living and excited about living for Christ, listen, I know that it sounds crazy to you, but I'm telling you, living according to this book is the best thing in the world. And then you frame that with a person who cares about them and is listening to them, do you see already you start to gain a hearing. Doesn't mean they're going to get saved. It's up to God. But you and I are called not to dispassionately, uncaringly present the gospel. We are called to deep care. We're called to reflect God's heart to them and the beauty is we can do it by his grace.

And that's what he's saying. That's what we're called to. And genuine affection, the last point, cultivate genuine affection. It's the word philadelphia, love a brother, I think what he's getting at here is that, listen, we are brothers, but I think he's getting, this is friendship love too. The idea of philos is friendship. So treat them as a brother. I think he's talking still primarily about our relationship with unbelievers and he's saying cultivate an attitude where you see them, in some way the connectedness of all human beings. Now, they're not a brother. They need to get saved. Truly, they're not a spiritual brother. They need to become one. But they may be, you may be looking at someone who's going to be a brother or sister in Christ, you just don't know it yet. But they're a human being. They're made in the image of God. You know, if they're a fellow Duluthian or a Gwinnett County or wherever, all the different counties we live in, or a Georgian or an American or whatever, they're a Bulldog fan, praise God, whatever it is, forgive me for that, but we can connect. He's saying cultivate affection for other people so that you really are a friend. You're a friend and you're seen as a friend. But it doesn't mean you back off of the gospel. No, no, no, it does not mean that. But you start by loving people. Genuinely loving them. He's saying this, we live in a post-Christian culture where things are going to pot. Yes, we do, but we have the gospel. We have the Spirit of God. We have all we need.

Let's go the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You so much for Your grace, the work that You've done in salvation, the privilege it is to be Your children. We come knowing that we really, Lord, we need to be more lowly minded. We need to see ourselves as You see us, as the Scripture shows there's nothing good in us that is in our flesh. No reason You should have sought us out. We stand amazed at Your incredible grace. Father, make us more lowly minded, make us more same minded, help us to truly get our thinking about ourselves right to see ourselves like Jesus saw his ministry as serving. And Lord, give us hearts, help us cultivate these things by thinking about the gospel and really thinking about people and their suffering, and make us win some for Christ. And we pray that You'll start, the work

that You start in us will continue to grow and we'll become more and more winsome. We pray that we'd see many more people saved as the times, if You continue to allow things to get darker, we're going to praise You and trust You, but Lord keep rescuing people, bringing them out of darkness into Your marvelous light, making them Your children. We pray all of this that Jesus might have more glory and more joy in His bride. We pray this in His name. Amen.