

EXPOSITION OF I PETER

Message #13

I Peter 3:8-12

I am sure that all of us have known people who think they don't need the church. They think they don't need anyone else except themselves. They take the position they are all that matters and that it is either their way or the highway. When this kind of person gets into eternity, they will be in for a big shock. Just as Peter says in this very context, they will not "inherit a blessing." God expects us to grow up and function together in His church. He expects us to face and confront issues and He expects us to change in regard to one another. If you refuse, it is your eternity that is at stake. If you want to live your life as some isolated monk, thinking you have arrived at some better-than-thou status, you will lose when you get before the Lord. We need each other. We need the Church. We need to make adjustments.

Now Peter moves from the husband and wife relationship to the kind of conduct we are to always have with all believers. If we want to earn the favor of God, if we want the blessings of God, if we want to demonstrate the grace of God, if we want to see good days in life, then this is how we need to relate to each other. What Peter says here is this:

THE BELIEVER WHO DESIRES TO ENJOY LIFE AND RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD IN THIS LIFE AND THE NEXT MUST PROPERLY RELATE TO OTHER BELIEVERS THROUGH THEIR ATTITUDES, CONDUCT AND SPEECH.

I am convinced that God sends all kinds of people into His church, to form His priesthood worship. God's people need to learn to function together in the way God wants.

Now the words of **verse 8** "to sum up" literally in Greek "finally" (τελος) refer to the final address on the subject of how we are to relate to each other in maintaining an "excellent behavior" as a Grace reflector (2:12). As Dr. Peter Davids said, Peter is summing up his "ethical exhortation" (*The First Epistle of Peter*, p. 124). **Peter is summarizing the attitudes and conduct and speech that are to exist in the family of God.** This is how we are to govern our lives in the context of corporate church life.

Now the word "all" goes with everything in the list, so this affects all people in the church. Whether you are a man, a woman or child or whether you are a visitor, a regular attendee or a leader, these admonitions are for us all. None are exempt. Whether you are immature or mature, whether you are a new believer or old believer, these are for all and all need to apply them.

There are eleven admonitions in this text that give all of us plenty to work on.

ADMONITION #1 – All are to be harmonious. **3:8a**

This particular word does not mean we all have to learn to like liver just because someone else likes liver. It doesn't mean that we all have to look like some uniformed robot, who doesn't have our own likes and dislikes and our own tastes.

The word "harmony" (ομοφωνες) is a rare Greek word which means sameness or agreement of mind (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 318). Peter desires that God's church strive for a unity that is a mental unity. We should seek one Christlike mindedness.

D. Edmond Hiebert said that this word calls for a unity of sentiment, a unity of disposition and aim and purpose of heart realizing we have all had a similar inner experience in that we all have experienced the grace of God (*First Peter*, p. 198).

We should strive to be harmonious in our doctrine and with each other with our minds, so that we may have and display a Christlike unity.

ADMONITION #2 – All are to be sympathetic . **3:8b**

Someone has said you are really beginning to become mature and spiritual when your concern for others outweighs your concern for yourself.

The Greek word “sympathetic” (συμπαισχεις) is one that means we should try to feel the same things each other is feeling or experiencing (Smith, p. 423). We should try to share “fellow-feelings.” When a brother or sister rejoices, we should rejoice with them, when they weep, we should weep with them. We need to be sensitive to and moved by each other’s emotions.

Now keep in mind the one who is writing this, the Apostle Peter. He was about as rough and tough a man as there was. But the Holy Spirit had taken charge of His personality and he had become a man who knew how to feel for others.

ADMONITION #3 – All are to be brotherly . **3:8c**

The church is to be a family comprised of brothers and sisters in Christ.

The word for brotherly is philadelphia (φιλαδελφοι), which refers to a brotherly love. We are to consider each other to be brothers and sisters in Christ and there should be a family bond between us.

One of the great hallmarks of the early church was that they were known for their brotherly love. It isn’t always easy to love and appreciate each other in the family, but that is what we are called to do.

ADMONITION #4 – All are to be kindhearted . **3:8d**

The word “kindhearted” (ευσπλαγχνοι) is a beautiful word which means we are to be tenderhearted and compassionate (Smith, p. 189). This refers to a very sensitive and tender heart to the needs of others. We should be touched and moved by the plight of others.

What is being described here is a group of people who take a real interest in each other. They care about the needs and hurts and heartaches of one another. They share the joys and the troubles.

We are living in a high tech, cyber world of satellites, computers and iPods. It is big, it is cold, it is hard, it is professional and fast and calloused. We need to be a different type of operation. We need to be a church family that cares for one another. We are to be sympathetic and kind.

ADMONITION #5 – All are to be humble in Spirit. **3:8c**

The better Greek manuscripts use the word (ταπεινοφρονες) which means lowly mind or humble mind (Smith, p. 439). This word is only used here in the New Testament. This is just the opposite of a high minded, haughty spirit that brags about self or pushes oneself onto others. This is a spirit that chooses to be lowly of mind and heart rather than dominate.

Now the apostle penning this letter was a big name in Christianity. God had done and was doing dramatic things with Peter. If any person could have taken a better-than-thou attitude about things, it could have been him. He could have sat around talking about what it was like the day he walked on water with Jesus Christ. He could have bragged about how he was only one of three who saw Jesus Christ transfigured. He could have boasted about how he preached and at one sermon 3,000 people literally were saved. But you don't find that mindset in Peter; what you find is a kind, gracious, humble man.

ADMONITION #6 – All are not to return evil for evil. **3:9a**

The word “evil” is one that refers to bad, mean, worthless and wicked things (Smith, p. 227). The preposition “for” used twice in this context is anti (αντι). The root meaning of this preposition is “face to face” (Dana & Mantey, p. 99). In classical Greek, this preposition meant in exchange for and the idea when used with the genitive case noun “evil,” is that we are not to exchange or substitute bad mean things that people say and do to us, to them. This is a mindset that will not involve itself in any evil retaliation.

In other words, if someone broke into your house, you would not break into their house. If they broke into your house you would have a right to defend yourself and your property, but you would not have a right to break into their house and exchange their evil for your evil. If someone raped someone you loved, you do not have the right to rape someone they love. This does not mean you would be a doormat who refused to handle things in a right way, such as report it to the authorities, but it does mean you would never retaliate in an evil-for-evil way.

ADMONITION #7 – All are not to return insult for insult. **3:9b**

One of the biggest battles you will ever fight and one of the fiercest fights you will ever battle is your tongue. Spiritual people who will shine great in eternity permit God's Spirit to transform their speech habits.

The word “insult” (λοδοριαν) again is a very rare Greek word. It refers to a verbal abuse that rails against a person. Again the point is not that you never verbally defend yourself, it is that you will not exchange verbal abuse for verbal abuse. This challenge is to not use abusive language against someone even when they have used abusive language against you.

If someone calls you a dirty name, you don't call them a dirty name. If someone starts putting you down, you don't start putting them down. Dr. Chuck Swindoll said, “Show me a person who has learned to refrain from gossip, to refrain from passing on confidential information, to refrain from making an unverified comment, and I'll show you somebody who is well on his or her way to maturity” (*Hope Again*, p. 127).

Our goal in life is not to get even, it is to lay up treasures in heaven and there is no better way to do that than by controlling what you say. The tragedy of many people is that they will not learn to hold their tongues until they are in their grave and then it will be too late for them to have earned rewards.

ADMONITION #8 – All are to give blessings instead. **3:9c**

The word “blessing” (εὐλογουντες) is one that means to invoke the blessings of God on one who is hostile to us (Smith, p. 187). If you want to see where you are really at in your spirituality and if you want to conduct a true reality check on your life with God, tackle this one.

When someone does something specifically negative to you, pray that God will save them, change them and bless them and say nothing but praiseworthy things about them. Instead of you ripping them to shreds, you speak well of them. You speak fair words and flattering words.

ADMONITION #9 – All are to refrain speech from evil and guile. **3:10**

Do not say evil and deceitful things. Be a truth setter.

ADMONITION #10 – All are to turn away from evil and turn to good. **3:11a**

The verb “turn away from” literally means turn out from the midst of evil, in the sense of running out of it and do that which is good. This describes immediate evasive action that swerves out of what is evil and bad and does what is good.

ADMONITION #11 – All are to seek and pursue peace. **3:11b**

Seek out the peaceful way in your relationship with God and others. A God-honoring believer will aggressively pursue and seek out the peaceful solution to a matter.

Now there are four main reasons why Peter wanted believers to act this way:

(Reason #1) - We were called for this very purpose. **3:9d**

We haven’t been called to live in a nice world but to reflect His grace in a lousy world. God saved us to be a reflector of His grace in this world and this is the way we do it.

(Reason #2) - We will receive a blessed inheritance for acting this way. **3:9e**

When we react this way, we do lay up treasures in heaven.

(Reason #3) - We will enjoy a good life if we act this way. **3:10-11**

God will see to it that we have a good life and will enjoy our life if we choose to live life this way. Some of the most miserable people you will ever see are people who go to church and behind closed doors are verbal vipers and evil pursuers. These people do not live a life of joy.

(Reason #4) - We will see God answer many of our prayers. 3:12

If you purpose to govern your life this way, God will watch over you and Personally answer many of your prayers.

If you want to go to work on something this week, take these eleven admonitions and see how many you can apply. Keep these notes. Go over the list. Keep a check on yourself. I can guarantee you this, if we as a church will purpose to go over these things and apply them, God will shine His face of blessing on us and His ears will be attentive to our prayers.