

Finally, All of You...

1 Peter 3:8-12

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

“Finally” does not mean that Peter is finishing his letter. It seems to mean that he is concluding the current discussion and transitioning to a new one. He now addresses all the brothers and sisters in Christ (not another specific group of them).

“All of you” followed by the five virtues reminds us that faithful, active engagement with a local church is a must for those who belong to Jesus. These commands are to be carried out in the Christian community which the Lord Jesus established. Jesus commanded us to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34-35). Jesus prayed that we would be a unified people (John 17:20-23). Look back at 1:22.

Unity in the church does **not** mean uniformity on every single issue. There **is** room within the church for diversity within our God-given unity. There really is room for some disagreements. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in Romans 14:1-15:7. Allowing such disagreements to separate us and to prevent us from welcoming and caring for one another is sin.

We should value our unity. We should understand how important it is. We must refuse to let questionable lifestyle choices or matters of personal preference fracture our fellowship. We can humbly and respectfully disagree with each other on some things.

We don't have to demand our own way. We don't have to wear people down with our words so that they will give in to our demands. We don't have to threaten or intimidate or manipulate anyone. We can trust God with it. We want Jesus' command to be obeyed and His prayer to be answered in the local church that we are committed to. Debatable stuff and personal preferences can't be allowed to divide and conquer us, although we know that Satan would love that. We can stop expecting perfection from imperfect people as we humbly see how imperfect we are ourselves.

As they both followed the Holy Spirit, Peter and Paul spoke the same truths. See Romans 12:15-16 and Ephesians 4:1-3 and 31-32.

How we **humbly** relate to each other **within** the church:

VALUING UNITY... SPENDING TIME TOGETHER... ASKING LOVING QUESTIONS... DRAWING PEOPLE OUT... ATTENTIVELY LISTENING TO EACH OTHER WITHOUT TAKING OVER... “MY STORY, MY SUCCESSES, MY PAIN, MY PROBLEMS, MY FAMILY, ETC. ARE NOT MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOURS... I REFUSE TO DOMINATE THIS CONVERSATION AND MAKE IT ALL ABOUT ME...” LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND... LISTENING TO ENTER INTO THE EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONS OF OTHERS... “YOUR JOY IN MY SOUL... YOUR HURT IN MY HEART...” NOT DEMANDING OUR OWN WAY... NOT THINKING OF OURSELVES AS SUPERIOR... NOT PUTTING OTHERS DOWN TO RAISE OURSELVES UP...

9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Again, we see the overlap of Peter and Paul. See Romans 12:17-21.

Are you being slandered? Are people mistreating you? Is someone being unfair or unkind to you? Look again at Christ your Savior and example. What did He do with mistreatment? He endured patiently. How did He do that? He did it by faith—by constantly entrusting himself to the Father (2:23). And that’s how we can refuse to retaliate. That’s how we can love instead of hate. If you and I keep looking by faith to Christ on His way to the cross and then as He hung upon the cross, we will be able to resist the temptation to find a way to get our pound of flesh. We can do what Jesus did and “leave the justice piece to God.” We’ve been called to this as those who now belong to Christ (2:21).

How we relate to others **outside** the church who are **hostile** to us:

NOT DEMANDING OUR POUND OF FLESH... LEAVING IT TO THE LORD... “LEAVING THE JUSTICE PIECE TO GOD...” PRAYING FOR AND ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SEEK THE GOOD OF OTHERS FOR THEIR GOOD... “BLESSING BACK INSTEAD OF STRIKING BACK...” DOING WHAT JESUS DID... FOLLOWING IN HIS STEPS... RECALLING 2:12 AND DESIRING REPENTANCE INSTEAD OF REVENGE...

10 For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Peter draws (again—see 2:3) on Psalm 34 to drive home his point. “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14) See again Romans 12:18. Anger, bitterness, and hate in the heart does not make for a happy life. Don’t make your hard life harder by having a hard heart. Give it to God and learn to love like Jesus.