

Checking All the Boxes – I Peter 3:8-11

I. Introduction:

- A. Abraham Marshall was the second pastor of the first Baptist church in Georgia.
1. The Kiokee church, was started by his father, Daniel, near Augusta, across the Savanna River from South Carolina.
 2. In 1786, Abraham, rode his horse from Georgia to Connecticut. He had two purposes in mind.
 - a. One was to present the gospel along the way.
 - b. He preached in every Baptist church, every community and every private home he could, both coming and going.
 - c. And the Lord blessed with the salvation of literally hundreds of souls, many of whom were waiting for baptism on his return visit.
 3. His second purpose was specifically to minister to his cousin **Eliakim Marshall**, a man he'd never met.
 - a. Eliakim had been a **Protestant minister** for thirty years, but Abraham had heard that he *"was a man of sound judgment, strong memory, and delicate conscience."*
 - b. So Abraham thought to himself, *"Well, if he has a sound judgment he will understand argument; (1) if he has a strong memory he will retain it; (2) and if has a tender or delicate conscience it will have an influence on his mind. (3) And for these reasons I expect to baptize him before I leave."*
 - c. And he did. Cousin Eliakim became a Baptist.
- B. Abraham returned to Kiokee and resumed pastoring, but during all this time he had never been married.
1. Six years later, at the age of forty-four, he determined to make a second trip to New England.
 2. Again he had the intention of preaching the gospel, strengthening the churches along the way, and to lead as many as he could to the Saviour. And again the Lord miraculously blessed.
 3. But on this trip Abraham had a second purpose. To come home with a wife.
 4. On his return, he stopped at the Virginia home of Pastor Jack Waller, where he met daughter Ann Waller.
 5. After a six-day, whirlwind courtship, Bro. Waller officiated at the wedding between Abraham and Ann, immediately thereafter that the couple hit the south road toward Kiokee.
- C. I have no evidence that this was the case, but I can imagine a forty-four year old man, carrying a list of character traits to look for in wife.
1. He was not a hormonal teenager, making decisions based on beauty or the woman's desire to party.
 2. Here was a rational man, in the midst of a ministry, looking for a helpmeet in that ministry.
 3. I can picture Abraham carrying a slip of paper with a dozen requirements with a box beside each one.
 4. Perhaps he had met a few other ladies along the way, but they only filled half a dozen of those boxes.
 5. But Ann, the daughter of "Swearing Jack" Waller, ticked off ten or eleven of the twelve.
 6. Here was the woman of his dreams, or maybe we could say of his required qualifications.
 7. Again, this was probably not the case, but it might have been.
- D. Peter has just addressed three major groups of Christians with some exhortations for each.
1. Now, in **verse 8**, he uses the word *"finally,"* as though he was summarizing things or moving on to put a capstone on his previous instructions.
 2. In the next few verses we find about a dozen exhortations, some of which are given without explanation.
 3. What if there was a box after each one? How many of these boxes could those people check?
 4. More practically, how many of these boxes could you and I check?
 5. Metaphorically speaking, what if the Lord was looking for a wife, and he rode up to your house.
 6. Could He look at you and check enough boxes to find you acceptable to take with Him to Georgia?
- E. We don't have time to look at all of Peter's points tonight. It will take three or four messages.
1. Tonight we'll just briefly look at the first verse, considering five of them.
 2. How many of these boxes, under your name, would the Lord check?

II. “Finally, be ye all of ONE MIND.”

- A. This is a common New Testament exhortation. We find this in **Romans**, **Corinthians** and **Philippians**.
1. It obviously means: agree with one another; *“I encourage you all to think alike.”*
 2. Unfortunately for the Bible student, neither Peter nor Paul tell us what areas in which we are to agree.
- B. Are we surprised that only one time in the Bible it is said that any group of people were of the same mind?
1. In **Acts 2:1** just after the ascension of Christ and days of united prayer, we read, *“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”*
 2. And then a short time later, still speaking of the early church, *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” – Acts 4:32.*
 3. Why is it that of only one church does the Bible ever say, *“they were of one mind?”*
 4. And how was it that growing throng of diverse people were so united?
 5. Could it be that they, for a short time, had only one focus: the Lord Jesus?
- C. From my commentaries I found only one which offered an explanation to this united frame of mind.
1. It said, they were united *“in regard to faith”* – which I assume means *“the faith.”*
 - a. Their unity wasn’t in regard to the length of a man’s beard, or even if he had to have one.
 - b. It wasn’t about whether or not a woman should wear ear-rings or if she wore her hair up or down.
 2. It was about whether or not Jesus was the Christ the Son of God and whether He should be presented to the lost as their potential Saviour. They were united in their desire to glorify the Lord.
 3. The Jerusalem church had one heart and one soul, because they were only days removed from the actual presence of Christ.
 4. The leadership of the church, from the Apostles to the 70 and then to the 120, had walked and talked with Captain of their salvation. That church still had its priorities perfectly straight, so agreement was easy.
- D. In our day of great diversity, how is church unity and solidarity possible?
1. First of all, isn’t unity far more likely if all the rest of Peter’s boxes are all checked?
 - a. When everyone is compassionate toward everyone else... when they are all filled with brotherly love...
 - b. When every heart is tender and everyone lives courteously, singleness of heart is possible.
 2. But of course, we need the Lord in order to reach each of these things.
 3. **Romans 15:5** – *“Now the God of patience and consolation GRANT you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also receive us to the glory of God.”*
- E. Let’s say that you disagree with your brother about which day of the week that Jesus was crucified.
1. Rather than insist that you are right and your brother is wrong, your first response should be humble courteousness with a recognition **YOU might** be the person in error.
 2. When we are willing to concede to another and especially to the majority, singleness of mind is attainable.

III. Next Peter says, “Finally... having COMPASSION one of another.”

- A. I was amazed to read the words of one expert as he commented on each of the various parts of this verse.
1. He said: *“Here only in the N.T., only here and in one other verse; here only in the N.T.; only here and in one other verse; here only in the N.T.”*
 2. In other words, **this** Abraham Marshall is **extremely particular** about the woman he wants to marry.
 3. It’s almost as if no one else in the world has these same requirements.
- B. What is it to have **compassion**?
1. The Greek word is *“sumpathes” (soom-path-ace)* from which the English word *“sympathy”* is derived.
 2. Have sympathy; be sympathetic to the people around you and to the needs they have.
 3. As an example, what made the **Good Samaritan** good?
 - a. When he saw the beaten man laying at the side of the road to Jericho *“he had compassion on him.”*

- b. And what did that compassion lead him to do?
 - c. He *“went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought to an inn, and took care of him.”*
4. Had the Samaritan ever been beaten and robbed? Was this the reason he took action? We don't know.
 5. It appears that he simply recognized the need of another fellow human being, and then went out of his way to help meet that man's need.
 6. Would I be incorrect to say that a compassionate person is willing to put other people above his own needs and desires? Isn't that a big part of unity within a church?
- C. The Lord Jesus has given us a reverse example of compassion in His parable of the *“Unmerciful Servant.”*
1. A certain king after years of patience decided to take account of all his servants.
 2. Among them, there was one man who owed his Lord ten thousand talents, and he and his family were about to be sold into slavery to pay the debt. But the man begged his Lord for time to repay it all.
 3. The King agreed, and the man was released to keep his promise.
 4. **Matthew 18:27** – *“Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”*
 - a. *“But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*
 - b. *And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.”*
 5. When the King heard what the man had done *“he... called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: **Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?**”*
- D. Christians are supposed to live in the way that their Saviour lived.
1. We have been infinitely blessed through the compassion of the Lord, and He expects us to be similarly compassionate toward others. The Lord wants to be able to check this box next to our name.
 2. But Christians are often far from compassionate people.
 3. They have to be told over and over again, *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”* – **Romans 12:15**. We will return to this theme in the next verse.

IV. Then Peter says, *“Finally... LOVE as brethren.”*

- A. As you may be aware, **the Apostle John** often refers to brotherly love & is described as *“the Apostle of love.”*
1. But it needs to be pointed out that this is already **the third time** that **PETER** has referred to brotherly love.
 2. **I Peter 1:22** – *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, **see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.**”*
 3. Then in **the next chapter, verse 17** – *“Honour all men. **Love the brotherhood.** Fear God. Honour the king.”* There are a lot of Christian who are equally disobedient in each of these four points.
- B. Someone says, *“Oh, I do love the brethren.”* Sadly, what that person means is: *“in an academic way.”*
1. Love which is inactive isn't love. Inert, unresponsive love isn't love at all. I don't know what to call it.
 2. Love isn't merely a word; it involves deeds. It is action.
 3. Paul told the **Romans in chapter 12** – *“Let love be without dissimulation (**hypocrisy**)... Be **KINDLY affectioned** one to another with brotherly love; **in honour PREFERRING** one another.”*
- C. In **II Peter**, our apostle builds a pyramid out of several important values.
1. *“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*
 2. *And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*
 3. *And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*
 4. *For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”* – **II Peter 1:5-8**.

- D. Remember, that love: love for Christ, love for the brethren, love for the lost are clear characteristics of the regenerated soul.
1. **Jesus** said, *“By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* – **John 13:35**.
 2. And **John** added, *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He hath loveth not his brother abideth in death”* – **1 John 3:16**.
 3. Love may be a natural product of the new birth, but that doesn’t mean that we are experts in it or that it truly fills our lives. **But it should.**

V. Peter goes on: *“Finally, be ye... be PITIFUL.”*

- A. **Ephesians 4:32** is the only other scripture which uses this Greek word, and it reads: *“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgive one another, even as God for Christ shake hath forgiven you.”*
1. The word *“pitiful”* is translated in **Ephesians** *“tenderhearted.”*
 2. **James** says in **5:11** – remember, *“the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.”*
 3. We might preface each of Peter’s points with the words, *“Let’s not forget that this is a blessing which you enjoy through Christ your Saviour.”*
 4. The Lord has made an investment in you, now share it.
- B. Many of us have been touched by God’s grace, and we were saved decades ago.
1. It may have taken ten years after that, but we have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to throw off the yoke of some really debilitating sins.
 2. And as a result, the effects of those sins are no longer menacing our every step.
 3. But we have Christian brethren who are still struggling with that same addiction & those same temptations which once plagued our lives.
 4. Like that wicked servant in Jesus’ parable, we are to be pitiful and tenderhearted toward that other person.
 5. *“Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?”*

VI. The last thing in this verse is: *“Finally, be ye...COURTEOUS”* toward one another.

- A. One of my commentaries explained Peter in this way:
1. This speaks about *“genuine Christian POLITENESS; not the tinsel of the world’s politeness.*
 2. This is *“stamped with unfeigned love on one side, and humility on the other.... ‘humble-minded.’*
 3. *It is slightly different from [simply being] ‘humble,’ in that it marks a conscious effort to be truly humble.”*
- B. Here is something which, I think, sheds light on each of the other points.
1. When we choose to be humble, and to behave in a humble fashion, we will be pitiful, courteous, and polite.
 2. It will paint our brotherly love in colors which make it truly stand out.
 3. When we look at ourselves in a humble way, we won’t be pushing ourselves and our agenda, our wishes and our minor doctrines. We won’t be aggressively assertive; we won’t be interruptive.
 4. We will stop to hear what the other person has to say, even when we want to complete our own thought.
 5. I know a lot of Christians who very simply are not polite people, because they are filled with their own egos.
- C. How many of Peter’s first five boxes have you been able to check?
1. “Finally, be ye all of one mind, ✓
 2. having compassion one of another, ✓
 3. love as brethren, ✓
 4. be pitiful, ✓
 5. be courteous. ✓