

LIVE AT PEACE WITH OTHERS

1 PETER 03:08–09

Introduction

This is a great passage for believers. It deals with peace. We are to live at peace with other Christian believers. When the world looks at believers, they are to see a most unusual unity, a spirit of oneness that is not found any place else on earth. They are to see believers who are so unified and so closely knit together that they are as brothers and sisters — brothers and sisters who stand together, who love and support each through all the trials and temptations of life. The world is not to see believers...

- arguing
- griping
- bickering
- enticing
- complaining
- brawling
- in division
- grumbling

The world is to see believers unified, standing together through thick and thin regardless of circumstances. How can believers live in unity? How can people with such diverse personalities and backgrounds be closer than earthly brothers and sisters? In the clearest of terms this verse spells out how in six points.

- I. Live in harmony (v. 8).
- II. Be sympathetic (v. 8).
- III. Have brotherly love (v. 8).
- IV. Be compassionate (v. 8).
- V. Be humble (v. 8).
- VI. Do not retaliate, but bless those who do evil against you (v. 9).

I. 1 Peter 03:08 Live in Harmony; Brotherhood

Believers must live in harmony (homophrones). The word means to be like-minded; to be of the same mind. Believers must keep their minds on the same things. They must focus their minds upon Jesus Christ and His mission.

1. Believers must keep their minds upon becoming just like Jesus, upon being conformed to the image of Christ.

Rom 8:29 *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

2 Cor 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Phil 3:10 *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

2. Believers must keep their minds upon living holy, righteous and pure lives.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

2 Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Heb 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

1 Pet 1:15-16 *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

2 Pet 3:11-12 *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.*

3. Believers must keep their minds upon developing spiritual character and fruit.

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

4. Believers must keep their minds upon carrying out the ministry and mission of Christ.

Mat 20:28 *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Luke 19:10 *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

2 Cor 5:20 *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

II. 1 Peter 03:08 Sympathy

Believers must have sympathy for one another. The word sympathetic (sumpatheis) means compassion; to actually feel with others. It means to feel for others so much that...

- one suffers with those who suffer.
- one weeps with those who weep.
- one rejoices when others are honoured.
- one understands the pressure that a leader is under when he has to lead.
- one hurts with those who are criticized and attacked.
- one grieves with the sorrows of others.

Unity cannot exist unless believers feel sympathy for one another. Believers cannot be selfish and aloof; they cannot be seeking attention and seeking to get their own way if they are to be unified. Unity demands sympathy; unity demands that believers feel for one another — that they feel deeply, so deeply that they actually experience what other believers experience: pain, hurt, abuse, suffering, joy and rejoicing.

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Rom 15:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

III. 1 Peter 03:08 Brotherly Love

Believers must have brotherly love for one another. “Brotherly love” (philadelphoi) has already been discussed by Peter (see *Love*, 1 Pet. 1:22-25).

IV. 1 Peter 03:08 Compassion

Believers must have compassion for one another. The word “compassionate” (eusplagchnoi) means to be tender-hearted; to be sensitive and affectionate toward the needs of others; to be moved with tender feelings over the pain and sufferings of others. We live in a world that desperately needs compassion, a world of extreme suffering. So many suffer and continue to suffer without ever having their needs met. The means and resources to meet their needs exist, but so many within the world have become hardened to the sufferings of others. They bank, hoard and build up asset after asset instead of sacrificing and reaching out to meet the needs of the world. But this is not to be true of the believer. Believers are to have compassion upon the sufferings of others. Believers are to feel compassion to the point that they are moved to act, moved to sacrifice and to reach out and meet the needs of the suffering.

Again, note how compassion leaves no room for selfishness. Compassion demands that a person deny himself and help others in their desperate needs and sufferings. Note also how compassion draws people together. Helping and ministering to one another binds and knits people together. Having compassion — feeling for one another and sacrificing and reaching out to help one another — unites people together. A great bond is created between the believer and those to whom he ministers.

Acts 20:35 “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Heb 13:3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

V. 1 Peter 03:08 Humility

Believers must be “humble” (tapeino-phrones). The word means to be humble-minded; to be lowly in mind. It means to offer oneself as lowly and submissive; to walk in a spirit of lowliness; *to present* oneself as lowly; to be of low degree and low rank; not to be high-minded, proud, haughty, arrogant or assertive.

Note: a humble person may have a high position, power, wealth, fame and much more; but he carries himself in a spirit of lowliness and submission. He denies himself for the sake of Christ and in order to help others.

Men have always looked upon humility as a vice. A lowly man is often looked upon as a coward, a cringing, despicable, slavish type of person. Men fear humility. They feel humility is a sign of weakness and will make them the object of contempt and abuse and cause them to be shunned and overlooked.

Because of all this, men ignore and shun the teaching of Christ on humility. This is tragic:

=> for a humble spirit is necessary for salvation (Mt. 18:3-4).

=> for God’s idea of humility is not weakness and cowardice.

God makes people strong, the strongest they can possibly be. By humility God does not mean what men mean. God infuses a new and strong spirit within a person and causes that person to conquer all throughout life. He just does not want the person walking around in pride. He wants the person to do what the definition says: *to offer* himself in a spirit of submissiveness and lowliness; not to act high-minded, proud, haughty, arrogant or assertive.

Humility is to be developed. Scripture tells us how:

Mat 11:29 *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Mat 18:3-4 *And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Mat 23:12 *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

Eph 4:1-2 *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Col 3:12-13 *Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

1 Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

VI. 1 Peter 03:09 Believers, Life and Walk

Do not retaliate, but bless those who do evil against you. This point refers to both believers and unbelievers. As tragic as it is, some believers do repay evil with evil and insult with insult against other believers. Nevertheless, no matter the source of the evil and insulting, true believers are not to retaliate. What are they to do when someone does evil against them?

1. The believer is not to react; he is not to return evil with evil to anyone. In the world and in the course of behaviour between men, everyone is mistreated and reacted against at one time or another. Therefore, the believer suffers evil and mistreatment just as every one else does — just in the course of behaviour as a man. However, the genuine believer suffers additional evil: he suffers evil and mistreatment because he is a follower of Jesus Christ. As a follower of Christ...
 - the believer is living a life of righteousness and purity, honesty and truthfulness; and such behaviour is often opposed by the world. Therefore, the worldly person often opposes and abuses the believer.

- the believer is bearing testimony to the corruption of the world and to God's salvation; to man's need to escape the corruption by turning to Jesus Christ and His righteousness. Again, the worldly person often opposes the message of Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

The point is this: the believer is not to react against a person who mistreats and does evil against him. There are at least two reasons why he is not to react.

- a. Reaction will most likely lose the friendship of the person and lose all hope of ever reaching the person for Jesus Christ. The evil doer will be able to say, "A Christian did that to me." The believer will have made Christ an *unappealing* Saviour. On the other hand, if the believer returns good for evil, he opens the door for eventual friendship and bears testimony to the love of God for all men, even for those who do evil.
- b. Reaction is not the way of God or of Christ.

Mat 5:39,45 *"But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

1 Pet 3:9 *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

1 Th 5:15 *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*

Lev 19:18 *"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD."*

Prov 20:22 *Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.*

Prov 24:29 *Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me; I'll pay that man back for what he did."*

2. The believer is to bless those who do evil against him. The word "bless" (eulogountes) means to speak well of.
 - a. It means to *speak well to our persecutors*. We do not react against them by cursing, speaking harshly or striking out at them. We do not try to hurt them either verbally or physically. On the contrary, we seek to find something that is commendable about them and we commend them for it.

1 Pet 3:9 *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

Eph 4:31-32 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

- b. It means to *speak well about our persecutors*. When speaking to others, we do not down the persecutor, but we mention some commendable trait. We praise some good thing about the person; we do not tear him down.
- c. It means to *pray for our persecutors*. We must do as Jesus said and did.

Mat 5:44 *“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

Luke 23:34 *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

Thought 1. Think of the impact upon persecutors when an attitude of love and blessing is demonstrated toward them. Every persecutor would not be won to Christ, but every persecutor would have a strong witness that could be used by the Holy Spirit in the persecutor’s quiet, thoughtful moments; and some persecutors would be won to Christ. This is what God is after.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

- d. It means to do good to our persecutors.

Luke 6:27 *“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”*

Luke 6:35 *“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”*

Rom 12:20 *On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”*

1 Th 5:15 *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*

Exo 23:5 *If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.*

Prov 25:21 *If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.*

- 3. The believer who blesses those who do evil against him will be greatly rewarded. Note: the believer is actually called to receive a blessing. The Amplified New Testament states it well:

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (v. 9)

The idea is that believers shall inherit eternal life. If they forgive others, God will forgive them. God will forgive them and give them the inheritance of heaven, of eternal life itself.

Mat 5:44-45 *“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*

Mat 6:14-15 *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

Mark 11:25 *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

Eph 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Col 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ■*

LOVE AND ENJOY LIFE

1 PETER 03:10–12

Introduction

We live in a world that is full of sickness and desperate needs. Many are hungry, homeless, dressed in rags, diseased and physically and emotionally ill. And to top it off, millions are lonely, empty and unfulfilled. They feel they have no significant purpose in life. They do not love or enjoy life: life is more routine and drudgery than enjoyment. This is the subject of this great passage: how to love and enjoy life. There are four steps to loving and enjoying life. (Note that these verses are a quotation of Psa. 34:12-16.)

- I. Step 1: stop your tongue (v. 10).
- II. Step 2: turn away from evil and do good (v. 11).
- III. Step 3: seek peace and pursue it (v. 11).
- IV. Step 4: remember the source of life, the Lord Himself (v. 12).

I. 1 Peter 03:10 *Disciplined Tongue*

First, stop your tongue. If you wish to love and enjoy life, the very first thing you must do is stop your tongue. Few tongues are disciplined and controlled. By far most tongues run, wag and blaze ever so loosely.

The tongue is easily stirred to run loose. It is easily ignited and just as easily set ablaze. The tongues of so many people are ever so ready...

- to react • to poison • to attack • to cut
- to defend • to hurt • to rail

A tongue that runs loose and is not controlled and disciplined knows little love and little enjoyment of life. What can be done? How can a person control and discipline his tongue? By doing two things:

1. A person must stop his tongue from speaking evil. Note: the honest and thinking person knows that no person can control and discipline his tongue perfectly. But Scripture is clear: God does not excuse us, and He expects us to stop our tongue from speaking evil. What we must remember — every couple and every believer — is that there is a vast difference between the *occasional offender* and the *constant offender*. An evil tongue is a tongue that constantly...

- cuts in and takes the floor • refuses instructions
 - interrupts and disrupts others • defends oneself
 - reacts • curses • argues
 - retaliates • backbites • criticizes
-

The list could go on and on until every act of behaviour is covered. It is very difficult to live with a constant offender of the tongue. A person whose tongue constantly does evil is destroying his or her life. And we must always remember that an evil tongue is a tongue that is constantly doing evil, evil that ranges all the way from constantly interrupting and disrupting others over to cursing and blaspheming the name of God. An evil tongue shows disrespect for others regardless of what a person claims. It shows disrespect and displeasure.

Note what the antidote is: “[he] must keep his tongue from evil.” This is an imperative, a command. The believer is personally responsible. He is to stop his tongue — hush, be quiet, quit allowing his tongue to do evil.

2. A person is to keep his lips from speaking deceitfully (dolon). A deceitful tongue is...
- a false tongue
 - a mistreating tongue
 - a cheating tongue
 - a beguiling tongue
 - a treacherous tongue
 - a flattering tongue
 - a lying tongue

We deceive and smooth talk others in order to get what we are after or to protect ourselves. But note what Scripture says: the very first step to loving and enjoying life is to keep our tongues from deceiving others. Deception leads to sin and sin destroys. Just think about the deceptive tongues that have...

- destroyed marriages
- disturbed children
- damaged friendships
- ruined reputations
- caused wars
- aroused fights
- caused injuries
- maimed bodies
- prevented promotions

If we wish to love and enjoy life, we must stop our tongues from doing evil and from deceiving others. We must control and discipline our tongues.

Thought 1. This is the duty of the believer. It is not something that God is going to do for the believer. Of course, God will help us and give us strength. Our tongues are controlled by us; they are under our power. We either do good or evil with our tongues.

Eph 4:31 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

Titus 3:1-2 *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

James 3:6 *The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

James 4:11 *Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.*

1 Pet 2:1 *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

Psa 31:13 *For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life.*

Psa 101:5 *Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.*

Prov 10:18 *He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.*

Prov 11:9 *With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbour, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

Jer 9:4 *“Beware of your friends; do not trust your brothers. For every brother is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer.”*

Isa 59:3 *For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.*

Heb 12:14-15 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

II. 1 Peter 03:11 Turn Away from Evil and Do Good

Second, turn away from evil and do good.

1. A person is to *turn from* evil. By turn from is meant to avoid and shun evil; to turn aside and away from evil. What evil is being talked about? Scripture clearly tells us what it is that we are to turn away from and flee. There are some things that we are to stop doing, some things that we are to turn away from and flee.

=> We must flee sexual immorality.

1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

=> We must flee idolatry.

1 Cor 10:14 *Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. (cp. Acts 14:15)*

=> We are to flee foolish and harmful desires and the love of money.

1 Tim 6:9-11 *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.*

=> We are to flee the evil desires of youth.

2 Tim 2:22 *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

=> We are to turn away from all forms of evil.

2 Tim 3:1-5 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

=> We are to stop and turn our tongue and lips away from evil.

1 Pet 3:10 *For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.*

The charge is direct and forceful: we are to stop doing evil. The idea is that we are to stop dead in our tracks, snatch our hands back, snap our eyes away, shut our ears from the evil. We are to turn away and flee evil lest it consume and destroy us.

Note a crucial fact: evil is being pictured as a deliberate choice. We choose to do evil. The command of God is to turn away and flee evil. Turning away and fleeing is also a deliberate choice. Turning away and fleeing evil is up to us. We are the ones who have to repent; we are the ones who have to turn away from wrongdoing and turn to God. This is the second step to loving and enjoying life.

2. A person must do good. Note: it is not enough to turn away from evil. When a person turns away from evil, he is like a vacuum. All the things that had been filling his life are set aside and his life is left with empty spaces. Whereas he had been spending time in the pleasures of the world, he now has blocks of time that must be filled. What is it that is to fill these blocks of time? What is it that is to fill the life of the person who turns away from evil and turns to God? Good works. A person who truly turns to God is a person who gives all he is and has to God. He commits his life...
 - to live a holy and righteous life.
 - to make Christ known throughout his community and all over the world.
 - to minister and meet the needs of the desperate in the world.

Psa 34:14 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Heb 13:16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

James 4:17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

III. 1 Peter 03:11 Pursue Peace

Third, seek peace and pursue it. Believers are not only to desire peace, but they are to actively pursue and go after it. The word “pursue” (dioxato) means to run after, chase after, press after and to pursue. It has the idea of swiftness and endurance — of hotly pursuing and staying after peace. We live in a world that is full of corruptible and evil people who could care less about peace and holiness just so they get what they are after. However, the believer must not give up, for peace is the very reason he is on earth.

The believer is to follow after peace (eirenen) with all men. The fact that he has to follow after peace means that peace is not always possible.

- => Some persons within the church are troublemakers: grumblers, complainers, gossipers, criticizers; some are self-centred leaders full of pride; some people within the church are just selfish and self-centred and care more about pushing themselves forward and getting their own way than they do about peace. Self is put before Christ and the church and its mission.
- => Some persons within the world are troublemakers and they cause great trouble for the believer. They oppose the believer: ridicule, mock, poke fun at, curse, abuse, persecute, ignore and isolate him.
- => Some persons within the world are troublemakers for the world at large: dissenters, dividers, fighters, egotists, power-builders, and warmongers. Some people have no interest in peace whatever unless they can have their own way.

The point is this: the believer is to follow after peace with *all men* — no matter who they are. The very purpose for the believer being on earth is to bring peace between men and God and between men and all other men. Therefore, the believer is to do all he can to live at peace with everyone and to lead others to live in peace.

The believer is to live at peace with all men. The believer is to work for as much peace as possible. Some level of harmony and concord can be achieved at least some of the time. The believer is never to give up, not as long as there is hope for some degree of peace. He is to achieve as much peace as possible. However remember, peace is not always possible — not with everyone.

IV. 1 Peter 03:12 Source of Life

Fourth, remember the source of life, the Lord Himself. No person has life apart from God, and God sees exactly who it is that is to receive life.

1. God sees the righteous, the very person who has been described in the first three points of the outline.
 - => God sees the person who controls his tongue, who does not speak evil nor deceive people.
 - => God sees the person who turns away and flees from evil.
 - => God sees the person who seeks peace and pursues it.

This is the righteous person, the person to whom God gives life and good days. Note also that it is the righteous person whose prayers are answered. God's ears are open to their prayers. The idea is that He hears their cries in times of need and He meets their need. God cares and looks after the righteous day by day, never letting them suffer more than they can bear. This is a most wonderful thing: it means that the inner cry for life is met. God gives life, both abundant and eternal life, to the righteous, and He looks after them by answering their prayers while they journey throughout life.

John 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

Heb 4:16 *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

1 John 5:14-15 *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.*

Psa 34:15 *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.*

Psa 91:15 *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

Isa 65:24 *Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*

2. God sees those who do evil. Who are the evil? Being very specific, they are those who do not do what is covered in the first three points.
 - => The evil are people who do not control their tongues and who speak evil and who deceive others with enticing and smooth talking words.
 - => The evil are people who do not turn away from evil, who do not turn away from sexual immorality, idolatry, foolish and harmful desires, the love of money, the evil desires of youth, and all forms of evil.
 - => The evil are people who do not seek and pursue peace, who are divisive, who grumble, complain, criticize, backbite, plot, fight and war.

Note that the very face of God stands against those who do evil. The picture is that God does not only see the evil person, God stands *face to face against him*. He stands face to face to judge them.

Mat 22:13 *“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

Mat 25:41 *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

Mat 7:23 *“Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Mat 25:46 *“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. ■*

STAND UP FOR CHRIST: SUFFER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

1 PETER 03:13–17

Introduction

This passage begins a new section dealing with persecution. Genuine believers suffer all kinds of persecution: being ridiculed and mocked, ignored and bypassed, isolated and cut off, abused and beaten, imprisoned and murdered. All genuine believers face some persecution at one time or another, all to varying degrees. The question is this: How can we bear up under the persecution? How can we be assured that we will stand up under the persecution and be counted faithful by God? How can we be assured that we will endure and inherit the hope of eternal life, of living with Christ forever and ever? There is only one way: we must stand up for Christ no matter the suffering or its ferociousness.

- I. First, do what is right and good (vv. 13-14).
- II. Second, set your heart on Christ and the great hope He gives (v. 15).
- III. Third, readily answer and defend the hope of salvation (v. 15).
- IV. Fourth, keep a clear conscience (vv. 16-17).

I. 1 Peter 03:13–14 Do What is Right and Good

The first answer to persecution is to do what is right and good. Note the verse: it actually says to become “eager to do good.” The word “eager” (*zelotai*) means zealot. The believer is to be so zealous for what is right that he is actually known as a zealot for good. Imagine being gripped with so much passion and zeal for good that one becomes known as a zealot! This is the challenge of this passage. Several attitudes toward doing good permeate society.

- => Some persons have a *care less attitude* toward goodness. Doing what is right and good matters little. What is right and good is rebelled against, ignored, cursed and rejected. The person has little conscience about right and wrong. His values are ever so weak. He could care less if he does what is right and good.
 - => Some persons have a *selfish attitude* toward goodness. If doing what is right and good benefits them, then they do it. If it helps them, meets their need and enlarges their holdings, then they do what is right. But if it costs them, demands discipline and control, and takes away from their pleasure and holdings, then they reject the good and refuse to do what is right.
 - => Some persons have a *surface or sentimental attitude* to what is good and right. They readily profess to believe in what is good and right and want to be known as moral and upright. But behind the scenes they go ahead and live like they want and do their own thing.
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Some persons, of course, have a zealous attitude toward what is right and good. They have committed their lives to seeking and doing what they should. This is exactly what Scripture is saying: "Be a zealot – be a fanatic – be a passionate follower – after that which is good and right." Note three points.

1. The believer who does good will be less likely to suffer persecution (v. 13). Most people will appreciate the good that we do, including our neighbours and civil authorities. Doing good will keep us from getting into trouble with the law and from offending our neighbours, fellow workers, and community. Therefore, the chance of our being persecuted becomes less likely.

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

1 Pet 3:13 *Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?*

Job 11:18 *You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.*

Psa 91:5 *You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,*

Psa 112:7 *They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD.*

Prov 3:24 *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

2. The believer who suffers persecution will be blessed by God. How can a person who is suffering persecution be blessed? When a person focuses his mind and life upon the things of this world, they can be snatched from him overnight. The person can be stricken with a disease, suffer a heart attack, have an accident, go through bankruptcy, lose everything he has through an economic slump or stock market crash. A black Monday can happen anytime and anywhere in this world. A person of the world can suffer such a crushing blow that he is destroyed and left hopeless and helpless in life, but not a true believer. The mind and life of the true believer are focused upon Jesus Christ; therefore, no matter what he suffers, he still has his most cherished possession – Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. He knows that Jesus Christ is going to look after him and take care of him: that Christ is going to work everything out for good.

The very same thing happens when the believer is persecuted for righteousness' sake. His mind and life are focused upon Christ; therefore, he possesses Christ and all the promises of Christ. He possesses such promises as these:

=> God will work all things out for good for him.

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

=> God will provide all the necessities of life for him.

Mat 6:33 *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

=> God will give him a very special Spirit of glory to rest upon him.

1 Pet 4:14 *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

=> The life of Christ will be revealed in his body.

2 Cor 4:11 *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

=> God will give him a great reward in heaven.

Mat 5:11-12 *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

2 Tim 2:12 *If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*

=> The Lord will take him on to heaven and preserve him through all of eternity when the time comes for him to leave this earth.

2 Tim 4:18 *The LORD will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Note how wonderful and glorious these promises are. There are so many more promises, so many in fact that, as John the Apostle says, the world itself could not contain enough shelves to hold the books if all the promises of God were written out (cp. Jn. 21:25).

3. The believer is not to fear nor be troubled by the terror of persecution. No matter what the suffering is — ridicule, mockery, abuse, assault, rejection, being bypassed, imprisoned or martyred — if the believer is persecuted because he stands up for Christ, he is not to fear. God will meet his need. God has great things in store for the believer; therefore, God shall never forsake him.

=> God will strengthen him to bear the persecution.

=> God will use his suffering as a strong testimony for Christ and touch the hearts of some of the persecutors.

=> God will use his suffering to make him a far stronger believer, to make him more and more secure in Christ.

Exo 14:14 *“The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*

Deu 31:6 *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.*

Psa 34:7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.*

Psa 91:4 *He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 41:13 *For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.*

Isa 43:1-2 *But now, this is what the LORD says — he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”*

Mat 10:30-31 *“And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

Phil 1:27 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved — and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,*

Rev 1:17-18 *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

II. 1 Peter 03:15 Dedication: Set Your Heart Upon Christ

The second answer to persecution is to set your heart upon Christ and the great hope He gives to believers. The believer is to receive Christ into his heart. Christ alone is to fill the heart of the believer. The believer’s heart is to be sanctified, that is, filled with Christ

and focused upon Christ. Why? Because Christ is his only hope of salvation. Jesus Christ promises to save all who receive Him into their hearts. Therefore, if a person wishes to be saved, he must have Jesus Christ in his heart.

The point is this: if Jesus Christ is in the heart of the believer, then the believer has the greatest of hopes, the hope of salvation and of living forever. It is this hope that stirs the believer to bear persecution. Christ, who lives within the believer, strengthens the believer. How? Christ stirs the hope of salvation within the heart of the believer and arouses him to endure the suffering no matter how fierce and threatening. Christ arouses great assurance within the believer, the assurance that the hope of salvation is true and that it is right around the corner. The person who has truly sanctified Christ within his heart loves Christ and wants to please Christ. He knows that Christ has died for him and is going to conform him into the very image of the Son of God Himself. Therefore, the true believer wants to please Christ. The believer would never think of displeasing Christ nor of hurting and causing Christ pain, especially by buckling under to persecution and denying Him. But remember: only the person who has sanctified Christ within his heart can stand fast against persecution. Our hearts must be filled with Christ and focused upon Christ to bear suffering for righteousness' sake.

***John 17:23** "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know; that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

***Ga1 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

***James 1:12** Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

***2 Pet 2:9** If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

***1 John 3:24** Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

***Rev 3:20** Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

III. 1 Peter 03:15 Readily Defend the Hope of Salvation

The third answer to persecution is to readily answer and defend the hope of salvation to every man, but to do so with meekness and fear. The word "answer" or "defend" (apologian) means just that, to answer back or to give a defence of the believer's hope (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 114).

1. The believer is to answer *every man* who asks him about his hope of salvation and of living forever. He is to answer every...

- neighbour • friend • foe • civil authority
- employer • employee • classmate • legal authority
- stranger • fellow worker

The believer is to miss no opportunity to witness for Christ. He is not to shirk his duty in witnessing, and he is not to neglect or ignore anyone. Day by day as he crosses the path of others, he is to give an answer and defend the hope of salvation to all who ask and will listen.

2. The believer is to *be ready* to answer and defend the hope of salvation. This means preparation; it means study, meditation and prayer. The believer must study the Scripture, study all about God and Christ, all about the salvation and promises of God. The believer must know the Scripture and live in prayer in order to be ready to witness.

Thought 1. The great tragedy is that most professing believers do not know what they believe. They know little about Christ, what it is that makes Him so unique and superior. Few can witness and lead anyone else to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Few are willing to take the time or exert the effort to study God's Word and to learn the truth. Most are just not willing to pay the price to learn about God and Christ and to prepare themselves to be dynamic witnesses for Christ.

3. The believer is to be very careful about how he answers and defends the hope of salvation. He is to answer people with a spirit of gentleness and of respect before God.

=> By gentleness is meant a spirit of tenderness and softness, of care and love, of humility and brokenness. But note: gentleness also means a spirit of strength and courage. Gentleness does not put up with sin and shame, license and indulgence. It does all it can to relieve and correct evil and mistreatment. Too often witnessing is done in a spirit of superiority and arrogance, argument and controversy, criticism and divisiveness.

=> By respect is meant fearing God lest one misrepresent or twist the truth of God's salvation. It means to hold God in such reverence and awe that one bears witness only in a spirit of constant prayer and dependence upon God. One knows and acknowledges that God is the Source of salvation; He alone can save a person. Therefore, one is ever so careful to present only the truth of God's Word and of salvation.

Thought 1. Too often witnessing is done in a spirit of pride and bitterness, of pushing oneself forward instead of God. The spirit of fearing God is all but forgotten; God is not revered: the truth of His salvation is twisted to make oneself more acceptable and recognized.

The point is this: the answer to persecution is to bear a clear and strong witness for Christ, but to do so with gentleness and in the respect of God. By bearing a strong but gentle witness, those who oppose us will understand more about why we hold to such a glorious hope. In some cases, some of them will even be saved.

Thought 2. Alan Stibbs has an excellent statement on this point that is well worth our noting:

“We have here some practical guidance concerning Christian witness. It is wrong to be always preaching at people. The Christian wife has been encouraged by Peter to seek to win her unbelieving husband without speaking to him on the subject (3:1). But the whole situation is changed if the other person asks for an explanation. Also, if Christians are on the alert, they may often rightly discern an implied question in some passing comment. Then is the time to speak; but one can do so only if one is seeking to be ready.

“The Christian is then to engage, not in an aggressive attack on the other person’s will or prejudice, but in a logical account...or reasoned explanation of the hope that is [in him]” (*The First Epistle General of Peter*. “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 136).

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

2 Cor 4:13 *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

2 Tim 1:8 *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

IV. 1 Peter 03:16–17 Keep a Clear Conscience

The fourth answer to persecution is to keep a clear conscience. Note the reference...

- to a good or dear conscience.
- to a good behaviour, that is, good conduct.

The only way a person can have a clear conscience is to have good conduct. If the believer is to stand against persecution, he must have a clear conscience, and to have a clear conscience he must have good conduct and behaviour. The believer must be living a good life; his conduct and behaviour must be holy, righteous, pure, decent, upright and above reproach. He must have a conscience and a behaviour that are without blame, that cannot be justly blamed with any sin or evil. Note two points.

1. Those who oppose and persecute believers will be put to shame by the believer's good behaviour and clear conscience. Some people will always oppose and persecute believers. If a person really lives for Jesus Christ, his righteousness and self-denial convicts those who love this world and its pleasures and possessions. Therefore, they often persecute the believer, ridicule, mock, isolate, abuse, imprison or kill him. The worldly do all they can to stop the witness of the believer. But note: eventually those who oppose and persecute the believer will be put to shame. The good and righteous behaviour of the believer will vindicate the believer either in this world or in the next world. The persecutor will stand ashamed of his attacks against the believer; the idea is that he will be eternally shamed.
2. It is better for believers to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. This is only common sense: a person can bear suffering much easier if he is suffering for a good and just cause. It is very difficult to stand up under suffering when it is an unjust and evil cause. Note also that it is the will of God for believers to suffer, that is to bear up under persecution, but not for doing evil. God wants believers living righteous and pure lives and He wants them witnessing for Him even if they do face persecution for it. This is the will of God; therefore, believers are to keep a clear conscience before God.

Mat 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

1 Th 1:8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia — your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.

1 Tim 4:12 *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

James 2:18 *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

James 3:13 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

1 Pet 2:12 *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

2 Pet 3:10-12 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ■*