

XXIV. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The Sojourner’s Journey—Submission, Part 5”
I Peter 3:8–12
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I Peter 3:8–9 says [8] **Finally**, *all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. [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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The word ‘finally’ that is long to be heard in a sermon but don’t let it encourage you too much because the preacher probably doesn’t mean it. It’s just the first of series of ‘finallys’ and that’s exactly the way Peter is giving it here. There was this wonderful family I pastored in Charlotte, North Carolina and came to Christ during the Jesus Movement out in California. They had six children, five boys and one girl. The girl was the caboose and that family always sat toward the front right to my right. I watched them grow and learn so much but they had some boys who were boys.

Back in those days I had a habit of taking my watch off and put it on the pulpit when I started preaching. Then when I reached the end of the sermon I would reach up and take the watch to put it back on during the conclusion. Now this little 10 year old boy named Wyatt, from this family got the flow of what I was doing. The watch goes on ‘here we go’ and watch comes off ‘it won’t be long now’ is what he would be thinking. This one Sunday I had gotten toward the end and put my watch on and then got excited about something I was saying and not thinking took it back off and put it down. Wyatt turned to his daddy in a voice everyone around them could here including me and said ‘Oh no Daddy he is starting all over again!’

So this finally in I Peter 3:8 is not the end of Peter’s sermon/letter, on the Christian life to the elect exiles in the churches to Asia Minor, but it is the final application of the Gospel command to submit yourself to one another. He has identified all the believers as elect exiles and because of being elect in the saving grace of Christ, Peter gave a series of 13 statements of Gospel blessings through what Christ has done to save you. The same Jesus who gave you these Gospel blessings by what He did on the cross in His resurrection, from heaven gives us Gospel commands as to why He saved us and how we’re to live. We are not insiders. We are outsiders but we’re to go inside to the world to tell people about Jesus. So how do we live for Jesus?

Peter has given us five Gospel commands and he will give us more but currently we’re on the fifth one. When you have been converted you have surrendered and submitted to Him and one of the evidences of submission to Christ is the ability and desire to submit to every human institution. In our study on I Peter he has gone through a series of these types of submissions. We have seen how Christian citizen submit to the emperor, Christian slaves submit to masters, Christian wives submit to their husbands and how husbands who have surrendered and submitted to Christ care for their wives. Now we come to the fifth and last application of submission.

So he says finally, this is the last thing I’m going to say about submission and he addresses **all** Christians, those that make up the body of Christ, the church of Christ and not just specific groupings. Paul’s language on this is to submit to one another. Peter is going to give us five marks, five adjectives that are positive, of submission and this is the only place all five of

these are used except that one of these is used twice in one other place. Now these five are used as nouns and verbs all over the Bible but this is the only time they are used together. Here he will also give us two negative marks (what not to do) on submitting to one another. Then Peter gives us a promise after giving us these seven marks.

The five positive marks given from I Peter 3:8 are unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender-hearted and humble mind as to how we are to live in submission to one another. These five marks have to be embraced as a way of life in the life of the believer. So let's look at the first one – unity of mind. How do we do this? If the church is reaching out in its community then there is going to be diversity that is represented from that community. There will be old, young, married, single, widowed, engaged couples, rich, poor, racial and ethnic diversity, etc. Now when these all were converted they didn't have the same mind for they looked at life through various prisms and emphases of life but Peter is asking that all these Christians have unity of mind.

So here is the question, whose mind? This is where Peter and Paul in the Bible keep helping us. Paul says it this way in Romans 15:5 which says *[5] Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus (ASV)*. We have the unity of mind as we are busily having our mind renewed to the mind of Christ and we find the mind of Christ in the Word of God. Philippians 2:5 says *[5] Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (ASV)*. In the hymn *May the Mind of Christ, My Savior*, it says;
*May the mind of Christ, my Savior,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and pow'r controlling
All I do and say.*

We want our mind renewed by that perfect will of God through the Word of God. Many Christians try to have their mind in what they think is right and go to the Bible to try to proof text it. But for a Christian to have unity of mind for all of us believers to be on the same page, we go to the mind of Christ to take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). We want to think His thoughts, His Word and His truth. We don't have it automatically. Praise God that when we were converted we received a new heart, a new record, a new family, a new life and a new home but we didn't get a new mind. We did get the mind of Christ in the Word of God and The Teacher, the Spirit of Christ so that with the Spirit of Christ and the Word of God we can begin to study to show ourselves approved as a workman that rightly handles the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:5) so that we begin to think Biblically in life. That becomes our unity of mind.

As I thought of an illustration for this I was brought back a long time ago to the athletic years of my life and the sports teams I played on. Some of these teams had amazing diversity but no matter how diverse we were we never thought of our differences for we just thought as a team. We had the same uniform, with the same name on our uniform, the same goal and the diversity never became the focus. If the diversity ever became the focus we couldn't do anything. The diversity was our unity and that's what allowed our unity to become an asset. The objective was that we were going to get that ball across that goal line. Our diversity becomes a strength because we're all bringing different abilities to that task.

As Christians we all have the same uniform. Our old uniform has been taken away at the cross and that was our sin record. We now have a new uniform which is the righteousness of Christ that clothes us. We now have a new identity. Our identity is not any of our past sins. Our identity is Jesus for to me to live is Christ because Christ is my life. In Christ my mind has been

renewed whereby we have unity of mind together so that all of us are on the same mission, with the same message and the same ministry of serving Christ as Lord with our diverse gifts that God has given to us – the mind according to Christ.

I love being a part of a congregation that has a confession of faith and not what the last pastor believes that the church believes, but it's what we confess. It's the faith that once and for all delivered to the saints and the preacher is to preach the Word of God to his congregation. We're not going to rest the Scripture for the mind of the preacher. We want those we look to for spiritual guidance to give their heart and soul to Christ to help us have the mind of Christ revealed in His Word.

The second mark is to be sympathetic. The word pathos is in this word that means depth of feelings, passions, feelings and we tend to think immediately that this word is the ability to identify with someone grieving but it's bigger than that in this text. By the way, that is not sympathy it's empathy to identify with someone grieving. Empathy is to be aware of the depth of passions. Sympathy requires empathy but goes beyond empathy. In empathy you are aware but in sympathy you're there. You can't be there unless you're aware. Are they weeping or rejoicing? Sympathy is engagement.

Paul says in Romans 12:15, *[15] Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep.* If you can't weep with those who weep then that reveals a prideful, arrogant and self-righteous heart. If you can't rejoice with those who rejoice that reveals envy and jealousy. Not only be happy for them but with them. This is how God has called us into this relationship with each other. That then gives us the opportunity for the third mark.

The third mark is brotherly love. This is family love. We're a family. Family love is loyal, persistent and you can't resign from family love. In friendship you choose your friends but God gives you your family and then calls you to love them. This includes your immediate family and your church family. You may say 'I don't like them' and that's okay but you love them. He calls us to love one another. When you have the unity of mind in Christ you can be sympathetic and now have the ability to embrace one another with brotherly love.

Brotherly love is an active love. This is where the Greek language is so far ahead of us because it has at least six words to identify love. Eros is a romantic and erotic love. Agape is a sacrificial love. Storgē is a family structure love. Phileo is a brothers and sisters kind of love which is what we're supposed to have in each other's lives. We don't have words like that in the English language so we have to rely on tone. There is a loyalty, persistence and a dig-down-deep-for-the-long-haul factor in a brotherly love between people. If men really have that brotherly love for each other they'll say 'I love ya man' and then give each other a side to side hug with two pats. If it's one pat it's a little bit suspect. Women tend to touch each other and say 'Aaawwww.' It is that tie that binds us to each other in Christian love.

Brotherly love leads to the fourth mark of a tender heart. Some translations have the word compassion in place of tender heart and that's exactly what it's talking about. As you love someone you get tender toward their joys and hurts but that doesn't mean you're going to coddle sin. Tender hearted is knowing our frailties in life spiritually and physically, our sins but doesn't make allowances for sin, just allowances to grow in grace as we deal with sin in our life. That tender heartedness is seen in the deeds of love and truth. Jesus was showing a tender heart as the Bible says 'He was moved with compassion when He saw the crowd like sheep without a shepherd' (Matthew 9:36). The next thing you see He is feeding 5,000 with a miracle. He did the same with a leper and with a woman whose only son was on the funeral platform and He felt compassion as He touched the funeral platform and raised the young man from the dead.

We're in a tough world and sometimes there is not a lot of tenderness. Sometimes the tenderness is an accommodation of evil but there's a way not to accommodate and promote evil as you are tender hearted toward brothers and sisters that are on the journey as sojourners. The key to a tender heart is to have a thin heart and to have a thin heart you have to have a thick skin. If you develop a thin skin you'll get a thick heart. A thick skin says 'I'm not going to be hurt by this. I'm going to turn this over to the Lord. This is not going to stop me in responding with tenderness.' I want a thin heart that God can easily reach to minister to others. This leads us to mark number five.

The fifth mark is a humble mind. According to Jesus John the Baptist is the greatest man born to women. Could that be related to the way that John the Baptist identified his life? John the Baptist says in John 3:30, *[30] He must increase, but I must decrease.* I don't want the first chair, I want the last chair. I'm not worthy to untie His sandals. Is there anyone more glorious than He who stoops to wash feet? This is humility of mind. I don't want to assume the position of honor. Sometimes things happen in our life to help us realize how much we need to learn these things.

I remember doing a conference at a place that was well-known for East Carolina Barbeque. I had my son with me on this trip. So I worked my way around toward the front of the tables where the line would start for the food because I figured they would ask me to pray which they did. We were right there at the front going through the line first where I would get this BBQ when it was steaming hot. What I had not realized was right after that meal I was going to be preaching at a service on the first shall be last and the last shall be first. There was something that was not complementary in my actions in what I was preaching. I got under such conviction while I was preaching that I had to stop in the middle of my sermon and confess to the congregation and to my son of what I had done. I had just taught the opposite to my son of what I was preaching on and I needed him to forgive plus the congregation and I didn't want to forget this ever again.

Our natural inclination is not humility of mind. The next time you confess your sins watch how many times you conditional it even when you're talking to the Lord. We're always covering ourselves or promoting ourselves because that's our tendency. God, please now make my mind not only a unity mind but a humble mind. Give me a humble mind in which I do not focus upon myself. In fact one of mentors Dr. Martin, said 'There is not strut in the walk of a Christian.' I believe you walk with your head up but you have a mission to accomplish. You walk with resolute eyes fixed on Jesus but we don't strut or need a parade because it's not about us. The Christian life is one in which we're ready to hear our Savior.

Philippians 2:5–8 says *[5] Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [6] who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; [8] and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.* God, give us that mind of humility in our life and in the way we live.

So when you look at the body of Christ, on its journey together, what do you see in that church? You want to see unity of mind. You want to see sympathetic relationships and not sympathy with sin but sympathy with sinners who are growing in grace on the journey. You want to see brotherly love and tenderheartedness, with humble mindedness. That's what we are looking at in the body of Christ. Now we are positioned to see the negatives.

There are two negatives we see in I Peter 3:9. The first one is *do not repay evil for evil*. Refuse to return evil for evil. The second is do not return *reviling for reviling*. So when someone does something to you don't do back to them what they did to you. Again, this is contrary to our natural state. When you were growing up if someone pushed you on the playground you pushed them back and you push a little harder as you do this. I won't only pay you back but I'm going to give you a little extra. This is our natural inclination. This is the way the world lives. Peter tells Christians that this is not them, they don't do this. He tells us not to repay evil back or verbally revile back when this is being done to us.

So what are we to do? It's not just what you don't do but *on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called*. You are to bless those who have done evil to you and reviled you. There are two ways you bless people. One is you pray for them. Peter is thinking about what he learned from the Sermon on the Mount because this is what Jesus said. Matthew 5:10–11 says [10] "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* [11] "*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* So you pray for them and then actively speak or do that which blesses them. God has blessed you so that you would bless them.

Then Peter gives this promise... *that you may obtain a blessing*. The Lord has promised to bless His people whom He has blessed to be a blessing. This is not works salvation because you wouldn't be blessings others if He had not already blessed you with salvation. We are talking about a real life reciprocal relationship that we have with the Lord. When you draw near to God He draws near to you. He wouldn't be telling you to do this if you were not born again, covered with the blood of Jesus, filled with the Spirit and chosen in Him. He has blessed you to be a blessing so when someone reviles you bless, because when you reviled Me I blessed you and now I have blessed you to save you. When you bless them He continues to bless you and your intimacy, vibrancy and vitality begins to grow.

It's not you bless enough people to get saved because you can't bless enough people to get saved. He is telling you I've blessed you so you bless others. We are to be channels for Him to work through to bless others. We're blessed to be a blessing. To be this blessing gives you a deeper intimacy with Him. Peter is calling upon something that is written in the Psalms. Psalm 34 is quoted here in I Peter 3.

I Peter 3:10–12 says [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.*

If you want a vibrant life in the Lord then get control of your tongue. Don't let it return evil for evil. You do good not to be saved but because you're saved. There is a whole other level of robustness and vitality when you by His grace intentionally live in submission to one another and part of that is not returning evil for evil or reviling when reviled. It doesn't say if you're reviled because you will be reviled. This is how we are to respond when that happens. That last sentence means that if we revile people we will be disciplined. You won't lose your salvation but if you return evil for evil or revile the Lord will discipline you. This is not condemning judgment but disciplining judgment in our life.

So where does this leave us? I want to give you a couple of thoughts and a takeaway. First, think of these five marks as a five jeweled bracelet. I gave much of my life to study this particular general in the Civil War and he was a Bible teacher at Bowdoin College in Maine. He fought in the Union Army and his name was Joshua Chamberlain. After the war he came back

and become a governor and then became the president of Bowdoin College. He also won the Congressional Medal of Honor and in a number of battles, wounded six times but he had a bracelet he had made. For each battle he was in it was represented by this beautiful jewel and he had the bracelet made to give to his wife. At the college there is a room set aside for him and this is where I read about this bracelet.

When I read that I thought about these five beautiful jewels/marks and if I could I would preach one sermon for each one of those marks for that's how glorious they are. These five beautiful jewels are displayed in the lives of believers and displayed in the life of His church. Paul faced down Peter when he faced another gospel but the reason Paul was able to confront Peter on this was because they loved each other and that's how they were able to speak the truth in love to each other. Each jewel is beautiful yet they're all related.

I believe in verbal plenary inspiration where every word and the order of them are there for a reason. There's a reason He says to get rid of stinkin' thinkin' and think with unity of mind – the mind of Christ. When you get to thinking right in Christ now you can be sympathetic where you not only are aware of passions but you can enter into passions Biblically. Now you can engage in brotherly love and demonstrate tender heartedness which will be fleshed out in humility. Each jewel is interconnected and interdependent and when you fasten clasp the humility of mind leads you right back to unity of mind. They are all united as the circular keeps working in your life to grow you in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Just think of this is in contrast to the world. If this is just to some measure in the body of Christ and in a local church you see the contrast for your living in a polarized world where people are devouring each other. There is the politics of destruction, greed in the corporate workplace and its divided, polarized and devouring each other. The only hope is the Gospel of grace and we're in such an opportunity today where people would see this in the body of Christ and want to be a part of it, where people's reputations are actually safe, people's hearts are tender toward each other.

Please understand we will not have these marks exhibited to the world if we play drive by church. You can't know when people are weeping if you're not related to them. There is a reason we have a big worship time, a congregational community and small groups and it's so that we can be transparent. You can't do this if you're not open about where you are and if you're not inviting people to be open by being connected to them, with them and a part of their lives. Church is not just attending, it's a relationship with each other where we are a community of believers, the family of God, we love one another and can't wait to be with each other, in descending levels of intimacy and ascending levels of transparency. We hate it when we're apart but by God's grace we'll meet again.

It's like that old hymn that says;

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

We are grieved when we're apart but we want to be with one another. Do you know how many people would ask us about the Gospel if they saw that displayed? I get to preach to you whom I get to learn from on this but by God's grace may it still excel still more.

Lastly, this is functionally counter cultural. When you are reviled and you don't revile or do those things the world does but instead return a blessing, what would that open up? Do you think Saul was impacted when sat, participated and watched as the stones were raining down on

Stephen and Stephen looked up and said ‘Father, forgive them they know not what they are doing.’ Do you think Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion recorded in Daniel 4 has anything to do with when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were delivered by the hand of God in the fiery furnace or when Daniel came out of the lion’s den without a scratch and humbly began to minister to the king who put him there? What do you happened to Joseph’s brothers when he had them by the neck and told them not to fear because what they meant for evil God meant for good to bring about this good thing at this time. Then Joseph blessed them by saving them from a famine. Joseph also blessed those who betrayed him at Potiphar’s house and while he was in prison and yet he saved a whole nation with wisdom as a statesman.

Then there is Paul where the Philippian jailer scourges him and inappropriately incarcerates him but then God delivers him. Now the jailer is ready to kill himself because he is now under a sentence of death for losing his prisoners but Paul blesses the man who had persecuted him. He said to him ‘don’t kill yourself for we’re all here.’ And the Philippian jailer and his household are brought into the Kingdom of God.

All of these are encouraging but yet they pale in comparison to our Savior. Do you not see Him at the cross as they rail and mock Him and He says ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’ The thieves are mocking him but to one he hears Him say ‘This day you will be with Me in paradise.’ Here is our Savior who has blessed us to be that kind of blessing to others. We are going to falter but He is ready to keep growing you on this sojourner’s journey but here are the markers for us. It is enough for me to see my Savior on a cross to embrace these markers as frail and incompetent as I am in it, but at least some measure of growth by God’s grace I can expect as His grace is greater than my sin.

Can you imagine, as men and women have their hands on the Son of God for one time in history and they are crucifying Him, mocking Him, beating Him, the angels in glory are straining over the ramparts of heaven at the tether but Jesus holds the tether? Sodom and Gomorrah would be nothing compared to what these angels would want to bring, but Jesus says ‘stay, for those who revile Me, mock Me and persecute Me, I’ll stay on this cross to save sinners’ and He stayed. By God’s grace we get to reflect that.

My dear friend, I don’t know where you are today and I’m not telling you the church is perfect in this but I’m telling you what our Savior called us to because of what He did. I don’t want to call you to that church but to that Savior who is making His church and you have never come to Him, we’re here to invite you to Him. We say ‘come’ and the Spirit says ‘come’ and that Savior came for you. If you want to pray with someone call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 or if this has touched your heart in anyway and you want to pray with someone, then don’t let the sun go down come and pray with someone.

May God give us such a testimony, growing by His grace that the world would do what Jesus said they would do – they will know you are Christians by your love. They will know you are My disciples by how you love one another – by unity of mind, sympathetic, brotherly love, tenderhearted, humble in mind, not returning evil for evil or reviling when reviled but blessing others to bless the Lord who has blessed us for His glory. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the great privilege to go into this text. Thank You for the 34th Psalm that moved Peter by the Spirit of God to give us this intentional, Holy Spirit enabled, and grace empowered life. Father will You so develop it in us? Thank You for what You’ve already done and I stand in amazement but grow

us so that this world in its polarization, division, destruction and its devouring culture of death, would see the glorious testimony of saving grace that brings sinners to Christ and sends sinners changed and changing for Christ, together. Praise the Lord, Amen!

Power Point

FIVE MARKS OF SUBMISSION WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- I. Unity of Mind
- II. Sympathetic
- III. Brotherly Love
- IV. A Tender Heart
- V. A Humble Mind

TWO MARKS OF SUBMISSION FROM THE BODY OF CHRIST

- I. Refusal to repay evil for evil
- II. Refusal to revile when reviled

ONE PROMISE

The Lord has promised to bless His people whom He has blessed to be a blessing.

LIFE TAKEAWAY

- I. Five Jeweled Bracelet
- II. Contrast
- III. Counter-Cultural