

Finding Favor with God

1 Peter 3:8-19

March 25-26, 2017

The theme of 1 Peter is that there is a great distinction between the life we had when we were in the world and the life we now have because we are born again into the kingdom of God. Over and over Peter emphasizes the significance of being born again. *“Behold, I am making all things new,”* God says in the book of Revelation. Paul wrote the same thing to the Corinthians, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*

This letter is really about what it looks like to be born again into the kingdom of God, while living in this broken down, evil world with all its troubles and difficulties.

The favor of God is distinctly upon the believer who is born again into the kingdom of God and lives according to the principles of the kingdom, especially with all the troubles that come with living in this broken, evil world where people hurt and offend you and speak evil against you.

Maybe you have difficult people in your life, you need the power of God to be different than the world, to live with the blessing of God in His kingdom.

I. **Be Kindhearted and Humble**

- We live in a time of tremendous animosity. I've never seen such division and heard such mean-spirited words like what is happening today.
- The trend of Internet trolling is new, but the ugliness behind it has been around since the fall of man.
- But we're called to be different; lay aside ugly things and understand that we are living in a kingdom that has different principles at work.
- So how do you respond to the mean-spirited, ugly culture in which we live or to the people in your life that seem intent on making life difficult?

A. Don't return evil for evil

- There is an unspoken rule that whatever someone does to you, you can do the same to them. After all, it's only fair, right? Isn't equity fair?
- If they say mean-spirited things to you, you ought to be able to say mean-spirited things right back. If they raise their voice at you, you ought to be able to raise your voice right back.

- But that's a worldly principle, not a godly one. You're in the kingdom of God now and he says to you, "Don't return evil for evil, or insult for insult."
- Jesus himself is the greatest example when He prayed for His persecutors...

Luke 23:33-34, When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

- What an example. You may have to pray that prayer over and over, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do."
- Paul wrote the same to the church in Rome.

Romans 12:17-18, Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

- But why? Why is this better? Several reasons.
- First; because it isn't about what's fair. If I got what was fair that I would have to pay the penalty for my own sins. God didn't give me what was fair, He gave me what was gracious.

- Second; when you repay evil with evil, doesn't that require you to be evil? When you return an insult for insult, does that not require an insult to come out of your mouth?
- When you return anger for anger, doesn't that require you to become angry? When you return cuss words with cuss words, doesn't that require you to become worldly? When you return a raised voice with a raised voice, doesn't that require you to raise your voice?

James 3:10, From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

- Third; another reason this principle is in the kingdom of heaven is because this is the heart of our Father...

Matthew 5:44-45, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

- The sun that rises and the rain that comes in its season are blessings that come from God and His blessings fall on the evil and the good. In other words, God's goodness and grace are extended to everyone and He wants us to have the same heart.

- You do the same and you'll be like your Father.

B. Give a blessing instead

- Verse 9 – not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead...
- Jesus said to pray for those who persecute you. He means the right kind of prayer, the prayer that blesses, not praying something like, ***“Break the teeth of the wicked, O God!”***
- When you forgive them, and pray for them, and give a blessing instead, it doesn't guarantee that they will ever change. They may never change, but you will.

Illus – The trial for our daughter's murderer was supposed to begin a couple weeks ago. We were all in the courtroom waiting for the trial to begin, and there he sat, the man who took our daughter's life. Later, one of the reporters called and asked if it troubled me to be in the same room with him. No, I answered, it doesn't bother me. I pray for him. He's empty and lost and his soul is in agony. I forgive him because I don't want to spend the rest of my life in the prison of bitterness and unforgiveness.

- In order to pay back evil for evil, you have to become evil, but when you give a blessing

instead, you're living out of the character of God in your life.

Romans 12:20-21, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- A lot of people really like the part about 'heaping burning coals on his head,' that sounds great; but it means that the mean spiritedness of your enemy should stand out against the backdrop of your good-heartedness and perhaps he'll feel the shame of being mean-spirited when you treat him well.
- The same is true with us, it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance, Paul wrote.
- I've also found that it confounds your enemy...

Illus - When I was youth director many years ago, I was playing basketball with some of our boys and another group of guys asked us to play a game. Little did we know how mean-spirited they were. It became an opportunity for a spiritual lesson...

Later, it became a life lesson for my children... when our daughter, Nicole, played

basketball at her Christian school, they had to play against a mean-spirited public school team...

- Here's the point, when you do what God asks you to do, power shows up. When you bless and don't curse, your words have real power because God will back them up.
- This is a biblical principle that goes all the way back to the Law of Moses...

Exodus 23:4-5, If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him.

C. This is the way of God's favor

- Verse 9 – but give a blessing instead; for you are called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.
- There is great confidence in God's favor when you're doing what God asks you to do. There is a confidence in God – and that strengthens your faith.

1 Peter 2:20, When you do what is right and suffer for it and you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

- One of the aspects of the favor of God on your life is that He is attentive to your prayer. When God is attentive, it gives power to your prayer.
- Earlier he made the point that husbands should grant their wives honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life *so that your prayers may not be hindered*.
- When you speak with honor to your wife and treat her as a fellow heir of the grace of life, power shows up in your life because God blesses it.
- Verse 12 – for the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer...

II. God's Favor Rests Even in Trials

- Verse 14 - Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness... You are blessed.
- God's favor is distinctly upon the believer who trusts in God with living faith in spite of the fact that we encounter trials and difficulties.
- Those whom God uses in great things are often those who suffer greatly. They trust in God in spite of what they suffer so that they can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper,

I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

A. Do not let your heart be troubled

- Verse 14 - Do not fear their attempts to make you afraid... And do not be troubled.
- The one thing we must not do is to give in to fear and let our heart be troubled.
- Fear is the opposite of faith and we were never meant to be imprisoned by it.

Illus – To quote from Ronald Reagan’s speech in 1964, a speech that made him famous, “There is one way you can have peace – and you can have it in the next second – surrender... If nothing in this life is worth dying for, when did this begin? Should Moses have told the children of Israel to live in slavery under the pharaohs? Should Christ have refused the cross?”

2 Timothy 1:7, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.

Illus – The terrorists of our modern day hope to control the world by fear and intimidation, but fear is a prison and we were never meant to live in it.

- Those who are born again into the kingdom of God are free and should live like free men.

1 Peter 2:16, Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves of God.

- Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness – *you are blessed*.
- Some would ask; how is it possible that you are blessed if in fact you are suffering?
Answer: God will see to it.
- Too many people are myopic and they only see what's happening in the moment, but those who have an eternal perspective greatly value God's blessing.

James 1:12, Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

B. You have reason to hope

- Verse 15 – Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.
- Sanctify Christ – set Him apart from all the other things in your life that He would be Lord, Captain, Master and Commander.

- Then Peter wrote that we should always be ready to make a defense, or to give an answer, to everyone who ask you to give an account for the hope that is in you.
- The word there in the Greek is *apologia* and we get the word apologetics from it. Some read that to mean that we should all be ready to defend the faith by knowing all the points of theology.
- That's not what Peter is saying. Besides that many people just want to antagonize with what they think are conundrums...

Illus – “Where did Cain get his wife?”

- Be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give an account *of the hope that is in you.*
- If someone says, “What is it with you? How can you have such hope when life is so hard?” Be ready to give an answer. Share your hope and give them life.

Illus - Shortly after our daughter died someone came up after the service and said, “How can you have even a shred of faith left?” Oh, I have hope and I’m more than happy to share it. I know my daughter has a Savior; I know who holds her in heaven. He’s the same one

**who took hold of my life and forgave my sin
and will one day welcome me home as well.**

- There is so much hopelessness today. The answer is found in God and the hope that he gives.
- Peter wrote, “You were born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”