

*How To*

# Inherit A Blessing

*1 Peter 3:8-18*

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## **I. Harmony in the Church**

**“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; <sup>9</sup> not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:8-9).**

### **All of You**

In chapter two Peter wrote to Christians to encourage them to be law-abiding citizens that their behavior in the world would be evangelistic and bring glory to God. In the latter part of chapter two he addressed household servants and told them that it was commendable in the eyes of God to follow the example of Jesus and be patient when those in authority over them are harsh. Peter then moved, in the beginning of chapter three, to the most intimate of all earthly relationships – husbands and wives.

In the beginning of verse eight Peter moves away from addressing those in authority and those under authority and addresses the Christian body as a whole. This is brought forth by the way he begins this section by stating **“Finally, all of you.”** So we find no distinction drawn in the targeted audience of today’s message. Employees, employers, husbands, wives, parents, children, pastors, elders, members etc. are all called to the following.

### **One Mind**

Peter starts by telling Christians something we hear Paul utter in Romans, Corinthians and Philippians. That Christians are to **“be of one mind,”** That is to say that our judgments should be the same. We should have a similar view of things. This, by the way, does not mean not to make theological distinctives an issue. To be of one mind does not mean, ‘If we disagree let’s just not talk about it.’ There is only one way to be of one mind and that is for all the minds involved to embrace and bow before one mind that is outside of themselves -- the mind of God. And all that we objectively and infallibly know about God is revealed in His word.

### **The Road to One Mind – Full of Division**

We must therefore recognize that the road to be of one mind is full of division. The word of God divides. It is called the ‘Holy Bible’. It’s very designation ‘holy’ is a word that means ‘set apart’. The Bible is, so to speak, divided from all other literature. The Holy Spirit, working through the Bible established and continues to establish the church who are the ‘called out ones’. In this respect the church is divided from the world. And at a very personal level the word of God, acting as a two-edged sword pierces even to the division of soul and spirit.

## **Holy, Holy, Holy**

So the Holy God, calls us out by His Holy Spirit working through His Holy Word making us His holy people. As His holy people we study His Holy Scriptures which acts as a two-edged sword cutting off the residue of humanistic, naturalistic, pagan thinking which seeks refuge in our minds. And it is only through this process that we can look around us and find that we are truly of one mind with our brethren. Peter starts with ‘one mind’, perhaps, because apart from being of one mind true unity is quite impossible.

## **Have Compassion**

Peter continues by charging Christians to **“have compassion for one another”**. Compassion means to feel or share in the suffering of another. Not everybody is as tough as you. Try to understand what they’re going through. Be understanding. On the other hand, not everybody is as sensitive as you. Learn to be patient with those seem to miss the obvious, or not so obvious, signs and cries for help.

## **Brotherly Love**

**“Love as brothers”** Peter says. We are not members of the same health club. We’re not shopping at the same grocery store. It’s different than having graduated from the same high school or college. The fraternal nature of the Christian faith is as such that we are to recognize the bond of oneness in Christ and exercise a brotherly love for each other.

## **Tenderhearted**

**“Be tenderhearted”** Peter continues. Some versions actual say “be pitiful”. When you observe your brother crumbling under the pummelings of this earthly dwelling it is unchristian to merely blurt out, “Hey, sink or swim.” Allow yourself to care. Force yourself to care!

## **Courteous**

**“Be courteous”** Which means friendly or humble minded. Courtesy has become quite superficial and is usually associated with trivial social amenities. We say ‘thank you’ and ‘you’re welcome’ because we’re taught these things from our youth. True courtesy, however is humble minded. It is not a matter of merely saying ‘thank you’ but a disposition which utters ‘My concern is for you and that you know you’re appreciated’.

## **No Evil For Evil**

**“Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling.”** (To revile means to condemn or complain bitterly or abusively.) Peter exhorts Christians that if they feel they have been condemned or abused, or if they have truly been condemned or abused, not to reciprocate. It is simply not up to you to get them back. The behavior of others should not be the impetus for

our behavior at all. In chapter two Peter told us that we are to follow the example of Jesus, who when He was reviled He did not revile in return. Jesus never allowed the depravity of man to determined His behavior. We are to follow that example. Peter tells us what we are to do which is quite the contrary.

## **Bless Others**

**“But on the contrary blessing.”** Regardless of what people do to you, you are to be a source of blessing to them. The word used here is ‘eulogia’. It is where we get our word ‘eulogy’. It literally means good speaking or praise. It is true in everything we do but especially in our words, we are to bless others. Before the air goes from our lungs to our mouths we must pass it through our minds and examine whether what I am about to say will bless the hearer. By the way, that doesn’t mean the hearer is always going to hear what they want to hear, but it will be a blessing. Someone may not want to hear that their words aren’t always a blessing. But it might be a blessing for them to hear that.

## **II. Inherit A Blessing**

### **The Calling – The Blessing**

**“Knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”** Christians are called to this behavior. This might refer to all of the above but perhaps more specifically to the fact that we are to bless those to revile. Peter is about to quote Psalm 34:12-16. We must keep in mind that the recipients of Peter’s letter are people who **“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, have obtained, “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3,4).** By the grace of Christ they have already inherited all the heavenly riches. So why does Peter write in such a way as to suggest that they “may inherit a blessing?” I submit it is because the blessings to which Peter will allude are not in heaven but will happen on the earth and in history.

### **Rewards And Punishments**

Some sects of Christianity mistakenly suggest that it was only in the old covenant that God rewarded obedience and punished disobedience. Let’s make some very clear. Never, ever (old or new covenant) has anyone received salvation by the merit of their deeds. Secondly, from day one to this very day, God has determined that sin has earthly consequences and obedience has earthly blessings.

### **The Gracious Process**

In short it works something like this: By God’s prevenient grace (grace that occurs prior to any human thought or action) man is saved and receives all the heavenly blessings of being in Christ. By God’s continuing grace (primarily God’s Spirit working through God’s

word) man is brought into greater conformity to Christ which results in temporal blessings to him and the society in which he lives.<sup>1</sup>

### **No Surprise**

This shouldn't surprise us. Where would we reckon to see greater blessings and more joy? In a society that had whole-heartedly rejected the gospel and law of God? Or a society where the grace of God revealed itself by saved souls who sought, even their own feeble way, to be obedient? Peter is calling Christians, who had already inherited the incorruptible blessings of being in Christ to a certain behavior which would yield a different type of inheritance.<sup>2</sup> The inheritance is mentioned as he begins to quote Psalm 34.

### **III. Loving Life**

**“For “He who would love life And see good days” (1 Peter 3:10) is the inheritance.**

#### **Loving Life**

To love life means to welcome -- to be fond of -- to be well pleased with. It means to get up and think to yourself, “I am just glad to be alive. Thank you Lord for giving me life. Thank you for giving me a body and breathing life and a soul into it. I love that I have taste buds and that colors exist and that people have funny and weird personalities.” It means to be fascinated with every day whether it is cloudy or windy or rainy or sunny. It can even mean to be content and to take joy in your sorrows knowing it is the very passion of life -- Especially for Christians who recognize that in the final analysis our Lord has it all in His hands, has and will sort it all out and wipe every tear away. I certainly hope and pray that we do not view our lives, no matter how difficult they might be, as a burden to be lived.

#### **Good Days**

Of course the inheritance goes even further. It is not merely loving life but seeing good days. A certain behavior will result in bad days and a certain behavior will result in good days.<sup>3</sup> I would suggest that abject rejection and disobedience to God will result in every conceivable notion of bad you can imagine. On the other hand, those who seek to obey God, though tainted with moral infirmity, will know the blessings of God. With these things as blessings brought before us, what is the behavior required to receive the blessing?

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that these blessings may not be immediate nor individual. Very bad things, even untimely death, may happen to the most godly people. But their godliness will somehow yield good results in some respect on the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Some might argue that an inheritance is never earned but freely given. This is true and brings out an important point. Even good behavior does not require God to bless. In a will someone might have a stipulation. They might write, “Junior receives the million dollars provided he finishes college.” Junior therefore must finish college to receive the inheritance. This certainly does not mean he merited or earned it.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote #1

#### IV. The Requirements

**“Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. <sup>11</sup>  
Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue  
it” (1 Peter 3:10b,11).**

##### The Tongue

Isn't it remarkable how the scriptures emphasize the taming of the tongue! Jesus tells us **“out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”** Of the seven things that God hates in Proverbs 6, at least three of them involve improper conversation. When Isaiah saw the Lord on His throne in Isaiah 6 **“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”** And it was when the coal touched his lips that his sin was taken away. Those things that are fighting to come out of our mouths – instead of catering and giving in – let them be a reminder of our own sinful heart and need for a Savior. The love of life and good days will come when lips refrain from speaking deceit.

##### The Barometer

The barometer of our culture came out during the impeachment process. I am not speaking merely of the president. But in pole after pole and almost every radio and television show that covered the issue there was a general consensus that deception just isn't a big deal. If I might put it in a more common vernacular – if we don't control what comes out of our mouths and if we think it is no big deal to deceive – so far from loving life, we're going to be hating life.

##### Pursue Peace

Then Peter takes us one step further. It is not a matter of merely not doing bad things, it is turning from evil and doing good. It is seeking peace and pursuing it. So it is not merely refraining from saying bad things but it is saying good things. It is not merely avoiding the creation of dissension but pursuing peace. So it is not enough to merely have the intestinal fortitude not to get on the phone and scream at that guy. You must get on the phone and make friends with that guy. Jesus didn't say, “blessed are the war avoiders.” He said, “blessed are the peacemakers.” Peter then reveals the disposition of God as He gazes down from heaven.

**For the eyes of the LORD *are* on the righteous, And His ears *are open* to their prayers; But the face of the LORD *is* against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:12).**

## **God is Never Indifferent – The Righteous of Scripture**

We must never think that God is indifferent to the behavior of men. For even though the behavior of men can never merit salvation, the scriptures give clear indication that God notices and responds to human behavior. Job was considered upright and blameless and one who feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1). It was said of Hezekiah that he did what was good and right and true. He sought, with all his heart to obey the law of God and therefore prospered (2 Chronicles 31:20,21). We read of similar assessments of the life of Cornelius, Moses, Josiah and many others.

## **God Will Respond**

Although we understand that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, we must never make the mistake of determining from this that God is indifferent and will not respond to human behavior. This does not mean that if you're disobedient this morning that your roof will cave in tonight. Nor does it mean that if you're obedient this morning that you will not become ill tonight. The blessings and judgments of God are not generally non sequitor. God will generally patiently allow people to repent – He will also allow evil to come to it's fullness – then it is usually the very evil men exercise which brings the curse. For example a nation that legalizes abortion should not be surprised to find that their youth have little regard for human life and vice-versa.

## **The Superior Gift**

Of course this leaves us in a bit of a quandary. For we must realize that even our best righteousness is but a filthy rag before the Living God. How can we expect the much superior gift of His eternal blessings when we find ourselves so deficient when it comes to securing even the temporal blessings? Peter tells us the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Surely if we have any notion of our own character when compared to the holiness of the Him who sits on the throne our response must mirror that of Isaiah's "I am undone!" Peter never strays too far, nor should we, from man's only hope. Just a few verses down he writes, **"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"** (1 Peter 3:18).

## **Just for the Unjust**

Lest we be overwhelmed by so much talk of good works let us now be comforted that it is not by our good works that we bring ourselves to God. But it is Christ, who suffered in our place for our sins. It is the Just one who died for the unjust thus satisfying what the righteous Father required to pour out His heavenly blessings. It is Jesus who was put to death in the flesh, but was made alive by the Spirit. He and He alone by His grace and righteousness brings us to God. And we take our eternal peace and rest in Him.