

1 Peter 3:8 Harmony: Love As Brothers!

Last time we looked at just one verse of 1 Peter: V7, in a sermon I called 'Love, Honour and Respect'. We looked at Christian husbands loving their wives, and I pointed out that this was the third time that Peter had spoken of "respect." That Greek word *timair* in this section of scripture, from chapter 2:13, which speaks of all echelons of society being subject, or living in submission to those in authority over us as Christians. Chapter 2:17. "Show proper respect for everyone love the brotherhood of believers." V18 "Slaves submit yourselves to your masters with all respect." And chapter 3:7: "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect." With honour. And I explained, that this "respect" this honour, that pours forth from us, must stem from a love for that God, who gave His Son so that we might live!

So we must submit ourselves to those in authority over us because that's what Jesus did. And we should submit ourselves to those in authority over us with the goal of testifying to that grace, which has been poured into our hearts, our minds and our souls, through the washing us clean from sin, with the Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ! And Peter gave men three reasons why they should love, respect, and honour their wives. Firstly, they are literally the "weaker vessels" physically. So husbands should be conscious and considerate of that reality. Secondly, they are "Co-heirs of God's gracious gift of life." Yes Jesus' Blood was shed for them as well. And thirdly, "so that nothing will hinder their prayers." So as wives lovingly, submit to their husbands, under Christ's authority, a man my selflessly, self sacrificially, "love, respect an honour" his wife! This is a command. It is not optional!

And as I mentioned earlier in this series, we abide by all of this submission instruction, because all authorities "have been established by God." Only if they countermand what the Bible teaches us, do we have license to go against them!

And now Peter continues, as he begins to bring this section of teaching to a close. 1 Peter 3:8: 'Harmony: Love As Brothers', I've called this sermon. And if you remember that all of this submission instruction must be viewed in light of ch.2:13: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake." Or for the sake of the Name of the Lord, to every authority. Firstly, it was to all of us. To submit ourselves to "governors and kings" those in positions of societal authority over us. Next, it was "slaves to their masters," and for us today this would mean to those in authority over us as employers and bosses etc. And finally, it was "wives to husbands," an husbands must respond to that submission, with loving, respect and honouring of their wives.

So to chapter 3:8: "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." Brothers and sisters notice the word "finally." Having spoken about all of this other stuff about living in an upright manner in regard to authority from the outside world, those of employment and also within the bounds of the sanctity of marriage, "finally" I now speak to you about your love toward one another amongst the church! And again notice the words "all of you." He began his section by addressing everyone. And then he pointed his instruction at different parts, or aspects of life within the church, His Body.

And now as he begins to draw this section to a close, he again speaks to everyone. "Finally, all of you." Now Beloved, I know that I am stating the obvious here, but as Peter's intention was to leave no one out of his instruction in those days within the church, so too is he speaking to every one of us, who are part of Christ's Body, His church, today!

I want you to take note of the words, because as we saw within the marriage bond, this teaching is all about the other person, or the other people. Yes if we read between the lines we can see that what Peter is doing here, is placing the good of the other person's life, so to speak, (as far as it is in our power to effect) in our hands. He really is giving each of us the responsibility to care for one another. Yes this following instruction is for each other's sake, but ultimately, "For the Lord's sake," because it is for our combined testimony to the perishing world around us!

Again listen to the words. "Harmony. Sympathetic. Lovers. Brothers. Compassionate. Humble." All of these words have a view and direction to the wellbeing of someone else when we break them down. What I mean is that you cannot live in "harmony" with someone, by yourself. You cannot be "compassionate" if there is no one to be "compassionate" toward. No you cannot be "compassionate" by yourself. You cannot be "sympathetic" without having someone to be "sympathetic" toward. Again, you cannot be "sympathetic" by yourself. And friends may I suggest, that even "humility" is directed toward another. Proof in point, the scripture says, "humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

So what's my point? Well it's simply this. I really believe that Peter continues to show us what Jesus commanded him to do on the beach. "Feed my lambs." "Take care of my sheep." "Feed my sheep." As we have seen many times of late, Jesus explained to Peter that love for Him is all about loving the flock. Authentic faith in Christ for salvation is expressed in love toward His People. That was the lesson that Peter had learned. After the cross of Jesus! And I really believe that this is what he keeps trying to reiterate to us as he continues to try to get us to understand, and abide by this truth! For it is for the sake of the body of believers, because ultimately, that is "for the Lords sake." We must look beyond ourselves, to the interest and needs of our brethren, if we would truly love the Lord Jesus Christ! "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another."

Brothers and sisters, let's be honest with ourselves. Although we are saints, (yes we are saints, contrary to what Roman Catholicism teaches, the letters of the Bible were not written to dead people, they were written to the living); yes although we are saints, we don't always agree with one another, and dare I say, sometimes, we don't act very saintly toward one another! Again dare I say, perhaps even inadvertently, sometimes, we may rub one another up the wrong way. Yes this is going to happen from time to time, because as of yet, we are not perfected saints: that remains for glory. Yes we are saints who remain sinners, and are looking toward heaven! But in this life, differences and difficulties will still occur. That's the reality. It has been said that anyone who is looking for the perfect church is going to be very disappointed. Firstly, because it doesn't exist. And the reason being, that all true churches are by their very nature full of forgiven sinners like you and I. And yet how we deal with those difficulties and differences testifies to who we truly are!

But Beloved, let me say at the outset, that if these difficulties and differences are foundational, biblical, doctrinal truths, then "harmony," which comes at the cost of spiritual and biblical compromise, is NEVER, and I say again NEVER, worth the price! There is much talk of such things today by many throughout Christendom. It may sound like a cliché, and that may well be true. But doctrinal compromise is the thin edge of the wedge that has led to the destruction of many a faithful church and ministry!

The Presbyterian denomination has taken decades to crawl out from under the apostasy, which became the Uniting Church. Oh, yes of course we can have differences of opinion scripturally and this is fine. But compromise upon foundational doctrines such as the Inerrancy of scripture: Meaning that the whole of the Bible remains true and is without error! The triune God: Three individual persons in one God! Jesus Christ is God Incarnate: He is from everlasting to everlasting. God become

man in the flesh! Mankind's inability to save himself from sins bondage. Hence it is only through Christ alone by grace alone are we saved! The virgin birth: because if Jesus was not born of the "overshadowing of Mary," by The Holy Spirit as the scripture says, then He has an earthly father of flesh, and like all of us, is born of, and in sin, and cannot save Himself, (and I say these things respectfully here Lord). Yes if Jesus was born of the flesh, He cannot save Himself, let alone you and I! And Brethren, this is just to mention a few of those foundational doctrines among others, of which there can be no compromise, lest we plunge into that abyss with the many that have followed that path, throughout the Millenia! "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction," Jesus said. And billions are travelling upon that road and entering by that gate blissfully unaware, as they march into hell!

But Peter is not talking about "harmony" at the cost of compromise. He's talking about practical ways of living at peace with one another as far as it is in our power to do so. So when such relational differences and difficulties occur, as far as it is in our power to do so, we must take it upon ourselves as we stand before God because of Christ grace, to go to our brother or sister and seek to make amends. To seek "harmony!" Because "harmony" cannot occur when enmity or resentment is present. "Harmony" cannot occur when pride and vanity are involved. And "harmony" cannot occur when our own ego is part of the equation.

Can you see? Firstly Peter says "finally, all of you live in harmony with one another." And then it's as though he gives us some of the most important tools to help us to do so. And the main one is, (although it is not openly stated and yet surely is implied, is putting others first, and ourselves second in any given situation!

Brethren, you have most likely heard it said over the years, that you have got to love yourself, before you can love anyone else. Well what a wonderful way to think of those three most important people in the universe! And I'm not talking about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, no. I'm talking about those other three most important people in the universe: Me, Myself, And I!

You see, a loving "harmony" will not occur when we have the need to put ourselves first, no. We could paraphrase Peter's words here like this: If you want to live in "harmony" with one another, what you need to do is be "sympathetic" toward your brethren! Now brothers and sisters, although yes, sympathy can be about having an emotional empathy, it is also about us having a practical response. For example, when someone experiences the loss and tragedy of losing a loved one, (particularly a child or spouse perhaps) we can and we do feel and almost share in their loss and pain, to some real degree. But in the context of believers "living in harmony" with one another, (and with the older translation saying, "to be of one mind ye with another" being "sympathetic" toward that person with whom we are having difficulties or differences, means to "sympathise" and empathise with them. To seek to see things from their point of view. Whether or not, we believe that we are in the right, because according to Peter, it matters not. Because we are to act "for the Lord's sake" whether we are, or are not in the right or wrong! Yes for the sake of the Name of the Lord.

So if part of the Lord's body, (His church) is in pain, and we have had a role to play in that hurt, if we can bring healing by swallowing our pride, then it's a small price to pay. Particularly when we remember what price Jesus has paid for us! Yes if you want to "live in harmony be sympathetic" toward one another. If you want to "live in harmony love as brothers."

Brethren, we all know the old saying, 'You can choose your friends but you cannot choose your family'. And also, that 'blood is thicker than water'. The implications are that family is warts and all.

And yet even so, when it comes down to it, friends are often for a season who come and go. But family is for life! How much more so then when this family is for eternal life!

So to “love as brothers,” is to overlook petty indiscretions and differences of opinion. Which in the light of day and in the scheme of eternity, add up to nothing. Because for the sake of the Body of the Lord, and our testimony to those around us, such things are not worth dwelling upon and getting all bent out of shape over. No those things really don't matter. Cast them aside in Christ. We won't remember them in glory! If Jesus died for this person or those people, all petty resentments and the need for vindication in, (whatever the situation may be) pile into insignificance in the shadow of the Cross!

Yes if we would “live in harmony, love as brothers.” Matthew 18:21-22: “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times but 70 times 7”. So as in families who truly love one another, forgiveness has no limits.

Friends, I must confess that there have been times over the years when, while of course not meaning to, I have said and done things which have hurt and upset some of you. And rightly, I have been deeply grieved on those occasions. And I praise God for your graciousness toward me and your ever willingness to overlook my stumblings. And yet there have also been those times when people were not so forgiving. And they took their resentments and there need to be lauded by others and left. And as God is my witness, I believe I can truly say that I have never taken any sense of victory or pleasure when they have chosen to do so. And actually the opposite has been true. Just about every time they took a piece of my heart with them. But that is in the Almighty's hands.

Yes if we would “live in harmony with one another” we must “be sympathetic.” We must “love as brothers” with unlimited forgiveness in our hearts, and we must be “compassionate and humble.”

Beloved, what I find interesting, is that the final thing which Peter speaks of here in this verse, really is the key to us practically living out all of those things, which we are called by him to do, in regard to all of this “submission,” and “living in harmony” with our brethren kind of stuff. And the key word is “humble!” As I have been saying all along in practical terms, all of these instructions are about the other person. Our Christlike love and testimony to those governing authorities’. Our Christlike love and testimony to those we work for. Our Christlike love and testimony to our spouses. And our Christlike love and testimony to our brethren, as we seek to “live in harmony” with them. Yes it is all “for the Lord's sake” but we do it all through our testimony of humility!

Darlene and I often have a laugh, when some politician or some sports star is lavished with praise and then when they give their speech, they often begin with the words, ‘I'm so proud and humbled’. Or ‘I'm so humbled and proud’. And while I appreciate the sentiment, these two things in reality are actually a contradiction in terms. It is very hard to be both proud and humble at the same time. Unless that is, if these are about two completely different subject matters. But Peter places this word “humble” here, almost as the bookend to all of those characteristics which we are to exhibit toward our brethren. Yes to “live in harmony,” to be of one mind with each other, before he goes on to speak of what we are not to do. And may I suggest, that the reason he does so, is because it is the key to them all! The Greek word which is used here for humble is “tapnophrones” and it literally means, humble minded. It is to have the mindset of humility. It is to not think too highly of ourselves in proud and vain terms.

Jesus put it this way in Luke 14:7-11: “When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable, “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take

the places of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host will say to you give this man your seat. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place'. Then you will be honoured in the presence of all of your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted." And James 4:10, as we read earlier, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up."

Beloved, it is very easy in the sight of the world to make ourselves big and others small. Some do it with their intellectual prowess within their knowledge of this or that subject. Some do it with their physical strength. Still others do it with the position of power and authority that they have acquired. And still others, with their financial superiority. And this can also happen spiritually! Which the religious elite were well known for during Jesus` day. Yes it is very easy to intimidate people. And make ourselves feel big, while making others feel small.

But if we would look to Jesus for our example, we would see that this was never His way! In Philippians 2:5-8 we read "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross."

Dear friends, whenever we look to Jesus, we soon learn that we have nothing to boast about. And if we would constantly look to Him with a sober mind and a sincere heart, in the everlasting light of his word, then a genuine humility, must begin to take root and also bear fruit within our lives! Because in the light of a clear and sober assessment for what Jesus has done for them, who would not want to "live in harmony" with their brethren? Who would not want to be "sympathetic" to the way their brethren are feeling? That though we be even in the right, a truly humble heart, (even as our Saviour did) seeks to put our brothers` and sisters` best interest, yes seeks to put their good, before our own! Yes that's what Jesus did. He loved us with a brother`s love. A love that forgives all wrongs. That even takes ownership of those wrongs, that in no way belonged to Him! To be compassionate. To not only feel their pain, but take it away if we can. This truly is a brother's love! "For greater love hath no man than this. That he lay down his life for his friends" Yes "live in harmony. Love as brothers"

Let`s Pray!

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