

# ***“Finally, All of You”***

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***Sympathy necessitates seeing what's happening with our brothers and sisters.***

**1 Peter 3:8-12**

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***Unity not uniformity —Pastor Paul***

There is no coincidence that the Holy Spirit lined up a passage like this for today knowing what's going on in our country. Look at these words—one mind, full of sympathy, towards each other, loving one another, having tender hearts, humble in spirit, do not repay evil for evil. I could not have picked better scriptures for today.

Before we talk about that, we need to have an understanding that we live in a sinful, broken world, and no other place is that evident than Disney World. It's supposed to be the happiest place on earth but it's not true. It is sometimes but not when it's above 90° and it's above 90% capacity. One of the most annoying things about Disney World is that it's an international destination. That is wonderful for Orlando and for the Florida Tourism Department but entire countries show up to Disney World. An international tour group shows up all wearing the exact same shirt, carrying a banner. They shove us with elbows, push my daughters, are loud and boisterous, and chant loudly; they are a united banner of obnoxiousness. To be fair, when Americans go to foreign countries, we do the exact same thing.

Unity does not mean uniformity. Unity instead is united in purpose. It's the whole idea of what are we known for. What are the people of Jesus Christ or Christians known for in this world? What are we united under?

Peter is writing to the church and telling them to be prepared for trials. Trials are coming. Don't act out of what you think you ought to be doing. Act out of who you are in Jesus Christ. Deny yourself and act out of the new identity that you have in Christ.

Twice in Chapter 3, you are going to get the word "life." The word life refers to this new birth and new life in Christ. The old 'us' is dead. The new 'us' lives his or her life in Christ. There is this newness of life. At its core, you are alive in Christ so live this new life not as your old self would but as Christ would. If Christ was walking in your shoes, how would he speak? How would he talk? How would he react? What would he do?

### ***Looking like Jesus —Pastor Paul***

Our text is talking primarily about a Christian to Christian relationship but it is also a Christian to the world relationship. Chip Ingram said, "We are never as Christians called to shout into the darkness. We are called to shine into it." In the same way, we would say "What would Jesus carry into a dark world?" Would he simply shout at it? His light causes not only hope and change but persecution.

In verse 8, it's a lot of "be's" and "do's." This all boils down to be like Jesus.

*Unity.* I am going to talk to us about black, white, Asian, Hispanic, and Christians of all nationalities and all races. When we talk about unity in the church, we need to have a greater understanding of what that means. Unity does not mean uniformity. It does not mean we elevate methodology, opinion, or preference but that we elevate Christ who is of utmost importance. Everything else is of a secondary nature.

Sometimes as Christians we let our methodology trump our savior. We let our preferences on worship, communion, or baptism drown out what the gospel says about new life. We actually let our skin color drown out who we feel we can have fellowship with even though we know John 3:16 says "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."

Unity simply means that we are standing shoulder to shoulder with the same purpose and goal. The One most elevated is Christ in his kingdom. We do not want to do anything that would impede giving glory to Jesus.

*Sympathy.* Sympathy is one of those things that I think men don't do well unless it's to another man. My friend, Dave, and I were fishing, and my line broke. Dave not only showed me sympathy but he showed me empathy. Typically, we march on in our lives. Showing sympathy is not 'I show you pity' but instead 'I can see where you are and I feel your pain'.

Notice the preposition Peter uses—sympathy *toward* one another. Do you know what that necessitates? It necessitates relationship. Peter is saying you must have

sympathy towards one another and that necessitates knowing and looking and seeing what is going on with our brothers and sisters in Christ. If this sounds exhausting to you, get over it because it's what Jesus did.

Why do we think about what's going on in Kenya? Why do we think about what's going on in Nicaragua or in Minneapolis? Why can't we just think about what's going on in Hickory? We as Christians are called to take the gospel into the world. Believers on the other side of the world have more in common with us than a blood relative that lives in our own house sometimes because we share the blood of Jesus Christ.

*Tenderness.* That also is a 'towards'. It's the ability for you not to be so hardened that you can't experience joy with someone experiencing joy and you can't experience sorrow with someone experiencing sorrow. You join in with that.

You may feel like you have worked very hard to achieve joy but then are hard hearted towards someone who is not joyful because they haven't been able to achieve joy. What you have achieved is hard heartedness. But in reality why do any of us have joy? Because our sins are forgiven and Christ is not in the tomb.

We can never be so hard hearted that in the midst of our joy we can't also come down and weep with someone who is weeping. This idea of tender heartedness is being available, and it's in the context of a relationship.

*Humility.* Humility was not a desirable quality in the Roman world. It was looked upon as a quality of weakness. To be humble minded you were thought to be unworthy of someone who is greater.

In the midst of the coronavirus and in the reality of racial unrest, how many of you have a list of things that you would like to say to a group of people that oppose your viewpoint or what you believe? Humility is putting someone else first. As Tim Keller says "not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less."

Part of the problem we have as human, fleshly people is that we don't listen to understand. We listen to respond. I am so glad that our Heavenly Father does not do that. Would you be willing to exercise unity by sitting and listening first and saying here I am available to you because that's what Jesus did?

Verse 9 is close to my heart because I am a *white* person. What I mean is that I sunburn incredibly easily. I have zero melanin. The most annoying thing you can say to me is "Gosh, you got sunburn." No kidding! I live in this skin all of the time. My mom would always say "Hey, you need to take some sunscreen with you." What is she saying? Be prepared because where you are going the sun is going to be there. Peter is saying "Be prepared. Where you are going persecution is going to be there. Be ready for it."

Look at Luke 23:35-37 “The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One. The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, ‘If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.’”

What does Jesus do? He says in Luke 23:34 “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” Then in Luke 23:46 “Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.” It has been paid for. It is complete.

We look at these three levels of how we repay things. Satan will repay good for evil. That’s why you can’t try to do something good that is selfish and simple because you will get evil in return. That’s called consequence.

In this world we can also repay evil for evil. Years ago, I worked with a pastor that was not as hip as Bob. He did not understand the statement “I don’t get mad; I get even.” He thought it was a joke. I told him that’s not a joke; it’s a way of life. That’s the way our world is. When evil comes to me, I am repaying it with evil.

Jesus turns and says something that is incredibly uncomfortable. He says (through Peter) repay evil with good—with a blessing. Every single thing in this text is counter to how our flesh would respond—be tender hearted, full of sympathy, humble, and united.

Then he adds, when somebody curses you repay them back with a blessing. I saw this at the Apologia Church out west. They plant churches in places that don’t have churches. They planted a church on the island of Kauai where the natives still worship deities and idols. They do not like it when someone comes from the outside.

I read a Facebook thread from this church, and the people in the community continued to post the vilest comments back to them. Every time the church responded back with kindness, it was engaging, and it left the door open for another conversation.

Peter doesn’t say that if you respond like Jesus everything will be okay. He says when it comes, be prepared to give a blessing. The problem we face is that we haven’t decided beforehand that that’s what we are going to do. We are surprised when we receive something negative. Peter says to expect it and decide beforehand.

Verses 10-12 are a kind of proverb buried in Psalm 34:12-16. It goes back to the idea of life that Peter talked about in verse 7. Life is this new life we live as new creations in Christ. The Lord’s face is turned towards those who are living like this. The Lord was most connected to his Son. And God’s greatest desire for us in life is not for us to excel at our career, sport, hobby, or even be the greatest Christian. His greatest desire is for us to be like his Son so that He will always be looking at us.

## ***All of You—Pastor Bob***

As if it weren't enough that we were dealing with a pandemic, on Monday a white police officer was videoed in a violent and deadly arrest of George Floyd, a black man. That sparked protests all week long, both angry but peaceful and uncontrollably violent.

Pastor Paul suggested we reach out to our colleagues in Hickory's black church community. I talked with Pastor David Roberts of Morning Star First Baptist Church Saturday, asking him what he would say to his people, what he would say if he were speaking to our congregation, and how he would pray. I asked him if he would record a prayer for our service today. I will share his prayer at the conclusion of the message.

Even without knowing our text, David's response echoed what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:8-12. Peter says, "Finally, all of you." "Finally" doesn't mean he's almost done with the letter/sermon. It means he's concluding and summarizing a section.

He's been talking to Christians as citizens, as household servants and as husbands and wives. Now he's emphasizing that his principles are for "all of you"—everyone who follows Jesus. Today, I would say these are important messages for blacks, whites, Hispanics, and every other race. They are important words for old and young, sick and well, fearful and bold, isolated and crowded.

I borrowed some of David Roberts' language and ideas, but it's all right there in Scripture. That doesn't surprise me, since he is a man of the Word.

First, *search your own heart* (8). When Peter challenges us to unity, sympathy, family-love, compassion, and humility, don't think he's talking to police officers or demonstrators, unless you are one. Peter's talking to *all of you*. Where has your heart been cold? Where have you been complicit or silent in the face of racism and hatred? Where have you thought someone else's life or family is less important than yours? Where have you contributed to division and arrogance? Peter's not talking to someone else. Or if he is, not to someone else instead of you. His words need to pierce you.

Second, *remember your calling* (9). If you forget your calling, you return evil for evil. And the cycle only gets worse. Remember Peter's entire letter is addressed to Christians in an unchristian world. But Peter believes those who don't believe need to see Jesus in those who do—not just by their words but by what they do that makes them distinctively Christian. Pandemic or protest—if we all just join the chorus of angry voices about what someone else did, how does the world ever find Jesus attractive? Your calling—all of you who know Jesus—is to stick out like the proverbial sore thumb because you find ways to bless those who insult you. You rise above it.

Third, *never give up on prayer* (10-12). Peter quotes extensively from Psalm 34, which is a prayer David prayed after God delivered him from a situation he never should

have gotten into in the first place. David uses that story to remind himself and God's people that the Lord's "ears are attentive to their prayer." Peter does the same.

One way we show our unity, compassion, and humility is by praying. Prayer is about humility and compassion, unity and blessing. I don't know how to pray in the midst of this situation, and that's one reason I asked my brother David Roberts to lead us in prayer this morning by audio recording:

*Most gracious and all wise God, we thank you right now in the mighty and marvelous and matchless name of Jesus. We come right now saying, Father God, bring us together right now as a nation and as a people. For we're all God's children, Father God. During this time when an individual has decided to rely on himself to be a pawn of Satan, Father God, to bring about a senseless death of one of your children, we, your believing children, come together collectively and say, we love you, we adore you, and we magnify your name.*

*We ask right now in the name of Jesus that you touch that family, bring them peace as they suffered the loss of their son, their brother, their cousin, their nephew, their uncle, their grandson, their child. Father God, be with that whole community, but be with us as we come together, joining hands and praying together saying, Father God, forgive our nation. Father God, heal our land. Father God, bring us together on one accord as your people, realizing and recognizing that together we can do all things but divided we will fall.*

*Satan, I rebuke you in the mighty name of Jesus. I know you're trying to bring about a discord, you're trying to bring about hatred and envy and ugliness. But the God that I serve is an awesome God. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," and his Son so loved the world that he endured a horrific death. And then he gave us the gift of the Comforter.*

*Be with my brothers and sisters, Father God, who are concerned for their fellow brothers and sisters, Father God, as we are in this together. Give them the strength and courage as we join hands in the body of Christ and give your name the glory. And we will defeat this enemy, this ugliness, this cruelty, this evil that's in our world and in our nation.*

*For the love of God is stronger, and our love and fellowship with one another as brothers and sisters is even stronger, Father God. And so we thank you right now. Just bless. Father God, heal. Father God, deliver. Father God, set free.*

*Allow the results of this that we come together even more as a great nation. That at the end of the day we give your name the glory, the honor, and the praise. Thank you right now, in Jesus' name we pray. Father God, we love you, and we love each other. And we stand strong. We stand united and not divided. Satan, I rebuke you in the name of Jesus. Father God, bless, Amen.*