

Standing Fast in the Grace of God

“Finally...”

Christlike Conduct in the Church

1 Peter 3:8-12

Beginning in chapter 2, believers are called to live as strangers and pilgrims, to conduct ourselves honorably before the world, to submit to authority, and to endure unjust suffering by following the example of Christ Himself. That Christlike pattern was then applied to the household (3:1-7) – wives and husbands alike – showing that the gospel shapes the closest and most personal relationships of life.

In the verses before us in this study, we will find that what Christ produces in the individual, and what He shapes in the home, must now govern the life of the church as a whole. “Finally” introduces Peter’s concluding word for this section – not the end of the letter, but the summing up of how Christlike character, Christlike response, and trust in God’s care are to be lived out together among God’s people.

I. PROPER CONDUCT (vs. 8)

Christlike disposition in the church

A. Unity of mind – shared spiritual direction

“Be ye all of one mind”

This does not imply uniformity of opinion or identical views in every matter, but a shared disposition of mutual love and respect within the household of faith. The idea is harmony. Just as harmonizing musically requires each person to adjust his or her own pitch – not to become identical, but to be compatible – so Christian unity requires believers to adjust themselves to one another in a way that produces spiritual order and

pleasantness. Peter is not denying that differences will exist; rather, he is calling believers to respond to those differences with humility and mutual submission, especially under the pressures they face.

Romans 12:16a

¹⁶ Be of the same mind one toward another.

B. Compassion – shared experience of life

"Having compassion one of another"

1. This phrase is all one word in the Greek New Testament (συμπαθής) and literally means to suffer with.
2. It's a willingness to enter into one another's burdens and one another's joys.

Romans 12:15

¹⁵ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Galatians 6:2

² Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3. This moves unity from belief to empathy.

C. Brotherly love – shared identity

"Love as brethren"

1. The word used here (φιλάδελφος) is one of family language, not friendship language. We've seen this term twice already in 1 Peter – 1:22 and 2:17.
2. It's affection rooted in our common Father, our common salvation, and our common inheritance.

3. This shows that the church is not a “voluntary association” but a spiritual family.

Romans 12:10

¹⁰ Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

D. Tenderheartedness – shared sensitivity

“Be pitiful”

1. This word (εὐσπλαγχνος) is only used one other time in the New Testament and is translated “tenderhearted.”
2. This speaks of a heart:
 - a) That remains soft even during times of great trial.
 - b) That resists bitterness even during the most hurtful situations.
 - c) That is easily moved toward mercy.
3. This reflects Christ’s restraint and gentleness under mistreatment (2:23).

E. A gracious mind – shared disposition toward one another

“Be courteous”

To be “courteous” is to be “friendly-minded” – to carry a gracious, considerate disposition toward one another that governs how we think, speak, and respond.

➤ Proper conduct in the church comes from Christlike humility and expresses itself in unity of mind, shared compassion, brotherly affection, and tenderhearted care.

II. PROPER REACTION (vs. 9)

Christlike response under provocation

How believers react to mistreatment, especially within the church, reveals whether Christ's example is truly shaping them.

A. What is forbidden: retaliation in deed and speech

1. Retaliation in action – “evil for evil”
 - a) This is responding to wrongdoing with wrongdoing, which is a natural response of the flesh.
 - b) Justifying sinful behavior because one has been sinned against is prohibited throughout Scripture.

Romans 12:17

¹⁷ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

¹⁵ See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

2. Retaliation in speech – “railing for railing”
 - a) Same root word (λοίδορος) as found in 1 Pet. 2:23 where Christ was the example for this.
 - b) This has to do with verbal abuse, cutting speech, character attacks, or “returning fire” with words.
3. The prohibition here is not only what we do, but how we speak. Speech is often the first place retaliation shows itself.

B. What is required: a contrary response

“But contrariwise blessing”

1. The word for “contrariwise” (τοὐναντίον) literally

means "opposite or instead of."

This is a reversal of instinct and a conscious choice, not a reflex.

2. The nature of "blessing" in this verse is that of speaking well instead of speaking harm, or seeking one's good rather than defending one's pride.

This is not approval of wrongdoing or a denial of hurt or silence in the face of truth.

C. Why this response is possible: a Divine calling

"Knowing that ye are thereunto called"

1. This is not an option we choose but something we are "called" to do, which ties our reaction to identity with Christ. This is part of what it means to belong to Him.
2. This calling echoes Christ's own example as found in 2:23.

D. The motivation given: a promised inheritance

"That ye should inherit a blessing"

1. Peter consistently grounds obedience in hope. The restraint the believer shows now is tied to the rewards we receive in heaven.
2. The irony here is that those who bless rather than retaliates inherit a blessing.

➤ In the next three verses, Peter anchors this demanding response to Scripture itself (Psalm 34), showing that this way of life has always been the path of blessing under the watchful care of God.

III. PROPER SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION (vs. 10-12)

Scriptural grounding for Christlike conduct

Psalm 34:12-16

¹² What man *is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?*

¹³ Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

¹⁶ The face of the LORD *is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

A. The universal desire acknowledged (vs. 10a)

"For he that will love life, and see good days"

1. Peter begins with a common longing of mankind: desire for life, well-being, peace, and stability.
2. "Good days" does not mean an absence of suffering or ease and prosperity. It means life lived under God's favor and moral wholeness and spiritual well-being.

B. The moral path required (vs. 10b-11)

God's way is not passive but deliberate.

1. Disciplined speech (vs. 10b)

"Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile."

a) Speech is the first area of obedience.

b) This goes back to verse 9 ("railing for railing") and reinforces that unity and blessing begin with restraint of the tongue.

2. Decisive moral turning (vs. 11)

"Let him eschew evil, and do good"

- a) This is not just avoiding evil; it's turning away from it entirely (έκκλινω – translated "avoid" in Rom. 16:17 and "gone out of the way" in Rom. 3:11-12).
- b) Not just turning from evil but making a conscious movement toward good. This is considered active righteousness, not a moral neutrality.

3. Intentional pursuit of peace (vs. 11b)

"Let him seek peace, and ensue it"

- a) Peace does not happen accidentally.
- b) The principal behind "seek" implies effort, and to "ensue" implies persistence.

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

4. The Divine perspective declared (vs. 12)

The attention is now taken off the immediate circumstances the church was facing and lifted toward heaven.

- a) God's favor toward the righteous – *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous..."*

The Lord is attentive and watchful over His children, and is not indifferent to their struggles together.

- b) God's nearness in prayer – *"and his ears are open unto their prayers..."*

This directly connects to and reinforces the earlier warnings of maintaining that proper

"conscience toward God" spoken of in 2:19 and that prayers not be hindered by dishonor in 3:7.

In other words, right relationships with others helps the believer to have proper communion with God.

- c) God's opposition to evil – *"but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."*
 - (1) When Peter says that the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, he is not making a general statement about God's dislike of sin.
 - (2) He is reminding us that God actively opposes persistent evil.
 - (3) Ultimately, this describes His judgment of the unbeliever, but it also stands as a sober warning within the church that God does not bless or overlook sinful conduct. The same God who watches over the righteous will not stand neutral toward evil – wherever it is found.
 - (4) This is why Peter takes internal conduct in the church so seriously.

Conclusion:

This isn't a discourse on how to avoid conflict – it's a calling for how to live when it comes. Christlike conduct in the church is not accidental, but takes effort and purpose. Unity of mind, compassion, brotherly love, tenderheartedness, and a gracious spirit are not optional values; they are the soil in which a faithful church must grow.

When that unity is tested (and it will be) – when wrongs are done and hurtful things are said – we are taught that our response is not to mirror the offense, but to reverse it. We

are called to bless those that wrong us, not retaliate against them.

We have been shown here, as found in Psalm 34, that the Lord sees His children and hears their prayers and He is not indifferent to evil. Because of this, we can let Him handle retaliation as He deems necessary which allows us to walk in the testimony of Christ.

The question before us is not simply how we will treat one another when things are easy, but how we will respond when obedience to God's Word costs us something. Peter's answer is clear: live as people who trust the watchful care of God, knowing that the path of Christlike conduct – however costly now – is the path that leads to blessing under His sovereign hand.