

## **The Christian in a Hostile World**

### **Excellence in our social life**

**Intro:** Peter emphasizes that Christians are different and because of that, they may be persecuted or spoken against. But Peter's solution is not to withdraw from the world, but rather to live in such a way that we may win the respect of the world and lead them to salvation! That means that we do not rebel against the order of society but rather live with excellence in it. For that reason Peter has urged his readers to keep their behavior excellent as citizens, as house servants, and as wives and husbands.

In a word, there is yet no better way to lead people to the Lord than for ordinary people who live extraordinarily well coming in contact with people who are not living so well. It is the power of an excellent lifestyle! Now one last time Peter shows his readers (and us) the features of the excellent life. This time his exhortation is not merely to servants, wives or husbands, but to every Christian.

### **A PORTRAIT OF PERSONAL EXCELLENCE**

#### **Harmonious (Of one mind, KJV)**

*"homophrones--"Of one intent or purpose; a very literal rendering of the original. It conveys the idea of being agreeable, harmonious in attitude.*

**The church needs such an attitude within itself.**

A lot of people have been turned off to the gospel because the people they know who are Christians can't seem to get along with their fellow Christians.

I'm afraid that Christians in some areas have quarreled and split so many times over personality conflicts that they have lost their credibility to the world.

**God's people need to develop excellence in their ability to get along with people in their everyday life who are not Christians.**

The gospel is never attractive when it is spoken by one who everybody knows is contrary and hard to get along with! The world is filled with grouches! (cf. the man who had seen so many changes).

What a refreshing thing to see a positive happy Christian who is pleasant and agreeable and easy to get along with!

#### **Sympathetic (Compassionate)**

*"sumpathes" from which we get the word "sympathetic"; ill. with sympathetic vibration*

**We all need to take time from our schedules to show compassion.**

Christians ought to care for each other!

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*  
(Rom. 12:15)

And we ought to be the first on the door step of our neighbors and friends when need arises! We need ordinary people practicing the royal law (Love your neighbor as yourself). People will not care how much we know until they know how much we care! (Sickness, death, catastrophe, celebration, support in problems)

#### **Brotherly (Love as brethren)**

*"philadelphos", cf. "philadephia"*

Brotherly love, the familial spirit of those with a common father. Christians need to cultivate a family spirit. "Brother and Sister" is not a meaningless title; it is a description of our spiritual relationship. Every time we use it we ought to think of each other as family. And we need to cultivate a brotherly spirit toward the lost! We all have the same last two names in our family tree--the son of Adam, the son of God. That makes us all kin physically. The love of which Paul speaks is "friendship", not the kind that partakes of the world's vices (Jas. 4) but the kind that makes contact and builds relationships from which to teach!

*So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Gal. 6:10)*

#### **Kind-hearted (Pitiful)**

*"eusplagchnos"--lit. "good inward parts"*

The Romans thought of the inward parts as the seat of courage. So we use the term "intestinal fortitude" or "guts".

The Hebrews thought of the inward parts as the seat of emotions, of tender feelings toward others.

*For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:8)*

Peter is talking about developing the ability to feel tenderness toward others. "Pitiful" in the sense of "full of pity". Let people of the world hear you say something about how you feel about your fellow-Christians that is positive and commendable.

#### **Humble in spirit**

*KJV uses the word "courteous"; but there is greater manuscript evidence for the word translated "humble". We have similar expressions like "down to earth".*

Having a genuine modesty, not a pretended self-abasement, the kind that makes us bury our talents.

Think of the value of cultivating humility among the people we are with. Someone once said pride is glue with which we get stuck on ourselves! How refreshing it is to see people who are not filled with self-importance, who can take a genuine interest in the thinking and needs of others rather than fill the time talking about himself.

Living in humility imitates the spirit of both the Father and Son who said, *"I am meek and lowly in heart."*

#### **Not rendering evil for evil**

The common human approach is personal vengeance--an eye for an eye. Jesus taught unconditional love and forgiveness.

*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Mt. 5:38-42)*

Everyday we have occasion to practice this principle at school, at work, in business. When someone says something to us out of the way, we can put them in their place, we can shoot something back or...we can:

### **Rendering a blessing to others**

*From "eulogeo" meaning "to speak well of"*

*But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. (Mt. 5:44)*

Just as we were blessed by God when we lived in sin, so we should extend that same blessing to others.

*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. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:17-21)*

## **A PROMISE TO THE PERSONALLY EXCELLENT**

**Peter shows us that his exhortations about character are in keeping with God's ongoing expectations from His people and that such a life has always been blessed by the Lord.**

*Who is the man who desires life, and loves length of days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.*

*Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. (Psalm 34:12-16)*

### **The conditions of the promise**

Refrain (pausato) his tongue from evil (cursing, slander) and his lips from speaking guile (fraud, deceit)

"Eschew (turn away from) evil and do good"

"Seek peace and ensue (follow) it"

### **The blessings of the promise**

Love life and see good days (The positive enjoyment of God's providence)

Answered prayer (The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears attend to their prayer). Peter has already alluded to the idea that bad behavior can be a barrier to God's blessings *You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)*

**Peter motivates us to excellence by reminding us that, though the world may be hostile toward us, God is not. Instead His favor is upon us and His blessings will flow to us.**

**Conclusion: What a challenge these verses present to us! Every day wherever we are we have an opportunity to manifest powerful attitudes that will change people's lives forever! Sometimes its the seemingly little things that make the difference. Let's start making full use of the the power of a godly example wherever we are. We will bring blessing to ourselves and others.**