

• Appeal widened

Peter has been speaking about wives and husbands^{□1}. Now he widens his appeal.

□1 3:1-7

1. Peter appeals for loving harmony

1. **He appeals for loving harmony among the Christians.** His words have reference to husbands and wives, but they relate to everyone else in the fellowship as well. *'To sum up, let all of you be harmonious, sympathetic. Show love of the brothers and sisters. Be compassionate and humble in spirit'*^{□1}.

□1 3:8

• Like-mindedness

First he asks for **harmony**. 'Let all of you be harmonious'. The word 'harmonious' means 'like-minded', 'united in spirit'. It is an appeal that they will agree together to strive after loving unity.

• Sympathy

He asks for **sympathy**. 'Let all of you be ... sympathetic' – responsive to each other's feelings and needs, tender-hearted towards each other.

• Brotherliness

He asks for **brotherliness**. 'Show love of the brothers and sisters'. They must remember that they come from a family. There may be differences of temperament among them, but they must show family-unity, family-loyalty. He asks them to show **compassion**, merciful and tender feelings towards the needs and weaknesses of others.

• Humility

He asks for **humility**. 'Be ... humble in spirit'. They must not lord it over each other or be rivals in competition, with each striving for superiority over the other. They are to be like Jesus who emptied Himself and humbled Himself.

• Freedom from vindictiveness

He asks for **freedom from vindictiveness**. 1 Peter 3:9 says *'Do not pay back evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary bless the other person, for you were called to this in order that you may inherit a blessing'*. They must face the fact that they are likely to face insult even from people who are closest to them – he has not long been speaking of wives and husbands – but they must deliberately and conscientiously set themselves against any spirit of retaliation or revenge.

2. Live for 'inheritance'

• Reaping the blessings of godliness in this life and beyond

2. **He asks them to live for 'inheritance'**. This is one of the major themes of the Bible. 'Inheritance' is reaping the blessings of godliness. Christians are 'heirs' – people lined up for inheritance, people about to get a gracious reward. Peter has referred to this twice before^{□1}. Salvation is with a view to inheritance. Inheritance is not justification or new birth. It is what we are born again **for**. Christians are 'born again ... for an inheritance'^{□2}. Inheritance is reaping the blessings of godliness. It begins in this life, since those who sow to the Spirit reap back from the Spirit. Yet it also involves reward beyond the grave. We lay up treasure in heaven.

□1 1:4; 3:7

□2 1:4

• Works of persistent faith

Inheritance comes by works of persistent faith. References to 'inheritance' nearly always follow appeals for godly living. Here in 1 Peter 3:7, 8–12 it comes in an appeal for godly living. Inheritance is not 'by faith alone'; it is by 'faith and patience'^{□1}.

□1 Hebrews 6:12

3. Old Testament confirmation

• To see good days.....

3. **Peter confirms what he says by appealing to the Old Testament.** He quotes from Psalm 37:13–17. For,

'Anyone wishing to love life and to see good days,

Let him restrain the tongue from evil, and the lips from speaking deceit.^{□1}

□1 3:10

Let him turn aside from evil, and let him do what is good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it.^{□2}

□2 3:11

For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous

And his ears are open to their request,
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil'. ³

³ 3:12

• And enjoy life....

He almost seems to ask a question: is there anyone who really wants to enjoy life? Most people want to be happy but we all tend to look for happiness in the wrong place and in the wrong way. How then can we thoroughly love life? 'They will scarcely brood over the days of their lives' – says Ecclesiastes 5:20 – 'because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts'. But how can we know such joy?

Two negatives and two positives

Peter – following Psalm 37 – has two negative points and two positive points.

• Restrain talk

We are to restrain our talk. The happy life begins with restraining the thing that brings most destructiveness and sorrow – a wild tongue, careless lips. This is the most difficult aspect of the human personality to control. How do we do it? It is easier when we believe in the sovereignty of God! When we talk wildly it is largely because we are trying to achieve something ourselves instead of letting God do it. But we must learn not to try to shape life by wild talk.

• Turn from evil

We are to turn from evil. When God shows us that something is wrong, as He will, we deliberately and conscientiously turn from it, and put the opposite in its place. We turn from deceit and practise openness. We turn from defensiveness and leave our reputation with God. We turn from envy and deliberately find our contentment in God. We turn from vindictiveness and deliberately let the other person ill-treat us. It is painful – but it brings us liberty and release when we do it!

• Do what is good

We are to do what is good. In every situation we find out what is the good thing to do. It will always involve loving the other person. Then we do it! It is not purely a negative life of self-restraint. It is positively and actively following God's leading and doing what is good. We are to pursue peace. We seek for ways of having peace. We will **not** compromise with sin – it is not peace at any price. But it is peace so far as it depends on us. We pursue it! This implies that peace is often running away from us! You only have to chase what is running away!

• Pursue peace

The result is wonderful. The fruit of the Spirit is love (that first!), then joy and peace and the consciousness of being in control of our lives. Then we love life; we discover that we are seeing good days. If we live in any other way, God is against us. Best of all we discover that God looks after us when we cease to look after ourselves so much. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and He hears our prayers.

• A wonderful result – God looks after us

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