

Loving Life

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

1 Peter 3:8-12

Of all the people who have walked the earth, Jesus alone knew how to pack more living into each moment than any other. Eternal living begins now in living life to the full and packing what matters into every nook and cranny of it. Jesus really lived rather than merely existing. His life still touches millions even though he has long gone. He knew the secret to extending life even though his time was so short. He made an eternal difference by pointing others to the Source of Life. If we fill our lives with getting even, then how can we ever get ahead? Jesus calls us to live in unity for the continual exchange of hostilities bankrupts the human spirit and drains life from any harboring hatred and malice. God did not create us to expend our lives proving to each other our own worth. God has already deemed us as "very good" and sacrificed his one-of-a-kind, darling son. What do I have to prove to anyone? If we must feel sorry, let us feel sorry for those who ridicule us. They have attached themselves only to what they see and given their lives to it.

Though Peter does not name it here, he speaks of forgiveness. It is remarkable indeed that these words come from the same man who once thought forgiving someone seven times to be more than sufficient to fulfill Jesus' teaching on the subject (Matthew 18:21-22). Peter's words echo Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. What grounds do we have to forgive those who wish our destruction? Do we really wish to become what they have become? Peter enjoins upon us to be tender of heart, to be of one mind, to be humble, to be filled with brotherly love and to be sympathetic. Does the world not have enough people who hate and tear down without us joining their ranks? Perhaps, we will not change our generation, but a better world begins with a better me. I cannot control what others do, and it would be wrong of me to do what even God refuses to do.

Christ calls us not to destroy but build. In a sense, we are spiritual engineers. Anyone can tear down and pick out problems—this is merely pointing out the obvious. While others tear down, we build. While others revile, we bless and in blessing we obtain blessing. While many have given into the evil around them, we seek to spread God's goodness because he alone has enough for all of us. Our hope and life rests in what Christ has done for us. In following Christ, his goodness pervades all we do. In saying that Christ works in us, we are not on an ego trip proving our superiority over unbelievers. Rather it is to say that we bow to his understanding as our maker and hope to open the hearts of those about us to their maker as well.

How do we love life and see good times? First, we open our hearts to God's words and live by them. We do not trade insults, and we watch what we say and how we say it. We live honest lives and deal honestly in all our dealings. We turn from evil and turn to good. We pursue peace rather than controversy. It is not an easy road but it is the only road worth living. Perhaps more of quoting from the same Psalm is in order, "*But the LORD opposes evildoers and wipes out all memory of them from the earth. The godly cry out and the LORD hears; he saves them from all their troubles. The LORD is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged. The godly face many dangers, but the LORD saves them from each one of them. He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken*" (Psalm 34:16-20).

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