

Week Seven Assignment: 1 Pet. 4: 12-5:4

1. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. Peter addresses the believers affectionately as “Beloved,” as he did in 2:11. His concern throughout the letter has been to adjust their thinking on suffering and Christian witness. Peter’s final command in verse 19 may be somewhat surprising to hear: “Therefore, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” Throughout this letter about suffering for Christ, Peter has encouraged believers to do good in the face of unjust suffering. Has studying this letter changed your understanding of doing good? What encouragement can you take from Peter’s long discourse on suffering? Read through the two hand-outs below on good works, in preparation for our discussion. (*These two hand-outs are condensed from Pastor Arch Van Devender’s class on “Church and Ministry.”*)

2. In what seems like a brief digression, Peter speaks directly to the elders (5:1-4). What might his reason(s) be for addressing the elders now? Think about how this connects to the previous sections of his letter. How might you encourage the elders or overseers in your church?

Good Works¹

Requires:

- Heart purified by faith
 - faith is a biblical emphasis (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 13:1-3; Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5:14)
 - faith and love are sufficient and necessary
- Obedience to God's Word
 - necessary to good works
 - commands include "to love" and "to seek His glory"
- The right end
 - the highest good is seeking to glorify God
 - 1 Cor. 10:31 "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Three conditions for good works:

- Right motive—God's covenant presence dwelling in us bearing fruit
- Right standard—God's authority
- Right goal—God's sovereign control, God's providence determines what acts will and will not lead to God's glory

Biblical reasons to do good works:

- The history of redemption—we are part of this history and the advancing of Christ's kingdom
 - what God has done, gratitude for past and anticipation of the future
 - John 13:34 "love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another"
 - Col. 3:1-3 "...set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth..."
 - when Christ died, we died to sin; when He rose, we rose to righteousness. We are one with Christ in his death and resurrection
- The authority of God's commands
 - Jesus' use of commandments in his exhortation toward a distinct manner of life
 - God has the right to absolute obedience
- The presence of the Spirit
 - acknowledge and follow the Spirit's fruit in the inner transformation that is ours through regeneration and sanctification
 - Eph. 5:8-11 "...for at one time you were in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."

¹ These notes are condensed from Pastor Arch Van Devender's class on Church and Ministry.

What are “good works”?² The good works of a Christian differ substantially from those of a non-Christian in several important details. On the whole Christian benevolence and good works is not dis-interested or general. Though there may be some benevolence of work that is directed to the “common good” and thus not specifically oriented toward an individual or group, the general character of Scriptural benevolence is much more personal and is consciously directed toward witness. The Christian understands good works to be done as the Lord did them, through the leading of the Holy Spirit who has brought specific individuals or groups into his particular sphere of contact and that this then constitutes not only an opportunity but a command or expectation that the Christian will respond to that individual or group in such a way as to communicate a truth or the Truth about God.

A. Bearing Fruit (Offensive Good Works)

Falsehood confronted (in word & deed) – Christians must develop a discerning mind so as to be able to pursue this task. To simply “feel like something was wrong” is not sufficient for the task. Christians must develop clear insights into the institutions and practices which are part of the world they inhabit so that they may refute the wrong thinking that is present in it.

Truth proclaimed (in word & deed) – proclaiming truth is the pursuit of light in the face of darkness. It is the positive redemptive proclamation of the Kingdom of Christ as it bears on whatever circumstances have prompted it.

Good works accomplished – fruit for the kingdom is also framed in good works motivated by love for Christ. These are most often characterized by a relief for suffering especially within the covenant community. Jesus stated that even a cup of water given in His name will not fail to receive its reward (Mat. 10:42). It is most clear from Scripture that the doing of good works is again accompanied by the proclamation of Christ, to distinguish it from worldly philanthropy. The personal nature of good works, often involving the immediate contact of the individuals involved, is implicit.

Converts gained – It involves the whole sphere of making disciples and requires commitment. It is not just about conversion, but about being involved in the discipling and edification of the convert.

B. Building Community (Defensive Good Works) –

Promoting peace and dwelling together in unity – Unity in the body is to be pursued and the effect of this fruit is good and pleasant (Ps. 133:1-2). The joy of fellowship and the deep appreciation of it are essential manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit. When God so acts as to draw us together across lines of cultural division and to build in us a mutual appreciation and interaction the experience of which is not only appreciated but a cause of delight, then something marvelous has transpired. In Christian unity, the common cause of the Christian

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community is the call to service of a Living Lord who has drafted the individuals into His army so as to pursue His goals and participate in His victory. It is this sense of submission to the external authority of their Lord that is the fundamental “unity” that characterizes Christian fellowship. The delight that abounds in such fellowship is the sense of privilege and purpose that is common to all and enables the mutual support, respect and interdependence that constitutes the Body of Christ. The promotion of this unity falls under the heading of “promoting peace” and identifies the field of service where this fruit is to be pursued. Both individually and corporately, the fruit of peace and unity is the product of diligent and dedicated service, as the various inroads being made by Satan are recognized, responded to, and through the Holy Spirit dealt with in such a way as to perfect or purify the Body of Christ.

Growing in Knowledge and Purity (edification & discipline) – Christians are to bear fruit also by serving within the body to cause it to grow in knowledge and purity. Far from being identified with the acquisition of Bible knowledge or the practice of spiritual disciplines, Christian “knowledge” is unto the end of producing a “life well lived.” The “knowledge” of God is a matter of the whole person. It is that knowledge which is intellectually apprehended and emotionally embraced. It is facilitated in fellowship through the mutual submission of the members of the church to growth in it.

Developing Bonds of True Affection: Characteristic Love of the Brethren – Christian love is the outworking of the Holy Spirit that is registered in genuine affection and extraordinary commitment. It is the distinctive hallmark of Christian community specifically in the manner in which it brings glory to God through its supernatural character. It is not in the love of people of like nature and social status but rather it is the love that exists between people when there is no other explanation for that love’s presence other than its supernatural origin. It is the love that does not draw distinctions between social status, ethnic heritage or gender difference. It is the love that understands the beloved, not in terms of their own merit, but in terms of their first being loved by Christ. It is the recognition of Christ in the person that constitutes their appeal and their loveliness. The beauty of Christian love is the beauty of Christ Himself and it is truly distinguished only when there are no other apparent reasons for the love being present.