

“Essentials of a Surrendered Life”

1 Peter 3:8-12

There is an interesting story that comes out of the events involving the Japanese surrender to the allied forces, which marked the close of the second world war. A little after 8am on the morning of August 6, 1945, American forces dropped the atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. It was the first and only time that nuclear weapons have ever been used in warfare. Three days later, August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 15, the Japanese officially surrendered. Emperor Hirohito recorded his announcement that Japan would surrender a day before it aired publicly. He knew that his order would be meaningless if it was not followed, so he made all of his generals sign their agreement to the surrender. He then locked the recording in a safe and waited for the morning.

Though the Japanese generals had signed the agreement, some of the other officers would hear nothing of it. There was a group of high ranking military men, led by Major Kenji Hatanaka, who were determined to keep the war going. They quickly devised a plan that they would steal the emperor's recording and keep it from going public.

Major Hatanaka believed that he only needed to capture the Imperial Palace, and the Japanese people would then become inspired to get behind him. So he forged an order that let him send his men to the palace. Once they were in, they disarmed all of the guards, blocked all of the entrances, and cut all of the communication wires. They then began to search for the emperor's recording.

Though they searched the palace for hours, they couldn't find what they were looking for. When the morning came, one of his men informed Hatanaka that the

Japanese people had not risen up in his support. Instead, the army was coming for him, and he would die a traitor rather than the hero he supposed himself to be. On that day, August 15, 1945, the same day that the Japanese surrendered, Kenji Hatanaka took his own life.

Surrender doesn't come natural to us. There is something within us that wants to maintain the conflict, to perpetuate the cause of self. However, the Christian life demands that we raise the white flag to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And in these verses, the apostle Peter shows us what this looks like in a practical sense. Unconditional surrender to God is the theme of these chapters.

Since the section that began back up in 2:11-12, Peter has been explaining how believers are to live in a way that reflects our kingdom citizenship. He says that Christians are to keep their conduct among unbelievers honorable, so that they may see their good deeds and be drawn to God.

Peter tells these believers that it will largely involve their submission to human institutions such as the government and even the emperor. Christian servants are to be subject to their masters. Christian wives are to be subject to their husbands, and those who are married to unbelieving men may in fact win them to Christ through their witness. He says Christian husbands are to love their wives and show honor to them.

All of this is to be viewed within the proper context of Christ's willing submission to do the Father's will. Jesus was surrendered to suffer in our place, and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

Peter calls us to surrender our lives in obedience, the way that Jesus did. Now in verses 8-12, he describes what I'm calling the essentials of a surrendered life.

1. ATTITUDES to be cultivated (3:8)

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.”

Up until this point, Peter has been specific in mentioning servants, wives, and husbands. Now, he wants them to understand that his following instructions apply to everyone at all times.

“Finally” — *means to sum it all up*

He’s saying, “To sum up this whole matter of submission, all of you collectively need to possess certain attitudes.”

You’ll notice in verse 8 that Peter mentions at least five specific attitudes that are to be cultivated in our lives. A life that is surrendered to God will reflect these attitudes. They are absolutely essential to the Christian life. They are not attitudes that you and I can simply muster up in our own strength. Our natural disposition is the opposite of these attitudes, and by nature we cannot do what Peter is about to ask us to do. Instead, these are supernatural attitudes produced by the life of Christ in the believer.

Let’s walk through these together.

Unity of mind

The word used here is a compound word that literally means ‘same think.’ The idea is that believers are to live in harmony with one another, sharing a common commitment to the gospel. They are not to be at odds with one another. They are likeminded, something for which Jesus prayed:

John 17:21—“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Jesus prayed for unity, and the early church displayed it:

Acts 2:44—“And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”

Acts 4:32—“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.”

We need to keep in mind what the readers of Peter’s letter were enduring by way of persecution. They were living under pressure. It isn’t easy to live in harmony when things are well, much less when things are bad. When we hurt, it is all too easy to turn inward and become selfish in our dealings with others. Instead of ‘circling the wagons’ and turning inward, Peter’s calls upon these Christians to live in authentic community with one another. (Romans 12)

Belief in the gospel puts us in a family of faith. That’s what the local church is. Ultimately, the church is not a place to go, nor is it an event to attend. It is a family to love and serve. And as a faith family, we are to cultivate an attitude of unity.

Ephesians 4:3—“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Unity is something that is produced supernaturally by the Holy Spirit who indwells believers. And yet we have the responsibility of guarding that unity, of cultivating it, seeing to it that it is preserved. (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:13)

Now let me tell you what that doesn't mean. It is not the same thing as 'uniformity' which says that we all have to like the same things. Nor is it the same thing as 'union' which is merely being under the same roof. Nor is it 'unison' which denies true harmony. (illus. of orchestra)

Unity is like a gospel tapestry made up of different people from different backgrounds with different gifts and talents. Each individual fabric is important to the overall tapestry.

Sympathy

This attitude that Peter mentions means to share the same feeling. Belonging to the church means that we are united on the basis of the truth, but it also means we share one another's pain. This shows how at its core, involvement in the local church is 'others' centered, not 'self' centered.

This is patterned after the example of Christ who is our sympathetic High Priest.

Hebrews 4:15—“For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

The sympathy that Peter is describing here is much more than a pat on the back. It is coming alongside someone else in a way that is selfless and sacrificial. It is taking seriously the scriptural purpose of involvement in the local church—

Hebrews 10:24-25—“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

True sympathy is considerate of others. I cannot be sympathetic toward someone else and preoccupied with myself at the same time. Sympathy for my brothers and sisters and preoccupation with self cannot coexist. If all I am concerned with is what I want, what I think, or what I need, then I cannot get under the burden of who you are.

Galatians 6:2—“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Hebrews 13:3—“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body.”

Sympathy is entering into someone else’s experience.

Brotherly love

Unity of mind and heartfelt sympathy is born out of a heart of brotherly love for each other. The word is ‘philadelphoi’ which describes love for those who are related in some way. Literally, it means ‘love from the same womb.’ Such is the glue that bonds us together with one another in the local church. Such love is not something that is merely stated, but is expressed through unselfish actions. Paul mentions the importance of this type of attitude:

Romans 15:2—“Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.”

Brotherly love goes much deeper than superficial activities that pass for Christian fellowship in much of the way we approach the local church today. Instead, it is descriptive of a sense of loyalty that is just as strong as one’s own family relationships. Peter mentions this a lot. He shows how the relationship we have one another in the local church is more like family than it is friends.

1 Thessalonians 4:9—“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”

Let me tell you something—we had better be careful that our understanding of the church is not more cultural than it is biblical. If all of this is nothing more than a club or an event, then you can take it or leave it. But if it is a family for whom I am to have a sense of brotherly love, one that is sacrificial rather than preferential, then it changes things.

Tender heart

Peter uses the same word here that Paul uses when he describes the tenderhearted disposition of believers who are quick to forgive those who hurt or offend them.

Ephesians 4:31-32—“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, and tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

A tender heart is one that is quick to forgive others, and quick to accept someone else. It speaks of a genuine compassion that is demonstrated through actions rather than mere words. The person who has a tender heart puts others before themselves. (illus. of Good Samaritan)

The opposite of a tender heart is a hard heart. The person whose heart is hard thinks only of himself. He isn't moved by the needs of others. Rather than being quick to forgive, he is quick to judge and write someone else off. The one with a

tender heart isn't easily offended. But those who have a hard heart are offended all of the time. Such an attitude is a reflection of pride more so than humility.

Humble mind

This last character trait that Peter mentions is arguably the most essential virtue of the Christian life because every other virtue flows from humility. It is the mind of Christ which the believer is in possession of. (Phil. 2:3)

The word here speaks of an inward humility that deep down where nobody can see. It doesn't mean that you make yourself everybody's doormat or that you seek to be a people pleaser.

The one with a humble mind is free to put others first. He or she isn't going through life with a 'me-first' mentality that is so prevalent in our day. My personal fulfillment, my accomplishments, my way, my...my...my!

These are the essential attitudes for a life that is wholly surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Go back through the list and see whether or not these virtues are on display in your life:

- Do I prioritize unity of mind, or am I the kind of person that stirs the pot?
- Do I possess sympathy, or am I unmoved?
- Do I have a sense of brotherly love for my fellow brothers and sisters, or is it all surface level?
- Do I have a tender heart, or am I cold and calloused?
- Do I possess a humble mindset, or am I proud and driven by my own ego?

2. ACTIONS to be demonstrated (3:9-11)

“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...”

Surrender demands that our inward attitudes are reflected through outward actions. An inner Christlike disposition will manifest itself through an outer Christlike walk. Religion seeks to change people from the outside in, but the gospel changes us from the inside out!

Peter quotes from the Old Testament in these verses, and the specific reference is Psalm 34. By referring his readers to this particular psalm, we are given a glimpse into Peter’s pastoral heart. He’s shepherding his flock. He mentions two essential actions:

Restrain our lips

“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.”

When you’re under pressure, it is all too easy to verbalize what you feel in the form of complaints and criticisms. Our natural inclination is to defend ourselves when attacked.

Rather than shooting off at the mouth, Peter says we need to restrain our lips (or our tweets...)

I’m sure that you all would agree that we are a nation of talkers. As Americans, we love to talk. News has become an endless smorgasbord of talk shows from a variety of persuasions.

There is talk radio and Sirius XM channels devoted to popular hosts. iTunes offers a plethora of options in the form of podcasts ranging from popular preachers to motivational speakers and conspiracy theorists.

We all have something to say, and it seems that everyone wants to be heard. Social media has given everyone an instant platform.

James 1:19—“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”

Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Imagine if you will this picture: a bicycle chain connecting your heart and your mouth. Our mouth is driven by what preoccupies our heart. Bridling our tongue means dealing with our heart first—not merely avoiding blurting out unkind words. So think about what this looks like practically. If in my heart I place others first, then my mouth will be filled with words of blessing for others. If humility truly describes the inner disposition of my heart, then I’m not going to be the subject of my conversation.

Offer our lives

In verses 11-12, Peter directly quotes from Psalm 34:12. In that particular psalm, David was on the run from King Saul. He was being persecuted, something that Peter’s readers could easily identify with. The whole theme of Psalm 34 is the faithfulness of God despite painful circumstances.

If it is life that you truly desire, both David and Peter are saying here is where it’s found—keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. And then he says:

“...let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.”

In other words, life isn't found through living for oneself. It isn't discovered through the pursuit of self-interests. Rather, life is found through surrender. (Counter-intuitive!)

Jesus said that the one who is always preoccupied with finding his life will ultimately lose it. But the one who loses his life for Christ's sake will ultimately find it.

Our natural disposition is to go through life with a clenched fist, always fighting for what we want. We jump to our feet when we're wronged. We dig in our heels when we don't get our way. Why? Because we want life.

In the gospel, Jesus freely offers us His life, but it is in exchange for our own. We can't have His life and not turn loose of the reins.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY to be anticipated (3:12)

"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."

Surrender to God demands certain attitudes and actions, but notice that it also involves a sense of accountability. Those who surrender their lives to Christ do so out of a sense of accountability to Him. He is the sovereign Lord of their lives. Regardless of what we are presently facing, the Lord Jesus has perfect knowledge of it.

Peter reminds his readers of their spiritual accountability to the Lord. How they thought inwardly mattered. What they did outwardly mattered. And even though they were being persecuted for their faith, which meant their circumstances were less than desirable, the Lord was well aware.

Remember that Peter is still quoting from Psalm 34 here, in which David's sense of accountability to God is reflected. All through the various psalms that he wrote, it is evident that David knew his life was in God's hands.

Notice in verse 12 that Peter mentions the Lord's eyes, the Lord's ears, and the Lord's face. All of this is meant to show how intimately involved God is in the details of our lives. He is not far removed from our situation, nor has He abandoned us to our circumstances, but is present with us.

God's eyes are not shut that He cannot see.

God's ears are not deaf that He cannot hear.

God's face is not timid that He will not judge.

Each thought I think, every word I speak, and each action I take must be weighed in the balance of my accountability to the Lord Jesus Christ. For one day I will stand before Him at the judgment seat where the things I have done in His name will be exposed for their true value.

These Christians to whom Peter is writing needed to hear these words, for they needed to be reminded that they were not forgotten. Their circumstances were not beyond God's sovereign control. How they responded in attitudes they had, in the words they spoke, and in the actions they did all mattered. And their persecutors were not without divine accountability, for they would answer to God one day the same as everyone else.

Peter's readers needed to hear these words, and we need to hear them as well. Our character matters, and it shows up more so through our reactions than our actions. If you are a Christian, go back through the list of these attitudes and see how you square up.

Do you make unity, sympathy, love, and humility a priority?

Do you have a tender heart, or are you often cold and indifferent?

Do you always have to have the last word in a matter? Are you quick to give your opinion, no matter how ill informed it might be? Or, do you restrain your lips? Like the psalmist, do you make it your prayer:

Psalm 141:3—“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”

Do you respond to insults with more insults, or do you bless those who curse you and turn the other cheek? The way we respond to our circumstances has implications for those who are watching our lives.

I want you to consider an illustration of what Peter is talking about here as I close. Do you remember how in Acts 16, Paul and Silas were accused and thrown in prison? Not only were they jailed, but they were beaten with rods.

Acts 16:23-24—“And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into the prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

And then the next verse:

Acts 16:25—“About midnight Paul and Silas were...

Cursing at the top of their lungs? Demanding their rights and threatening a lawsuit? There's none of that.

Acts 16:25—“...praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

Not only were the prisoners listening, but the jailer himself was listening. He was watching. He was moved by the difference he saw in their lives, and by the earthquake, and their willingness to not take revenge.

Go back several years to Acts 7. Do you remember the account of Stephen? The Scripture says that when his persecutors began to stone him, he cried out to God for their forgiveness, praying for the very ones who were killing him.

Acts 7:60—“And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

And do you know what the very next verse says? It says that Saul was consenting of his death. Saul was there. He watched Stephen die the way that he did. And it was something that he never got away from. And when the Lord of glory confronted him on the Damascus Road, He said to him, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

I believe that one of the ‘goads’ was the witness of Stephen himself, who when was cursed, blessed in return.

I hope that in the next part of your day, whether it be in your connection class or at lunch, talk with someone else about how you can be a blessing to someone else as a disciple of Jesus. Ask yourselves what you might be able to do this week to bless because of the blessing you have received in Christ, something that is so unlike anything else that your co-worker, or neighbor, or total stranger sees on a regular basis.

Peter says that if it is life that you desire, then you need to know that it will only be found through surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know Him? If you’re not yet a Christian, then you need to know that the only way to life is

through faith in Jesus. Repent of your sins, believe the gospel, and surrender your life to Him now.