

Session 5: The Characteristics or Qualities of a Christian Life

1 Peter 3:8-12

Before you read....What do you think the marks of the Christian Life might be?

Give your opinion in lieu of reading the Scripture first!

1 Peter 3:8-12, “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

The Word according to Peter: Marks of the Christian Life...

- **Unified...one mind! Hearts United!**
Words of Jesus who prayed for his people that they might be one, as He and His Father are One (John 17:21-23).
Paul reminding the Christians in Corinth that they are one body in spite of all their different qualities and gifts 1 Cor. 12-12-31)...and that the Christians in Rome might be of one mind (Romans 12:4,16). Over and over again, Paul pleaded with the church in the many cities to be of one mind in the Lord.
- **Genuinely Sympathetic...Rejoice with those that rejoice...and weep with those that weep. When one suffers all suffer; when one rejoices...all rejoice.**
- **Exhibits Brotherly Love...Jesus said, “New Commandment I give you...to love one another; this will all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”**
- **Shows compassion! God...showed so much compassionate that He gave us His only Son...to die for us.**
- **Humble heart...humility with contrite heart!**
Genuine and sincere...repentant.
- **Forgiving**

Summary by Peter: Picture of the person whom God receives and the person God rejects.

1 Peter 3:13-15a, “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats^[a]; do not be frightened.”^[b] ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.”

Christian Security in a Threatening World!

We see how Peter was a student and ardent believer in the Old Testament:

Isaiah 50:9: “Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Isaiah 8:13, “But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall regard as holy; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.”

Three (3) Great Conceptions in this passage:

1. **A Passionate love of goodness**...like a Zealot (fanatical patriot).
It is only when man falls in love with goodness that the wrong things lose their fascination and their power. If you want to know peace, love goodness.
2. **An Attitude of Suffering that is Different than the World’s Idea of Suffering:**
 - Human Suffering...physical suffering: death, sorrow, distress of mind, weariness and pain of body.
 - Suffering because of “Being a Christian”
Unpopularity, persecution, sacrifice for principle...deliberate choosing of the Christian life.
3. **The Christian’s perspective as what is the most important in life....God and Jesus Christ are the supremacies of life**—The Christian’s relationship to God in Christ is life’s greatest value.
The Christian has no value and is most miserable when he places other things in front of what has eternal value.

Therefore, even in suffering the Christian is still responsible to himself, others, and to God.

Summary: No person escapes suffering, but for the Christian suffering cannot touch the things which matter most!

1 Peter 3:15b, 16, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

In this world, the Christian will be called upon to defend his faith.

Peter tells us how to defend the faith...and answer the critics of our trust in the Lord God through Jesus:

1. **Our defense must be REASONABLE.**

To appropriately discuss our position as a Christian, we must know what we believe and have thought it out...we must be able to state it intelligently and intelligibly.

IMPORTANT: OUR FAITH MUST BE A FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE AND NOT A SECOND-HAND STORY.

If we will do our part, the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

2. Our defense must be GIVEN WITH GENTLENESS.

The lost may be wooed into the Christian faith when they cannot be bullied.

Don't be arrogant or belligerent....

Gerald's theory of Defending the Faith:

Pray about it, Prepare for it, Practice it, Protect it, Petition the Holy Spirit to be your helper, and Present it.

Remember...Heaven and Hell are real places prepared for followers of God or the evil one.

3. Our defense must be GIVEN WITH REVERENCE.

Any argument in which the Christian is involved must be carried on in a tone which God can hear with clarity and heart-felt.

God will not "high-five" His children if they present God's character as one that is not of love and merciful. God is not willing that any should perish. Let the person choose whom he will serve....but don't twist is arm in trying to get him to surrender.

4. Our defense must be A GIVING LIVING LIFE.

- *Let a person so act that his/her conscience is clear.*
- *Let your life meet criticism with a life which is beyond reproach. Such conduct will silence slander and disarm criticism.*