

1Peter 11-04-08a

This is Friday, the 8th of April, 2011. We continue our study in the book of 1 Peter, resuming in chapter 3, verse 10. We'll open in a word of prayer and begin.

Father, it is always a wonderment, it's a source of gratitude and thankfulness when we review what you have done for us over preceding days, your sustaining grace, your compassion on us, your patience with us, your watch care over us. We are so grateful for the privileges and the benefits that we receive because we are joined together as part of the body and bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the plan that you have woven us into, the tapestry and the fabric of purpose and design that carries us with it to greater and greater heights of glory as human history moves forward and your character is revealed.

We know that our opportunities in this life are fewer with each passing day because the time of the return of the Lord Jesus approaches and we will enter a new phase and a new arena for the manifestation of your character toward us. We ask that as we study this portion of your word, you will enlighten us through it. May we be good students, understand and grab hold of these principles of life and these portions of guidance from your word that in the hands of the Holy Spirit can enable us to live in a way that is impossible in our human flesh.

We thank you for this portion of your word and we ask that you will bless it to the nourishment of our souls. In Jesus' name, Amen. The section of exhortation here in 1 Peter has begun with three representative examples.

Slaves and masters, wives and husbands, and then husbands with wives. The interesting thing as you review those examples is that while there is certainly an element of function, an element of doing and being, there is an emphasis on speech. There is an emphasis on what we say.

This becomes more and more evident as the passage progresses. We saw back in chapter 2 verses 11 and 12 that we should abstain from fleshly lusts that war against our soul, having honorable conduct among the Gentiles so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they are by your good works, which they observe, caused to glorify God. It begins with others speaking evil.

When that evil speaking hits us by way of application, he is of course talking in that day to the Jews of the Diaspora, the Christian Jews, the believers who are scattered, but he says as you mingle in this relatively hostile environment, their evil speaking will be put to shame and put to rest and they will end up using those same tongues to glorify God. So he says you should be recognizing these creations, these structures that God has placed among men that involve authority, that God has placed in societies, in nations. This is the will of God, that by doing good, verse 15, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Once again, there is ignorance being expressed. There is wrong speaking and it is silenced when

it comes up against the reality of the lives of believers in the Lord Jesus. He says servants be submissive to your masters.

You endure when you do good and suffer if you take it patiently. This is commendable before God. To this you were called, verse 21.

It is a part of your calling to absorb rather than reflect evil. When evil comes, it stops with us. We don't pass it on.

We don't amplify it. We suppress it. We negate it.

We reverse it. Who is our example? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ suffered for us leaving an example that we should follow in his steps who committed no sin nor was deceit.

There was no guile found in his mouth. We're going to take a look at that word here in a moment because it's going to recur in the passage we look at tonight. But notice, when Jesus received all kinds of evil treatment, what does it emphasize? He did not commit sin as a reaction or as a response or in that situation, nor was anything false found in his mouth.

It didn't cause him to speak ill. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten.

All of these are verbal sins and as I said, the more you go through this passage, if you read it and re-read it and watch for the places of emphasis, more and more we see that it is the expression of our souls that comes through our lips that is in view. What is it that we say? How do we react in conversation, in dialogue, in speech? What do we give out with? What is the overflow of our souls that comes out of our mouths? He bore our sins so that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness. Chapter 3, wives be submissive so that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word may be one.

This is stopping evil speech. This is not wasting good speech. Sometimes your good words are not appropriate.

It's not the time. The Holy Spirit hasn't prepared the ground. It's not the place.

It's not the circumstance. One of the hardest things that gung-ho believers have, you know, some believers are just reticent and well, I'm shy, I'd really rather not rock the boat, remain silent and be thought a fool than open my mouth and remove all doubt. I think I'll just remain quiet here, just not make any sort of an issue of myself.

But then there are believers who recognize that there's an opportunity to be a witness. There's a situation that needs change. There's advice that seems in need of being given and I can't think of anybody better to give this advice than me and I'm going to speak, I'm going to inform, I'm going to illuminate.

I've already been down this road. I see this person beginning to make a mistake and I can help them. I will speak.

I will advise. I will counsel. After all, in the multitude of counsel or counselors, there is safety.

Well, I'll provide some safety here with the multitude of my counsel. Peter says, wives, in many cases, the best witness you can give is a silent witness. You can win without a word.

And of course, this is again emblematic. This is an example in a marriage that applies in many other circumstances beyond wives and husbands. Many if not all of us function under some sort of authority.

The authority may be ill-advised or misinformed or judging things wrongly, bad priorities, faulty values, just gaps in the picture. We need to pause because our first inclination is to speak. And one of the first things a Naval Academy midshipman learns or used to learn was to memorize the laws of the Navy.

These are the laws of the Navy, unwritten and varied they be, and he who is wise will observe them going down in his ship to the sea. For as naught may outrun the destroyer, so it is with the law in its grip, the strength of the ship is the service, and the strength of the service the ship. By the way, that is an expression of these creations, these structures that God has placed in human societies.

Just another way of saying it. You've got the service composed of many ships, you've got sailors, you've got seamen who are going into ships, and they're part of something larger than themselves. Take heed, I'm skipping a few verses for your benefit, take heed what ye say of your seniors, be your words spoken softly or plain, lest a bird of the air tell the matter, and so shall ye hear it again.

Set a watch on what you say, whether you say it softly in the ears of one or two, or you say it boldly to a group, some other little bird of the air is going to be flapping his beak and pretty soon you will hear about it again, and it's going to not be a happy time. So there is, even in secular wisdom, there is recognition that speech should be thought out, should be guarded, should be guided by wisdom. Do not let your adornment be merely outward, arranging the hair, wearing gold, putting on apparel.

Once again, remember that this is symbolic, and not only do we not have to become Mennonites or Luddites or Amish or whatever and walk around with drab, pale, unadorned, feminine specimens amongst us, but outward adornment. Sometimes people say, people just love my sparkling wit, they love my engaging personality and the wide and varied topics of my conversation. This is my adornment.

When I get into a group, people just love to hear what I have to say. Well, maybe, maybe not. But

adornment should not be that which is outward, and you don't necessarily, in the same way that you don't have to wear earrings and makeup, or men wearing a handsomely cut suit and \$600 shoes to impress, we also don't have to find something new to say.

Let me give you the latest juicy piece of news, because this is what makes me of interest to people. Everybody wants to be interesting. It's part of our nature.

We want to be the first to break the story. Have you heard? It's getting tougher to do that with the internet, because by the time you've heard something it's already on somebody's blog or on somebody's news page or whatever. It'll be on Drudge, it'll be somewhere.

But people love to be the first in there with the news. Well, it's a natural instinct, and we all have it to a greater or lesser degree. What this is saying, what this is encouraging us to, is pull back a little.

This is part of that investment in the world. Remember the injunction that Peter has given us. When you find yourself under pressure and things are going bad, pull out of the world a little bit.

Disengage. Don't be so invested in what people think or in how a situation is unfolding. Develop some reserve.

Don't be so entangled and enmeshed that if things go badly it drags you down with it. Be a bit more detached. Well, the same goes on the positive side.

If we are less invested and less caught up in the moment, we will be less likely to sin with our lips. Let that inner beauty gradually shine its light. Some of the most beautiful photographs that you will ever see are time exposures.

They're not quick snapshots. Those are neat. You catch the receiver in the end zone with the ball right on the tips of his fingers, and it makes a great sports page shot.

But things that you see over time, these slowly developed one frame a minute things where flowers are blooming or clouds are forming and moving across the sky, things that take time to develop. You have to wait a long time for a rose bush to grow. Sometimes you have to wait seasons before it matures and begins to produce these really beautiful blooms.

If you are patient, that's where the beauty is. The same thing if we want to be beautiful, men and women. Sometimes it just takes patience.

You don't have to lay down all your cards at once. You don't have to make everything evident. Let me tell you all of the good things about me.

Let me show you how interesting I am. Inner beauty is patient. It takes time to find it.

The Lord Jesus Christ, you remember when he first came to Judea, he didn't go down to the

temple and stand up on the great day of the feast and say, Come unto me, did he? What did he do? He began talking to one here and two there. He started teaching his disciples, talking to small groups. He didn't try to become a phenomenon.

His message, his identity, his presence as the Messiah of Israel gradually unfolded. He didn't march in with a band and big bass drum. That's the idea here.

But the hidden person of the heart, notice, how can the person in your heart be hidden? If you're constantly, and I've told you before, I pick on this one girl from long ago that I dated, really the first girl I ever dated, and she was constantly trying to tell me what she was like. She said, you know, I'm not this kind of a person. I'm always that kind of a person.

This is what I like to do. Well, I knew her. I had known her for years.

She was in my school, and we'd been at the same school for grade after grade after grade, and I had admired her. I already knew what she was like. But she wanted to tell me what she was like, and her idea of what she was like was somewhat different, as it is for most of us, than reality.

But I liked to sit and listen to her because it was amusing to compare what her self-image was with what I knew her to be. She was a wonderful girl. I liked her a lot.

I didn't want anything to matter with her. I just thought it was kind of funny that she would say, endlessly, for hours at a stretch, with breaks in between, for breath, but to tell me all of the... It was basically what she wanted to be, what she aspired to be, but she put it all in the present tense. You know, I'm not this, I'm that, and this is what I'm... And I just thought, well, you know, I wonder if I've got that same tendency.

The hidden person of the heart. You've got a person inside, well, if your beauty is the hidden person of the heart, that means it's not immediately obvious. It doesn't... You don't spill everything you are, and everything you know, and everything you hope to be in the first few minutes.

You let that speak for itself over time. The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and what spirit? Gentle and what spirit? You're being quiet, aren't you? Quiet spirit. A quiet spirit, not a verbose, chatterbox spirit.

Not let me tell you everything I just learned since the last time I saw you spirit. It's a gentle and quiet spirit. The only people who get to be unquiet are those of us with a communication gift where we have a pass.

We can talk over... No, I'm kidding. We can't either. Very precious in the sight of God.

Wouldn't it be a great thing to be found precious in the sight of God? A gentle and quiet spirit is precious. How do you know what's precious in the earth? What's precious? Do you see where gold this past week topped \$1,400 an ounce, \$1,458? It's not quite so much a measure of how

valuable gold is as how unvaluable dollars are becoming. Gold pretty much has a fixed value.

So when it becomes worth more and more dollars per ounce, that just tells you your dollars are getting less and less spendy. They're getting more and more monopoly money-like. So don't feel bad.

If you have gold, just hang on to it. Don't feel like you need to get just a bigger pile of more worthless dollars for it. Precious in the sight of God.

Precious things are things that are relatively rare, kind of hard to come by. Not just any old place do you find it. And a gentle and quiet spirit is rare.

That's why it's precious. In this manner, former times, holy women who trusted in God adorned themselves being submissive to their husbands as Sarah obeyed Abraham, verbalizing her beauty by calling him Lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. You don't fear with any fear.

Husbands likewise dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, weaker vessel, heirs together, that your prayers be not hindered. If you can't guard your mouth with your wife, God's not going to pay any attention to your mouth when you pray. That's a paraphrase.

But once again, most harsh treatment of wives by husbands is verbal. And if there's going to be any harsh treatment, that's what it ought to be confined to. Not that harsh treatment is ever good, but it's a whole lot better than physical abuse.

Finally, verse 8, all, and remember this was telos, the result, if we develop these attitudes that Peter illustrates with slaves and wives and husbands, everybody, when you pursue this approach, cultivate this inner beauty, exercise this self-control, manifest this submission where it is appropriate, the end is this same kind of thinking, compassion, Philadelphia, tenderheartedness, courteousness, et cetera. And we translated these words last time in some detail. Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling.

And again, this is largely in the verbal realm. Not giving back, not reflecting. We stop it, we absorb it.

If evil is going to get reduced in the world, how's that going to happen? If there's evil bouncing around, how's it ever going to stop if all we do is reflect it and amplify it? The reduction of evil in the world happens when it meets an object and gets stopped, gets absorbed, gets subtracted from the situation. The evil disappears. We are called to be evil quenchers.

If I receive it, it quenches. If somebody launches one of Satan's fiery darts, it is quenched. It isn't a ricochet.

Knowing that to this you were called, just like chapter 2, verse 21. This is our calling, it's why

we're here, it's part of our purpose. Be an evil quencher.

You cannot quench evil without cultivating submission, in the areas where we are to be submissive, and silence, where silence is the best response. With a view toward inheriting a blessing, and I mentioned as we closed last time the beautiful structure at the end of verse 9, because you have good word in both its verb and noun forms, speaking well, this is a participle, present active participle. On the contrary, not returning or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, very strong contrary word, tunantion, right in the middle of that is anti, against this, against reviling for reviling and evil for evil, against this, being a good speaker.

It says blessing, but this is euloguntes, from logeo, to speak or to say, logos is a word or a subject or a topic or a thought that is verbalized, euloguntes, good speaking, because with a view toward this you were called in order that you might inherit eulogion. If we cultivate good speaking, we inherit good speaking. If we try to find something good to say about others, somebody says, well, what do you think about old so-and-so? Well, if nothing else, they're consistent.

I like the predictability, it's not a surprise, that's nice, you can navigate accordingly because you know what to expect, at least they're not erratic, at least they're not whipsawing you around and doing one thing one way and one thing another, what you see is what you get and this person is this way or whatever, you find something good because when it comes time for inheritance, you want God to look at you and say, well, here's what I find that's good. If you want to inherit good, you have to speak good. Speak well of others, you inherit a blessing.

It's kind of the flip side of if we do not forgive others, we are not forgiven. Father, forgive me my trespasses, just as I have forgiven so-and-so their trespass. That really puts it on the line.

I don't know if you've ever tried being specific about that when you follow the guidance that Jesus gave the disciples on how to pray. He says, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Well, think of a specific really annoying trespass and say, Father, I pray that you will forgive me of the following sins that I have committed, just as I have forgiven this person of this specific trespass.

You think, well, now how fully have I forgiven them? Because if I haven't fully forgiven them, I'm asking God to forgive me to that same extent. Well, this is the same idea. Speaking well, finding something good to say, changing the subject, speaking blessings so that we may inherit blessing.

That's the criteria. That's the standard. Because, in verse 10, and now he is going to quote Psalm 34, 12 through 16, he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil.

That's the first thing out of the box. The Greek verb there is, when it says, he who would love, this is the verb fellow, and it's in the present tense, the one who is willing, not willing in the sense of I'll do it since I must, but who is currently exercising will, sometimes desire, sometimes translated wish. But this is stronger than wish.

This is when you make a decision. The will of God is fellow. And this is that verb.

The one who decides, the one who wills, and it's in the present tense. This is an ongoing pattern, an ongoing condition. To love life.

The one who wills to love life and to see good days. That's my plan. That's my intention.

Intend is probably a really good translation here. The one who intends to love life and to see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil. The first, foremost, fundamental key to having a life that you love and good days is to curb the tongue, to avoid verbal sin.

First thing, well, the Bible has a lot to say about this. If I say name a book of the Bible that says something about taming the tongue, I think most of you could give me a New Testament book. What would it be? It starts with a J, ends with A-M-E-S.

James, remember James says the man who can bridle his tongue has brought his whole body into subjection, the tongue is like a fire and it is set on fire by the flames of hell and so on. We will look at that passage a little bit more after the break, but the Bible has a lot to say about the tongue. This is one of those passages.

It is probably not the first one that springs to mind, but ever since the middle of chapter 2, Peter has been focusing more and more and more on what it takes to live a successful life, to inherit a blessing, to love your life and to see good days. A big part of it is keeping a watch on how we communicate, what we communicate. This is a good place for us to pause and take our break.

We will be back in ten minutes to see what this passage from Psalm 34 that is repeated verbatim in 1 Peter. Any time God repeats Himself with more than just an allusion, you figure it must be pretty important. He doesn't just allude, he doesn't just footnote, he doesn't just give us a catchphrase and say, go back and remember that.

He quotes it. Why? We will try to answer that question when we come back.