

Called To Be A Blessing

January 11, 2015

Good morning! My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. This morning we continue our series in the book of 1 Peter. We pick up at 1 Peter 3:8. I ask you to turn there in your Bible. If you need a pew Bible, 1 Peter 3:8 is found on page 1,015.

In this section of the book, Peter taught about the way our relationships with Christ changes our relationships with other people. He showed how our relationships with other people should make Christ attractive. Peter talked about how Jesus changes the way we relate to the government. Christians are model citizens. He talked about the way Jesus changes the way we work as employees for our employers. Even if our bosses are crooks, Christians are to be the best employees. He looked at the way Jesus changes marriage. We learned how Jesus teaches a wife to honor her husband and support his leadership in their home. Last week, we learned how Jesus changes how husbands love their wives. Instead of dominating a wife, a Christian husband accommodates her, honors her and protects her. A husband and wife follow Christ together. The best husbands and wives are Christians because Jesus changes the way they relate to other people.

This morning, Peter finishes up his teaching on how Jesus changes the way we relate to others. This final section is teaching for all of us.

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 (ESV)

This is the big picture. If you can get this, everything else in the message will fall into place. *As a Christian I live my life to bless others.* Blessing is a church word. Don't let its “churchier” roots throw you off. It simply means to do spiritual and practical good for others. As a Christian, my life is not about me living for myself. The way I live the Christian life to make Christ attractive is I bless others. I do spiritual and practical good for people around me. As we work through these verses, we will develop our thoughts under three headings.

1. I bless others in the church by living in community rather than isolation.
2. I bless my enemies by doing them good and refusing to take revenge.
3. God promises to bless me when I bless others.

I bless others in the church by living in community rather than isolation.

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 1 Peter 3:8 (ESV)

Modern society is about the individualism. We have personal computers, personal phones (the iPhone is my phone), personal cars and personal e-mails. Everything is geared for the individual. This teaches us to think about life from a narcissistic angle. All I care about is what affects me. You see this in church.

Many Christians only want to attend church as spectators. They treat church like they are attending a movie at the theater. They come for the show and not to connect with other people. They want to listen to the sermon, sing in worship and go to lunch. See you next week. The reason we do this is because

the individualism and isolation of our culture teaches us to come to church but not connect with one another at church.

The church is to be a different place. The people of the church are to be radically different people. We aren't to think of church like attending a movie. In church, I am there to connect with other people and serve them because it is about community. Peter detailed out what this life of community in the church looks like.

Unity of mind

This is unity of mind, not uniformity of mind. It does not mean that everyone is a clone. It means that in church we have the same aim of serving God and loving one another but God made us different. Some of us are home schoolers. Some of us are public schoolers. Some of us are blue collar, others are white collar but there is to be a unity among us in our attitude and approach to life. We put honoring God and other people first.

How do we keep this unity of mind and stay focused on the big picture? This is where the Holy Spirit comes in.

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3 (ESV)

As we walk with Christ, the Holy Spirit supernaturally works inside of us to produce unity between us, not uniformity among us. The church is to be like an orchestra. In an orchestra there are different instruments playing different parts. If everybody plays his or her own thing, it is a mess. When everybody plays his or her part and follows the conductor, they make beautiful music. The conductor in the church is Jesus. When we follow him he takes our differences and makes

something beautiful. Live in community, not isolation. Life is not about me, it is about blessing others.

Sympathy

Sympathy means in the church we should be concerned about others, not just ourselves. If we are just concerned about ourselves and what affects our family, that is selfishness. In our hyperconnected society it is easy to stay emotionally disconnected because we see so much pain on the news and in the movies. It is not God's plan that in the church we say emotionally disconnected from others' pain. One of the ways we bless others in the church is we have sympathy for them when they go through times of pain. The word *sympathy* literally means "to suffer with" someone. It means to enter into the experiences of others either by multiplying their joy or dividing their sorrow.

[Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Romans 12:15 \(ESV\)](#)

This means when something really great happens in someone's life in the church family, we are genuinely happy for them. We don't ignore them. We celebrate with them. If someone is struggling, we try to call them or message them on Facebook to pray for them and tell them we care.

When my kids were little, our family attended wrestling tournaments on the weekends. In a wrestling tournament, if you place in the top three, they give you a little gold, silver or bronze medal. On Sundays, my kids loved wearing their little medals to church. Some people just ignored them but there were a handful of people in the church that saw them wearing their little medals, they stopped and congratulated the boys. They celebrated with them. That meant the world to

my boys. They loved church, because while they didn't have grandparents that lived near us, they had grandparents in the church who celebrated their victories with them. That is the picture of the church. We love in community, not isolation. We use our lives to bless others.

Brotherly love

We are to develop a type of love for one another that's not just surface love but family love. We are to treat each other like they are part of our family. They are our brothers and sisters. The church is to be a family and to love one another like family. If you don't have family, the church is to be the place where you find family love and people who care. We don't live in isolation but in community.

Unfortunately, in the modern church, it is harder to feel like family. It is easy to come to church early and leave early. It is easy to treat church like a movie theater. Church is to be like a family reunion. A family spends time together and enjoys being together.

At CrossWinds, there are ways we try to get around this. This is why we serve coffee and cookies. When family members pay a visit, you put on the coffee and get out the snacks. We take it to an extra level. We make really strong coffee. We drug you with caffeine to force you to talk to other members of your family. In the same way, once a month we have lunches after service; they are family meals. When family gets together they always eat together so the family can connect. When big families get together they break into smaller groups for more intimate conversation. In the same way, we have Life Groups

that allow you to connect with family members on a deeper basis. Look what the Bible says about the importance of the church living together in community like a family rather than isolation.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart... 1 Peter 1:22 (ESV)

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10 (ESV)

Tender hearts

What is a tender heart? It means feelings of concern for others that express themselves in action. We see so much violence on television and in the movies that we are desensitized to pain. We can become hard-hearted toward others and their pain instead of tenderhearted. Most of us don't think we are hard-hearted. How do we know if we have become tenderhearted? Here is a test. When you see someone in the body going through pain do you feel a deep enough response that you actually do something about it? Do you give them a call? Do you bring them a meal? Do you visit them in the hospital? If you never respond to the pain of others in the church, chances are you are hard-hearted. That may be tough to say but if the shoe fits, wear it.

How can we be more tenderhearted? Here are some suggestions. When someone is going through a hard time, take a moment to text them or message them on The CITY to let them know that you prayed for them and you care. Another way to be tenderhearted toward others in pain is to bring a meal. Many of you ladies are great at this. People know you care when you give them a meal. If you are like me and you can't cook, just give someone a gift card.

When we get the prayer list off The CITY, do you actually pray about the needs of others in the church or do you just delete it? If you delete it, you may be hard-hearted instead of taking the 60 seconds to read the prayer requests and pray for the needs of your church family.

Here is a recommendation. Don't just pray for people on the prayer list but get on The CITY, type in their names in the upper right hand corner and they will come up. Send them a two sentence message letting them know you prayed for them and that you care. If you have been here for a while and you have not signed up for The CITY, please sign up. The reason for The CITY is to help us live in community and care for one another. Don't choose to live in isolation from your church family. I ask you to get on The CITY, create your profile, put up a photo, and put up information about yourself. How do you sign up for an account on The CITY? Simply go to www.crosswinds.tv and follow the instructions. The reason for The CITY is so we can live in better community not just isolation.

Humble minds

This means not thinking we are better than others in the church. It means not self-promoting. When I was studying, the example that came to mind was Mike Singletary.

Do any of you remember him? He was a famous football player for the Chicago Bears. At the time he played for the Chicago Bears, I lived in Chicago. I had a chance to attend his church. When he retired they interviewed him and I learned something about him I didn't know. Mike volunteered on Sunday nights to clean up the sanctuary. His job was running the vacuum between the seats in

the auditorium and getting down on his knees to pick up discarded bulletins. Sunday afternoon he was the MVP on NBC and late Sunday night he was vacuuming the church serving as a janitor. That is the way the church works. We are to be humble-minded people. We don't think of ourselves as above others, we do whatever it takes to bless and serve others.

While living to bless others in the church sounds radical, Peter's next words are even more unsettling.

I bless my enemies by doing them good and refusing to take revenge.

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless for to this you were called... 1 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

When I was growing up, one of my favorite movies was "Rambo." Who has seen the movie? One of the famous lines from the end of the movie after Rambo had single-handedly destroyed a town and the corrupt police force behind it came when Rambo's former commanding officer, Colonel Trautman, asked him why he did this? Do any of you remember his words? "They drew first blood." In other words, they hurt me first so I have a right to get revenge. I have a right to get even. They drew first blood means they started it but I am going to finish it.

The problem is that many Christians think more like Rambo than Jesus. We think that if someone hurts us, we have a right to get even. The people of Jesus do not seek revenge. *We do not repay evil for evil.*

We repay every evil done to us with a blessing. Look at what the Bible says.

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...
Matthew 5:44 (ESV)

It doesn't say blow your enemies up with a grenade, shoot them or cuss at them. It says go out of your way to love them, help them and pray for them.

That means we don't raise our voices. It means we don't call people four-letter words. It means we don't threaten them. It means we don't take them to court. We do them good. We speak kindly to them.

I know what you are thinking. You are trying to find a way to squirm out of this and find a loophole. Don't go there. Just obey the Bible. Don't repay evil with evil. Love our enemies and pray for them. Bless them. Period! That is the way Christians live.

Another important word here is the word *revile*. It means using insulting or hurtful talk. It means when people swear at us or say insulting things about us, we don't swear back. We don't raise our voices. We don't gossip about them to others. We bless them.

As Christians, when our spouses yell at us, we do not take it up a notch higher and yell at them. Remember that our entire lives are to be about blessing others, even our enemies. Our entire lives are to represent Christ by blessing others, by doing spiritual and practical good even for our enemies. When others do evil toward us, they cuss at us, they hurt us, they talk bad about us, they drag us into court. We go out of our ways to bless them and do them good. The Bible says this repeatedly.

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes

you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Luke 6:27–29 (ESV)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Romans 12:14 (ESV)

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:17–21 (ESV)

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (ESV)

Look at how Jesus handled evils and injustices that were done to him.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 1 Peter 2:23 (ESV)

This is revolutionary. Can you imagine what it would be like if every Christian was known for blessing those who hurt them? Can you imagine what it would be like if we were known for loving our enemies instead of acting like Rambo and getting even with them? Can you imagine what it would be like if we gave special focus to doing practical good to those who say nasty things against us? This would produce a completely different society. The entire world would know Christians were different in absolutely no time at all when we live more like Jesus than Rambo.

Incidentally, this doesn't mean that our enemies will instantly become nice people and their hurt-filled words or evil actions will magically evaporate. Sometimes things will get worse. Some people are evil enough that by showing them kindness it actually annoys them.

Is there ever a place for Christians to fight against evil? Yes.

God ordained the government to punish those who are evil.

The government has a job to punish those who do evil. While we are not justified in seeking personal revenge, the job of the government is to punish evildoers.

...or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 1 Peter 2:14 (ESV)

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:2-4 (ESV)

While a Christian doesn't have a personal right to take revenge on those who do evil toward them, that very same Christian, if he or she is a police officer and acting as a representative of the government, does have a right to stop evil and use deadly force if necessary.

Why does God want us to bless our enemies? It is essential to following Christ that we pray for those who do evil toward us and verbally insult us. This is a non-negotiable part of the Christian faith. Showing undeserved grace and kindness toward those who do evil and speak against us is the very same thing God did for us through Jesus. We were his enemies. He blessed us and showed us undeserved grace and kindness. He did us spiritual and practical good when we didn't deserve it. Just as God blessed his enemies we are to live the gospel so others can see it by blessing our enemies.

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:35–36 (ESV)

Every Christian must live this way. This is an essential part of the Christian life. Our enemies will never understand the gospel message if we don't show it through our lives to them.

God promises to bless me when I bless others.

...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 3:9–12 (ESV)

This is an amazing promise. God promises to bless us, when we are blessing others, especially when we are blessing our enemies. We think the world moves along with simple cause and effect; God is not involved. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is involved in our everyday lives. When we use our lives to bless others in the church, when we use our lives to bless our enemies who do evil against us, rest assured that God will look out for us and bless us.

We think that if we don't look out for ourselves, nobody else will look out for us. That isn't true. God promises to look out for us and care for us. That is the Christian life. We don't live protecting ourselves but we live blessing others, even our enemies, and trusting God to bless us and take care of us in return.

This sounds insane so Peter bolstered his point. He gives us an example in the Old Testament of what looks like the foolish blessing of an enemy. It

comes from Psalm 34. Psalm 34 was written by King David when he was in a low point in his life. He was anointed king by Samuel but old king Saul was still on the throne. King Saul made it his life mission to destroy David. David, the anointed king, found himself running for his life from Saul, the wicked king. That was a messed up situation. David had done nothing but good to Saul but Saul was an enemy who tried to take David's life.

If you look at the heading of this Psalm in your Old Testament, you will see this Psalm was written when David was forced to hide from Saul in Philistine territory. The Philistines were Israel's enemies. To survive in enemy territory, David needed to pretend to be insane. His enemies didn't kill him because they thought he was a lunatic.

It was during this time when the Holy Spirit inspired David to write that God will look out for those who are righteous but his hand will be against those who do evil. David wasn't to focus on getting even with Saul. He was just to focus on blessing his enemies and let God take care of where the chips fell. How did it end up?

David eventually escaped the Philistines and two times after this David had the chance to act like Rambo, take revenge and kill Saul, but he refused.

In 1 Samuel 24, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. He didn't realize David and his men were hiding in the same cave. Saul was literally caught with his pants down. Even though his troops begged David to make use of the opportunity to kill Saul and get his revenge, David refused to kill him or do evil against him. David cut off the corner of Saul's robe to prove he was there but he

let Saul go. Look at what Saul said to David afterward when he realized David could have taken his life but didn't.

“Is this your voice, my Son David?... You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil.... So may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.” (1 Samuel 24:16, 17, 19)

In 1 Samuel 26 David had another chance to take Saul's life when David snuck up next to him while he slept in his own camp. David's military officers once again urged David to take Saul's life and get his revenge, but once again David refused to do evil against him. Instead he took Saul's canteen and slipped away under cover of darkness only later revealing to Saul, from a safe distance, that he had his canteen and was right next to him the night before didn't take his life. What did Saul say about this?

“The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness.... Blessed be you, my son David.” (1 Samuel 26:23, 25)

Did God reward David? Did God take care of blessing David? Yes! Saul eventually took his own life and God brought David to the throne of Israel. David didn't need to do evil to his enemies. All he needed to do was bless them and trust the results into God's hands.

Peter's point is that God still promises to bless us when we are blessing others, especially our enemies. We don't need to look out for ourselves. We just need to bless others and let God take care of us.

Conclusion¹

What does this look like in real life? On October 2, 2006, Charles Roberts, a milk truck driver who delivered to Amish farms, entered a one-room

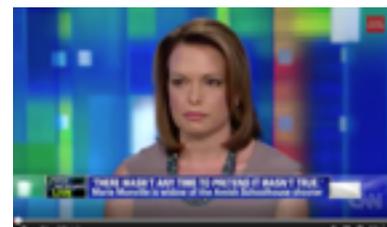
¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amish_school_shooting

Amish schoolhouse with a 9mm handgun. The teacher at the school escaped to a nearby farm but Roberts was prepared for a long standoff. He ordered the boys in the school to help him bring from his truck a shotgun, stun gun, wires, chains, lumber and nails. He eventually let the boys go after he forced them to help him barricade himself in the school with 10 of the girls before the police and state troopers surrounding the building.

If you remember the news, you know he shot the girls before taking his own life. Five of the 10 girls died. What happened next left everyone in shock. On the day of the shooting, a grandfather of one of the murdered Amish girls was heard warning his relatives not to hate Roberts. Only hours after the massacre an Amish neighbor went to Roberts' wife, three children and parents to offer forgiveness. The Amish community visited and comforted Roberts' widow and three children. One Amish man held Roberts' sobbing father in his arms as he wept for an hour over what his son had done. The Amish set up a charitable fund to help Robert's family and they contributed to it. Thirty Amish attended Robert's funeral. That more than doubled the size of his funeral because nobody else from the public gave him the honor of attending. Let me show you what Marie, Charles Roberts' widow, said about the way the Amish lived their faith as they forgave and blessed her family. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERTjBWxzzEY>)

Charles Roberts' widow, Marie, also wrote an open letter to the Amish community.

Your love for our family has helped to provide the healing we so desperately need. Gifts you've given



have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you.

Some commentators who wrote about this were critical of the Amish for forgiving and blessing so freely. They said offering forgiveness was inappropriate when there was no repentance or remorse. The Amish responded by saying their willingness to not seek revenge but to offer forgiveness and to go out of their way to bless the wife and family he left behind was because they wanted to follow the words of Jesus.

My friends, we are called to use our lives to bless others. We are to bless others in the church by not living in isolation but in community. We are to bless even our enemies. The world will see and understand the gospel when we offer forgiveness and blessings to others just like God has offered forgiveness and blessing to us. As we do, the name of Jesus is made famous and people are drawn to Christ.

Let's pray.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ@RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include

