

Mark: The Church in Formation

Called to Inherit a Blessing

1 Peter 3:8-12

I'm just amazed at what the Lord has done and what He has planned to do in the future. It hasn't even really entered into our imagination what God has planned. I want you to know that your life is well thought of in heaven because God has already decided what to think of you. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that His thoughts toward you are more numerous than the sands of the sea. And that He has ideas and plans for your life. You have an inheritance. You have a destiny.

I believe the Lord has a word for you today. I believe He has something to encourage you with. And if you'll turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 3, I want to talk to you about [how] we are called to inherit a blessing. Say to your neighbor, "God's got something for you today." Everyone in this room has a calling upon their life to inherit a blessing. ...God's plan is that you would be blessed. What a good thought that is and what a good concept. But I want you to know that the book of 1 Peter is written to a church that is going through impossible circumstances, a church that is being persecuted for their faith. Many of them have lost loved ones, others have been put in prison, they had [even] been blamed for the economic problems of their society. So this church is going through an impossible situation — difficult days, trials, and tribulations. And Peter writes impossible words to them. He gives them a challenge, and he shows them that God is going to bless them. He calls them to be blessed in the midst of circumstances that aren't a blessing. Some of you today are going through situations that really are contrary to what God's Word says about you — that you are blessed and not cursed, that you are the head and not the tail, that God is going to prosper you and you're not going to fail. And yet, in the circumstances that you face, it seems just the opposite. Does that relate to anyone here today?

Peter says to this church, look with me in verse 8 (and we're going to read through verse 12) it says:

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing [vv. 8,9].

That you may inherit a blessing. Now, in verse 9 it says that [despite] what the circumstances are...they are not to return evil for evil. Now that is not a natural tendency. When somebody nails me, I want to nail them back. When somebody speaks evil, I want to speak evil about them. That is my human response. Don't look at me like I'm the only one that's ever experienced that [laugh]. "Reviling for reviling, but on the contrary" change the circumstance, bless those that curse you, it's saying. Why should I do this? Here it says in this verse, "that you may inherit a blessing." In other words, God has an inheritance for you, but you can

abort that inheritance. You may not obtain that inheritance if you don't fulfill the requirements of these verses. You're involved in the process of God's blessings, and if you don't do certain things, you're not going to inherit a blessing even though it's God's will. You don't always get what God wants for you because you abort many of the things that God has ordained through actions of disobedience and through being rebellious.

So Peter says, "that you may inherit a blessing." Can you hear the church saying, "Yeah, Peter, sure. Do you realize that my local government has persecuted us and my husband has been taken off to prison for his faith and we don't have any money and we don't know where the next meal will come from? Yeah, it's easy for you to say not to return a curse for a curse, not to speak evil about those people that are speaking evil about us. Yeah, sure Peter, that's easy for you to say." We all have this tendency to doubt that good came from bad. Peter is saying here. If you want to inherit a blessing, you're going to have to do certain things, and he tells us exactly what that is. Verse 10-12 is a quote from Psalms 34 (from David's life, the Psalmist), and it says this:

For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain 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 prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" [vv. 10-12].

[Prayer]

Let me give you the outline of this message. There are five D's that I want to give you. First of all, you need to **Decide** to have a good life. Some people don't. Some people decide to have trouble in their lives. They decide to do dumb things and say dumb things that cause their lives to be miserable. I've decided that before, just to have a bad attitude, and it made me miserable and everybody around me was miserable. And I decided to do that, and what a dummy I was. The first principle in this outline is, decide to have good days. I hope you'll write that down if you have a pencil – just decide. It says, "He who would love life and see good days" [v. 10]. There's an implication here that you need to decide, do you want this or not? Do you want to inherit your blessing or not? Or do you want to have a destiny of self-pity and misery? The second principle in the outline is **Dominat**e. It says in verse 10, "Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit." It's interesting that really the second thing that we need to do to obtain our inheritance, to receive blessing, is that we need to dominate that mighty muscle called our tongue. It always gets us in trouble, no? Number three, **Depart**. Peter declares, "Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it" [v. 11]. Depart. You need to depart from a lifestyle that would produce misery and pain for you. You need to repent of that and say, "No, I'm not going to do those terminal tendencies in my life." The next principle is **Do good**. The simple truth is that if we are to be blessed in life we should seek to do good to others. God will not allow any good deed not to go unrewarded. And the last one, the last D, is **Develop**. Develop a relationship

with Almighty God. Verse 12, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

I. DECIDE TO HAVE GOOD DAYS

"He who would love life and see good days..." (v. 10).

Now, these are very simple principles, and yesterday, about 3 in the morning, I was awakened, and I began to think as I was [lying] there in bed about why I was awake. And I began to meditate on this thought: "He who would love life and see good days," and I began to think about all the good days that I've seen in my life. I'm 46, soon to be 47. I was saved when I was almost 17 years of age, so I've been saved almost 30 years. It'll be 30 years on June 15. And I've just been blessed. I've really inherited a blessing. And I've been blessed in my family, in my marriage, in my relationships, in the churches that I've pastored, in the Bible schools that I've taught in, and I have friends all over the world. I've been blessed, and I've seen a lot of good days. So I got up early in the morning and went into the living room because my wife always yells at me (It's not a good day when she yells at me [laugh]) when I turn on the light and try to write down some of these thoughts. And so I went into the living room, and I began to write down things that came to me about some of my good days. And, you know, I just want to say that it was a good day when I got married 'cause I realized that Rena was totally deceived in the relationship [laugh], that God does blind people. It was a good day the day my kids were born. It was a good day when Rena and I, last November, were surprised by many of you in throwing us a surprise 25th wedding anniversary. It was a good day when I preached my first message in Spanish. It was a good 3 weeks when we just had Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames, and I saw hundreds of people come forward to make some kind of commitment to Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, last night in our service a young man, his name is John, came up to me. He was saved at Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames. And he was testifying to me how he's been delivered from drugs and alcohol and how God has promoted him in his job. That was a good day. It was a good day when I learned to forgive my father and give up the offenses towards him – it was a good day. It was a good day when I took Jim Clark up to Toronto, and he was blasted by the Holy Spirit, and [I got] to see him knocked off his feet. And Olga Clark got mad because she wasn't getting blasted too by the Holy Spirit. That was a good day. I enjoyed watching that. It was a good day when I have wept with many of you over the loss of your loved ones at their death or wept

with you because a child was in some kind of trouble. See, good days are not just days in which things go well. I can look back and some of the best days of my life have been days in which I said goodbye to my father when he died and he was graduated into eternity. When I said goodbye to my mother at her funeral it was a good day. It was a hard day, but it was a good day. The day that I was able to hire more staff in Koinonia was a good day for me. It was a good day for me when Andrew was 5 and he awoke from surgery and he gave me a little weak smile as I kissed him. It was a good day the day I saw Andrew graduate and receive his bachelor's and was able to stand up and say, "That's my boy, right down there!" It was a good day when Mike Nordstrom made a great deal on our trailers over here and we got them for \$12,000 when they are worth a lot more money. It was a good day when Mike Nordstrom made a deal on my ski boat, and got me a great deal [laugh]. And I just learned that this property on 198, between 12th and 13th Avenue on Hanford-Armona Road (you've seen it – it's across from the COS campus), that Mike's the master of great deals. [He] got it for \$150,000 and the realtor told me [that] just 6 years ago it was bought for \$345,000. That was a good day. It was a good day when Randy Saville and his bride, Linda, came into this church and received Jesus Christ [...]. It was a good day when Ernie Drewry was healed from his lung disease. It was a good day for me when all my uncles and aunts and cousins and relatives started coming to this church [laugh]. I've had a lot of good days, and I'm sure you've had some good days in your life. The question is, have you decided to have a good life, to have good days? Well, if you have, and if you want a good life, if you want to inherit a blessing, you're going to have to do certain things.

II. Dominate.

"...Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit" (v. 10).

You're going to have to, number one, dominate that mighty muscle, your tongue. You're going to have to watch your words and not allow yourself to speak things that are negative. You're going to have to refrain from evil speech.

When I was 7, my little sister had brain cancer, and she was in the process of dying. She was a precious little 3-year-old girl. And we were coming back from the hospital after her first surgery, and half of her beautiful curly hair had been shaved. She was just a lovely little girl. I was 7. My brother, Michael, was 8 or 9. And Michael said to Jeriann, my sister, "Your head, it looks so funny 'cause you only have half your hair." And I saw my little sister, at 3-years-old,

begin to cry and her little heart was broken. And I learned that day to be careful about how I speak to people. Something impacted me that helps me refrain from saying hurtful words.

I believe that if we're going to enjoy life, if we're going to see good days with our family, with our fellow workers, we're going to have to control our speech, refrain from talking evil. We're going to have to put a bit in the mouth and pull back and say, "Whoa!" when we feel like telling all. Am I the only one that has ever felt like telling it all? If you want to see misery on your job, then I just make yourself feel good at the moment and tell your boss exactly what you think of him or her. If you want misery in your family, then just yell at your kids and use profanity at your spouse and just fly off the handle and let your mouth just run wild. If you want to have misery, if you want to have bad days, just allow yourself to say whatever comes to your mind when you're angry. If you want to have broken relationships and misery among others in this church, then just be a gossip. Just get on the phone and talk and talk and talk and talk and backbite and let your mouth run wild. Gossip about your spouse; gossip about his or her faults. And if you really want to have a bad day, talk about their mother and tell 'em they're just like their mother or father. If you want to have a bad relationship with me, then just badmouth one of my pastors, talk about their wives and how they dress. It got quiet in here. Truly, if you've decided and determined to see good days, then you will dominate your tongue. Speak blessings instead of curses. Don't return evil for evil. I tell you, it's hard, and yet, if you want to see good days... This is Peter's counsel to a church that is being treated unjustly, unfairly. Their rights are being violated and yet he says to them, "If you want to be blessed in the midst of this curse, then dominate your speech."

Learn these verses, they'll help. "Even a fool seems wise when he keeps his mouth shut" [Prov. 17:28]. "Rods for the back of a man who has his mouth open wide" [Prov. 14:3]. "Judgment for every idle word" [Matt. 12:36].

If you have a negative word that reveals your ignorance about people of color, you're not welcome to share those thoughts here among us. There are certain things that you should not say ever. If you want misery then just begin to tell jokes about other ethnic groups and just be negative about people around you. A key to seeing good days is to Dominate the tongue.

III. Depart.

"Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it" (v. 11).

If you want to see good days, then you must depart from bad habits, attitudes, and behavior. You can grow old and still be immature. God has called us to be a people of maturity, and that means that we need to change, and change demands that we look at our lives and say, "You know what? I'm miserable because I keep allowing sinful things in my life. I'm making myself miserable and everybody around me miserable, so I just am going to depart from this behavior. I'm going to change this thing within me. I may have to always struggle with this and resist it. I may have to say no to it the rest of my life. It may always be something that bothers me, but I'm not going to allow it to control me. I'm not going to act upon my feelings." The Bible says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" [James 4:7]. It says, "He that has suffered in the flesh will cease from sin" [1 Pet. 4:1], and so we sometimes just have to suffer in the flesh. And every so often, because of the terminal tendencies within Blake Cromwell (and I know what they are), that temper starts to come up within me and I want to fly off the handle, I just have to bite my tongue. There are things that we've just got to say, "I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm going to depart from this. I'm not going to allow this anymore."

In our society there are certain sins that must be dealt harshly with. Our little community of Lemoore just recently had a man arrested for child pornography, he was sending it over the Internet. What a sad society we live in when men and women are turned on by child pornography! It's a perversion that possibly none of us can understand; it's so demonic. We've opened up the floodgates through allowing pornography in all of our stores. We've allowed pornography to be exported to all the nations of the world. No wonder it's attacking our families. It's time for our society to depart from it, from their violence, from their murder. Why wouldn't our streets be a place of complete horror and terror [when] we've aborted so many children and killed them? We need to depart as a nation from our sinful ways. [We need to] quit sacrificing our precious children for convenience of our lifestyle. We need to depart from some things before we will inherit a blessing as a nation.

I can't do it for the nation, but I can do it for myself. In the midst of whatever curse that's upon the nation, I can find blessing. You know, this Psalm [that Peter quotes] was written by King David. He wrote "you can have good days" when he was running away from

his father-in-law, King Saul. Assassins were chasing him down to kill him. He runs out into the wilderness and goes into a cave, and while he's in the cave they say he wrote Psalms 34. Nobody is with him. He's all alone. He's lost his family. He's being persecuted by the king. And he sits down and says, "You can have good days." Peter says, "Let me quote King David here. Let me quote the Psalmist who, in the midst of problems, said you can have good days." And you can have good days even in the midst of problems, but you've got to dominate and you've got to depart.

IV. Do good.

"...And do good..." (v. 11).

Let me give you another D – do good. Not only depart, but do good. To me, it's so neat to have Paul and Diana Scuffins from England here. And since they've come into this church, they done good, and they have been blessed. They do good. They are the ones that started Helping Hands ministries. When they read in the paper that one of the families in our community had lost their home due to a fire. The Scuffins did good. They went to that family and said, "Can we help?" And you did good, and you got together beds and furniture and clothing and monies. And we, as a church did good and took that money to that family. And that family started coming to Koinonia and got saved and their kids got saved [and] they've been water baptized because somebody did good.

V. Develop.

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (v. 12).

Verse 12, speaks of developing our relationship with Jesus Christ. There are three points in developing your relationship with the Lord.

A. Focus on the Lord.

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous..." (v. 12).

See, it's wonderful to know that the Lord is focused on you. It's hard not to focus on the problem when you're going through a cave experience. When people are speaking evil about you and things are going wrong and the finances are not flowing and your spouse is just being a major Hitler in your life, it's hard not to focus on the problem, no? And yet, here, the Lord's focused on you in the midst of your problem. His eyes are upon you. Many times we feel like, does God

really care? Or where is the Lord while I am going through this? He does care. He's focused on you, now you need to take your eyes off the problem and focus on the Lord.

B. Faith in the Lord.

"...His ears are open to their prayers" (v. 12).

Have faith in the Lord. "His eyes are open to their prayers." Isn't that wonderful?

Joanna, our daughter, is going to Albania with Youth With A Mission. She's going to be right at the border of Kosovo helping the refugees. You know that she scared her daddy to death when she went to Mongolia, traveled by train 2-1/2 days out of Beijing, China. But, you know, I have no fear about her going to Albania because, as some of you've heard me testify, years ago in a Bible college where I work, I would meet with the students for early prayer. The school had a large map like we have out here in the foyer, and I was praying before that map with my eyes closed. As I was praying in the Holy Spirit, probably because it was so early I couldn't think of anything to say in English [laugh], and as I was praying in the languages of the Holy Spirit I began to say over and over and over again the word, "Tirana." And I thought, "Well, that's unusual. Why am I saying this word, 'Tirana' over and over again?" And as I asked the Lord that question I had an inward vision and I saw a star and around the star was a circle. I realized it was a capital sign on a map, and I opened up my eyes and I was standing before the map of Albania, and the capital of Albania is Tirana. I realized that the Holy Spirit was praying for that country of Albania. At that time it was the most communist country in Europe, even more communist than Russia. I just had a tremendous burden for Albania after that and would pray for Albania for years. And then, of course, when the doors opened to Albania, I was excited that the Seminoff's went there and maybe that was part of the Holy Spirit's prayers in sending them there, maybe that's what the Holy Spirit was praying through me. I know that as Joanna goes to Albania, she's being covered in prayers given by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has groaned and travailed in prayer. As this verse declares, "The ears of our Lord are opened to their prayers."

Let me just say that when Joanna, my little girl, calls from Tyler, Texas (she's in her SOE...School of Evangelism), 2-3

times a week, always collect (what's the deal with that? [laugh]), I always receive it. I'm always glad. My ears are open to Joanna. And she's a typical girl. I mean, she just tells me every little detail of her day and I love to hear her. We should realize that God's listening to us [and] that His ear is open to our prayers. He's not so busy that He's not waiting for you to pray prayers of deliverance. As we go through life's problems and we feel overwhelmed it's good to remember God is there waiting with a ready ear to hear our prayers. Knowing this causes faith to arise which will chase despair away.

Many of us turn from God when things go wrong. Peter tells the church going through difficult days to have faith in God. Develop a relationship with Him. Troubles are fertile ground in which we develop a deep relationship with God. We are to focus on the fact that God's ears are opened to us. A problem will attempt to dominate one's attention and block out all thoughts of hope and faith. As one remembers this verse faith arises and despair leaves.

C. Fear of the Lord.

"...But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (v. 12).

First the verse teaches us to focus on the Lord, then to have faith in the Lord, and finally to have the fear of the Lord. I hope that you've learned that God is good all the time and in His goodness, sometimes He brings discipline and correction. If you won't give up a certain sin that He's been dealing with you about in private, watch out – it's about to be made public because He loves you too much to allow you to persist in your sin. Can you say, "Oh me"? And I don't want the face of the Lord against me. I want the face of the Lord for me. I want Him to be pleased with me. Now I know only by His grace will He be pleased with me, but I want you to know that grace does not cover sin that you have not repented of. See, grace does not cover what you need to walk out of. And if you're making excuses for not departing and dominating and doing, then at some point God's just going turn His face toward you in judgment and discipline. And I don't want Him to look at me this way. Do you remember Dad's look when you were a kid? He didn't have to say anything, He just looked at you. I don't know how such a loving Dad can look so mean [laugh], but I've gained that ability with my own family members. Have you ever

been with your spouse somewhere and maybe said something you shouldn't have said? And that spouse looked at you and you knew – you knew – that you wanted to extend the evening with friends [laugh] because as soon as they left and you were alone, that spouse was going to tell you whatever they were thinking, and you weren't sure you wanted to hear about what they were thinking. Have you ever noticed that you just really realize that you and God need to get together and talk and He needs to deal with you and you're putting it off, you're staying away like Adam, hiding 'cause you know when you meet with God He's going to say, "Who told you that you're miserable? Who told you that you're exposed to Satan's attacks?" And so you just avoid, push it away. We need to fear the Lord. If we're going to see good days, we need to fear the Lord. We need to decide to have a good life.

Do you want a good life? Do you want to see good days? Well God has given us you His ingredients for a good life. Let us during difficult days remember to decide to have good days, to dominate our speech, to do good works, and to develop our relationship with God.