

Text: 1 Pt 3.10-12

We are in the “finally” bit of a long section of 1 Peter that I call the “submission section.” It begins in 1 Pt 2.13, and concludes with our text, 1 Pt 3.12.

Today we really conclude.

Last week, we talked about what we are to be and how we are to act as Christians. The apostle Paul might call it, “Walking in the Spirit.” Peter’s emphasis is on the readjustment of our inner human spirit to the spiritual way of life. We can see it / illustrate it best in subordinate relationships, when we must comply. One can “sit down on the outside” or “sit down on the inside.”

To wrap things up, Peter turns to Psalm 34.12-16.

The Psalm gives us a sort of book-end in the passage, because he alludes to Psalm 34.8 in 1 Pt 2.3, just as he his getting ready for the submission section.

Peter’s quotation mostly follows the Septuagint, but he changes the person so that the quotation emphasizes the points he wants to make.

Peter is clarifying more than proving. In other words, he is giving us more insight into the spiritual life God calls us to.

One more thing, from Tom Schreiner:

“It is also imperative to note that Psalm 34 focuses on suffering and the Lord’s deliverance of those who are afflicted. Peter already had alluded to it in 2:3 and now returned to it again. The psalm was not selected arbitrarily since it addresses the issue faced by Peter’s readers. The psalmist reminded his readers that the Lord rescues his own when they suffer and that he will judge the wicked. Meanwhile the righteous display their trust and hope in the Lord by renouncing evil and pursuing what is good.”¹

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 165–66.

First then, Psalm 34.12-16

Ps 34.12-16 Who is the man who desires life
And loves *length of days* that he may see good?

¹³ Keep your tongue from evil
And your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴ Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
And His ears are *open* to their cry.

¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Now let's read it in 1 Peter 3.10-12

I. The man who desires life (10a)

A. Life and good days in the OT context

1. In the OT, the law promised “this do and live”
2. Most of this reference had to do with “life in the land”
3. Recall the blessing and cursing of Dt 27-28, Josh 8 [Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim]

The curses of that passage concluded with this warning (among others):

Dt 28.25 ¶ “The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be *an example of terror* to all the kingdoms of the earth.

In the OT, the life and good days had to do with life in the land, especially for the nation.

B. Life and good days in the NT context

1. Generally speaking, the hope of the NT saint is life in the eternal land
2. Nevertheless, the context of 1 Peter has to do with this life here and now, how we live among oppressors

3. Hiebert:

The one who desires life “pictures an individual dominated by a unifying desire or purpose, namely, ‘to love life’ (zōēn agapan), ‘life to be loving.’ Not length but quality of life is in view—to live zestfully, to participate in life with full intelligence and purpose. He has recognized and deliberately accepted the realization that life is not a playground of indulgence but rather an arena of redemption.”²

4. In this passage, I think the focus of life is this life

- a. The goal is not length of life
- b. Nor is it escape from suffering
- c. Rather, quality of life lived for the glory of God

Recall the Mark Noll illustration about the Chinese brother and “In the Garden.”

II. The three essentials of this man’s life (10b-11)

A. He must guard his words (10b)

1. Energetic restraint
2. Compare James 3.6-8

Jas 3.6-8 ¶ And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell.⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; *it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*

B. He must avoid evil (11a)

1. Stretch, twist, turn, dodge to escape the trap of evil
2. Replace evil with active effort for good

² D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 215–16.

“‘Turn from’ (*ekklinatō*) means ‘to incline or bend out’ and pictures the individual as leaning over or swerving aside to avoid an encounter with evil, whatever its nature or form. He takes evasive action because of his holy aversion to evil. The void left by the negative should be filled by the positive: ‘and do good’ (*poiēsato agathon*), ‘and let him do good,’ that which is morally good and constructive.”³

C. He must seek peace (11b)

1. Implies zeal in the search
2. Heightened by the word “pursue”

Same word in other contexts means “persecute,” so high intensity involved.

Do these three necessities characterize the way we work at our personal relationships?

III. The relation of this man to God (12)

A. In the Bible, there is a regular contrast between the righteous and those who do evil

1. Righteous here isn’t a description of their inherent worth
2. Rather, conformity to a standard, just as those who do evil deviate from the standard

B. Peter laid before us God’s standard for the spiritual life (see again v. 8 and others)

^{1 Pt 3.8} ¶ To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

C. We who are of the day have God’s encouragement; those who are of the night have God’s opposition

³ Hiebert, 216–17.

Conclusion:

In the end, Peter is encouraging us to live the life of the Spirit in our spirits. This life is one of delight, it is full of good days, it has the support of God, and it is a life well worth living.

... even if it is a life full of suffering and oppression...