

A PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH
1 Peter 3:8-9
January 18, 2009 – Grace Covenant Baptist Church

Three things that cause division and strife in the church:

- 1) Doctrine
- 2) Personal preferences
- 3) Overcorrection

I. The Christian Ethic Presented (3:8-9)

“To sum up” – both a conclusion on teaching of submission and authority in relationships (began in 2:11) as well as an introduction to his expanded theme of suffering in 3:13-4:19. Here we see some general exhortations on how the Christian ought to live, a pattern for Christian conduct. This is captured by the phrase **“all of you.”** Peter began with general commands to the church in 2:11-12, then spoke to individuals in their specific relations in government, workplace, and home (2:13-3:7), and he now concludes with these general exhortations to all believers.

1. Towards one another (v. 8) – Five imperatives “to be”

- *Be harmonious* – while this is a common theme in the NT, this is the only time the word is used this way in the NT. Paul told the Philippians, Romans, and Corinthians to be “of the same mind” (Phil. 2:2; Rom. 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11) and Euodia and Syntyche to “live in harmony in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2). Both Peter and Paul show that while there will exist differences in the body, whether it be of mind or giftedness, these differences should not lead to schism, but harmony. *Harmonious* does not mean unison, but unity and/or uniformity; like-mindedness. While there will be differences, while we may agree to disagree in matters that are not essential in the life of the body, there should be agreement and unity towards a common goal.

Philippians 3:15 – If in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you.

(Illus. – band/orchestra; baseball)

Common goal is that God is glorified and the body is edified!

- *Be sympathetic*
The word basically means “sharing fellow-feelings,” whether those feelings are joyous or sorrowful. It is being prepared to enter into and share in the feelings of others that enables them to laugh when another laughs and cry when another cries. It involves a heightened sensitivity to be able to actually experience the joy or pain of another.

Of course, this means that we must go through certain things in order to be able to sympathize with others in this way, particularly as it relates to suffering.

(Illus. – broken leg)

- *Be brotherly*

This is somewhat of an unfortunate translation in the NAS because it fails to properly relate the emphasis on the Greek, literally, “brotherly love” as the ESV has it. Like the command to live in harmony, this is the only place in the NT where this word appears in verb form. In the body of Christ, it denotes a mutual love which is the bond of brotherhood in Christ. John Calvin noted, “Where God is known as a Father, there and only there brotherhood really exists.” The practice of such love is a sign that one is truly in Christ.

1 John 1:14 – We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

1 John 4:20 – If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

This love consists of that sacrificial love that is exemplified by Christ.

Ephesians 5:2 – Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

It is to think of others in the body first, be concerned for their spiritual welfare and physical needs.

This is reflected in the next imperative-

- *Be kindhearted*

This reflects a warm and tender attitude as found in Ephesians 4:32, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted.” The word in adjectival form is derived from a noun which reflects internal organs—the heart, lungs, and liver—which were in Greek thought the seat of the emotions. It is comparable to the way the word “heart” is used in the NT. To be “**kindhearted**” then means to show deep human love and compassion.

Rich young ruler – Mark 10:21, Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

- *Be humble in spirit*

Humility means seeing others as more important than yourself. It is the opposite of the tendency we have toward pride. **1 Peter 5:5** – Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Philippians 2:3-4 – Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

2. Towards their enemies (v. 9a)

Matthew 5:11 – Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Matthew 5:43-46 – ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”

1 Peter 2:23 – While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.

Romans 12:17 – Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 – See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

1 Corinthians 4:12 – When we are reviled, we bless.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

3. Towards their calling (v. 9b)

“for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.” (NASU)
for to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing (ESV)

“For to *this*” could refer back to what preceded (vv. 8-9a and the Christian ethic) or point forward (end of verse, **“that you might inherit a blessing”**)

Backward – Good behavior is necessary to inherit eternal life.

Romans 2:6-8 – Who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

2 Corinthians 5:10 – For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

But doesn't this teach works righteousness?

James 2:14-17 – What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. (Rich Mullins – “Faith without works is like a screen door on a submarine”)

Our works prove our faith. We do not do good works in order to be saved; we do good works because we are saved.

Forward – Inheritance we have received. While the “**blessing**” could be interpreted as present blessings on this earth, it seems more likely given Peter’s focus on the “**inheritance**” that the believer is to hope in (chapter 1 and future eternal blessing), that this too refers to eternal life.

Illus. – Matthew 18:23-35 (Unforgiving servant)

Conclusion

- 1.** When you agree to disagree, how you do so is important to harmony and unity. When you know you disagree or have a different view about something than is the norm in the body, then my counsel is to seek counsel. In many places church members take the view that because they have a different opinion about something that the church leadership will not care or listen to them. May that never be the case at Grace Covenant! As church leaders, we try to set forth what we believe about certain non-essentials. We owe that to the body.
- 2.** In the midst of suffering, you are not alone (Elijah after Baal; Paul at Corinth) God has others who are able to sympathize with you.
- 3.** Christ’s fulfillment of the imperatives.