

Sermon Series: God of All Grace
Our Future Blessing – 1 Peter 3:8-12
August 23rd, 2020 // Daniel Hickinbotham

- Introduction:
- It is written from Peter to weary churches of Gentile Christians in Asia minor, or modern day Turkey.
 - These Gentiles have been converted into a distinctly Jewish religion, something entirely foreign to them. Unlike Peter, it is not the waters they grew up swimming in.
 - Even though they have been converted... they are still being daily inundated with:
 - Residual Greek religion and philosophy
 - Prevailing Roman rule and culture
 - Their own regional and family cults and economic culture
 - These forces are competing to shape their worldview and belief system.
 - Add to that:
 - They have faced the relational persecution that comes with leaving the idolatry of their families,
 - Many have likely been excluded from membership in guilds because of a refusal to honor the god of the guild.
 - Now they are beginning to face ACTIVE persecution from the Roman authorities.
 - Couple this persecution with the pressing cultural influence and it would be like trying to stand beneath the crushing pressure of a waterfall... one that is intent upon eroding your faith and satisfaction in Christ.
 - Peter is writing to encourage a weary people
 - People who feel as though they are foreigners in their own land and exiles from their own community.
 - And he affirms just that, and ministers the truth to them.
 - Peter is recognizing, validating, their experience of ostracization and suffering... without coddling them as victims,
 - He is connecting them to a greater reality of where they belong and who they belong to.
 - He connects these new brothers and sisters to
 - The earthly story of God's people, and the promises of Israel,
 - But he also connects these people
 - the transcendent family of God throughout the earth and history and

- to union with Christ who is seated at the right hand of the God.
 - He points them to their new reality in Him...
- Look at how Peter does all that in Chapter 2:
 - 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.
 - He then goes on to show what that honorable conduct for Kingdom Citizens looks like in relation to the government, social and economic forces, within the family, and now he is turning to EVERYONE...
 - Open with me or turn in your device to 1 Peter Chapter 3:
 - "8 Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, 9 not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For the one who wants to love life and to see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit, 11 and let him turn away from evil and do what is good. Let him seek peace and pursue it, 12 because 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 what is evil.
 - Peter is exhorting us here, that because we are born into the world and called to be in the world, we must be aware that, usually,
 - Point 1: **Our default coping mechanisms are worldly.**
 - Every human being, when facing a trial or conflict, especially if it is an acute traumatic stress or a regularly recurring stressor, develops and uses a response that we popularly call coping mechanisms.
 - As we have been discussing, Peter is writing to people who are under regular stress, and much of it is tied directly to their conversion.
 - These folks in Asia Minor are getting kicked from their trade unions and homes because God has called them to no longer walk in the way of their former ignorance.
 - As an example of how deeply connected the culture and trade was to idolatry, Remember that story in Acts 19...
 - The guy who started it was named Demetrius... (cult of Demeter)
 - Worry that the goddess would stop blessing them...

- Imagine that? Your conversion is seen as an attempt to END THE BLESSINGS OF ARTEMIS!
- What would be the temptation in that moment, when you have lost your livelihood because of your obedience to God's call?
 - To cope...
 - In our flesh, that coping USUALLY isn't done in holy ways...
 - We medicate with food or alcohol or drugs
 - We check out with sports or video games or pornography
 - We talk crap about those who hurt us and grumble all the time
- I believe Peter knows that is our tendency...
 - Let's look at the prohibitions here in 1 Peter 3:
 - Do not payback evil for evil, or insult for insult.
 - Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit.
 - Turn away from evil.
 - That word evil is used in Mark 7 to describe the state of the human heart out of which flows fornication, theft, murder, adultery, sensuality, slander, pride, foolishness, and generalized wickedness.
- Peter is warning us away from the sensual and immediately gratifying mechanisms of this world.
 - He is saying, do not cope like the world would have you cope...
 - The world that is constantly assaulting you with its solution to your problem... to your discontent...
 - If you just, take this pill... buy that thing...
 - If you just, send the Tweet... have that relationship... relinquish that responsibility...
 - If you just.... give up your Christian claims...
 - All will be better...
- We read Romans 12 before the sermon and you might have recognized a similar list of prohibitions and phrasing.
 - It is likely so similar because it is referencing some type of catechism from the early church.
 - And we need to be catechized regularly because, like the Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, we are surrounded by a culture that is trying to shape our worldview and response to trial.
 - As Pastor Ryan reminded me this week, the world is trying to catechize us.
 - Don't believe me? How many hours of media, screen time or otherwise, is the average 13-18 year old exposed to per day?

- 9 hours worth. 9 hours of other peoples thoughts and worldview being poured into the eyes, ears, and hearts of young people.
 - It is literally a fulltime job for the world of catechizing young people.
- And it is non-stop for adults too. Think about the content...
 - Think about our political discussions in this country. What are they comprised of? RETURNING INSULT FOR INSULT!
 - Think about the riots in the streets over the perceived injustices of the system, be it judicial, societal, or economic. What is that? RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL!
 - Think about media and its' never-ending spin, be it 24 hour news or Facebook, or YouTube or talk radio. Everyone purports to be honest, balanced, out for the truth, yet time and again we see people and positions misrepresented, facts left out of stories, voices silenced and subjective feelings represented as objective facts. What is that? DECIETFUL SPEECH!
 - This is the water that we swim in... and like water running across the landscape it begins to shape and form whatever it is flowing over... unless it is intentionally interrupted and diverted somewhere else... intentionally controlled....
- Lest we think it is just some external poison that makes us this way, remember:
 - These worldly and sinful coping mechanisms have been with us since the fall
 - Cain murdered Abel. Whether it was because he felt Abel was specially privileged by God, or that there was an injustice, his worldly response was to destroy.. to get even... it was evil...
 - But it isn't just about controlling the destruction... it isn't just about not doing what is wrong...
- Peter, reinforcing our FUNDAMENTAL identity as citizens of a heavenly kingdom... recognizing that we are not called to be of the world... reminds us that...
- Point 2: **Our calling is to respond supernaturally...** to trial... to mal-treatment... to oppression...
- How do we do that if our natural tendency is not to?
 - Throughout the New Testament, there are these things called indicatives and imperatives.
 - Imperatives are the authoritative commands that we find in the Gospels and epistles.
 - They are the things that inform our Christian mission, our morality, or behavior
 - They are things that we as a Christian community can hold one another accountable to as those who claim the name of Jesus.
 - The most famous New Testament imperative is what we usually quote as the Great Commission

- Verse 19 of Matthew 28 says... “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you”
- Sadly, most people outside of the church think that all Christianity is an ever stricter list of imperatives... of commands they must obey...
 - Many within the church believe that too...
 - Christianity is a theological affirmation of XY and Z regarding trinitarian monotheism, and the life long endeavor to obey the imperatives.
 - But let me tell you something as an imperative follower... that is exhausting... and unsustainable...
 - We must grasp, meditate upon, delight ourselves in the indicatives in scripture, otherwise we are missing out on a fundamental piece of the puzzle when it comes to being conformed to image of Christ.
- You, see indicatives are the WHY behind the WHAT of the imperatives.
 - It is the fuel that sustains the fire of our affections and actions.
 - How many of you caught that I misquoted Matthew 28:19?
 - How does it really go?
 - Go, THEREFORE, and make disciples...
 - What is the Therefore there for?
 - It is there for VERSE 18, where Jesus proclaims Himself the sovereign commander of heaven and earth, the one to whom Psalm 2 would say, every king, country, and nation, OWES their allegiance...
 - I AM THE KING... YOU ARE MY AMBASSADORS... GO AND MAKE SUBJECTS OF MY KINGDOM
- You must have the right indicative for the right imperative... it drives obedience...
 - If I were to give you the same indicative... your imperative would be to grab your family and friends, and walk out the door, never to return.
- Lets finish looking at the imperatives...
 - Peter doesn't just give us prohibitions... imperatives to NOT do... he gives us a set of imperatives to do
 - Like minded and sympathetic
 - This means that you are able to understand and accurately represent another person's point of view, including those you don't agree with, in a fashion that they would say: “Yeah... That's exactly it..”
 - Love one another
 - This is the language of family... love one another like family...
 - Be compassionate and humble

- Bless, and do not curse
 - This means Facebook needs to be off limits for some of you...
 - Seek peace.
 - What is the indicative for all these imperatives? All of 1 Peter 1 and 2!!
 - REDEEMED IN CHRIST YOU ARE SOMETHING OTHERWORDLY... now ACT like it... embrace it and embody it... meditate on it and delight in it
 - So that in the face of trial and tribulation, of persecution and reviling, you can NOT ONLY subdue your natural desires but you CAN act in an unnatural way...
 - Rather than becoming obstinate and unfeeling for others in the midst of your self-righteous victimhood, you rather are like minded and sympathetic.
 - Rather than hating as you have been hated, you can respond in love
 - Rather than being arrogant and indifferent to anyone who isn't struggling with exactly what you are, you are able to access true compassion and be humble
 - Rather spitting venom back at those who curse you, you respond with blessing
 - Rather than dumping gasoline on the dumpster fires, you can instead become a peacemaker
 - THIS ISN'T JUST UNNATURAL... IT IS ALL A SUPERNATURAL WORK OF THE SPIRIT, REVEALING THAT YOU ARE INDEED A CHOSEN RACE... AN INHERITOR OF LIGHT...
 - But... If we are segregated from the indicative... just trying to operate in the imperatives we are destined to fail...
 - That has SERIOUS consequences...
 - You see, we are being watched... actively or passively... by the surrounding culture to see how we are going to respond and the MOMENT we respond as they would, they assume that what we claim to believe (regarding both imperatives and indicatives) is a load of horse manure.
 - You may think that living in that type of fishbowl is unfair... but that is the way God ordained it... When his people face both blessing and adversity
- Point 3: Our response is our witness of what we believe about Jesus.
 - Verses 10-12 of this passage are a quote from the second half of Psalm 34
 - The first half of that Psalm, which we read as our call to worship last week, is about a transforming experience of the reality of God's goodness and protection in a time of danger and persecution.
 - The Psalm then calls upon the one who experienced it to order their lives and hearts in these ways as the response to it.
 - Next week, Pastor Jeff is going to talk about having a defense for the hope that is within us...

- but the implication is that the response to all of the persecution they were facing was to be a NOTICABLE HOPE... something that people ASKED about... and then they were to have a response for it...
- If our response to trial and to persecution looks EXACTLY like the world's response... then the world ASSUMES one of two things:
 - That our words and beliefs are empty...
 - That they don't NEED what our words and beliefs are full of... because they have it already.
- Romans 12 talks about not taking vengeance, but leaving room for the Lord to avenge. Do you know what we are communicating to the world when we take vengeance?
 - First, that God is not faithful to do what He has said.
 - Second, that God is not REALLY the only one who can appropriately mete out justice, he needs our help.
 - Third, that it is the satisfaction of our justice on our timeline that matters.
 - Fourth, that we, inheritors of mercy, do not believe that others are deserving of mercy
 - Do we reasonably expect any unbelievers to give glory to God because you got yours from the person who disrespected or harmed you or a loved one?
 - That evildoers will glorify God on the day of his coming because you cursed right back at those who cursed you on Facebook?
 - EXAMPLE
 - It continued to eat me up... still struggle when I see him sometimes...
 - I can promise you <SING> "PRAISE GOD THAT DANIEL HELD THAT GRUDGE" is not a chorus that is going to be sung at the end of the age.
 - When we do these things regularly, when we fail in the imperatives of the faith, it reveals that we have not been fully overwhelmed and transformed by the INDICATIVES of the faith... it hinders our ability to bring glory to God...
- CORRIE TEN BOOM STORY
 - On the 28th of February, 1944 a Christ loving family in the German occupied town of Haarlem, the Netherlands, was arrested by the Gestapo for harboring Jews. They were betrayed by a Dutch informant that had previously attempted to help.
 - This family had been so transformed by Christ and His Gospel, that they had spent decades devoted to the care of the infirm, the poor, and developmentally disabled becoming spiritual pillars of the community and discipling hundreds.
 - Under the occupation, nearly 900 people (Jews, deserters, political dissidents) were rescued through their efforts, including 100 orphans.

- After their arrest, they were taken to a local jail, where the father died within 10 days of incarceration. The son, Willem, succumb just months after the end of the war to tuberculosis caught in the prison camp where he was held.
- The two daughters were held in solitary confinement for 3 months before being interrogated and sent to a work camp for political prisoners for a few weeks, after which they were brought to the notorious Ravensbruck concentration camp.
 - They faced every horror of the camp together, all the while clinging to the goodness and faithfulness of God, serving their bunk house by holding worship services every night with a smuggled in Bible, and planning ways to establish a place for all people to heal after the war.
 - At one point the oldest, Betsie, so gripped she was by the glory of God, reminded her sister “There is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still.”
 - Then, on 16 of December 1944, Betsie, the oldest of the two daughters died, one of the over 50,000 women to die there during the war.
 - 15 days later, her sister Corrie was miraculously released on a clerical error a week before every women in her bunkhouse was executed in the gas chamber.
 - Corrie Ten Boom immediately went right back to helping those on the run.
- After the war God opened the doors for her to tell her family’s story around her country, and soon to the world, including the country of her oppressors, Germany.
 - Then in 1947 she was speaking in Munich and caught a glimpse of a man she instantly recognized... he had been a guard at Ravensbruk... he had overseen their intake when they had stripped her and her sister of their clothes, of their hair, of their dignity... this man had mocked and beaten them in the midst of it...
 - After her talk, in which she proclaimed the goodness of God and his forgiveness, this man approached her, and confessed to having been a guard at Ravensbruk, told her of his conversion to Christ and rejoiced that his heinous sins had been forgiven... but that he would very much like to ask for her forgiveness... and he extended his hand to her.
 - These are Corrie’s words: “Jesus, help me!” I prayed silently. “I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.”
 - And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.
 - “I forgive you, brother!” I cried. “With all my heart!”
- Her identity as a forgiven, mercy washed, grace-filled, citizen of a heavenly kingdom allowed her to do the SUPERNATURAL AND FORGIVE A MAN WHO HAD BRUTALIZED HER AND MURDERED HER FAMILY!
- She embraced him as a BROTHER, because she believed that JESUS HAD MADE HIM HER BROTHER

- She forgave him because she believed that Christ had thrown his sin, his wretched Christ crucifying sin, into the deepest sea alongside her own.
- Her forgiveness of that man was her speaking a blessing to the one who had cursed her.
 - IT WAS A SUPERNATURAL ACT... And I guarantee you that man and many others GAVE GLORY TO GOD the day they died because of Corrie Ten Boom.
- But Corrie Ten Boom ISN'T the hero of our story. She isn't the captain of our salvation. She isn't the one who shed her blood to rescue us... She was merely one who was captivated and transformed by the one who did.
 - It was Christ who came seeking peace when we were in rebellion
 - It was Christ who loved us when we hated Him
 - It was Christ who was gripped with compassion over our lostness, though we had willfully abandoned Him
 - It was Christ who forgave us though our sins were scarlet
 - It was Christ who blessed us when we cursed Him
 - Psalm 32 says, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."
 - And when Christ hung on the cross, he prayed a prayer invoking God's blessing on those who were murdering Him, when he said "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
 - THE PREVAILING TRANSCENDANT INDICATIVE FOR EVERY IMPERATIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS CHRIST HIMSELF: CRUCIFIED, RESURRECTED, ASCENDED ON HIGH, SEATED IN GLORY, AND WORTHY WORTHY WORTHY OF ALL GLORY AND HONOR NOW AND FOREVER AMEN.
- Corrie Ten Boom forgave the unforgivable... she did it because she was blessed... and she was looking forward to a future blessing. Not only did she receive the temporal blessings that come with not returning evil for evil, she assured herself of the future blessings that God has reserved for those who love and obey him. She entrusted the injustice she experienced to the Judge of all the earth, just as Christ did. And she was vindicated here and hereafter. Just as Christ was.
- And that my brothers and sisters is the greatest blessing the Lord will ever give us: to not just declare us sons and daughters... but to MAKE us, in character and spirit, his sons and daughters... not to usurp him has God but to inherit the blessing of life and union with Him... and to see others, even our enemies and persecutors, enter into that same blessed existence.