

THE GOOD LIFE

1 Peter 3:8-12

INTRODUCTION

- The world describes the ideal life as “the good life” and “living the dream”
- A survey in 2017 found that about one in four Australians (23%) believe they are living the dream
- Essentially, the good life, in their view, is a life of self-pleasure
- This is the complete opposite of what the Scriptures describe as the good life
 - ✓ It is a life of self-denial, not self-pleasing
 - ✓ It is a life of serving, not being served
 - ✓ It is a life of giving, not receiving
 - ✓ It is a life in view of the next world, not the present world
 - ✓ It is a life that lays up treasure in heaven, not on earth
- Our verses today describe this “good life” according to God
- The description primarily focusses on our conduct towards our fellow-man
- Note that Peter is addressing born-again believers – these instructions are not for unbelievers who have no desire to obey them, nor the ability to
- -God’s moral law is of no interest to the lost, and in their spiritually dead state, they cannot keep the law, it only condemns them
- We do not go out and evangelise the world by calling them to start being good, kind compassionate people, and “just do your best” (cf. Jeremiah 13:23), which is legalism

- No, we preach that we are sinners unable to save ourselves, but that Christ died for our sins, and if we repent and believe in him, we will be forgiven and justified, and given eternal life
- But once we are saved, the new nature imparted to us, the power of sin broken, the Holy Spirit indwelling, we are called and enabled to live a holy life before the world, and particularly in our relationships with others
- When the Scripture says we are not under the law but under grace (Romans 6), this means that our justification and acceptance with God does not come from a system of self-righteous law-keeping, but from the grace of God
- It does not mean that believers are free from obeying God's commands – rather, the grace of God teaches us to live righteous and holy lives (Titus 2:11-13)
- And Christ gives us power to obey his commands from the heart
- The word “finally” indicates Peter is summing up this section dealing with honouring others (2:13-3:12)
- The theme has been one of “submission”, of citizens to governments, of servants to masters and of wives to husbands
- The instructions that follow apply generally to all our relationships, but apply primarily to the relationship of members within the church
- Though Peter is writing a “general epistle” not written to a particular individual or church, it is written to believers who were united in fellowship with local churches

What does it mean to truly live the good life?

I. RENDER TO THE BRETHREN GRACE

A. Five qualities we must exercise to one another

1. Of one mind

- a. The Greek word (*homophrones*) is a compound of two words meaning “same” and “mind”, indicating harmony, like-mindedness, unity
- b. It is the opposite of division and conflict
- c. In God’s sight it is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1)
- d. Christ prayed for unity among the brethren (John 17)
- e. Unity was a mark of the early church (Acts 1:14; 2:1,44,46; 4:24,32)
- f. This unity is exhorted throughout the New Testament epistles (Romans 12:16; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 2:1; 3:16; 4:2)
- g. The common ground of this unity is the “the faith”, the body of doctrine contained in word of God (Ephesians 4:5; 1 Timothy 3:9; 4:1; Jude 3)
- h. The members of the body have many differences, yet they work together with a common purpose (1 Corinthians 12)

2. Compassion

- a. This word (*sumpatheis*) literally means to “suffer with” another (Romans 12:15)
- b. We are naturally unsympathetic, caring only for ourselves with little regard for others
- c. Christ shows us what compassion is, frequently being “moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32), weeping with the mourners at Lazarus’ grave (John 11:35)
- d. His incarnation makes him a merciful and faithful high priest (Hebrews 2:17-18), touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15)

- e. We are to have the same compassionate heart towards others, to enter into their feelings, and to do what we can to share their burdens (Galatians 6:2)

3. Love as brethren

- a. The word *philadelphoi* means “brotherly love” (cf. 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17)
- b. This is the chief mark of the disciples of Jesus Christ (John 13:35; 1 John 3:16-18)
- c. The standard of this love is Christ’s love shown towards us (John 13:34) – freely, graciously, sacrificially, consistently

4. Pitiful

- a. This word (*eusplagchnoi*) means “tender-hearted” (cf. Ephesians 4:32) and is derived from the “bowels”, the innermost part of our being, touched and filled with mercy for others (cf. Colossians 3:12)
- b. It is a heart sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, even to those who may have hurt us

5. Courteous

- a. This word (*philophrones*) is a compound of two words meaning “friend” and “mindset”
- b. It is a considerate, humble attitude towards others, treating them with respect, allowing them first place, acting and speaking graciously towards them, seeking for opportunities to help, expressing gratitude for any kindness (Philippians 2:3-4)

B. The right response to evil

1. Not evil for evil

- a. Some return evil for good

- b. Some return evil for evil and good for good
 - c. The Christian returns good for evil
2. Christ demonstrated this in his own life (1 Peter 2:21-23)
 3. Christ taught us to do the same (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-29)
 4. Paul both taught (Romans 12:14, 17-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15) and practiced this (1 Corinthians 4:12-13)
 5. The world and the devil want us to respond with evil, showing we are no different to them, destroying our testimony, and turning them away from Christ
 6. To bless (*eulogountes*) is to “speak well” in response to those who persecute us
 - a. Speak well *to* them (Ephesians 4:31-32)
 - b. Speak well *about* them to others
 - c. Speak well in *prayer* to God for them (Matthew 5:44; Luke 23:34)
 - d. We bless by *doing* well to them (Exodus 23:5; Luke 6:27)
 - e. By blessing them, we “heap coals of fire upon their heads”, not to harm them, but to melt their anger and hostility, shame them for their evil, and bring them to repentance (Proverbs 25:21-22; Romans 12:19-21)
 7. The “little maid” of 2 Kings 5, captured by the Syrians and forced to serve in Naaman’s house, is an example of this rendering of blessing in return for evil

II. REALISE YOUR BOUNTY OF GRACE

- A. Called by grace unto blessing

1. The divine calling is mentioned five times in this epistle (1:15; 2:9,21; 3:9; 5:10)
2. We are called to a holy life that imitates Christ and exhibits these graces
3. We are called to inherit blessing
 - a. God has in his grace in Christ blessed us with justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, glorification, assurance, peace, joy, increase of grace, perseverance, and many other blessings
 - b. Since God has called us to such blessings, we can patiently endure persecution
 - c. Since God has rendered his blessing upon such evil creatures as we are, so we should render blessing upon those who do evil to us

III. RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF GRACE

A. To love life and see good days

1. Peter here quotes Psalm 34:12-14
2. Many people live miserable, joyless lives, and do not “love life”
3. God shows us that the most satisfied, enjoyable life is that which is lived according to the purpose for which it was created – in fellowship with God and obedience to his commandments
4. The secret to a good life can be summed up in one word – *righteousness* – both imputed and practical

B. Keep the tongue from evil and guile

1. Lying, slander, backbiting, complaining, etc, do not produce good lives, but only create conflict and misery (cf. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11)

2. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." (Proverbs 18:21)
3. We must know the great potential our tongues have for evil (James 3:1-12), and seek God's grace to bridle our tongues that they may be used for his glory (Psalm 141:3)

C. Eschew evil, do good, pursue peace

1. God's people are to be a holy people, separated from sin, unto righteousness
2. The world's wisdom creates envy and strife, but heaven's wisdom creates peace
3. We are to do everything in our power to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18)
4. This may mean at times to suffer wrong for the sake of peace (1 Corinthians 6:6-8)

D. The blessing of God hearing prayer

1. Peter quotes Psalm 34:15
2. God's eyes are upon all things, but his eyes of favour and protection are especially upon his people who walk in his ways
3. He promises to hear their prayers (1 John 3:22)
4. For such a person under the continual guardianship of the Almighty, they truly "love life and see good days"

E. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil

1. This section concludes with a warning against those who reject Christ and choose the path of unrighteousness
2. There is no neutrality with God – every person is either under his grace or his condemnation

3. The single factor that determines our standing with God is our acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ (John 3:18)
4. Many on the day of judgment will be as Esau, “how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Hebrews 12:17)

CONCLUSION

1. Most people are in fact living a dream, not living reality
2. They live ignorant of God, of the day of judgment, self-deceived into thinking that they can live their lives in rebellion against Christ with no consequences
3. *“You have been used to take notice of the sayings of dying men: this is mine, ‘A life spent in the service of God and in communion with him, is the most pleasant life that anyone can live in the world.’”*
(Matthew Henry)
4. Have you taken the first step in “the good life” by receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?
5. If these criteria given in these verses are required for “the good life”, very few people in the world are living the good life
6. And many professing Christians also who live mostly selfish lives are not living the good life
7. God’s commands are not grievous (1 John 5:3), they are for our good, both in this life and the next
8. May the word of God be a mirror to us today, to show us how badly we have failed in our obedience to Christ’s commands, to work repentance in our hearts, and a resolve by his grace to walk in them from henceforth