

Doing Good to our Brethren

- I. We're to have *unity of mind*; i.e., to be of one mind.
 - A. Paul speaks of this often, Rom 12.16; 15.5; 1Cor 1.10; Phil 1.27; 2.2.
 - B. Divisions characterize the world of men, but unity should characterize the church of Christ, 1Cor 8.5-6; Eph 4.4-6.
 - C. Does this forbid differences in the nonessentials (the adiaphora)?
 - 1. Of course not. Paul makes clear that there is liberty of conscience here, Rom 14; 1Cor 8.
 - D. Peter is therefore talking about the *essentials* of Christianity, those matters of faith and practice which make it what it is. In faith: *the Triune God saves sinners*; and in practice: *saved sinners live holily to the glory of God*. Here there can be no latitude. There must be unity or Christianity loses its witness in the world.
 - 1. When, instead of unity of mind, the church divides and disputes over traditions, opinions, etc., great obstacles and stumbling-blocks are put in the way of her witness in the world.
 - 2. But when the church (across denominational lines) minds the one thing needful, the world is turned upside down as it was in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 4.32).
- II. We're to have *sympathy*.
 - A. It means to have *fellow-feelings* (in a general sense). It's a call to be of one heart so that we weep with the weeping and rejoice with the rejoicing, Rom 12.15.
 - B. We're not to be selfish with our interests or affections, but look also to the interests of others, Phil 2.4.
 - 1. And why does this matter? Because Christ says He takes our treatment of each other as a treatment of Himself, Mt 25.40.
 - C. This fellow-feeling shows that our unity is more than doctrinal; it's also affectional. We share the same Christ and Spirit; how can we not share the same heart?
 - D. This oneness of heart is powerfully on display in the Psalms: 51.18; 122.6-9; 137.5-6.
 - E. If we don't have this sympathy for other Christians, something is radically wrong with our heart, because this is the sympathy which brought Christ down to save us, Jn 10.11; cp. 1Jn 4.20-21.

- F. And what better witness to the world than when the church is united in doctrine as well as in affection?
- III. We're called to *brotherly love*.
 - A. This love springs out of Christ's love for us and is the direct fruit of our unity in Christ, 1Jn 4.7.
 - B. And wherever this love reigns, it banishes and mortifies and puts off and shuns all that smacks of dissension, bitterness, division, anger, etc., Col 3.5-9; Eph 4.22-27.
 - C. It speaks the truth in love, seasons speech with grace, puts on compassionate hearts, and exercises kindness, forbearance, and forgiveness, Eph 4.3, 29; Col 3.12-14; 1Cor 13.4-8.

Doing Good to our Fellow Man

- I. We're to have a *tender heart*. It's a call to compassion for the hurting, a call to be moved by the adverse condition of others and do what we can to relieve them.
 - A. None should be so compassionate as those whose God is the God of all comfort, 2Cor 1.3-4.
 - 1. This compassion is seen in the sympathetic presence of Job's friends, Job 2.11-13.
 - 2. But it's learned from none better than our God and His Christ, Ps 103.13; Isa 49.15; Mt 11.29; 12.20; Lk 4.18-19; 15.1; Jn 10.11.
 - B. How glorious, then, when we live in the world with one another and with our unbelieving neighbors with a tenderness that bears witness to the heart of the gospel, Isa 55.1-3; 6-7!
- II. We're to have a *humble mind*.
 - A. Humility is that grace which gains a man favor from God and respect from men. It's the chief characteristic of a Christian, his greatest grace.
 - B. God gets the most glory from the humble and the humble get the most graces from God.
 - C. Pride in the church destroys her witness. But none makes so undeniable an impression on the world and so good a witness to the truth of the gospel as the humble.
- III. Therefore let us prayerfully pursue and cultivate these five graces, for they testify to and preserve our witness in the world; and without them we cannot proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us to a life of good works, 2.9, 12; cf. Mt 5.16.