
Some are surprised when the Apostle Peter encourages the living of a good and long life:

"He who would love life and see good days..." (I Peter 3:10)

And it in no way lessens the challenge and encouragement for Christian brothers {and sisters, as brothers, like "he" in the Bible is generic for males and females}, when you realize that these are not original words from Peter, but rather a quote of Psalm 34:12-16. Of course the exegetical wording of the Old Testament original being written in Hebrew is quite different from the Greek of the New Testament, both retaining the original meaning and perhaps even stronger in Psalms:

"Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?' (Psalm 34:12)

"WHO?", almost all today reading this chapter of the Appendix of "Life and Letters of Paul" would say, "Me...me...me, I desire life and would love to live many days in order that I might see good.

A2-1: And we recognize immediately that this is a group thing, for to a great extent seeing good in a long life implies a social thing that the people environment around you is also being good and seeing good. This is somewhat of a surprise after Appendix A1 where the emphasis was on CHRIST FOR INDIVIDUALS, or “Group Self-Denial and Separation”.

So we quickly come back to the text and context of I Peter 3 to find out what point Peter was trying to make from the Word of God when he quoted Psalm 34:12-16. In other words, what is the introduction to the quote?

“Finally {sort of like a “therefore” from Paul}, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” (I Peter 3:8,9)

1. Perhaps this is a clue as to why so many seniors in Hollywood live such a long life in spite of little or no commitment to Christ or lack of “love for the world”¹ (I John 2:15-17); that is because, they have for years chosen a life style that keeps them in agreement with their social context, often one of extended popularity and pleasantness.

2. Of course exegesis of the “finally” point that Peter was making leads us to see that this alone is not sufficient for a long and good life of blessings from God. For one thing, the love of the world exhibited by those in movies and on TV, an emphasis on a life style of “pride of life, lust of the flesh, and lust of the eyes”, is the diametrically opposite of the love of the Father, not able to have the full blessings of God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ!

We must realize something else about God the Father as revealed in the pages of the Bible. God either allows or gives a good life to certain devotees of this “world” system, knowing from His vantage point on the circle of the earth, that this life is all they get. When this life of possession of wealth,

1. Hopefully you have read APPENDIX A-1 on “Group Self-Denial and Separation”, and you know of how the Apostle John, or rather the Word of God through John, distinguishes between a life which practices predominately either the love of God the Father or the love of the world; and which identifies for us exactly what love of the world is: it is “lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” (I John 2:15-17)

comfort, and things is over, that is the sum total of life for them. There is no abundance of life in eternal life!

“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (I John 2:17)

In the parable Jesus told of Lazarus and the rich man, where Lazarus being tormented in hell asked that Abraham send Lazarus with just a drop of water to cool his tongue, Jesus contrasted those like Lazarus who have their comfort eternally and those like the rich men who must seek and find their comfort in this life only.

“But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime {life or lifetime is the subject under discussion in this A2 chapter of the APPENDIX} you received your good things {one might be inclined to confuse the receiving of good things in this life like in the false Gospel of Prosperity and the thought pattern of American Studies and history called the Gospel of Wealth and the corollary of success² with the seeing of good days}, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.” (Luke 16:25)

A2-3: In life after death there is a GREAT GULF fixed between men of the world like the “rich man” and men of love for God the Father like Lazarus; and your safest route now of life style is to establish a habit of priority for love of the Father over love of the world, comprehending that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but of the world.” (I John 2:16)

1. Besides those already wealthy, even those who through the Gospel of Prosperity, the Gospel of Wealth, and the corollary of success, would only desire to be wealthy, are in danger of falling into the snare of the Devil where the trap bait is love of money.³

2. See GROWTH OF AMERICAN THOUGHT by Merle Curti, on “The Self-Made Man and the Cult of Success”, page 644ff.

2. Basic to the following of Christ, and even before one becomes a church member, is a commitment to the service of God over the service to the "mammon" of men and the world, mammon being all those creations of men in the world and of the world.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)

If you agree that the supreme trait of character, like from Josiah Royce the philosopher, is "loyalty"; then you see from the Word of God that loyalty follows treasure and heart. In other words if the heart is on treasure in this world, that is where the loyalty is also; and if the heart is on treasure above, that is also where loyalty is. God demands: (1) the choosing of loyalty between Himself and mammon {the creations of men and this world}; and (2) for those who would be Christian, God further demands that this choice be in favor of loyalty toward God and treasures in heaven.

NOTE: Each generation of church members finds its own way to rationalize and justify the seeking after things and wealth. Years ago it was called by the secular observers of American life and thought, The Gospel of Wealth and the corollary of success"; but now under the leadership of a large church in Houston Texas and their writing pastor of national fame, it has become disguised in the new wrappings call the Gospel of Prosperity and Health. That thought pattern which says that if you are really a Christian of faith, if you have enough faith, God will bless you with both earthly treasures and health; the sad state of affairs which has been noted in the lives of my relatives, members of that sad church, is that: (1) they live in frustration, guilt, and cover up from the other members because they must have little faith as they are dying; and (2) they do not face up to dying and the need for medical treatment.

3. It is not that Christians can be completely indifferent to some possessions of this world, such as "having food and raiment, let us be content" (I Timothy 6:8)⁴, {sort of like the "in the world, and not of the world" of a harmony of John and Paul}; but rather it is a matter of whether your heart is primarily in the laying up the treasures of wealth, status, and possessions

3. You see how "love of money" is close to "love of the world"; and Jesus made that clear in fundamentals of Christianity as given in the Sermon on the Mount, "you can not serve God and mammon."

here or the priority of heart commitment is for the laying up of treasures in heaven. Because of the great Gulf of Eternity, and the recommended gulf of the Word of God here for love of the Father over love of the world, it is highly recommended {even demanded in the Bible of Christians and other church members} that they focus on the treasures of heaven.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

4. You can see the wisdom of God in the teaching of Jesus of “how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:23); because by occupying his time and life style with the things of this world, his treasure and therefore his heart becomes bent and focused on this temporal world. In short, the rich man's heart {and in fact the heart of also a church member who desires to be rich} is focused on treasure here instead of on heaven and heavenly matters.

A2-4: Exegesis of the “Finally” of I Peter 3:8,9 with both (1) A Harmony of the Word from several Apostle writers of Scripture; and (2) A Harmony of Life itself from the Apostles and God.

Pardon if this introduction to the subject of the Harmony of Life and the Bible, I Peter 3:8,9, is repeated again so that you will not have to go back or look it up in your Bible. {Of course, you are encouraged as always to read the publications of SunGrist_Bible with Bible in hand in order to “Search the Scriptures to see if these things are truly so.” (John 5:39)}

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted. be courteous {humble}; not returning

4. See how often we quote from the 14 letters of the Apostle Paul, both in this Appendix A2 on “Harmony of Life” and in the previous APPENDIX chapter of A1 on “Group Self-Denial and Separation”, so that we have not drifted too far away from the “Life and Letters of Paul”; and after all, with the consideration of the consistency of Bible teachings from the Apostles Peter, John, and Paul we are illustrating honor for the harmony of the Bible Itself as the inspired Word of God.

evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing." (I Peter 3:8,9)

1. And why not start with the bottom line of "A Harmony of Life": As a Christian you are called to inherit this blessing of a good and long life. Definitely Christians are blessed in knowing that their long and good life has no end, it just keeps going right along into eternity, and forever. In Lloyd Ogilvie's MASTERING THE NEW TESTAMENT, the following is written about the above passage:

"...Peter now gives a summary of the qualities which we should express in our relationships with every person who comes into our lives--especially those who are brothers and sisters in Christ."

2. "Spare no Effort to Make Fast with Bonds on Peace the unity which the Spirit gives." (Ephesians 4:3) Peter's first aspect of the Christian calling {what Paul calls your vocation in 4:1 and Elton Trueblood in his little book calls YOUR OTHER VOCATION, that of being a Christian} is summarized as "BE OF ONE MIND". And in keeping with the title of this chapter, "A Harmony of Life", almost adding double meaning, Ogilvie offers an interpretation as "Live in harmony with one another!" It should not be surprising that a long and good life of harmony greatly depends on harmony with one another.

3. Be sympathetic or compassionate toward one another.

4. Love as brothers and sisters.

5. Peter continues to "Be tenderhearted"; and with triple harmony we are reminded of the words in Ephesians 4:3 from the Apostle Paul, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."

6. "Be courteous" which literally means to be "friendly of mind".

A2-5: What it takes to have "A Harmony of Life", alias live and good and long life. Each item of this list of 4 requirements for harmonious living is self-explanatory, however like with most of the

admonitions from the Apostles and God in the Bible, it is the practice of which that is difficult.

1. Does it surprise you that the first requirement for harmony has to do with the "tongue": "Let him refrain his tongues from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit."? (I Peter 3:10 and Psalms 34:13)

If you have been participating in "Bible Studies in Jeremiah and Prophecy", then you know about the chapter on "Dreamers of Delay and Deceit", where all the Prophets of Judah except Jeremiah, and all the priests, and all the people were practicing deceit.

"Because from the least to the greatest, everyone is given to covetousness; from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter {Israel and Judah} of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace." (Jeremiah 8:10-11)

Seeking after peace will be the bottom requirement for group harmony, after control of the tongue and a turning away from evil supplanted with good; but the realities today of the Falling Away of churches and Christians is that group peace is not possible at all periods of history, even the history of Christianity. Certainly, not now in the Falling Away.

2. "Let him turn away from evil and do good." (3:11) Like repentance and faith, turning away from evil and turning to do good, are two faces of the same coin. And like about face, the two happen simultaneously as this "him" or "she" {remember generic} of harmonious living turn away from one side, the evil side, at the same time the him of the harmonious life is turning toward the other side.

3. "Let him seek peace and pursue it." (3:11b) You have perhaps noted almost poetry of the harmonious life is here as the requirements come in threes of two each. Of course, you realize that like most of the psalms from David, recalling this in I Peter 3:10-12 is a quote from Psalm 34:12-16.

Like any good chorus of a song of praise, it builds up in the final requirement for harmony to a double emphasis on PEACE: (1) seek peace, and (2) run after peace. Peace is so critical to a good and long life. Peace in the family, church, community, and State; and thus harmony of a good and long life is as much a group blessing as it is an individual blessing.

A2-6: I Peter 3:12 and Psalm 34:15,16 faces the realities of the difficult first centuries of the Apostle Peter, that time called by Jesus "the great tribulation"⁵, and the even more impossible times of group peace for the backslidden people of God of Jeremiah and the Falling Away people of this present generation.

"For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil." (I Peter 2:12 and Psalm 34:16)

NOTE: The nature of the patience and longsuffering of the character of God the Father is such that it may take time, like in the case of Lazarus and the rich man, for the evil to get their just due as well as the righteous; however in the end "The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." (Psalm 34:16)

1. The times for group peace were not that good either during the days of David as he wrote under the inspiration of God, the 34th Psalm. And as you read through Psalm 34, it like reading through Revelation 2 and 3 of the status of the seven churches of Asia Minor in the first century, there is the contrast in peace, or lack of peace, for the group, but peace for the individual overcomer.

2. Of course, right up front in Psalm 34 (34:1), David wants the overcomer in a church to know that God is to be blessed at all times, in peace and out of peace, in times of group backsliding and of group Falling Away as well as in the times of the greater group peace of revivals and prosperity: "I will bless the LORD at all times."

3. Fears which disturb both group and individual peace will characterize the final tribulation, the Falling Away, even as they did the backsliding of Israel and Judah of Jeremiah; however individual peace and perhaps somewhat a

5. The great tribulation where Christians, and all flesh, suffered at the hands of the Romans and Jewish leaders, that time of which Jesus said unless it were shortened no flesh could survive is contrasted to the final tribulation near the end of the Falling Away and before the Second Coming where tribulation will be more physical, from the disintegration of the universe with the climax of the signs in the heavens above and the earth beneath.

6. We know from our studies of "Jeremiah and Prophecy" that there are times not so group peaceful, where God stops listening to the prayers of His own people.

lesser harmony of life comes as: "I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4)

4. The poor man will cry out during these times of distress.

"This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (Psalm 34:6)

NOTE: Salvation is more than abundant and eternal life, it is salvation from all the troubles of a poor man; and recall, "Blessed are the meek" is more "Blessed is the poor man".

5. During times of group fear, the angel of the LORD encamps about those who fear God to provide deliverance and individual peace (34:7)

6. Psalm 34:10: THIS IS INDIVIDUAL PEACE.

"The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing." (Psalm 34:10)

