

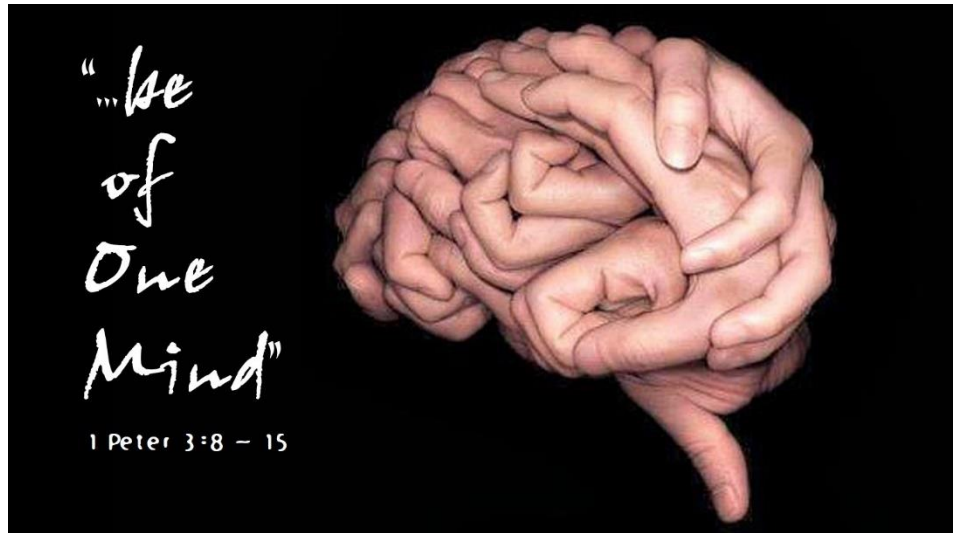
“...be of One Mind”

1 Peter 3:8-17

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**
at **JF Believers Church**
in **Menomonie, Wisc**
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1 Peter 3:8-15 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not

returning 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. 10 For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 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." 13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;



Peter...as we have already mentioned, is addressing a group of believers that were under incredible pressure. They were being persecuted by the religious folks on one side and the governmental powers on the other. It was tough times for the real Christian. And yet Peter, while seemingly sympathetic and loving, still expected faithfulness and due diligence. This may seem to be but a minor aspect in this account, yet in reality it is crucial to our understanding of just what is being asked here of these believers. For Peter was not just laying out some further instructional/spiritual caveats that the people would thereby be expected to add to their religious repertoire. He was giving crucial spiritual direction but furthermore he was asking that such be carried out literally in the midst of the storm!

I call attention to such because even in our day it seems our adherence and obedience to matters of faith and scripture seem to directly correlate to our level of current pressures and passions. Thus our compliance to the ideals and instructions of Christianity ebb and flow...*sometimes quite erratically*, because there are “bumps in the road” in life. Yet such was clearly no excuse for Peter. Please note however, that he was not speaking from the position of a prima donna. Peter certainly knew what it meant to step up in the midst of the storm, yet admittedly he learned to do so through personal failure. But he DID learn to do so, for in the latter years of his life it seemed he had a way of running *into* burning buildings instead of away!

Peter had overtly called for “submission”: submission to law and authorities, then to spouse, and nowmoving steadily into wider circles of influence, he addresses the submission to each other in the body of believers. Now I realize that many of you ‘checked out’ at the beginning of this series because you quite simply are not going to take a submissive position to anyone. After all, this is an attribute that can only be manifested from a life filled with the Holy Spirit, and that is still an alien state of being for many of you. But truth is not dependent upon one’s adherence to it. Thus Peter moves to teach and those “with ears to hear” will receive it and move further into Christian maturity.

Peter begins with the call to “unity of the mind.” **Unity.** It’s a nice word from a distance, but like submission it is an oft rejected principle ‘up close.’ It’s something we corporately desire but individually reject. Certainly our current political climate speaks volumes. I mean, unity is great as long as I and my beliefs are the center of the circle and I don’t have to change or exert any effort to foster that unity. In other words, as long as everyone goes along with me and my agenda then we will have wonderful unity!

To make matters even more difficult, Peter doesn’t just call for “unity of behavior” but actually “unity of the mind.” That means we are pulling together in that which is hidden as well as the public persona. This is where the church so sorely fails. It’s as if Peter just clearly knew this in his heart and addressed it. Often we within the body of believers will “go along to get along.” But our hearts and minds can be far from consensus and harmony. Let’s face it, to practice real spiritual body life is not only hard, but extremely rare. Yet Peter does not address the subject as such. He puts it out there as a crucial and even a foundational aspect of Christian living. In other words, it’s not a *suggestion*.

Actually, right from the beginning of the church this was an essential aspect of Christianity. We read in Acts that the people “*who believed were together, and had all things in common,*” they “*...sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need*” and “*continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*” And in that environment “*...the Lord added to the church daily...*” But church has changed over the years, and sadly, not for the better. Now church is a Sunday destination where considerations of comfort, entertainment, and a tasty, easily digestible message are primary. Then we leave and maybe we might do it all again next Sunday if we aren’t too busy. Submission to each other? In most churches we don’t even *know* each other! Let the facts speak for themselves. According to Acts, our current model is a far, far cry from what was established back then. Any hint at the premise of “submission” and “unity” today comes immediately with a subtext of “cult.”

Certainly it goes without saying that we are not to just give an *acknowledgment* of its truth towards us, but actually in turn live that truth out! James 1:22 says “*...be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” Matthew 7:26 also points out that “*...everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand...*” We know the rest of the story! Our houses are sure to “come tumbling down!” When we fail to *act* upon what we hear, we are doomed to become those spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:5... those who hold to “*a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof.*” (2Tim 3:5)

We are herein called to be of “one mind.” That’s a powerful ideal! Such speaks firstly of a unity with the rest of the body of Christ within the context and concrete truths of scripture. But this is not about overt ecumenicalism; it is about real *agape love in Christ*. We are called to “*have a **compassion** one for another.*” This phrase means to literally “feel another’s pain and suffering.” But instead, we so often are guilty of venting out in attempt to bolster the “I, Me, and Mine.” Thus we are caught “red-handed” feeding the selfish flesh of what the apostle John says is in fact simply an unredeemed man. 1John 3:10 “*In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not **practice** righteousness is not of God, **nor is he who does not love his brother.**”*

I openly, *and yet reluctantly admit*, that it seems that we in the greater church actually often do this worse than the world. I have openly and avowed pagan acquaintances that have only and ever treated me kindly and with respect while the most scathing hatred I have ever received in my life have been from those who wear the mantle of Christianity. This is in reality a true crisis within greater Christendom. For according to clear scripture, to practice such absolutely endangers one’s stance with God and eternity.

1Jo 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. **He who does not love his brother abides in death.**

1Jo 3:15 **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer**, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1Jo 2:9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, **is in darkness** until now.

Our response to such confrontation as this usually involves statements like “ya, but they started it!” Or “they did it to me first!” Neither of which holds up to verse 9 of our text, which tells us rather to “*not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary (give) blessing...*” We are to love each other as if they are truly your own flesh and blood. In John 13:34-35 Jesus Himself said “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

We must know that such a love and relationship requires a very real sacrifice at times. To “*be tenderhearted*” speaks to a “*deep inner state of being.*” Not a shallow “fellow church member” mentality, but a *sacrificial love in action*. An “*other-centered*” heart that actually *moves* in scriptural truth not just *believes* in it! Verse 9 says we are called to bless others...even when they seek to hurt us, and in doing so we receive a blessing ourselves. Such calls are difficult to embrace because they require a serious setting down of our own fleshly spirits to do it. It absolutely requires a holy spirit infilling to pull this off.

If we desire to love life and see good days, then we must learn to keep our mouths shut and our hearts pure when we desire rather to retaliate for the actions and words of others. It therefore goes without saying, that when we do *not* do this, we will *not* see good days! That is a fact I have seen repeatedly manifested in so many lives, so the truth in this is not merely textual warning but visually witnessed.

Few things have the toxic effect that bitterness has inside us. It stops our fellowship with God, and it ceases our joy. By allowing it, we hurt ourselves, hurt others, and hurt our Lord Jesus Christ, who forgave **us** of every sin we have ever committed! In Christ we have in fact experienced a redeemed life and a 'life abundant.' But how now will we respond to that gift? Because you see God actually expects that His awesome gift will have a deep and unbridled response from us. But that's the real fight for so many people! We want joyous life and blessing, but we don't want to give back in return. I have always felt that such a tacit response should truthfully cause us great concern because I can't help but think that a real understanding and embrace of the gospel will by nature elicit a profound response from us. We would desire to respond to Christ to the greatest degree! It should be our greatest passion! So is it?

Please note that “unity of mind” does not speak of a drone like quality where people cease to express individualism and that we simply acquiesce to those in authority over us. Unity does not mean **uniformity** but it does mean cooperation in the midst of diversity. The members of the body are to work together in unity, even though they are all different. We believe that here in this community and we emphasize the practice such. We have Covenant membership, which avails all those who have committed themselves to this body of believers, a voice in its direction and priorities. There is an understanding that to be submissive to one another means “me to you” as much as **you to me** as the lead pastor here. Everyone has to answer to others. Or at least those who have pledged themselves to be a part of us. Rejection of accountability only shows that you were “never one of us.” (1 John 2:19) To practice faithfulness in this matter one must be able to set down their pride, for it is pride that destroys us every time!

When you look around the room on a Sunday morning church service, do you have a clue concerning the lives, hearts, and spirits of those who are party to the micro-body of Christ that is your church fellowship? This directive of *one mind* goes beyond doctrinal issues and church order. It speaks of an other-centered heart that comes only through the Spirit's indwelling! It is this act that glorifies Christ and His kingdom.

God longs to see us actually *experience* the blessed life He has given us. But we must hear His plea to us in that Christianity is a *walk*; we must *move*! He is calling us to truly *act*! Loving God is more than a mental ascent, more than just heady acknowledgment. Real faith, real salvation, and real Christianity is nothing less than an all-out giving of self. Everything we are, with nothing reserved. Christianity without this is just religion. The religion of the comfortable and powerless.

These believers in Asia Minor, if they were anything like us, were surely looking for a loop-hole in which to avoid the pain and suffering that they had found themselves living. Yet Peter was not giving way. He in fact was seeking that the believers "stepped up their game." That they "lean in" when under fire. To not cower and surrender, but rather to commit to an even greater disciplined walk and committed relationship with Christ. God has promised to surround us with His presence if we do.

"...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Sanctify means *to commit, to set apart, to give priority to and to dedicate our lives in holiness to God*. We are called to set apart our very lives, and further, even our *hearts* toward Christ. Do we truly understand the necessity of such a direction? This is more than an issue of successful living, but the factual manifest of a life that has been so changed through salvation. It IS the reflection of a Christ redeemed individual. For they will "know we are Christians by our love..." (John 13:35)

This is so very important for us to grasp. For there are many who wish to be born again, and as many who wish to acquire eternal life by it, but few will actually live such a set apart life toward Christ. Therefore, few who will truly know this promised peace and joy through *all* times good and bad. This is exactly why we see the family of God often unravel in difficult fearful times such as the Y2k fear, and the 9-11 disaster. We *believe*, but we fail to *sanctify*.

"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." Oh if we can make this promise a real part of our lives! The problem herein is that we often deny what we are doing is "evil." Would Jesus do it? That is the ultimate question! And if we are brazen enough to answer "yes"...Jesus would attack that person...slander Him or Her...try to hurt that person...fight with that person...go anonymously online a leave a nasty google review...f He WOULD do that, then why doesn't He? Is He powerless to do so? He can't handle a problem person and He needs your wisdom and help?

In meekness and humility, we should live out that "hope and joy" and be ready to answer for such to those in our life path. Contrary to the often interpretation, this does not mean you must be a Biblical scholar or a Greek and Hebrew expert. While one will certainly benefit and be blessed by all commitment to scriptural education, as we should in fact diligently pursue such knowledge, the answer that is needed here does not require a divinity degree. On the contrary, a brand new believer is equipped with the answer to such a question. For he or she does more than *verbalize* their understanding of such, *we live it out in truth...*

Romans 12:16 "*Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.*"