

SOJOURNERS AND EXILES

A JOURNEY THROUGH FIRST PETER

NO REVENGE ALLOWED!

March 22, 2026

John Hattenberger

1 PETER 3:8-12

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰ For

“Whoever desires to love life
and see good days,
let him keep 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 eye 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 evil.”

SUMMARY

Peter gives instructions to Christians, beginning with how they should relate to fellow believers. He emphasizes heart-centered traits that should shape their relationships. He turns to how Christians should respond to those who mistreat them, commanding not retaliation, but blessing—repaying evil, abuse, and insults with kindness. This calling reflects Jesus Himself. Peter draws from Psalm 34, showing that those who pursue righteousness and choose to bless even their enemies will experience God’s blessing. The psalm further affirms that believers who live this way can trust God to deliver them from trouble and affliction.

SERMON TRANSCRIPT:

So before we jump into our Scripture this morning, I have an important question. And I know there's at least one person in this room that knows the answer. What is my favorite movie?

Yes—The Princess Bride. There we go. You can always count on Adrian to know his grandfather.

How many of you have seen that movie? Oh, that's not bad. It came out in 1987, so it's been out a really long time.

Do you know who my favorite character in the movie is? Can anybody guess? Correct—Inigo Montoya.

In this film, he is a swordsman—a fencing expert. And this is what he looks like. So I just want to tell his story because he has a very sad story. What I had to do to tell it correctly was pull down the script from the movie. So if you don't mind, I'm just going to read from the script because I don't want to get Mr. Montoya's story wrong.

He says this in the middle of the movie:

“My father was slaughtered by a six-fingered man.”

Am I doing okay? Okay, I'll continue. If I start doing the wrong accent or something, just cut me off—it's fine. I'm not an actor, I'm just a preacher today.

He was a great swordsman—a great sword maker, my father. When the six-fingered man appeared and requested a special sword, my father took the job. When my father finished the sword, the six-fingered man returned and demanded the sword, but at one-tenth his promised price. My father refused. Without a word, the six-fingered man slashed him through the heart.

I loved my father. I was eleven years old then, and when I was strong enough, I dedicated my life to the study of fencing so that the next time I meet him, I will not fail.

I will go up to the six-fingered man and say, “Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

Those of you who have seen this movie know why it's my favorite movie. And those of you in my family can't stand watching it one more time—but you will.

Inigo searched for twenty years to find and kill this six-fingered man. So it was twenty years of a search for revenge.

Near the end of the movie, Inigo Montoya finally finds the six-fingered man. He's an evil man—a mean, ugly guy whose name is Count Rugen. Inigo proclaims, “After twenty years, at last, my father's soul will be at peace. There will be blood tonight.”

So Inigo and Count Rugen get into this classic, very exciting battle to the death with swords and knives. Finally, Inigo says to Count Rugen five times, “Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

Then Inigo takes his sword and thrusts it through the belly of Count Rugen, and he dies.

And everybody who watches this film at that moment starts to cheer. You can’t stop yourself. The revenge is so sweet, and it is so right—we just cheer that.

But the Bible says something else. And that’s what we’ll talk about this morning.

Would you pray with me?

Lord God, I’m thankful for your Word. I’m thankful for the way that you have disclosed to us how you want us, as your chosen people, to live, and how you’ve told us to be different from the society around us. We pray that this morning, as we unpack your Word in 1 Peter chapter 3, you would help each of us to listen carefully—me first—to what you have to tell us, and that we might walk away from here different than when we walked in. I pray this in Jesus’ name, amen.

First of all, I just want to give you some context around 1 Peter chapter 3. First Peter was written about 64–65 A.D., about thirty years after Jesus died and rose from the dead. It was written to a group of Christians that he calls “the dispersion.” By that he means these are Christians who had fled from Jerusalem and gone north into what is now modern-day Turkey.

These Christians were under some suffering and persecution. The big picture of the whole letter is to teach and encourage them how to live godly lives in the midst of suffering.

For the last several weeks, we’ve been through this. We’ve covered chapters one, two, and part of three, and he’s given instructions to these Christians—and to us. He’s told Christians to honor those in government authority. He’s told servants to submit to their masters. He’s told wives to be subject to their husbands and to appreciate the good in them. He’s told husbands to understand and meet the needs of their wives.

Last week, David went a bit into Ephesians chapter 4 and emphasized that in marriage we are to be like Jesus to our spouse—kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

This morning, we’re back in 1 Peter chapter 3. Turn to verses 8–12, which we’ll cover today.

The big picture is this: Peter describes key character traits for righteous Christians. Righteous Christians must never take revenge—no revenge allowed. Righteous Christians are commanded to bless those who are evil, abusive, and insulting. That is bold and countercultural. And God will bless Christians who strive to live righteously.

What do I mean by “righteous Christians”? Not perfect Christians, but those saved by faith in Jesus who strive to follow God’s commands.

Today we see references to righteousness throughout the text—righteous character, righteous actions, and a contrast between righteous and evil people.

We're covering seven verses, with twelve commands, five blessings, and one calling.

Let's read 1 Peter 3:8–12:

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless... For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous... but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

There's a lot packed in here. Let's unpack it.

Verse 8 gives five character traits:

- Unity of mind (harmony, not uniformity)
- Sympathy
- Brotherly love
- A tender heart
- A humble mind

Unity doesn't mean everyone thinks the same—it means we cooperate even in disagreement.

Sympathy means caring deeply, often through listening rather than speaking.

Brotherly love is the special love between believers.

A tender heart means compassion.

A humble mind means recognizing we are no better than others and have been saved by grace.

These traits should mark all Christians.

But we don't always interact with Christians. Sometimes we interact with people who are evil, abusive, and insulting.

So how should we respond?

Verse 9 says: do not repay evil for evil. No revenge allowed—not like Inigo Montoya.

Instead, we are to bless.

Blessing means speaking kindly and seeking their well-being.

Jesus said in Luke 6:

“Love your enemies... bless those who curse you... pray for those who abuse you.”

To non-Christians, this sounds foolish. Even many Christians struggle with this.

If we're honest, we might say, "I don't think I can do that."

So we ask:

Why should I do it?

What's in it for me?

Verse 9 answers:

You are called to do this.

And you will receive a blessing.

Jesus modeled this. He did not retaliate when reviled.

We cannot do this in our own strength—we need the Holy Spirit.

And what's in it for us? A blessing from God.

Verses 10–12 explain:

Whoever desires to love life and see good days should turn from evil, do good, seek peace, and pursue it. The Lord watches over the righteous and hears their prayers.

That's the promise.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the character traits in verse 8 are already part of your character? Which ones need serious correction, and why?
2. Why do you think it is difficult for people to resist the urge to carry out revenge when they have been wronged by others?
3. What are some ways you could bless that person who has been evil or insulting? What will you plan to do, and who will hold you accountable?
4. In what ways do you feel “called” by God to live a life of righteousness and to bless others, especially those who are evil, abusive, and insulting?
5. Which of the four blessings that Peter described in verses 10 and 12 are most meaningful to you, and why?
6. Think back over your life and recall situations where God delivered you from afflictions, difficulties, and troubles. How does recalling these situations help you in times of current trouble?
7. In what ways will you seek to apply the biblical truths in this section of Peter’s letter?

To listen to this or any other sermon, visit tomballbible.church/sermons.