

TITLE: "Marks of the Believer's Birthright" (Part 2)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 3:9a

THEME: *Partakers of grace give evidence of grace*

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{The dangers of religion without regeneration}

If you've known me for any length of time, you've likely heard me talk about t/dangers of religion w/o regeneration.

In fact, every religious system o/s of authentic Christianity (includes many that would claim to be Christian) is just that - a religious system that knows nothing of t/Spirit's regenerating power.

Religion is external / Regeneration internal

Religion is man-centered / Regeneration is God-centered

Religion leads to hell / Regeneration causes one to inherit heaven

Religion is about man's attempt to save himself / Regeneration is God saving men who could in no wise save themselves

Religion is authored by man's will / Regeneration by God's (since it's authored by God, God himself will see it to completion, this alone is grace)

Religion results in dead religious people / Regeneration results in living transformed people.

In Jesus' day, religion characterized most of t/Jews, especially t/religious leaders. {cf. Matthew 23:27} ==> that's t/nature of religion. It has no power to cleanse t/soul.

Since regeneration (genuine God-authored salvation from sin) results in a changed life,

it is expected that those who are regenerate will behave and think differently than those who are not. So Paul could write in Col. 3 ==>

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving each other as Christ has forgiven you.

This is what you call a reasonable expectation. If you have been "chosen of God," if you are H.&B., then it is to be expected that you will put on these things {cite}.

Partakers of grace give evidence of grace. Graced people are to be gracious people.

{Read Passage}

Partakers of grace give evidence of grace. Graced people are to be gracious people.

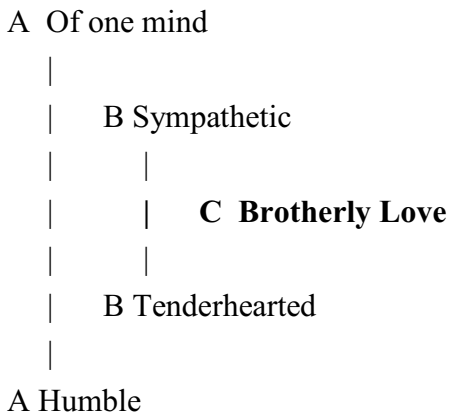
I. Marks of the Believer's Birthright (8-12)

Identifying characteristics of t/redeemed. Peter sums up t/entirety of 2:11 thru 3:7 by giving us 5 such characteristics.

A. The Mark of Love: *How do I Act Toward Friends?* (8)

That's t/emphasis of v. 8. How do I relate to those who are, for t/most part, friends? Brothers & sisters in JC? Main thrust of this verse - life in and among t/body of X.

We know, because of t/chiastic structure, that love is t/main emphasis of t/verse. Specifically, "brotherly love."



Love is central. Being of one mind, sympathetic, tenderhearted, humility, are elements of that love, and help define what this love is to look like.

The love that Christians share is to be brotherly; united; humble; sympathetic; & tenderhearted. That's what we looked at last time.

Partakers of grace give evidence of grace. Graced people are to be gracious people.

I. Marks of the Believer's Birthright (8-12)

A. The Mark of Love: How do I Act Toward Friends? (8)

B. The Mark of Forgiveness: How do I Act Toward Foes? (9a)

Here's where t/rubber really meets t/road. It's one thing to love friends, another to love foes.

Jesus in Luke chapter 6 ==>

“... if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even pagans love those who love them. ... And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that? Pagans do that!”

How often do we hear about someone who is arrested for t/most outlandish & scandalous crimes & t/reporters interview t/neighbors who say, "He was a wonderful father who loved his children, and He helped me out many times." *Who would have thought he was a premeditated axe murderer!* Well, even Adolf Hitler had friends!

Here's an entire distinguishing mark of one's character. Here is ==>

I. Marks of the Believer's Birthright (8-12)

B. The Mark of Forgiveness: How do I Act Toward Foes? (9a)

Two parts to t/verse (look at each separately & then put them together)

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the other hand, giving a blessing; || for you have been called for this purpose: so that you might inherit a blessing.

There's a negative, a positive, and a reason. Don't do this. On t/other hand, do this. Here's t/reason why. Don't return evil for evil. Do bless. Reason why is that you have been called to inherit a blessing.

1. Here's the negative:

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult . . .

a. This admonition isn't new

Similar phrase in Romans 12:17 and 1 Thess. 5:15. Where did Peter get it? He may have gotten from Paul. According to 2 Pet. 3 he was quite familiar w/Paul's writings.

Both Peter and Paul would be familiar w/similar commands in Proverbs:

17:13 **He who returns evil for good, Evil will not depart from his house.**
20:22 **Do not say, "I will repay evil"; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.**

Of course, there's t/Lex Talionis of X in Matt. chapter 5 (lex = law; talionis = retaliation) {paraphrase} ==>

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 "And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 "And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

When Peter writes by way of God's Spirit ==>

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the other hand, giving a blessing . . .

He's not saying anything new. May have been new to some of his readers, but it's not new to God's Word.

b. Why would Peter write this?

What's the occasion? We can assume that his readers were on t/receiving end of evil (evil acts) & insults (evil words), but why? And from whom?

(1) Remember the context

This has largely to do w/the unbelieving world. IOW - How were Peter's readers in t/1st c. & we in t/21st c. to respond to those who are hostile to us because of our faith in X?

(a) What was the first word of verse 8? ("finally")

Last time we said that Peter is giving closing words to t/entirety of what he wrote from chap. 2 v. 11 to chap. 3, v. 7.

i. 2:11-12 {read}

Among those "fleshly lusts" would be anger & revenge toward those Gentiles (better "pagans") who were slandering them. Note "insult for insult." Yes, they slander you as evildoers, but don't . . . {cite 3:9a}

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Maybe when they see grace in your life, God will use that to draw them to t/source of all grace - JC - so that they, too, may glorify Him on that day.

ii. Then there's 2:13-15 {don't read}

Submit yourselves to your political leaders knowing that they have come to you by t/hand of God. That's true whether they be good or evil. Yes we know that Nero is Emperor, we know that he is evil, we know that he hates us, but that's okay. God is in control. Do right so that you might silence t/ignorance of those who are foolish, political leaders or otherwise.

iii. Then in verses 18-20 . . .

There's t/first c. issue of slavery; believing slaves with unregenerate & hostile masters. Slaves were being treated harshly (v. 20) and yet were not to respond, evil with evil, but with patience.

iv. In chapter 3 we were introduced to believing wives with unbelieving husbands

Many of these husbands are difficult to live with. Many are demonstrably hostile to their wives because of their commitment to JC.

(b) That's the context

When others mistreat you, when they sin against you, don't respond as they do. Could call this the "Strike back reaction."

When you're struck how do you strike back? When someone does you wrong, do you respond w/vengeance? When someone insults you or puts you down, do you respond back to them t/same way? The flesh wants to strike back // vengeance. Cannot!

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the other hand, giving a blessing . . .

(c) What did we see at the end of chapter 2? {2:21-24}

i. What did Jesus say when he hung upon the cross . . .

. . . having been nailed there by godless men? "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing." Can you do that? When someone hurts you?

(d) Remember Stephen, the first martyr of the church?

He didn't mince words. He was passionate for t/Gospel. But he wasn't out for blood. And he was sinned against. Godless men conspired to kill him.

In Acts 6 it says that he was full of grace and HS power. His detractors were unable to debate w/him. They couldn't win t/argument so they turned to violence. They got false witnesses to say that they heard him blaspheme Moses & God. So he was arrested & brought B4 t/Council (Sanhedrin). They saw his face like that of an angel!

He preaches a sermon B4 his audience of 71 men. He gives an entire history of unregenerate Israel. Israel who rejected Moses // prophets // Law. In 7:51 Peter gives his central idea for his entire sermon==>

"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

Being gracious, being humble, being compassionate doesn't mean there isn't a time and place for strong language. // skirt truth.

As Stephen was saying these things he was full of the Holy Spirit (7:55). He gazed up into heaven & God gave him a vision - he saw t/glory of God & Jesus standing, not sitting, but standing at His right hand. Standing to welcome this faithful believer home.

The Jewish leaders came upon him and took him outside t/city. They began to stone him to death. Before he died, he fell to his knees and cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Do not hold this sin against them." And he died. His Lord, who stood up to receive Him, embraced him into His arms.

i. BTW - there were witnesses of this event

We don't know what happened to every individual who saw Stephen die that day, but we do know about one - a young X-rejecter named Saul who would later become TAP. He never forgot that moment. He never forgot those words of a martyr who refused to return evil for evil or insult for insult but who gave a blessing: "Do not hold this sin against them."

And so, Augustine once noted: "The church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen." [Augustine, cited in Boice, Romans (4:1609.)]

Fox's Book of Martyrs has several accounts of believers who gave their lives for X - many of them during t/Inquisition, many of whom followed in this pattern of forgiving their persecutors. One account, about a young woman, Lady Jane Gray, who was condemned to death under t/reign of Bloody Mary in England.

Fox's account is as follows ==>

When she first mounted the scaffold, she spoke to the spectators in this manner: "Good people, I am come to die, and by a law I am condemned to the same. . . . I pray you all, good Christian people, to bear me witness, that I die a good Christian woman, and that I do look to be saved by no other mean, but only by the mercy of God in the blood of His only Son Jesus Christ . . . "

[After she had read a Psalm] . . . the executioner kneeled down, and asked her forgiveness, whom she forgave most willingly. Then he desired her to stand upon the straw, which doing, she saw the block. Then she said, "I pray you, despatch me quickly." Then she kneeled down, saying, "Will you take it off before I lay me down?" And the executioner said, "No, madam." Then she tied a handkerchief about her eyes, and feeling for the block, she said, "What shall I do? Where is it? Where is it?" One of the bystanders guided her to it and she laid her head upon the block, and then stretched forth her body, and said, "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" and so finished her life, in the year of our Lord 1554, the twelfth day of February, about the seventeenth year of her age. On the same day . . . her husband . . . was likewise beheaded . . . "

You will likely never have to forgive your executioner, but you will have to forgive many others in your life who have hurt you in some other way.

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Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the other hand, giving a blessing . . .

I. Marks of the Believer's Birthright (8-12)

B. The Mark of Forgiveness: How do I Act Toward Foes? (9a)

1. The negative:

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult . . .

2. Here's the positive:

. . . but on the other hand, giving a blessing . . .

a. Note how Peter goes far beyond what might be expected

It's one thing to not return an insult or evil. To just hold one's tongue or restrain from violence and let it go at that. That would be a neutral response, a passive response. Peter calls for a positive response: Bless!

(1) εὐλογεῖω - εὖ (good) λογεῖω (to speak)

hence to speak well of someone, even to pray for them.

"To bless someone is to extend to that person the prospect of salvation, or the favor of God (cf. BGD, 322)." [Michaels, 178]

The hope is that those who now harm may one day "glorify God on the day of visitation" (2:12).

In OT it was the function of the Levitical Priests to "bless" (Num. 6:22-26). But now t/CH is a royal priesthood (chapt. 2) & each believer is a living stone in a living temple, every believer is a ministering priest. As such we may bless.

b. Oh, but when we're squeezed, when we're hurt, when we're opposed, when someone lies about us or slanders us or hurts us - do we call down blessing on them . . . or fire?

(1) I confess, I'm too often like James and John in Luke 9

Jesus is heading to Jerusalem; He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements. And they would not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem.

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

That's t/spirit! Get in our way will you? Boom!

(2) What are our attitudes toward the lost?

(a) What about immoral people?

You're out at a restaurant with your family & a group of college-aged men is sitting behind you and they're talking filthy & using profanity. I tell ya' I confess, more times than not, if I had t/power, I'm not calling down any blessings. Get out of t/way, I'm bringing down sulphur & brimstone.

(b) What about cultists/false religionists?

You can loathe what they stand for & you can hate t/enemy who uses their damning doctrine to lead others to hell, but what about t/people?

What goes through your mind when you see some J.W.s going through your neighborhood?

What do you think when you see two young Mormon men riding their bikes down the street in front of you as you're driving? Do you tell your passenger to open their door as you drive by them? Or do you grieve for their lost souls?

(c) What about hostile people?

Someone cuts you off on t/freeway, a coworker or boss mistreats you. Politicians, movie stars & TV personalities say & do things that you hate. What do you do? How do you respond?

On Jan. 11th an ESPN anchorwoman was speaking at a celebrity roast in Atlantic City, NJ. She suddenly unleashed a tirade of blasphemous statements that cannot be repeated. Pro-family Xn groups caught on to this and they are asking their subscribers to contact ESPN demanding that this woman be fired. After all, they reason, this is hate-speech that wouldn't be tolerated if it had been directed toward homosexuals or Jews, so why should we put up with it. "Demand that she lose her job!"

Two scenarios: She gets called on t/carpet by her supervisor. He tells her, "The Xns are up in arms. They're boycotting our sponsors and demand you be fired. I'm going to have to let you go." OR "Christians are calling and writing. They are deeply hurt by what you have said. And they are praying for you."

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the other hand, giving a blessing . . .

You say, "but people like that don't deserve it!" That's the point! They don't. We didn't deserve grace! Why Graced people are to be gracious people.

We need to look at all lost men as potential brothers and sisters and remember what we once walked in darkness, yet God's grace reached us (there but the grace of God go I).

A member of the KKK, Grand Dragon Larry Trapp of Lincoln, NE made headlines in 1992 when he renounced his hatred, tore down his Nazi flags, and destroyed his many boxes of propaganda. As Kathryn Waterson recounts in the book *Not By the Sword*, Trapp had been won over by the love of a Jewish Cantor and his family. Though Trapp had sent them literature mocking "big-nosed Jews" and denying the holocaust, though he had threatened violence in phone calls to their home, though he had targeted their synagogue for bombing, the cantor's family consistently responded with love and compassion. Diabetic since childhood, Trapp was confined to a wheelchair and rapidly going blind. The Jewish family invited Trapp into their home to care for him. "I couldn't help but love them back" he later said. He spent the last years of his life seeking forgiveness from those he had spent so much of his life trying to destroy.

[From Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* Audio book, tape 1 side 2, 1997]

BTW - Do you remember Jesus' response to James & John?

55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; 56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

I. Marks of the Believer's Birthright (8-12)

B. The Mark of Forgiveness: How do I Act Toward Foes? (9a)

3. If you would, turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12

This passage serves as a strong parallel to 1 Peter 3. Peter may have drawn from Paul or both may have drawn from another source.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.

Wishing God's blessing upon them. Forgiveness. This is an act of a redeemed heart. It's also a mark of humility.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 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.

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

We forget that. We want vengeance and we want it now!

20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."

That expression likely refers to a greater accountability that one's enemy will have before God on t/day of judgement. IOW - you have given him no excuse to repent & if he doesn't, he will incur an even greater judgement. That's t/way t/Jews in Qumran understood t/principle of non-retaliation.

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1 Cor. 4:10-12 10 We are fools for Christ's sake . . . we are weak . . . we are without honor. 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

"To be laughed at is not great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers. Caricatures, lampoons, and slanders are my glory. But that you should turn away from your mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but, oh, repent! Laugh at me, but, oh, believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, but damn not your own souls!" [C.H. Spurgeon]

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4. How can we do this? Six quick ideas - all start w/"P"

a. Ponder God's great Mercy (Know that you are unworthy)

In Romans 9 - "He has mercy on whom he desires." It is by God's pure grace that you have been, to use an old Puritan term "bemercedied."

The Puritan Thomas Manton said: "There is none so tender to others as they which have received mercy themselves, for they know how gently God hath dealt with them." [cited in MacArthur, Matthew 1-7, 395]

b. Practice Humility and Empathy

Humility is looking to yourself. Making yourself low before others. Empathy is looking outside of yourself to the other person. It's to try to walk in his shoes.

Robert Candlish, 19th c. pastor at St. George's in Edinburgh ==>

When you suffer wrong, call to mind the considerations which should bring the wrong-doer before you in a very different light. Look at his case rather than your own. . . . If you put yourself in his place, you will see much, very much, that should charm all your resentment away and turn it into tenderest pity and concern. . . . Ask yourself what, if his history had been yours, you would have been, how you—if his lot were yours, his training, his habits, his companions—would be inclined to think and feel and act. You cease to wonder at his obtuseness and his opposition. You are drawn and not repelled by that too easily accounted for infatuation of his, which really hurts you, but alas! is ruining his own benighted soul. No thought of self can find harbor within you. All your thought is of him. You bowels yearn over him and more for the very blindness and madness which make him a persecutor. And so you bless, and do not curse." [Robert Candlish, cited in Boice, Romans (4:1609.)]

c. Pardon the sin of others

Only one petition in the Lord's Prayer has any condition attached to it; it is the petition for forgiveness.

14 "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Micah 7:19 - he casts our sins into the depths of the sea.

Isa. 38:17 - he hides our sin behind his back

Psalms 103 - 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. 14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.

How can one who is bemercied // forgiven totally by God's grace of such great offenses against heaven, not forgive others?

(1) Take a look at Matthew 18:21-35

There's nothing anyone can do to you or me that comes anywhere close to our offenses against God. Why forgiven people are forgiving people. And if one refuses to forgive, he gives evidence that he himself has never experienced forgiveness.

Esp. true in t/body of X ==>

Eph. 4:32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

d. Put on a heart of unconditional love

JOH 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

JOH 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

ROM 12:9-10 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

COL 3:13-14 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things {put on} love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

1TH 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for {anyone} to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

JAM 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "\You shall love your neighbor as yourself,\" you are doing well.

"Love and do as you please." [Augustine]

"One loving heart sets another on fire." [Augustine]

There was a certain barber who noted a huge increase in his business over the course of a week. In fact, his earnings nearly doubled. He didn't understand why until he discovered that his competitor down the street was very sick, so all of his customers were coming to him. When the week had ended the barber took all of his earnings over and above his average take for a week and gave it to the sick man stating that it was "a gift of Christian love." (Cited by J. MacArthur, cassette tape GC 59-13)

e. Pray for your adversaries

Jesus said ==> . . . "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you 45 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Paul said "Pray for all men." 1 Tim. 2.

John Calvin, in commenting on 1 Peter 2:9 (Not returning evil for evil): In these words every kind of revenge is forbidden; for in order to preserve love, we must bear with many things. At the same time he does not speak here of mutual benevolence, but he would have us to endure wrongs, when provoked by ungodly men. And though it is commonly thought that it is an instance of a weak and abject mind, not to avenge injuries, yet it is counted before God as the highest magnanimity. Nor is it indeed enough to abstain from revenge; but Peter requires also that we should pray for those who reproach us; for to bless here means to pray, as it is set in opposition to the second clause. [Calvin]

When you hear of someone complaining about someone else, a good response is: "Do you pray for him?" Really, genuinely pray?" It's easy to complain // gripe // not always so easy to pray and forgive.

f. Perceive the purpose of your calling ==>

for you have been called for this purpose: so that you might inherit a blessing.

Partakers of grace give evidence of grace. Graced people are to be gracious people.

"The word `grace' on the lips of an ungrateful person is profane." [William Shakespeare]