

# Seeing Good Days

SERMON

By

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**October 12, 2002**

**TEXT:** 1 Peter 3:8-17

**PROP:** Seeing good days is contingent on our attaining to the Christian virtues delineated by Peter and worked in us by grace.

1 Peter 3:8-12 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For “Whoever desires to love life and **see good days**, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; <sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes 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.”

<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

It is a hard thing to live as we should before the Lord. By nature we rebel against authority and we chafe especially at the authority of God. We have learned from Peter that we are to submit to the authority of God. We are to submit to the emperor, to governors, to masters and wives are to be subject to their own husbands. Many of us, in recent years, have been introduced to a world of virtual reality in which there are no rules or laws to regulate virtual relationships. Many spend hours in cyberspace where they can say whatever they please and murder or steal with no consequences for their actions. It is a world in which they can define their own rules for living and there is no such thing as good or evil. Truth is whatever they wish it to be. It is all subjective and virtual and in fact no truth at all. Those of us who have spent a good portion of our lives working with computers are all too familiar with such a world. And those of us who spend a great portion of our lives in the world of television and similar media all too often lose ourselves in a world that is anything but real. Most children in our country spend so much time in front of the television that it is difficult to communicate with them in any other way. Many studies of the institutions

that affect our world and life view rank television media as the most influential with parental and religious influence much less. High on the list is the music we and our children listen to for hours on end. The moral and ethical concepts inculcated into us by Rock and Rap lyrics serve to shape the ungodly ideas and behavior of our entire nation. This along with the immorality and ungodliness taught in our educational institutions only serves to feed our innate rebellion to authority.

If it is hard for us to submit to authority how much more difficult is it for us to submit to unjust and ungodly authority. How hard indeed it is to submit to authorities who persecute us and utter all kinds of evil against us falsely on account of Christ. Our strong inclination is to rebel against such authority and seek to take revenge against anyone who harms us. Having addressed himself to authority issues Peter writes, "*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 to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*" (1 Peter 3:8-9, ESV)

"Finally," Peter says. Not that this is the last thing he wishes to say on the subject but it is the high point of his concern. He tells us that seeing good days is contingent on our attaining to the Christian virtues that he delineates and worked in us by grace. The very opposite of rebellion and revenge is, "*Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*" Moreover, as those whom God has caused to be born again to a living hope we have been called to this way of life. If we would love life and see good days instead of living in rebellion and revenge we must bless those who have done evil to us. Who among us does not want to see good days? We are surrounded by so much pain and misery who would not want relief from it? Most, it would seem, find relief from the terrors and sorrows of this world by escaping to the world of virtual reality. We turn to drink and drugs and immoral pleasure just as people have done throughout the history of mankind. There is nothing new under the sun. **However, we must see that the desire to love life and see good days has certain contingencies, We must understand that good days come with a price.** In the end apart from the precepts Peter gives to us, our desire for life and good days will never be realized. We may do well to bring justice to terrorists and to topple tyrants and enemies but apart from saving faith and repentance unto life which issues in the godly way of life Peter defines for us, all this will fail to provide the life and good days that we desire.

The first contingency to receive God's blessing of life and good days is that all of us must have unity of mind. We live in a world where there is anything but unity of mind. Just look at the rancor and chaos in our Senate caused by the lack of this Christian virtue. We must live in a pluralistic society with many different religions, political views and moral standards so our educators insist that we tolerate those with different views. Tolerance, however, does not really deal with the ungodliness and immorality expressed by those who

differ with us. How can we tolerate homosexuality and abortion? How can we tolerate the hostility to Christ which forms the basis for persecution? Educating the nation to live tolerantly of those with different religions and world views appears to be a complete failure judging by the proliferation of war and terror and the continuation of social misery. The apostle Paul puts it this way,

Romans 12:14-21 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> **If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.** <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Not mere tolerance but as Paul writes, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Paul does not intend that we abrogate justice; that we should ignore bringing to justice those who break God's law and the laws of our nation. Certainly we should deal with great social evils in a lawful manner if at all possible. If it is not possible we must leave revenge to God and overcome evil with good. Christians who live in Muslim countries are very limited in what they can do in a lawful manner to seek justice for wrongs done to them. We must remember that both Peter and Paul are dealing with the actions of individuals. In particular both apostles direct their attention to the brethren, to those who love the Lord and desire to please him. Mere tolerance never brings peace with all people. People will continue to repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, no matter how tolerant they claim to be, so long as God has not been pleased to bring them to repentance.

The unity of mind Peter speaks of is not merely toleration of those with differing opinions. Unity of mind was seen in the early church and referred to a number of times in the book of Acts.

Acts 1:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> All these **with one accord** were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Acts 2:43-46 (ESV)

<sup>43</sup> And **awe came upon every soul**, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> **And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes**, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Acts 4:24 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> And when they heard it, **they lifted their voices together to God** and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

Acts 4:32 (ESV)

<sup>32</sup> Now the full number of those who believed **were of one heart and soul**, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

It is this same unity of mind that Paul speaks of in,

2 Corinthians 13:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, **agree with one another**, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

We see here harmony of thought, the same goals and purpose and all seeking the same results though by means of different gifts and methods. Not uniformity but unity of mind. Along with unity of mind there is to be sympathy, tenderheartedness and humility such as Paul refers to when he says, "*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*" (Romans 12:15, ESV) If we desire to love life and see good days we must strive for these Christian virtues. No one knows this better than the psalmist David cited by Peter in our text. David however adds a contingency to the seeing of good days saying, "*For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;*" (1 Peter 3:10, ESV)

If the tongue and lips are not controlled there is little hope for realizing the Christian virtues spoken of by Peter. About the tongue, James writes, "*So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.*" (James 3:5-6, ESV) Strong words indeed but virtues like unity of mind are impossible without keeping the tongue from evil. One of the first places to suffer from the unbridled tongue is the home and the same precepts that apply to the church apply to there

as well. If there can be no unity of mind in the church among brethren because of angry deceitful tongues there can be no unity of mind in the home as well. Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell in their book *The Five Love Languages of Children*, write, "*The greatest enemy toward encouraging our children is anger. The more anger present in the parent, the more anger the parent will dump on the children. The result will be children who are both anti-authority and anti-parent. This naturally means that a thoughtful parent will do all in his or her power to assuage anger -- to keep it to a minimum and to handle it maturely.*" If we wish to love life and see good days we must control our tongues and our lips. David continues

Psalm 34:14-16 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. <sup>15</sup> The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. <sup>16</sup> The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Now you might say, "How can I ever see good days when I must suffer under the tyranny of ungodly emperors, governors, masters or husbands?" Peter's answer is that even if you suffer for righteousness sake you will be blessed. Good days are not necessarily tied to peace in the nation or home. The story is told of John Nisbet a godly Scot who during the reign of Charles in 1661 renewed his covenant with God by signing the National Covenant of Scotland. His days were known as the Killing Time and he became well known to the enemies of the cross with a huge price offered for his capture.

So came the day when he and three others met together for prayer and business, and, as wrote his son James, 'it pleased God they were seen.' Forty dragoons came upon them and a fierce fight took place in a barn. Their ammunition gone, the dragoon commander set the barn on fire forcing the Covenanters into the open where they fought on till all of them were beaten to the ground and made prisoners.

The Redcoat commander, a relative of John Nisbet, gloating over his captives in front of his relation's face, shot his brave fellow-Covenanters. Speaking to John Nisbet the butcher asked what he now thought of himself and his circumstances. Nisbet replied, 'I think as well of Christ and His Cause as ever, and not all the worse for what I suffer. Only I grieve and think myself at a loss that I am left in time when my three dear brethren are gone to heaven, whom ye have wickedly murdered.' He was told that he would have a worse death, and he was taken away on his painful journey to Edinburgh where at his trials he made noble answer for his faith. He told his judges there that he was more afraid to lie than to die, and that he was as willing to give his life as they were to take it. Sentence of death being pronounced upon him, he blessed and praised God that he was counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

In prison he was very cruelly treated, having a load of irons on him weighing almost 100 pounds, and not able to move much because of his terrible wounds. But all the time he was filled with inexpressible joy and continually witnessed to strong inward assurance and assistance from the Holy Spirit. He testified, 'It has pleased Him to give me such real impression of unspeakable glory as without constant and immediate supports from the Giver will certainly overwhelm me. This frail tabernacle is not able to hold up under what I now feel.'

A few days before he was hanged, he was so transported while at worship with other prisoners that he called aloud in prayer, 'O for Friday! O for Friday! O Lord, give patience to wait Thy appointed time! O give strength to bear up under Thy sweet, sweet Presence! If Thou, O glorious, Thou the Chief of ten thousands, the eternal wonder, and admiration of angels and redeemed saints put not to me more strength, this weak clay vessel will rend in pieces under the unspeakably glorious manifestations of Thy rich grace and matchless, matchless Presence!'

In prison, he wrote his Last and Dying Testimony. It is one of the most remarkable of Covenanter Testimonies. It is written truly by one who knew that he 'had been lying dying and rotting in his blood-red sins, and One had passed by and in His love and life said, Live, Live.' His Testimony said in part of God, "He has not given me one challenge since I came to prison, for anything less or more; but on the contrary He has so wonderfully shined on me with the sense of His redeeming, strengthening, assisting, supporting, through-bearing, pardoning and reconciling love, grace and mercy, that my soul doth long to be freed of bodily infirmities and earthly organs, that so I may flee to His Royal Palace even the Heavenly Habitation of my God, where I am sure of a crown put on my head, and a palm put in my hand, and a new song in my mouth, even the song of Moses and of the Lamb, that so I may bless, praise, magnify and extol Him for what He hath done to me and for me." (Fair Sunshine by Jock Purves)

With Peter we ask again,

1 Peter 3:13-17 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Physical persecution is not the only form of it that we have to face. There are many in our modern world including the so called Christian church who deny all that is supernatural, and all that sets forth the glory of God in the world around us. They treat the resurrection and ascension of Christ as mere legends promulgated by his ignorant disciples. Jesus to them is merely a good man and a great teacher. Those that hold such views, though they be eminent professors and teachers of religion are in truth great enemies of the cross. Many attack the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible.

The technological world in which we live seeks to prove that the universe, the earth and all that is on it are the result of random natural processes. In fact just this past week a group of European scientists say they have created enough anti-hydrogen - a type of the mirror-image, antimatter stuff that fictionally powers spaceships on Star Trek -- to test a widely held basic model of the universe. They say, "Such a discovery certainly wouldn't help you to build a better computer or TV, but it might shed some light on why we have a universe that looks the way it does." Antimatter is the mirror image of conventional matter with opposite properties. It is destroyed whenever it collides with conventional matter, turning both into bursts of electromagnetic radiation. Scientists believe this process was crucial to the fiery creation of the universe billions of years ago.

Peter would therefore have us to always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in us. Our worship of the True and Living God is said to be spiritual or rational worship. *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* (Romans 12:1, ESV) Our faith in Christ is not an existential leap of faith but it is informed by the truth of the word of God and based on unassailable evidence that we find there and understand with our ability to think rationally. Again Paul writes, *"-- But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."* (2 Timothy 1:12, ESV) Peter writes, *"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."* (2 Peter 1:16, ESV) The church of Christ is built upon such truth but the unconverted world is blind to it. The utter rationality and cogency of the word of God is a force against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Praise the Lord! We can well afford to be fearless in the face of formidable physical and intellectual enemies. The Lord will go before us and give us the victory over our many enemies but Peter cautions us to deal with our enemies with gentleness and respect, *"-- having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."* (1 Peter 3:16-17, ESV)

May God grant us his blessing in our desire to love life and see good days.

