

BLESS AND BE BLESSED, 1PET.3:8-22

A New Hope #7

◆**Intro:** If you've been reading the news, you know that there is much talk these days of Russian preparing to invade Ukraine. There's also talk of our government readying maybe 8000 troops to aid in holding off the 150,000 Russian soldiers gathering on the boarder. Here's my question. Do you think such an invasion is wrong? If so, would you affirm the government in sending you, or say your 20 year old son or daughter, to shoot bullets and risk explosions, even their death, to help stop this wrong invasion?

◆The US recently evacuated Afghanistan leaving \$83 million in equipment as well as numerous personnel to fall into the hands of the terrorist group the Taliban, seemingly because it was not profiting us to be there. This raises questions. Is something right to do only when it is to your benefit? Does it become a wrong choice when it harms you in some way? Can it be right even when it harms you?

◆I suggest that when we are most absorbed in our own benefit, we are less likely to put ourselves at risk, merely because wrong should be stopped. I suggest that when we are most concerned about ourselves we can easily justify the risk of damaging others, if it in some way benefits us.

◆In today's text, Peter is summing up his sermon on doing good in the world, displaying God's praise and goodness by acting as his "priests" to the rest of humanity, and being law abiding citizens that submit to authority structures for the good of all around. And now he encourages all these characteristics that

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frankly, a good portion of humanity does not admire: humility, sympathy, compassion, gentleness, truth-telling, suffering, good for evil!

◆Are you kidding me? First off, these are not necessarily “fair” approaches. And these kind of things can get you hurt, walked on. Aren’t these for wussy-pants people!? Historically, plenty of cultures have laughed at these traits. The Roman Empire sure did. Their motto was more like “take what you can by force; if someone does you wrong, do them wrong-er! Don’t just balance the scale, tip it in your favor.” These are the natural attitudes of a sinful humanity, and also why many won’t believe what I’m going to tell you next.

◆**1. It is God’s character to bless.** Many folks think of God as a character who punishes, because that’s what we’d want to do if we had the power. God, we think, is the Heavenly Equalizer whose occupation is to even the score for the bad things you do. God is the mad, judgmental one, upset most of the time by all of us. He’s all about making you feel bad about yourself and your evil flaws. -You see what’s going on don’t you? We impose on God the things that come easy for us. Trouble is it’s not true.

◆Psalms 130:3-4 If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness;

◆Colossians 3:12-13 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and *dearly loved*, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and

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forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.
Forgive as the Lord *forgave* you.

◆ *Psalms 103:2-4 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love.....*

◆ So when Peter writes that God's people are bless instead of insult, he's simply telling them to display who God is. (cf 2:9) But let's make a correction. The wussy-pants way in reality is the revenge way, the pay-back way. That doesn't take much strength of character. Any man can overreact, shoot back insult for insult. It's the truer, more honorable character that rises above the reactionary revenge to "turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." (v11). Much harder!

◆ I think this is beautifully expressed in the latest SpiderMan film *No Way Home*. Spoiler alert: I'm going to tell you a twist you won't see coming, so if you haven't seen it, take a bathroom break right now. In the story, all the other characters who played in other SpiderMan movies over the years, all wind up in this movie. And all their respective villains do to. So now we have three Spidey's fighting five villains: Sandman, Doc Ock, Green Goblin, The Lizard, and Electro. But here's the twist: **[show clip of making cures...]**

◆ What we just watched would never come out of a story told in countries steeped in Eastern religions like Buddhism

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or Hinduism. It wouldn't have arisen in Greek or Roman culture. The perceived beauty of curing evil comes distinctly from Western culture, which rose out of Christian theology. If it resonates with you, it's because you have also been influenced by the Christian worldview. But much of the world does not share the view that the nature of God is to cure and redeem. But it is. And that's what he wants to do for you too: cure and redeem.

◆ Isaiah 57:15-18 this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me—the breath of man that I have created. I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him,

◆ cf 1Pet 3:18...

◆ God made you because he wanted to love you! That's the only real foundation of trying to live a good life. Verse 15 says, “in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord”. Only the God who is good by nature can enable you to want the same. Step one of being a blessing in this world is to be contrite, to repent and accept healing from God. God's blessing nature is always our hope.

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◆ **2. It is God's call to bless others.** This is a summary statement of Peter's sermon here. God wants to bring his good kingdom into the world of men, and he does it through his family. It's one of the reasons we are still here and not just evacuated off the Earth once we become his. Jesus in his prayer for his disciples in John 17 said,

◆ "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it... As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." v15-18

◆ Did you notice Jesus followers are sent *into* the world, not taken *out of* the world. God sends his blessings into the world through his own family.

◆ *Acts 3:25 (NLT) For God said to Abraham, 'Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed.'*

◆ God blesses his family, so that they in turn bless the world around them. So what does it take to be a blessing? Who in your life would God have you bless instead of destroy? And who would you prefer NOT to bless? Now if you take your calling as a Christian seriously, you will have to make some difficult adjustments.

◆ **A. To bless others requires humility.** (v8) Blessing of others is contrary to selfishness. As soon as you do something helpful or good, but for a selfish reason, like say, impressing someone, it ceases to be a good seed of God's kingdom. Putting someone in

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their place may satisfy your anger, but it won't plant kingdom blessing in the world.

◆**B.** To bless others often requires suffering. (v9) If you do not repay evil, that means you are enduring/absorbing evil, you are forgoing payback. You don't get to point fingers. You don't get to blow up in anger. You don't get to punish the "perp" by bringing it up everytime you disagree about something. That's suffering. And if you sympathize with the student being picked on at school and step up, you risk getting picked on too, don't you? That's suffering. And if you tell the truth (v10b) about what really happened between you and so-and-so, and your were complicit, also guilty –well you will suffer won't you? Your reliability will be in doubt. You will look the bad you are guilty of. That's a suffering too. But you will have done the good, or right thing and that, God promises, leads to life and "good days".

◆**C.** To bless others requires truth. There is no real blessing the world without also standing for the truth. We do not bless our society by retreating from all standards in the name of some weak-kneed tolerance. It does not bless a your child to affirm his various delusions in the name of wanting him to live "authentically." By the way, speaking the truth in a sinful world will get you suffering.

◆In 2013 Baronelle Stutzman refused to make a flower arrangement for the same-sex wedding of her long time friend, Rob. She was not willing to dishonor God's world

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with her creative talents. The State of Washington sued her for this and it's Supreme Court ruled against her. In the last 8 years her case went all the way to the US Supreme Court which in 2021 declined to hear her case. Last November Stutzman decided to settle and sold her flower shop. She did not compromise her faith or her principles, but she did suffer from the demands of her state. She injured no one, but received injury. It may not seem like a benefit to her, but she has inspired others to stand firm in their biblical convictions. Stutzman was actually blessing our culture.

◆ A lot of people think they are blessing their loved ones by throwing out all standards or right/wrong, good/bad. That's just folly. We don't do that with medicine, or nutrition? True blessing requires finding the truth, not allowing for anything. So be humble, take on suffering, and seek truth. Gods kids are called to this.

◆ **3. It's also God's call to receive blessing.** You will note verse 9 essentially says what? repay evil with blessing, why? Because you were called to inherit blessing!

◆ A. Those who bless others with God's goodness are blessed themselves.

◆ Proverbs 11:25 he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

◆ *Galatians 6:7-10 (NIV 1984) Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to*

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please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

◆ She that truly blesses in this world sets up treasure in heaven even if she doesn't notice blessing here. You get up and you pray before you leave the house, "God, show me someone to bless today." Then you watch for an opportunity to plant seed of the Kingdom in the soil of Earth, because it will count forever.

◆ **B.** What is the seed of the Kingdom? you ask. The Heidelberg Catechism puts it this way. "What do we do that is actually good? Only that which arises out of true faith, conforms to God's law, and is done for his glory." Ok, with every choice you make that obeys God's law, because you want to obey out of your love for forgiveness through Jesus, motivated not to make yourself look good, but to thank God's glorious goodness to you -every time, you are adding to your heavenly IRA.

◆ Many folks think there's really no matter to what we do here, or how we live. Every believer in Jesus automatically winds up in the New Heaven/New Earth with the exact same conditions. We just all become happy clones who wear the same clothes, and experience everything alike. But that's not in the Bible at all.

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◆“Do not become weary of doing good, you will reap a harvest” if not now, when Jesus finishes establishing his good kingdom on this Earth. Right now counts forever. We are not here biding time till we get to run off to heaven. Every good act done for God is a brick in the eternal world. It has eternal ramifications. It will not disappear. You, follower of Jesus, are called to inherit these blessings.

◆“Oh”, you say, “Isn’t that earning salvation and contrary to the Gospel of salvation by grace?” No it isn’t earning you a thing. It’s grace you didn’t die in your sin. It’s grace you survived into eternal life in the presence of a holy God, who on top of that wants to bless you! It’s grace he desires to reward. It’s totally at the discretion of the giver, and God constantly promises to reward everything we do in following him! So obey! You have been called to inherit a blessing.

◆**Conclusion:** Let’s return to that verse in Acts and read a little further.

◆*Acts 3:25-26 (NLT) For God said to Abraham, ‘Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, Jesus, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways.”*

◆Here Peter is preaching to the Jews in the temple after he has healed a lame man in Jesus’ name. And his words there capture the two major thoughts he writes in our text: 1) that God has ordained that

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the blessings of his kingdom come into the world through his family.

2) That in the act of planting God's blessings in the world, you inherit his blessings yourself. To obey God's law, or to turn back from your sinful ways, is to find blessing. And it is to bless those around you at the same time.