

April 27, 2008 by Steve Brandon



# The Good Life - A Call to Harmony

## 1 Peter 3:8-9

1. Be Harmonious
2. Be Sympathetic
3. Be Brotherly
4. Be Kindhearted
5. Be Humble in Spirit
6. Don't Return Evil for Evil
7. Don't Return Insult for Insult

My message this morning is entitled, "The Good Life." Isn't that what everybody seeks? Everybody seeks, "the good life." It's without accident that Joel Osteen's book entitled, "Your Best Life Now," rose to the top of the New York Best Sellers list where it remained for two years. It's because everybody is looking for the good life.

Now, the pursuit of that life may look different to different people. Some seek the good life by pursuing after "the American Dream." They want to grow up, get a job, get married, buy a house, have 2.4 kids, and save up for retirement in Arizona! And then, they think that they will have "The Good Life." Some may seek the good life by following Joel Osteen's advice of how to use religion to gain riches. Some may seek the good life by pursuing after pleasure. They live for the weekends, so that they can go fishing. Some only work for the money, so that they can purchase their alcohol. Some live for the next video game or movie or party or vacation. There are some who seek "The Good Life" through fame. There are some who seek "The Good Life" through power. There are some who seek "The Good Life" through influence.

Ultimately, all such pursuits after "The Good Life," will end in futility. Solomon demonstrated this. He pursued personal fulfillment through wisdom, alcohol, materialism, nature, power, money, music, and sex. At the end of the day, he found all of it to be vanity. Listen to his testimony,

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility. I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?" I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives. I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men many concubines. Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold **all was vanity and striving after wind** and there was no profit under the sun.

Solomon's life ought to be enough to tell us that "The Good Life" isn't to be found in pursuing the pleasures of this world! Nobody has ever had the amount of wealth that Solomon had! Nobody has ever been gifted with the wisdom that he had! Nobody has ever had more wives than he had! And yet, he found it to be vanity.

But the Bible does describe "The Good Life" that we can have. In our text this morning, Peter will tell us how to live the good life. It comes in community. The good life comes in body of believers who live in unity and harmony with each other. But, our text goes a bit further than this. Peter isn't merely telling us that God tells us how to live the good life. Rather, Peter informs us that God saves us **so that** we can live the good life. Perhaps you will be able to discern this in the text:

1 Peter 3:8-12

To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips speaking deceit." He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

I believe that the best place to begin with these verses is with the last half of verse 9. It's here that Peter gives us the reason why God saves

us. Verse 9 says, "For you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing." In other words, God calls us and saves us and brings us into His kingdom for a specific purpose: We are to inherit a blessing.

Now, certainly, we know that this will take place when we die (or when He returns). When we see Him, we will receive an incredible blessing. If anything, this is the message of 1 Peter! The inheritance that you will receive in heaven is so far above and beyond what we are experiencing now, that you will be able to endure all manner of sufferings to get it! Consider Peter's words, ...

1 Peter 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This inheritance is so glorious that we can't help but to worship the Lord and rejoice at our future, even if "now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." The hope that we have in the future gives us reason to rejoice today, even through our sufferings! We ought to "fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13). That is the hope that will help you through your trials today. Or, as I have so often repeated, "Suffer Now, Glory Later."

However, as much as Peter's focus is upon the blessing that comes later, there is a blessing that comes today as well. In other words, the blessing that God has for those who trust His Son isn't only for the life to come. As Peter writes in 3:9, "For you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing," he quickly proves his point in verses 10-12. Verse 10 begins with the word, "for," which is a word of explanation. In this case, it comes by way of Biblical proof. Peter quotes from Psalm 34, "For, 'The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must [pursue these things].'" I think that it's clear that Peter's main point in these verses is that we ought to seek "the good life", and we ought to seek it now.

Now, contrary to what the world thinks, the good life doesn't come in the material possessions that we have. Nor, does it come in the pleasures that we experience. Rather, it comes as we give ourselves to others. When we do so, the favor of God will come upon our lives. It comes like verse 12 says, with "the eyes of the Lord upon the righteous." And when God's eyes are upon us, we can be guaranteed that we will be living "the Good Life."

The second portion of my message title this morning is, "A Call to Harmony." This is Peter's point in verses 8-9. In verse 9, Peter said, "You were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing." The proper question to ask at this point is this, "What purpose is Peter talking about?" Is he looking forward to the truth of Psalm 34? Or, is he looking backwards to what he just said in verses 8-9. I believe that it's clear that he's talking about verses 8 and 9, because, in verse 9, Peter had just written about giving a blessing. And now, he ends verse 9 about how it is that we are called to inherit a blessing.

So, what are we called to? Look again at verse 8, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead."

Peter gives seven brief exhortations to which we are **all** called.

In previous paragraphs, Peter had focused his attention upon particular segments of the churches, with particular roles to fill. First, he states as to a general exhortation to all of us. He said, ...

1 Peter 2:11-12

I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

As believers in Christ, we are different than those who are in the world. We are so different that Peter calls us aliens and strangers. And as such, we need to work hard to stay clear from the sin that so easily entangles us. Our behavior ought to be above reproach as we live in the presence of those who don't know Christ. And our behavior ought to be such that it draws them to the Savior. Then he focuses our attention upon various groups of people in various circumstances.

In chapter 2, verse 13, Peter's focus was upon the free citizens, who were called to submit to their authorities. This was to be the case even under the most difficult of rulers, like Nero. In chapter 2, verse 18, Peter's focus was not upon the free citizens, but upon those who found themselves in the role of a servant. They were told to submit to their masters, even to those masters "who are unreasonable" (2:18). After a brief explanation of our example given in Christ, Peter directed his attention upon the wives and how it is that they were to conduct themselves before their husbands. He told them to "be submissive even if any of them are disobedient to the word" (3:1). Finally Peter's attention was directed toward husbands, who were told to "live with your wives in an understanding way and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life."

And so, Peter has bounced around for the past few paragraphs. But, now, it comes back to all of us. That's why the New American Standard Version translates this, "To sum up." Better, is the translation that most translations give here, "finally" (which is in the footnote of the New American Standard). But, however you translate it, the point is the same. Peter is saying, "I've been addressing various different people who are in their various different roles. But, now, finally, I'm getting back to address all of you."

Here in verse 8, Peter is bringing everything to a point. He's trying to bring everybody back. "If you have been drifting, because the last few

paragraphs haven't really been addressed to you, well come back. Because these things are for all of you." I don't care if you are an elder of the church or a nursery worker or a worship leader or an usher, these words are directed toward you. Whether you are a man or a woman or a child, these things apply to you. Whether you are a father or a mother or brother or sister, these things apply to you. Whether you are seven years old, or seventy seven years old, these things apply to you.

All of us are called to be "harmonious."  
All of us are called to be "sympathetic."  
All of us are called to be "brotherly."  
All of us are called to be "kindhearted."  
All of us are called to be "humble in spirit."  
All of us are called not to retaliate when provoked.  
All of us are called to speak kindly to others, even when insulted.

These things aren't too hard to understand. It barely takes any exposition to understand what Peter's talking about. However, as easy as these words are to understand, they are that difficult to apply, especially within the church.

In describing the difficulty, John Stott said it well, ...

The problem we experience, whenever we think about the church, concern the tension between the ideal and the reality. The ideal is beautiful. The church is the chosen and beloved people of God, his own special treasure, the covenant community to whom he has committed himself for ever, engaged in continuous worship of God and in compassionate outreach to the world, a haven of love and peace, and pilgrim people headed for the eternal city. But in reality we who claim to be the church are often a motley rabble of rather scruffy individuals, half educated and half saved, uninspired in our worship, constantly bickering with each other, concerned more for our maintenance than our mission, struggling and stumbling along the road, needing constant rebuke and exhortation, which are readily available from both Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles. [\[1\]](#)

I believe that apart from the Lord, these things are out right impossible. Nike's slogan, "Just Do It" is no help at all. We need His help! Perhaps you might want to take a moment now and pray for the Lord to help you apply these things in your life.

Let's begin with Peter's first admonition.

## 1. Be Harmonious

Literally, this word in 1 Peter 3:8 means, "to be of the same mind." It means that we are thinking the same thing. It means that we are working toward a common goal.

A good illustration of this comes in the book of Philippians. Paul exhorted those in Philippi to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). A few sentences later, Paul writes, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." The picture that Paul gives here is one of unity and like mindedness, understanding the call of the gospel upon our lives, as it affects our relationships.

This is Peter's point. Those in the church ought to live in harmony with each other, not like Euodia and Synthyche, who were not getting along with one another. Such actions are not "worthy of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27), because implicit in the gospel message is a message of reconciliation to God and to each other. We need to live in harmony with each other for the sake of the gospel!

And there is a blessing that comes when those in the church live in harmony with each other. Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity." This is the good life! When brothers and sisters are living in harmony with each other. And when there is tension in the church, it's terrible. Proverbs 17:1, "Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with strife." You can change this to apply to the church, "Better is a small church with few resources, than a big church with riches and strife."

The good life is a peaceful, harmonious life. Whether you are a master or a slave, the good life is the peaceful, harmonious life. Whether you are a husband, a wife, a parent or a child, it's all the same. The good life is the harmonious life. Peter's second exhortation is for us to ...

## 2. Be Sympathetic

The word Peter used here literally means that we are to "feel with others." Romans 12:15 says it about as good as any other place in Scripture. Paul writes, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." This is "feeling with others."

When things are going well with those in the church, we ought to rejoice with them! When someone gets a promotion, or purchases a new house, or finds a spouse, or graduates from high school or college, or receives some athletic award, We ought to rejoice with them in the true sense of the word. We ought to truly "congratulate" them. ("Con" means "with" and "grat" means "thanks"). We ought to "be thankful with them!" And when things are going poorly with those in the church, we ought to weep with them! When someone loses a job, or loses a house, or faces the death or illness of a family member, or has an accident, or has surgery; we ought to weep with them.

This is what it means to be "sympathetic." And when you are a part of a sympathetic community of believers, there is great blessing that will come upon your life. First of all, you won't have to suffer alone! When the early Christian leaders were jailed for their faith, the community of

believers "showed sympathy" toward them (Heb. 10:34), visiting them, helping them, and feeding them (Matt. 25). They shared in their sufferings (Heb. 10:34).

Solomon told us, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Ecc. 4:9-10). To have the good life, you need to be sympathetic and surround yourself with sympathetic people. That's the role of sympathizers. They come along side and help in moments of weakness.

In recent days, our family has been reading Pilgrim's Progress together. Toward the end of Christian's journey, he and Hopeful were approaching the Celestial City. As they were walking, they met a man coming the other way, whose name was Atheist. When Atheist heard that they were headed to the Celestial City, Atheist laughed and told them, "There is no such place as you dream of in all this World. I have been seeking this City these twenty years, but find no more of it than I did the first day I set out." Christian began to be persuaded by this man, asking Hopeful, "Is it true which this man has said?" But, Hopeful reminded him of how they had seen the Gate of the City from the Delectable mountains. And so, Christian was restored in his faith, with a sympathetic listener. A short time later, they passed through the Enchanted ground, Hopeful became drowsy and almost stopped to take a nap. But, Christian, who was right beside him reminded him, "Do you not remember, that one of the Shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted ground?" [\[2\]](#)

This is the blessing of God upon those who sympathize with others. They will be encouraged in the community of believers. Peter continues exhorting us to ...

### 3. Be Brotherly

Peter is here telling us that we ought to relate to one another as fellow family members. In using this term, Peter's not referring to dysfunctional families with poor relationships. Nor is he talking about families at their worst. Rather, he's talking about the deep down love and care that family members have for one another.

One of the best books that we have used in our home to promote a family in which God is honored is a book entitled, "Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends." It was written by two sisters and a brother, who reflected upon their relationships with each other, and gave help at improving their relationships. Our children love to read this together as a family during our time of family worship. Just this past week, our family was reading about how a younger sister or brother can be a blessing to be a blessing to your older sibling.

This particular section was written by the youngest sibling, Grace.

We all want attention and approval from our big brothers and sisters. If we can't get attention by being nice or helpful, sometimes we go to the other extreme and try to get attention by being annoying. This makes it hard for everybody including our parents. Is this what we want? I have experience in both ; ), so I hope this list encourages you to be a blessing, instead of a pest.

#### How to be a Blessing

- Take them a snack while they are working.
- Be happy when they succeed; don't be jealous of them.
- Send little paper airplanes with notes on them into their room.
- Be helpful and cooperative when they baby sit.
- Put away their bike for them.
- Tell your parents the good things you notice about them.
- Bring them flowers for their room (To brothers maybe blue flowers? Or a toad. Well, that might not be a blessing to mom!)
- Surprise them by doing one of their chores secretly for them.
- Let them have the front seat of the car.
- Give them exceptional service when they are sick by making them cards, and taking them books, blankets, and things to do.
- Don't bother them when they want to be alone.
- When you first see your brother or sister in the morning, smile and cheerfully say, "Good morning! How did you sleep?"
- Surprise them with little candies on their dressers.
- Comply with what they want to do. Let them have the last serving of mashed potatoes.
- Obey them. We younger ones don't like it when our older brother or sister tells us what to do, especially if they are not very much older than we are. But even if it goes against our pride, it is good practice for us to be humble and honor them.

#### How to Be a Pest

If we let ourselves, we can be annoying, irritating, little pests, can't we? I'm sure our older siblings would agree this is quite a talent that we have!

- Constantly ask, "What are you doing?"
- Then, never fail to follow it up with a second question, "Why?"

- If they don't answer (or even if they do), this is a sure sign that you should ask the same question again, louder.
- Borrow their things.
- Make sure you scratch them or break them.
- See how long you can talk without stopping (except to take breaths).
- Go in their room and move things around.
- When their friends come over, this is the best time to show all your latest toys, tricks, pictures, or tell all your stories.
- Drink all the milk so they won't have any for breakfast.
- Always point out when they get details wrong in a story they are telling.
- Surprise them with all your junk on their bed.
- Always talk loudly. In fact, if you yell instead of talk, this really gets 'em.
- Get to the bathroom just before they do.
- Go into their room early in the morning, flip the lights on, rip the covers off, and loudly exclaim, "It's time to get up!"
- Pound on their bedroom door every five minutes with something else to tell them.
- Bug them when they are trying to read an interesting book.
- Get a big smile on your face when they tell you that you are extremely annoying.
- When they ask you to pass the butter, leisurely spread the butter on your bread first.
- Tell them how thankful you are that you don't look like them.
- Tell them that you think their jokes are dumb. Always jump out from corners when they are not expecting it and scare them. (This is one of my specialties! : ) [\[3\]](#)

This is how the whole book is. It's very practical. That's why my children so much like it. And the premise of the book so easily translates into the church as well. Just as brothers and sisters ought to be best friends, so also ought those in the church be best friends.

#### 4. Be Kindhearted

Peter's word here literally, this word carries the idea of having good, emotional feelings toward another person. Peter is calling his readers to have a heart that is disposed to kindness and well being toward another person. Some translations here say, "tender hearted" (NKJV, ESV). Others say, "compassionate" (NIV). These all do a good job of the concept here.

On the one occasion when Paul uses this word, he describes having a forgiving attitude toward others, "forgiving [them] just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). This is really the essential characteristic of what needs to take place if genuine community is going to take place within the life of the church. Because, any time that you have sinners living close together, they will surely sin against one another. And a kind, tender, heart of compassion will forgive, which will allow the relationship to continue. Isn't Christ a great model for us in this area?

Peter knew full well what it meant for Jesus to be "kindhearted" toward him. Jesus predicted that Peter would fall away on the night when He was betrayed. But, Peter refused to believe it! He told Jesus, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away" (Matt. 26:33). Jesus told him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matt. 26:34). Again Peter denied it, saying, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You" (Matt. 26:35).

But, sure enough, Peter did. Do you remember how Jesus dealt with this situation? We have no record of Jesus rebuking him or scolding him or telling him, "I told you so!" Rather, we see Jesus restoring him with a heart of kindness. After His resurrection, Jesus is on the beach with Peter. We read the following narrative in John's gospel, ...

John 21:15-17

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You " He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You " Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Do you realize what Jesus was doing? He was reinstating Peter as a shepherd of the church. Yes, he failed! But, Jesus restored him again. and He did it with a kind heart. Oh, this is needed in the body of Christ!

#### 5. Be Humble in Spirit

At this point, some of the ancient manuscripts read differently. Some read, "courteous" (such as the KJV and NKJV translate). In many ways, the idea is the same you are setting the interests of others before yourself. That's what it means to be "courteous." That's what it means to be "humble."

In Philippians 2, Paul gave us great discourse on humility. He said, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). And this, of course was the example of Christ. "Although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Church family, if Jesus Christ was willing to come and take the form of a man and die upon the cross for us, can you not do this for others? Can you not willingly place yourself under others and willingly serve them? It's the key to a healthy church. But apart from humility, a church will crumble.

C. J. Mahaney gives a great illustration of his this very thing taking place. He writes, ...

A few years ago in our church Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland celebrated its twenty fifth anniversary. As we gathered on this occasion to rejoice together, Gary Ricucci, who's part of our pastoral team and one of the church's founding pastors, stood before us to present an overview of our history. He observed that though much had changed over the previous twenty five years such as the physical appearance of certain pastors like myself the particular values that were present at our church's inception had remained unchanged.

Listening intently to Gary that morning was a church member and small group leader named Jim. Before attending Covenant Life, he'd been a part of a congregation where, regretfully, a serious church split had taken place. As he listened to Gary describe our church's enduring values, Jim's mind was busy comparing these with the values evident in his former church. "Why was my experience so different?" Jim wondered.

He heard Gary affirm that, right from the beginning, Covenant Life Church had a love for God's Word.

And Jim said to himself, *Yes, we had that.*

Gary continued, "We were in love with Jesus Christ and grateful for His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross."

Yes, Jim thought, *we had that, too.*

"We loved grace, and we loved worship."

*Yep, had that.*

"We believed in the importance of relationships," Gary added.

Once again Jim inwardly responded, *Okay, we had that.*

Then Gary said, "And there was a strong emphasis on humility, especially among the leaders."

And Jim thought, *Nope. That we did not have.*

Let's ask ourselves: When it comes to the values we live by, what will others say about us one day? Will they testify that humility characterized our lives? [\[4\]](#)

Pride has destroyed many churches. Pride will destroy many churches. But, humility will bring "the good life."

The humble person is quick to confess sin. The humble person is easy to confront. The humble person seeks help from others. Isn't it difficult on our pride to seek help? The humble person is focused upon serving others and will willingly defers to other people. Does this describe you?

At the end of Peter's epistle, he quotes the Proverb, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5; cf. Prov. 3:34). Think about the good life that comes to the humble! They have the favor of God upon their lives! Think about the cursed life that comes to the proud! They end up fighting against God. Do you want to live the good life? Be humble in spirit.

And now, we get to Peter's last two exhortations, which are found in verse 9, "not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead;" Let's take them together.

## **6. Don't Return Evil for Evil**

## **7. Don't Return Insult for Insult**

Peter's counsel is simple. He simply says that when you experience evil from others, you aren't to retaliate in kind. If people insult you, you aren't supposed to insult in return. Rather, you are to speak kindly in return. Romans 12:21 says the same thing. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

This is so contrary to our nature. If people hit us we want to hit back. If people curse us we want to curse them back. But, here Peter is merely passing on what he learned from Jesus, who said, ...

Matthew 5:39-41

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. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.

This was no pie in the sky application for Peter's readers. The context of the entire epistle comes during a time of persecution. It comes during a time when Christians are being "slandered as evildoers" (2:12). It comes during a time when Christians are "suffering for the sake of righteousness" (3:14). These sufferings are certainly coming from those outside the church. But, should those inside the church inflict you with harm (which can very easily happen), the principle still applies: we ought not to retaliate. Rather, we should be a model of godliness, like Jesus. He is our example. This is what Peter has already said.

1 Peter 2:21-23

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.

I think that we can understand non retaliation. But, what's difficult to understand is this: "How can this lead to "the good life"? that Peter is talking about here?" Verse 9 ties the blessing right into this non retaliating action, "for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

Think carefully about what Peter is saying. God has called you for a purpose. He has called you to be insulted. He has called you to be on the receiving end of evil. He has called you to respond differently to the world around you. Rather, than fighting for your rights, you are to continue in doing good to others. And when you do this, it will be an opportunity for you to give glory to God. Because, people will ask you, "to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). In doing this, your joy will exceed the joy of others around you. And you will live the good life and know the blessing of God.

Look down at chapter 3, verse 14, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed!" Peter here isn't talking much about the blessing that you will have. He's talking about the blessing that you have right now! Think about it! When evil is coming upon you, or people are insulting you, know that you have a great opportunity to live the good life! As you respond without retaliation, you will be blessed.

Did this really happen? Yes. When the apostles were flogged for preaching in the name of Jesus, "they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). When those in the early church experienced persecution, they rejoiced. The writer to the Hebrews says, "You accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one" (Heb. 10:24).

Now, certainly, in order to suffer well, you need to look forward to the reward. As Jesus said, ...

Matthew 5:10-12

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for there is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

But, don't lose sight of the fact, that you will be given joy today and experience the blessing of God when you refuse to retaliate against the injustices that come your way.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 27, 2008 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] J. R. W. Stott, The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World, pp. 219 20, as quoted by Scot McKnight in The NIV Application Commentary, pp. 206 207.

[2] John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress, pp. 155-156.

[3] Sarah, Stephen, and Grace Mally, Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends, pp. 198 199.

[4] C. J. Mahaney, Humility, pp. 22-23.