“How to Live as Suffering Saints”

1 Peter 3:8-12

These verses outline 14 commandments believers are to practice

Each one of them is rooted in humble submission

God’s Word places great importance on how we are to treat one another – obligatory, relational expectations

Jesus said our mutual expression of loving behaviour is to be our most distinguishing characteristic before unbelievers, John 13:34,35

**First, Peter calls for the comprehensive practice of unity**

The exhortation to be of one mind is referenced four other times in the N.T., Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:2

Paul also called out for Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in Philippians 4:2

Their evident disagreement was harming the church’s testimony and it needed to stop

Divisiveness is not to be tolerated within the church

Too often we put up with it by reasoning we should be accommodating and not confronting as Christians

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Titus 3:9-11 instructs believers to address disunity “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”

However, unity is not the same as uniformity

Our foundational biblical beliefs must be identical but our personal preferences can have diversity

Where Christians get into problems is when they turn preferences into convictions, e.g. music, clothing, carpet colour

Paul identifies some things we are to be unified around in Ephesians 4:3-6: “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Our unity around vital biblical truths will be tested to a much greater degree in the years to come

What we hold to be true from the Scriptures regarding marriage, gender, and the sanctity of life is being increasingly marginalized in our society

Let’s recommit to being unified around the most important truths of Scripture

 3

**Second, we are to be compassionate**

This term is “sympathes” in the original Greek text

It literally means to have a “fellow-feeling”

Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

Callousness has no place in Christian conduct

A person can be religious and not show compassion but he or she cannot be a truly godly person without expressing it

The Parable of the Good Samaritan substantiates this

James 2:14-17: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

1 John 3:16-18: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

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Our default response to one another should be compassion before condemnation, even when correction is necessary

How many acts of compassion are we performing on a daily basis?

**Third, we are to love as brothers and sisters in God’s family**

This is “phileo” love

To love this way entails having strong, relational feelings

Christians should long for true companionship

We should love to be and serve together, experience life, laughter, sing praise and communicate our thanks to God

There’s a connection here to what the N.T. Scriptures refer to as koinonia – fellowship

If we’re intent on practicing brotherly, sisterly love, there’s no necessity for enticement or coercion to make it happen

It should be as natural as breathing for believers to want to share time around the Word of God, praise, prayer and just enjoy one another’s company

If we have to be constantly challenged to be in spiritual and social relational contexts, then we are not truly following this teaching

May God increase our phileo love at MBBC

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**Fourth, we are to be tenderhearted**

One cannot be a genuine believer and not show empathy

We need a much greater expression of tenderheartedness today amongst Christians, especially throughout this crisis

There’s so many strong opinions and harsh criticism coming from people who claim to be followers of Christ

It’s almost rampant across social media platforms

Where is the evidence of empathy for others?

Having a tender heart is one of the most precious character qualities a Christian can have

How am I continually showing tenderness toward others within the body of Christ?

**Fifth, we are to be courteous**

To be courteous is to be intentionally, situationally friendly, kind, and polite

Our society has a significant shortage of courtesy

We should be the politest people on this planet and it begins with our kindness toward one another, especially the people who are closest within our family units

Let’s make a commitment be gracious to everybody we meet

**Sixth, we are to replace retaliation with refreshment**

Romans 12:17-21 instructs us to take this approach

“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Our sinful nature seems to have a thirst for revenge

It comes naturally to us to want to pay back others for wrongs they’ve done to us

There’s a way we can experience an enjoyable longevity

This refers to strong probability, not an absolute promise

This is a quote from Psalm 34:12-16

Our tongue will always reveals the truth as to the authenticity of our faith