

The good, the bad and the ugly 1 Peter 3:8-18

It is critical for anyone who plays in a sports team to learn how they should relate to their team mates **and** how they should relate to the opposition.

This is true whether we're talking about **football** or **rugby** or **netball** or **hockey** or **whatever**.

If we want to play the game properly **and** if we want to keep on playing the game over time then we need to know how to relate to our team mates and how to relate to the opposition.

For example, suppose you get called up for your national football team. For some this is your dream. For others this would be a nightmare.

- There are some key things we should do as **a member of the team**. Pass the ball. Don't laugh when they hurt themselves. Show loyalty.
- There are some key points we need to know about **the opposition**. They will try and get the ball off us. They will be physical. If we don't know this then we might be tempted to give up when it happens.

Being a Christian is not a game. It's much more serious.

In fact, we're not even talking about life and death. We're talking about where people will spend eternity. However, even though Christianity is not a game, there are still lessons we can learn from team sports.

First, Christians need to know how to relate to other Christians on our journey to heaven. We need to know how the team should work.

Second, we need to know what the opposition will do. If we are to keep on going throughout our lives we need to be aware of what push back might come in our direction.

This morning I want to answer two questions from **1 Peter chapter 3**.

- How should Christians relate to each other? (Vs 8)
- How should Christians relate to the world? (Vs 9-18)

First, how should Christians relate to each other? (Verse 8)

Look at verse 8. **Read verse 8.**

In the previous verses of this letter Peter has been giving practical wisdom to specific types of Christians on how they can live out their faith in certain situations. So he's given advice to slaves, to wives and to husbands.

But now he addresses **all Christians**. His eyes are gazing at everyone in the congregation. He teaches us how we are to relate to one other.

I love what he says.

First, be liked minded.

Think the same thing.

This starts with the Bible. We are to come to God's word as the first and final authority on all matters of belief and behaviour. All Christians are to think this.

This will allow us to agree on the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

It's **not a free for all** and it's **not a disastrous mess of differing opinions**.

Christians throughout the ages and around the world have agreed on the primary issues of faith that the Bible is crystal clear about.

Who is God? One God who exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Who is Jesus? The promised King and Saviour of the world.

What does it mean to be saved? By faith in Jesus alone based on his death and resurrection.

There will be lots of other areas where Christians who love the Bible genuinely disagree about particular topics.

But on the big, fundamental areas of faith we are to be like-minded.

The **good news** is that we can be like-minded!

Second, be sympathetic.

We are to feel what others feel.

We are not to be hardened to the distress of others.

No, we are to be bothered by the sadness we see in our brothers and sisters, whatever has caused it, whether **situations** or **sin**.

This is more than simply listening for a while but allowing the news to bounce off our skin and so that we are free to move onto the next item on our list.

We are to enter into the feelings of other Christians as if they were our own.

How do I know what others are going through?

- Ask them
- Join the groups where people talk like this

Third, love one another.

The Greek word is *philadelphia*. It literally means to have brotherly love for each other.

Or to put it slightly differently, **love each other as family**.

In England we have a phrase, **blood is thicker than water**. This means that family relationships and loyalties are the strongest and most important.

What about the blood of Jesus? It is his **precious blood** that has created a **precious family**.

When someone becomes a Christian they don't join a **gym**. No, they join a **family**.

This is what God is creating at Trinity Church. It is a joy to behold the Holy Spirit prompting actions of deep love.

Even this last week there has been evidence of family love as some of our brothers and sisters have been under the pressure of covid.

Let's rejoice at what God is doing and let's pray that he keeps on doing it.

Fourth, be compassionate.

The original Greek word is very rich in meaning.

It is often translated as either **tender-hearted** or **compassionate**.

It's similar to sympathy but it goes a stage further.

Not only does a tender-hearted Christian feel for other Christian's situation, they are moved to act in order to alleviate the suffering they see. They do this in **a tender-handed way**.

Fifth, be humble.

All of us are equal at the cross of Christ.

This is powerfully demonstrated in communion services where people come forward and kneel for the bread and the wine.

Let's be **humble**.

This doesn't mean we are worth knowing. No, it means our incredible value is hinged to the priceless person of Jesus Christ.

Being humble will enable us to practice to love every member of the church, no matter their social status in the wider community.

It's a beautiful attitude of the mind.

At this point let me encourage you if you are feeling a little overwhelmed by the vision of relating to other Christians like this. command to be like this.

If you are a Christian then you have the seed of these traits already within you. Remember what was said in **1 Peter 1:22-23**.

There is so much evidence of these qualities already at work.

So my brothers and sisters, let's **be encouraged** and let's **be expectant** as we seek to relate well to other members of the Christian team.

Second, how should Christians relate to the world? (Vs 9-18)

Look at verse 9. **Read verse 9**.

Christians are to respond in a miraculous way when they are wronged and insulted.

We all know what the natural response is.

Revenge and **retribution** are the actions that arise instinctively.

Honour has been insulted, honour must be satisfied.

Insult has been thrown, insult must be returned.

We all know how these responses **fuel the fire of conflict and destruction**.

Is the Christian expected to be any different? The short answer is yes. We are called to live a different way.

This won't always be easy but it will be better.

Look at verse 10. **Read verses 10 to 12**.

The way of lies, deceit, revenge and grudge-bearing brings **ruin, entanglement** and **misery**.

However, the way of **godly conduct** brings at least two outcomes that are wonderful to experience.

- **Peace** with others
- **Prayers** that are answered

The Lord may in his wisdom say yes, no or later. But the truth of these verses is that he is eager to listen to what a godly Christian says. He is attentive to their prayers. Whereas the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

In **verses 13 and 14** Peter is honest about how Christians will be treated by non-Christians as we live out our faith.

I love his **combination** of **hope** and **realism**.

Listen to verse 13. **Read verses 13 and 14.**

Who is going to harm us if we are eager to do good?

This makes sense doesn't it? Having these kind of people in a society is good for it.

This should certainly be our aim as Christians. That our presence in the family or work place or walking group or sports team is one that encourages healthy relationships.

However, Peter is not naïve to think that Christians will never suffer. Indeed, he knows we often do.

The reason is because even though people might like **our behaviour** they often despise **our beliefs**.

- Uniqueness of Christ
- The way of salvation
- Sexuality and gender

In the UK we are moving towards a situation where Christians are not just seen as weird but as dangerous.

If this direction continues then we are likely to suffer more for being Christians.

This is vital to know if we are to keep on living as Christians throughout our lives.

I'm always sobered by those pictures taken of a church family years previously. When you look at them you spot the people who are not here anymore because they have walked away from the faith because it got a bit tough to live the way Jesus said.

How do you ensure you are not one of those people that disappears from the picture?

How can we ensure we keep on living for Christ in a world that **pressurises** and **persecutes** us?

As we finish let me show you three motivations from verses 14 to 18.

First, let's remember our privilege

Look again at verse 14. **Read verse 14.**

We must not use our current circumstances to assess what God thinks of us.

Those who trust in Christ are in him. We are children of God and so have a great inheritance. That is, we are blessed. We are hugely privileged! This will help us to continue to live for Christ even when it's tough.

Second, remember Christ's position

Look at verse 15. **Read verses 15 and 16.**

Fear is such a massive problem in our lives. Behaviour is stopped and started because of fear. Shall I talk to them? Shall I visit them? Shall I be honest?

What is the remedy to fear?

We fight fear with reverence. We revere Christ as Lord. That is, we remember his exalted position. He is the Lord who controls everything. Which means that no matter what happens to us, Christ is in charge.

Third, remember Christ's provision

Look at verse 17. **Read verses 17 and 18.**

We are pointed to the ultimate provision of Christ.

He suffered for us to bring us to God.

Whatever we are suffering in this earthly life, nothing changes the true that Christ has brought us to God and one day we will be with God. **So let's not walk away from the faith when the fire of persecution is turned up in our lifetime.** Consider what the future has in store. The ultimate end is secure and the ultimate end is sensational. So let's continue to live for Christ now until we see him face to face! **Let's pray.**