

## 1 Peter 3:8

### Introduction

Six weeks ago, after a really powerful introduction (remember the indicative and the imperative), Peter introduced the main body of his letter to the churches in Asia Minor.

- 1 Peter 2:11–12 — **Beloved, I urge you** as sojourners and foreigners to abstain from the cravings of the flesh, which wage war against your soul, keeping your conduct among the Gentiles good, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and give glory to God on the day of visitation.

After this introduction, Peter went on to describe the good that we are to do before the Gentiles with the language of submission – a fearless submission that’s the ultimate expression of our freedom in the Gospel. So, verse 13 begins, “**Submit yourselves** to every human creature [even to Nero’s and Pontius Pilate’s]...” And then verse 18: “**Slaves, submit yourselves** to your masters [even to unjust masters]...” Then verse one of chapter 3: “**Likewise, wives, submit yourselves** to your own husbands [even to disobedient husbands]...” And then in chapter three, verse seven, Peter turns to those in authority: “**Likewise husbands...**”

Now, this morning, we come to Peter’s conclusion of this section of his letter in verses 8-13. We’ll be looking only at verse eight.

### I. 1 Peter 3:8a — Finally, all of you...

Remember how every group that Peter’s addressed so far has been addressed ultimately with all of us in mind. The power of the Gospel at work in Christian citizens of the state, and in Christian slaves, and in Christian wives, and in Christian husbands is the power also working in all of us no matter what our station in life and no matter what the nature of our relationships with one another or with the world around us might be. So at the same time that the Gospel enables **submission** for those **under** authority, it also enables the **bestowing of honor** by those **in** authority. We’ve already seen, in part, why and how the Gospel works in these amazing ways, but this morning we’re going to see this “why” and “how” even more clearly.

Think about this: What’s the common ground between the Christian husband who bestows honor on the one under his authority, and the Christian wife who submits to the one in authority over her? How does the submission of the one and the proper exercise of authority by the other— how do these two apparent opposites both arise out of the same soil of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Peter answers:

### II. 1 Peter 3:8 — Finally, all of you, be like-minded, sympathetic, loving-the-brothers, tenderhearted, and humble-minded.

There are many things I might feel like saying after reading these words: “Lord, forgive me. Lord, help me. Lord, thank you! Lord, how good you are!” This is just one of many similar

summaries in the New Testament of how Christians are to live together in true Christian fellowship and love.

When Peter wrote this verse in Greek, after “finally, all of you” he used only five words – five adjectives one after the other that should all describe every single one of us as we live together as family. The first and last adjectives are similar in their form and seem to go together as a pair: “like-minded” and “humble-minded” (*homophron... tapeinophron*). The second and fourth adjectives also go together and are similar in meaning: “sympathetic” and “tenderhearted.” And the third, or the middle, adjective seems to encompass and sum up all the others: “loving-the-brothers” (*philadelphos*). So as we think about these adjectives and how they should always be describing all of us, we’ll work our way from the ends inward to the middle.

### III. **Like-minded**

In the first place, we are to be of like, or of the same minds. This doesn’t mean that we always have the same opinions or that we always agree on every matter. We’re not all clones of each other. But it does mean that in some fundamental, basic way, we should all be “**thinking**” **the same things**. And how is it that we can all, as different and diverse as we are, be thinking the same things? It’s because we all have the **same faith** and the **same hope** and the **same love** – because we’ve all believed together in the **same Gospel**, and we’ve all trusted in the **same Lord**, Jesus Christ. Shouldn’t this be enough to set us all thinking the same thoughts for the rest of our lives? It’s this common faith, and common hope, and common love that we all share with one another that should always result in us all having the same mind and therefore enjoying a harmony, and an agreement, and a fellowship that transcends and overcomes all other differences we may ever have.

- Philippians 4:2 (NRSV) — I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of **the same mind in the Lord**.

Apparently, Euodia and Syntyche had some kind of disagreement, but Paul believed that even in this difference of opinion they could still be of the “same mind”(!) in the Lord –in their common faith and common hope and common love. In fact, it’s especially in our differences that our ultimate agreement is even more powerful and beautiful as a witness to others and a testimony to God’s glory.

- Romans 15:5–7 (NASB) — Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of **the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus**, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.**

Isn’t this a beautiful picture? Nowhere do we see more clearly the same mind that we share with one another than when with one voice we’re glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (**worshiping, praying, working** together for the cause of God’s glory). And nowhere do we see more clearly this same mind that we share with one another than when we’re accepting and receiving one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. May God grant to us also to be of the same mind with one another.

- 2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB) — Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, **be like-minded, live in peace**; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Let's ask ourselves: Do we all agree in the Lord? Can we be described as all having the same mind and the same thoughts according to Christ Jesus? And do we see this agreement visibly in a fellowship, and harmony, and peace that could only exist among a people who have all believed together in the same Gospel, and who have all trusted in the same Lord, Jesus Christ?

#### IV. "**Humble-minded**"

If we're to be "*like-minded*," we're also to be "*humble-minded*," and these two things really do go together. If the reason we all agree together is because we've all believed in the same Gospel of God's grace and mercy to underserving sinners, then shouldn't we all, also, be "humble-minded"? Paul writes in Romans chapter 12:

- Romans 12:16 (NASB; cf. Rom. 11:20) — **Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly.** Do not be wise in your own estimation.

When Paul says "associate with the lowly [*tapeinos*]" his point isn't that we're *not* lowly and others are. That word for lowly is actually the same word that Peter uses here to describe all of us. Instead of "humble-minded," we could actually translate, "**lowly**-minded" (*tapeinophron*)<sup>1</sup> – and again, just is just the natural counterpart to being like-minded in Christ. So we read in Philippians:

- Philippians 2:1–5 — So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of **the same mind**, having the same love, being in full accord and of **one mind**. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in **humility [lowliness of mind; *tapeinophrosyne*]** count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

We see that the ultimate point of humility is not just how we're thinking about ourselves, but actually how we're acting towards one another. That's why Paul says: "Be of the same mind *toward one another*." And that's why Peter says later on in chapter five:

- 1 Peter 5:5 — Clothe yourselves, all of you, with **humility [lowliness of mind; *tapeinophrosyne*]** *toward one another*, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble [lowly; *tapeinos*]."
- Ephesians 4:1–2 — I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all **humility [lowliness of mind; *tapeinophrosyne*]** and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.
- Colossians 3:12 — Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, **humility [lowliness of mind; *tapeinophrosyne*]**, meekness, and patience...

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<sup>1</sup> Contrast "high-minded" (*hypsēlophroneo*) in 1 Timothy 6:17

Being humble—or low-minded—is key to *all* of our interactions with those around us in the body of Christ.

We hear the word “humble” and it sounds noble and praiseworthy. But what about that word, “low-minded”? In the Greek world of Peter’s day, to be “low-minded” was a weakness and a fault that was despised in a person. “Only those of degraded social status were ‘[lowly],’ and [so low-mindedness] was regarded as a sign of weakness and shame, an inability to defend one’s [status and] honor.” (Elliott; quoted in Jobes) So can you feel how shocking it must be when Christianity takes the “fault” of low-mindedness and calls it a virtue and a grace? As Christians all of our status and honor is bound up in Christ and who we are in the Gospel. Apart from Christ, we know that we don’t have anything to boast about. Outside of Christ, we know that everything is ultimately empty and worthless and vain. And so because we have no status and no honor that needs defending or even maintaining, we’re left with the time, and the energy, and the freedom to truly be the servants of others and to look out for the interests of others. It’s the Gospel that causes us not only to be “like-minded,” but also to be “low-minded” – not only to be in full agreement with each other, but also to be clothed with humility toward each other. Paul says:

- Philippians 2:5b — Have this [lowliness of] mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...

And it was Jesus Himself who said in Matthew chapter eleven:

- Matthew 11:29 (cf. Mat. 21:5) — Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly [*tapeinos*] in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

So let’s ask ourselves: Could we all be described as having a true lowliness of mind and a genuine humility toward one another? Having no status or honor of our own that needs guarding or defending, have we been released to serve each other?

## V. “Sympathetic”

If “like-minded” and “humble-minded” emphasize a way of **thinking** that always results in doing, then the second pair of words (“sympathetic” and “tender-hearted”) emphasize a **“feeling”** that should also always result in doing. Now there’s a sense in which some people are more or less naturally sympathetic than others, but Peter is thinking here of a kind of sympathy that all of us are to share in equally. In other words, this “feeling” of sympathy is more a conscious choice than an emotion that comes and goes. So how can this be possible when we know we’re all “wired” so differently? The first thing we have to remember is our own daily experience of the “sympathy” of Christ—our great high priest—for us.

- Hebrews 4:15–16 — For we do not have a high priest who is unable to **sympathize** with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Christ actually entered fully into our human condition so that He might fully identify with us and then also be for us a merciful and faithful high priest.

- Hebrews 2:17–18 — He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

In the Bible, sympathy is an entering into the circumstances and the feelings of someone else (we might think of the word “empathy”) so that you truly identify with them – not just in feelings, but in actions as well. In the same book that tells us of Christ’s sympathy for us, we read about how the Christians were showing sympathy to one another.

- Hebrews 10:32–34 — But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being **partners** with those so treated. For you had **sympathy** for those in prison...

Prison in Peter’s day wasn’t like prison today. If you were a Christian in prison, the only ones likely to come and provide for your basic needs would be other fellow Christians. And yet just by visiting the Christians in prison you were inviting on yourself all the same reproach and affliction and even imprisonment that they were experiencing. So how did Christians show their sympathy for those in prison? They did this by *identifying themselves with them* and even being willing to become *partners with them* in the same sufferings.

- Hebrews 13:3 — Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

Remember how you and I are daily benefitting from the sympathy of Christ for us; it’s this that should then naturally produce in us a sympathy for one another.

So far we’ve been thinking of a sympathy for each other in our weaknesses and griefs and trials, but we could also say that Christ sympathized with our entire human condition – even with our joys and delights and our longings and desires (those that are pure). So our “sympathy” for each other should include not only our sorrows, but also our joys.

- 1 Corinthians 12:26 — If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
- Romans 12:15 — Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Have we really understood the sympathy of Christ—our great high priest—for us? Then we can work diligently to put ourselves in the place of others, so that we actually share with each other in all our griefs and all our joys. Isn’t it this kind of sympathy that should especially empower our prayers for one another?

## VI. “Tender-hearted”

Peter says that we’re all to be a people who are “like-minded” and “humble-minded,” “sympathetic” and also “**tender-hearted.**” Some translations say “compassionate,” but today we think of compassion mostly in relation to victims of tragedies or those who are going through difficulties and sufferings. This Greek word, however, means more than that. The word is *eusplanchnos*, and the second half of that word (*splanchnos*) is actually the word for all of our internal organs.

- Acts 1:18 — Now [Judas] acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his **bowels** [*splanchnon*] gushed out.

When this word isn’t literally talking about our internal organs, what it’s referring to is our innermost affections – the tender, affectionate, attachments of our heart. It’s a word that’s describing the warmth and the strength of our feelings toward one another. So, for example, when Paul wrote to Philemon he said:

- Philemon 12 — I am sending [Onesimus] back to you, sending my very **heart** [*splanchnon*].

But again, how can all of us really be this tender-hearted and so full of affection toward one another? Here’s where we have to see again that these feelings aren’t so much emotions that have to be constantly worked up; instead, they’re a choice we make that’s based in what’s true.

When we hear this word, *eusplanchnos*, in the Bible, we can really only understand it in light of God’s own tender affections for us. Listen to these verses where we hear God Himself speaking:

- Jeremiah 31:20 — Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD.
- Hosea 11:8 — How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

This is an amazing and wonderful thing – that it was the warmth and the strength of God’s tender affections for His covenant people that led Him to send His own Son into the world to live and die for us. This was no detached, unfeeling choice that God made! Zechariah prophesied about his son, John:

- Luke 1:76–79 — And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the **tender** mercy of our God.

So in the first place, we see God’s tender affections lived out in the life and the ministry of Jesus.

- Matthew 9:36 — When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them [he **felt** a tender affection for them], because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

- Matthew 14:13–14 — Jesus... withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them [he **felt** a tender affection for them] and healed their sick.
- Matthew 15:32 — Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd [I **feel** a tender care for the crowd] because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”
- Matthew 20:34 — And Jesus in compassion [**feeling** a tender pity] touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.
- Luke 7:13 — And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her [he **felt** a tender care for her] and said to her, “Do not weep.”

In the end, it was the warmth and the strength of Christ’s tender affection for His covenant people that led Him to die in our place, so we could be forgiven and have eternal life. How, then, could we ever doubt the warmth and the strength of Christ’s love and tender affection for us even today?

- James 5:11 — You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and overflowing with affections [*polysplanchnos*].

So now we come to the conclusion: If we are the recipients of God’s tender affections constantly coming to us in Christ, then that’s what enables us to choose to overflow with the same kind of tender affections toward one another – without ever running out or ever running dry. We would run dry in any other scenario, but not here in the Gospel. The only other time that we see the adjective *eusplanchnos* in the New Testament is in Ephesians chapter four:

- Ephesians 4:31–32 (cf. Col. 3:12-13; Phil. 2:1-2) — Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, **tenderhearted** [**affectionate; eusplanchnos**], forgiving one another, *as God in Christ forgave you*.

And Paul writes in Philippians:

- Philippians 1:8 (cf. 2 Cor. 7:15) — For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the **affection** (*splanchnon*) of Christ Jesus.

Am I characterized by a yearning for all of you with the tender affections of Christ Jesus? Are we all characterized by a yearning for each other with the tender affections of Christ Jesus? And are we seeing how all of these “*feelings*” are really just a **choice** that we can all make because we’re all always experiencing God’s sympathy and tender affections poured out on us through Christ Jesus?

## VII. “Loving-the-brothers”

So now we come to the adjective in the middle: “loving-the-brothers,” or, “lovers-of-the-brethren.” We could think of this word summing up all the others – in two different ways. First of all, to be like-minded and humble-minded, to be sympathetic and affectionate, is really just to love one another. But secondly, this word also sums up the gospel foundation and motivation for all our love when it calls us to a love of the brothers (*philadelphos*).

What is it that creates and then enables our love for one another? It’s the **Gospel REALITY** that we’ve all been begotten anew by the same Father through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3), and so that means that now we’re all brothers and sisters in the same family. It means that now we all share spiritual ties of kinship and familial sympathy and affection and love. Whether we’re husband or wife, male or female, master or slave, parent or child, rich or poor, young or old, in authority or under authority, the Gospel has transformed us and is transforming us all to be like-minded and humble-minded, sympathetic and affectionate, lovers of one another as brothers and sisters. That’s the power of the Gospel, and it’s a power to be found in no other place, ever, anywhere in the world.

### Conclusion

We need to be praying together that God would always be working and producing these things here, in us. Because when He does this, I know there will be much joy for us, and great, great glory brought to God. And as we’re praying for these things, let’s remember to always, daily be choosing them because of all that we know to be true in Christ.

It seems fitting, this morning, to close with these words of the Apostle Paul from 1 Thessalonians chapter four:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10 (Heb. 13:1-3; Rom. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:5-7) — Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another... but we urge you, brothers, to **abound** [in love (to **excel** and **increase**)] still more and more.