

1 Peter 3:8-12

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; 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 from 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 toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

We have been on a pursuit to understand what it looks like to practically live like an alien and stranger on this earth. The good news is that it has not been something we have to go do but what the Spirit will do in us. The Spirit has made the point that if we adopt our identity in Jesus Christ, being firmly convinced we are the **beloved**, and shed all our ties to this dying world, He will cause us to be submitted to all sorts of relationships: to our government, to every human institution, to our masters or those who have practical authority over our lives, wives to their husbands and husbands to God, and on it goes. Accordingly, **3:8** follows this up and provides for us a description of a person who has learned to live in the Spirit’s submission detached from their identity in this world.

In **3:8** we start with an interesting list of adjectives which follow the only noun in the sentence. But oddly there is not a single verb, just descriptors. The Spirit is saying: in the summary or “concluding” (“summary” being the only noun), all

harmonious or literally “like-mind,” sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted and humble in spirit. Again, there is not a single verb in this verse. Therefore, this is not telling you what you must go out and try and do; rather, as a list of adjectives it defines for us what our lives will look like if we are truly submitted to the Spirit and have made the choice to live like an alien and stranger. This is so important. Living like an alien and stranger is not just about not “loving” this world and cutting off all the soul-ties that we have to this world’s system. That is only part of it. But this passage highlights what you are to do with the void. The answer, by implication, is that you fill it up with the Spirit for if you truly have given up control of your life to Him these are the descriptors that will define your life.

This verse is a total religious buzz kill. Even though the translators interpret it as a “to-do” or an implied “to-do” (“all of you be”), you cannot walk away looking at this as a list of something you have to go try and do; besides, you won’t get very far since this cannot be accomplished through a “work of the hands.” If you “go-for-it,” I think you will strive really hard and maybe keep it up for a while, but you will fail; it is inevitable. This list is presented to us as a fruit of abiding in Jesus and submitting to the Spirit. Therefore, when you look at this list it should be like looking at a thermometer. If these adjectives do not consistently define your life, then it means you are sick and your temperature is too high and you have not yet settled into your identity as the **beloved**—one who does not belong to this world. So as we go through this, I encourage you to take your temperature.

- Harmonious or like-minded. Think about how radical this is; if you take this seriously, this definitely comes across a bit cultish. Like-minded? Does that mean we should all think exactly the same hence talk the same, dress the

same, and do the same things? Should we all be these clones doing everything the same? Maybe? The idea here is that if the design point is fulfilled in you, “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me” then you will have the mind of Christ; after all, He lives in you. And collectively you will think as He thinks, you will feel as He feels, and you will do as He does (for example, our sharing in His suffering). This concept is made clear for us in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:11-13, 16

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. For, "Who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?" But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

Having the mind of Christ is a strange concept at first, but if you hold to the design point it makes a lot of sense. If you can confidently say, “it is no longer I who lives but Christ lives in me” then you will share in His thoughts and know the things freely given to us by God. Accordingly, you will speak those things, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words, and you will have understanding because

you have the mind of Christ. And this is something we can share; it can be an attribute or a trait that we have in common. Like-mindedness may be uniquely expressed in each one of us but at the same time it will be very similar (as it was expressed differently in Paul than it was in Peter even though they gave the same message). Accordingly, the Spirit wants the design point to be true about us in the collective, not just some of us, but all of us. In our studies in *Philippians*, the Spirit described to us what that will look like when we are like-minded:

Philippians 2:1-8, 14-16

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by ***being of the same mind***, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 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.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing 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.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a

crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.

Being “like-minded” always plays itself out in the quality and characteristics of our relationships with one another. And the reason like-mindedness is attached to such things as maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, is because Jesus binds us in a sweet unity that is not based on what we can take from one another but on what we can give to one another. Since this mind we share is that of Christ, what it produces in our life will clearly be void of selfishness, it will look out for another, it will be without arrogance and pride, will be willing to exalt others, and even to be inconvenienced for others because they are worthy of it. Like-mindedness, however, can only be accomplished through the design point: Christ in you.

It is important to note that like-minded also speaks to a lack of division within the body, a common direction and purpose, and a cessation of grumbling and complaining. Christ is not divided; therefore, those who share His mind won't be either. It is easy, however, to be an instrument of division and disruption when all you do is obsess on what you want and what you are not getting. If that is you, then your temperature gauge says you are sick and need to get busy putting aside your fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love.

- Sympathetic. This is a very interesting attribute. It comes from the idea that we experience things jointly, with a unity or harmony in terms of its effect on the whole. It is akin to this idea of being like-minded, but adds an emotional twist.

Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” As a body, when one of us hurts, we all should feel this pain. When one of us is rejoicing, then we should all be able to connect to this person’s joy and join them in it. Clearly, this requires one to be like-minded otherwise you will likely internalize everything and make it about the “Me” and start comparing their experience with yours, and you know where that leads. This form of sympathy is clearly illustrated in how Paul lived. In talking to the Corinthians he said, “I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?” (**2 Corinthians 11:28-29**). Paul lived in a sympathetic relationship with those in his life; and the unifying agent that connected him to others was the Spirit of God.

Now, please do not mistake spiritual sympathy for “feeling sorry for someone” and the kind of so called “Christian love” that is not love at all but amounts to nothing more than permissiveness and the lack of true sympathy. Paul was not ok when people were led astray or when they struggled in the weakness of their flesh. It totally had an impact on his life. But at the same time, he did not feel sorry for them nor did he accept their choices under the fictitious banner of “Christian love” (which is just really a banner of selfishness). Absolutely not; it angered him. He was not tolerant of these things; and he definitely did not just tell people it was ok and encourage them to go off and pursue their own journey with Christ. In fact, both of his letters to the Corinthian church reflect his anger and intolerance for those who permitted others to live as they wanted all the while slapping the name of Jesus over their selfish decisions just so they could feel good about themselves and justify their actions.

Having a sympathetic heart is not about permissiveness but it is about the truth and true love. Paul had no tolerance for their selfish indulgences because he cared for their lives and for the overall health of the body. Paul grieved over the damage and destruction a person would do to themselves and to the body at large when they tried to be friends both with God and with this world (which according to **James 4:4** makes them an enemy of God). You see, he knew the truth. He knew that they would only be safe and at peace when they, like him, chose the ultimate design point (beginning with crucifying the flesh) and anything less than that would be detrimental to their relationship with God.

In the same way, Paul truly rejoiced when people submitted themselves to the Spirit—he was authentically sympathetic. Once again, dealing with the Corinthian church, Paul wrote a very difficult letter to them chastising them for their permissive attitude toward one member of the church that was indulging in gross sexual immorality. He commanded them to cast this member out of the church, literally, and into Satan’s hands so that his sinful nature might be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns (**1 Corinthians 5**). This was an awful letter to write and it totally killed Paul, but he knew it was necessary for this man and for the body. And when this letter resulted in obedience and ultimately repentance, Paul rejoiced as if he were in their very midst celebrating. Writing sometime after this whole affair Paul said:

2 Corinthians 7:8-16

I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. Now I am glad I sent it, not

because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right. My purpose, then, was not to write about who did the wrong or who was wronged. I wrote to you so that in the sight of God you could see for yourselves how loyal you are to us. We have been greatly encouraged by this.

In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was about the way all of you welcomed him and set his mind at ease. I had told him how proud I was of you—and you didn't disappoint me. I have always told you the truth, and now my boasting to Titus has also proved true! Now he cares for you more than ever when he remembers the way all of you obeyed him and welcomed him with such fear and deep respect. I am very happy now because I have complete confidence in you.

Clearly, Paul has a deeply sympathetic relationship with the Corinthian church. He always told them the truth even though he knew that so few actually wanted to hear the truth. But he loved them; so he spoke knowing the risk of potential

fallout. With a sympathetic heart, he hurt when they hurt and he also rejoiced in their submission to the Spirit. The Spirit linked their souls and they went through this life together, even though in their case they were not even physically together.

And this is how I feel about all of you, as well as all of the people that God has brought into our lives and have left. Watching you become submitted to the Spirit gives me great joy and a reason to be proud. I know the path is not easy and I winch at the things God brings into your life; but is so clear to me how when one of you suffers, we all suffer. We all are impacted. At the same time, I love seeing God bring you into those places of peace and rest and joy. I love to experience it through you; as, I know, you do through me. I love to rest in the unity which God has brought into our lives; we are linked in the Spirit and it is a wonderful and very unique experience that we get to share. What a privilege.

However, many others have sadly and tragically chosen—in the name of Jesus—to make their abode in this world. It has caused me great pain, anger, anguish, and distress. I can confidently say that I always spoke the truth; it just hurts when that truth is rejected and people slap Jesus' name all over their own selfish decisions. I hate each time a person is torn away from our lives; the process of separation is awful, especially when we have invested so much in their lives. I hate the pain it causes the body; it really hurts.

In addition, I also hate what they will have to go through because of their choices. As we have learned, they will either be relegated to wander the desert for many years to come never finding the promises of peace and rest or they will have to go through the fire for the destruction of their flesh. Either way it is awful

and a horribly painful experience and it kills me when I think about it. We must never forget Jesus is a jealous lover—His name is Jealous—and He will do whatever it takes to convince a person to choose only Him. I sympathize for what they do not get to experience in Jesus, especially when it seemed that they were so close, oh so close, to breaking through. Besides, great pieces of me, and I know great pieces of many of you, are in each and every person that has left. We have all invested so much; it has been an effort of the collective, and I know we have collectively hurt over their departure. This is sympathetic living.

Hebrews 4:15 says that our high priest (Jesus Christ) even now sympathizes with all we go through because he Himself faced each and every temptation. And even though He passed them all without any failure, He does not look down on us and roll His eyes over our inability. Rather, He sympathizes with our struggle—it pangs Him deeply—and so He is busy constantly interceding on our behalf (**Romans 8:34**). But make no mistake, do not be confused, He is not feeling sorry for us and His intercession is not about permitting us to do what we think is right. Rather, His intercession is in accordance with His Father’s will for our lives and is centered on the design point, beginning with crucifying of our flesh.

- Brotherly. The word “brotherly” or “brotherly love” is from “*phileo*” and this form of the word is used only this one time. If “like-mindedness” deals with the source and content of our thoughts toward one another and “sympathetic” deals with the common emotions shared with each other, “brotherly” is about how we practically enjoy one another. It is a general attitude expressed in fondness and affection. Brotherly love should be easily identifiable when you walk into any gathering of true believers for it naturally flows from the lives of those

who have truly identified themselves in Jesus and have put to death the fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love. If you cannot instantly identify it, then you know there is a problem. Here is where you can take another personal temperature reading. If you have difficulty enjoying those whom God has brought into your life and you are annoyed by everyone (or most everyone), then it is a sign that you are sick and you need to be busy about your crucifixion and setting aside the fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love.

It is interesting, “brotherly” or “brotherly” love comes from two Greek words meaning “fondness” and the “womb.” This combination of words pictures a powerful bond between two people who are like-minded and sympathetic because their connection goes back to the womb. It is very similar to the way the Spirit, in **2 Timothy 2:22** says, “Pursue faith and love and peace and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.” Our pursuit of relationship and our enjoyment of relationships is definitely qualified. This is far too often overlooked in the realm of Christianity. As such, brotherly love is not to be confused with the artificial “Christian love” which, as we talked about earlier, is a religious banner for mutual and collective selfishness. Our relationships and the affection we share is to be with those who call on the Lord with pure hearts—those who are like-minded (with the mind of Christ that is). To make this point stick, I want you to consider what the Spirit says to those “brethren” who have chosen to be friends with this world and seek their identity, meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in what this world has to offer:

1 Corinthians 5:11-13

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (in that last quote the Spirit is referencing ***Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21***).

Brotherly love is not false, it is not accommodating of evil, and it is not permissive of those who want to do their own will and not the will of the Father. Surely someone who is an immoral person, reviler, drunkard and swindler is practically the type of person you would want to avoid anyways. But when you add to the mix those who are covetous and idolaters, well that pretty much captures everyone who has chosen something in this world that matters to them more than does Jesus. The Spirit further addresses this type of limiting aspect to “Brotherly love” in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you ***keep away from*** every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but

with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and ***do not associate with him***, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Wow, they were commanded to keep away from (or not associate with) these types of “brethren.” Therefore, I can confidently say that brotherly love is a deep affection and bond in relationship for those who are truly like-minded with the mind not of this world but with the mind of Christ. And please do not forget, brotherly love is a natural byproduct of letting the Spirit cause you to be submissive.

- Kindhearted. If “brother love” is about how we practically enjoy one another, “kindhearted” is to describe the nature of our affection for one another. Literally, in the Greek, it is a good feeling which comes from our bowels; the spleen to be exact. In other words, it is a deep seeded tenderness for one

another. This word is used only one other time in the New Testament in ***Ephesians 4:32*** and it is rendered as tenderhearted.

This word implies that there is a softness towards one another—towards those with whom we share brotherly love. Some translations render this word as “pitiful” or “compassionate.” It speaks of our ability to connect with one another and to be understanding of the difficulty of the life we have chosen. We are definitely on the fringe and have decided that we will gladly be an enemy with this world in exchange for the type of relationship we get to experience with God. But with this decision comes a necessary amount of fire, persecution, distressing trials, and so on; and it is hard. But instead of being critical and harsh with one another in our failures or competitive and comparative in our successes, we are gentle, kind, understanding, and generally have a soft and tender spirit toward our true brothers and sisters in the Lord.

There is this one thing I have noticed, now and then, that I want to address because it goes to this aspect of being tender or kindhearted. Sometimes those who have walked this difficult pathway forget that through a big part of their journey they were wailing, moaning, complaining, fighting, and resisting, and so on. And when others are in that place, and seem to be taking forever to get through this stage, it is easy to be annoyed and not treat them with pity and tenderness. But you know the pain and difficulty they are enduring, and if you would stop even for a moment and consider what you have been through, I think you would truly be able to connect with their experience and have pity on those who are fighting (so they are truly brethren) but are slowly trudging down the path. Tenderness is to mark our interactions. Again, please do a temperature

check and if this is not you, then it is time to get to work on those fleshly lusts.

- Humble in Spirit. Once again we have a very unique word in the Greek; in fact, this is the only place this word is used. In the New American, it is translated as “humble in spirit,” in the English Standard Version as “humble in mind,” in the New Living as “humble attitude,” and in Young’s Literal and the King James as “courteous.” It comes from a root word which is often translated as “depressed” or “cast-down” or “made low” (hence, all the references to humility) and from a word which means to reign in and to curb (presumably what you would otherwise want to do). Perhaps, this is another way of phrasing what we read in **Philippians 2:3**, “consider others as more important than yourself.” If you think about it, being “courteous” is a way of lowering yourself to another and reigning in your needs for the needs of another.

This puts real practical definition to the idea of being humble. There are so many situation where this can come into play. But it is not something you can go do, at least not for very long; it is a fruit (a natural expression) that marks the lives of those who are submitted to the Spirit. Again, the point of all of this is that you are to do a temperature check and if this does not define you and others don’t know you as one who is willing, at any moment, to humble yourself, to be courteous, and consider another brother as more important than yourself, then you need to get to work. Yes, you need to start (or continue) the process of being crucified to your flesh putting away the fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love. It is time; the fruit of self-pity and self-love is so unbecoming and selfish. You don’t want that anyways; toss it out.

Like minded, sympathetic, brotherly love, kindhearted, and humble or

courteous, this list of adjectives is to define us and should be how others experience us. This is the evidence, the fruit on the tree. It proves you are one who desires to truly be like Jesus and to love Him with your heart, mind, soul, and strength. This is the evidence that proves you have made the decision to live on the fringe and be an alien and stranger in this world, cutting off all soul ties that keep you bound to this world. This is the evidence you have embraced your identity as the **beloved**.

Next week, Lord willing, we will continue with the Spirit's summary regarding a life submitted to the Lord beginning with not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead.

Let's pray