

## The Face of the Lord – 1 Peter 3:8-12

How much money do you think it would take for you to be classified as rich? Well, I did some research – I Googled it – and according to a [2025 SmartAsset study](#), you need \$731,492 to be in the top 1% of earners nationwide. \$731,492 to be considered rich. And I found that interesting for two reasons. It was very specific. \$731,492. So, if I were to make \$731,491 I guess I'm not rich. The other surprising thing was that it wasn't really as high as I thought it might be. I thought you had to be a millionaire, but what do I know? Because in most of the studies I looked at, the rich people didn't think of themselves as rich. The amount was always a little more than what they had. Most rich people are not quite rich enough.

At the same time, we have probably all known poor people who were very content. So, would you rather be rich and discontented or not rich and content? What do you need in this life to live contentedly? It has become very evident that money and fame and power do not bring contentment. Think of all the movie stars and politicians who were wealthy and powerful and wound up taking their own lives because they were miserable.

King David, in the Old Testament, was wealthy and had plenty of difficulties but he learned to love life. His Son, Solomon, was even more wealthy and had fewer difficulties and he wrote in **Ecclesiastes 2:17** that he hated life. What is the difference? If money and stuff and power and fame won't guarantee an enjoyable life, then what will?

Well, let's continue our study of **1 Peter** by turning to the third chapter and we will see just what it takes to live a life that is enjoyable and the one thing that we all have in common whether rich or poor. Turn to **1 Peter 3** and we will concentrate on just **verses 8-12** today. And part of what we are going to read is Peter quoting King David from **Psalms 34**. I find it interesting that Peter starts off this passage by saying, "*Finally...*" and then he goes on for two and a half more chapters. He's like so many pastors – not me of course – who say they are closing and then go on for twenty more minutes.

But, actually, he's not closing the letter, just this part of the letter and here he is giving us all the secret to enjoying life. **1 Peter 3:8-12** says, "*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.*" <sup>9</sup> *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.* <sup>10</sup> *For, "Whoever would love*

*life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. <sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

I would say that **verses 8 and 9** are what we are supposed to do. **Verse 10** is what we want. And **verse 12** is the motivation for getting it right. Let's look at it more closely. **Verses 8-9** are about having the right attitude. He starts with having the attitude of unity or harmony. Harmony in music is not about all singing the exact same sound but coming together with different sounds to make one big beautiful sound. It's the same in the church. We can all have different ideas but we are all unified.

Jesus prayed in **John 17** for our unity as believers and it is still one of the biggest things I pray for with this church. Paul said in **Philippians 1** that we should all stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the Gospel. That means that we all bring our own ideas to the table but when there is a difference of opinion then we do like Paul said to do in **Ephesians 5**. “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*” That is harmony. That is unity and it is blessed by God.

Alright, now hang on just a second. Wait a minute now. I know some of you are thinking, “*Yea, okay, submit...unity...got it. What's next?*” Let me ask you a question. Do you really believe the Bible is true? No, really believe it, convinced of it. You are positive. Because if you do believe it, I want you to see what will happen when there is unity; when you submit to others for the sake of God.

Look at what Peter is saying. He says if you will live in harmony, be sympathetic, love others, be compassionate, humble – then look at **verse 9**. If you do those things you were called to get a blessing from God. I want that! I want a blessing. And we will see more about what that blessing is in just a minute but if God has called me to get a blessing, I'm in. I'm living in harmony. I'm submitting.

I say all that because I know what you're thinking way back in the back of your mind. I know I should submit but my idea is the best one. I know what I'm talking about. I have experience and this is the best way and I will ultimately fight for my way because it is best for the church. And honestly, it might be really good but if it causes division in the church, it's not right.

There is one thing that trumps unity and that is truth. We will not give up when it comes to truth. That is a fight worth having. But when it comes to the day in day out decisions that have to be made in a church or in a family, bring all your ideas and discuss which one is best but the first one to submit...wins! The first one to submit is blessed!

That goes for all the rest of these that Pete brings out in this passage as well. Be sympathetic...and be blessed. Be loving...and be blessed. Be compassionate and humble...be blessed. And all of those go against the grain of what the world tells us to do and what our human nature tells us to do too.

How about this one from **verse 9**? Is there anything harder to do than not repay evil with evil but with a blessing instead? When someone insults you; when they say you aren't very smart or you aren't very pretty or you have the personality of a damp rag, what is your response? There are literally books written on the best comebacks to put that person in their place. But God is saying through Peter here that your response should be to bless that person.

I think it was Steve Martin, the comedian, that I heard say this a long time ago and he was being dead serious. He said he ran into some drunk guy somewhere one time that wanted to fight him for whatever reason. He pushed Steve and called him some names but Steve wasn't going to fight this guy. He knew it would be trouble. So, Steve said, *"Hey man, I really like your shoes."* And the guy was thrown off by it. He said, *"Hey, shut up about my shoes!"* But Steve said, *"No, I really like your shoes. Where did you get them? I would like to get some like them."* And the guy told him where he got the shoes and they both walked off. Now, who won that fight? They both did. That's similar to what Peter is saying here. It's not easy but it's what you do if you want to be blessed by God.

Now, **verse 10** is the blessing. This is what we want. **Verses 8-9** tell us the right attitude to have to get the blessing and **verses 10-11** spell it out. And this is basically, low-key the secret to life. Do you want to enjoy life? Do you want to be content with whatever amount of money and fame and power you have? Read **verses 10-11** again.

*For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. <sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it."* This is the quotation from David in **Psalms 34**. This is basically what Peter was trying to say and since Peter knew the Old Testament scriptures, he used this to back up what he was writing. Do you want to love life? Who is going to say, *"Oh, no. I'm not interested in loving my life. I just want to hate my way through it til I die"?*

He's not telling us how to make more money or how to be more famous. He is saying that we can love the life we are living and we do it by doing basically just what Peter was telling us to do. And that sounds a whole lot like what Pete was telling us to do earlier in the book. For nearly two chapters, Peter was telling us to live holy lives. Live like God wants you to live and you will be rewarded. Live holy and be happy. Live holy and love your life. Then Peter broke out the big guns and quoted King David saying basically the same thing. Now, the only question is, do you really believe it?

Okay, let me ask you another question. For those of you who insist on doing it your own way. For those of you who insist that it's okay to talk like the world talks with your colorful language and watch the same things the world watches and to live unholy lives that look just like the rest of the unholy world. How's that working out for you? Do you have peace? Are you blessed by God? Do you love your life? If so, then keep doing what you're doing. Sure. Good for you. But I bet if you are honest, you would say that your life is actually harder than it has to be. And peace is hard to find. Joy is only found in rare occasions.

What about your prayer life? Do you feel like God is answering your prayers? Is He even hearing them? Look at **verse 12** again. Peter is talking about prayer here when he says that the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears attend to their prayers. When he says the "*eyes of the Lord*", that is a common Old Testament phrase that relates to God's special, caring watchfulness over His people. (MacArthur, 1 Peter, pg. 193)

**Proverbs 5:21** says, "*For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths.*" That ought to be very comforting. That's one of the reasons why we say that we appreciate that God is interested in the things we are interested in. Nothing is too small or too big to pray about. God is examining everything we do and everywhere we go. The eyes of the Lord are on your ways – all your ways – and when you are right with Him it says that He attends to your prayers. That doesn't mean He always says "yes" to everything but that's good because we don't always know how best to pray. But He attends to those prayers. He hears them. He is especially aware of the petitions and supplications for help that holy believers cry out to Him. That's very comforting.

When Peter – or David – talks about the eyes of the Lord, it always refers to God's watchfulness and that is comforting. But then he goes on to say that the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. His eyes represent God's all-seeing, all-knowing care but when it talks about God's face, it symbolizes His wrath and His judgment.

In **Revelation 6** it is talking about the end of the Great Tribulation and how horrible it is going to be for all people left behind. And in **verse 16** it says, *“They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!”*

Going back to the very first book, Genesis, it says that Adam and Eve walked with God and had fellowship with Him as friends. But they were disobedient to the one command He gave them and it was God who cursed the ground. He cursed the woman. He cursed the man. And He drove them out of the garden of Eden [[Genesis 3:17-24](#)]. His face was against them.

Turn over a couple of pages from there to **chapter 6** and it says that God saw how great man’s wickedness had become and He was grieved. It says in **verse 8** that Noah found favor in **the eyes of God** but it goes on to say that God caused it to rain and flood and it killed everybody except Noah’s family. God’s face was against those who did wickedness.

Turn a few more pages over to **Genesis 18** and see that Abraham found favor in the eyes of the Lord but God saw the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah and to make a long story short, in **Genesis 19:28** it says that in the place that used to be Sodom and Gomorrah, *“the plains smoked as though it burned in a furnace.”*

And as I turn the pages of the Bible, I read Samson’s life and the judgment of God upon him [[Judges 16:23-31](#)]; Saul’s life and the judgment of God upon him [[1 Samuel 15:22](#), [16:14](#)]; David’s life – the man after God’s own heart [[1 Samuel 13:14](#); [Acts 13:22](#)] – and the judgment of God upon him [[2 Samuel 12:7-12](#)]; Solomon whom God loved, the Scriptures say, "And God loved him" [[2 Samuel 12:24](#)], and the judgment of God upon him [[1 Kings 11:4](#), [9-13](#)]. And I turn the pages and see the face of God against Israel, and they are destroyed by the Assyrians and carried into captivity [[2 Kings 17:6](#)]. (W.A. Criswell, The Severity of God, 11/18/73)

And if you think God has changed and has chilled out from all that Old Testament wrath, **2 Thessalonians 1** says, *“This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”*

Peter says the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. And maybe today you are thinking that you don’t do evil. So, God’s loving eyes must be on you. But unless you are

living holy as Peter described in the previous chapters and unless you are living like he describes in **verses 8-9** then God considers that evil. To not be holy is to be evil. Just because you aren't as bad as somebody else doesn't mean you aren't evil and God's face is against you. Maybe that is why you seem to struggle in this life like you do. Maybe that's why you can't say you love life and you don't see many good days.

Wikipedia describes **Marla Maples** as an American singer, television personality, model, actress and presenter. But anybody that has ever heard of her probably just knows her as Donald Trump's second wife. She believed in the Bible, she told interviewers, then added the disclaimer, "**but you can't always take [it] literally and be happy.**" (C. Colson, The Body, p. 124.) The immortal words of philosopher, Marla Maples.

The world sees holiness as a barrier to happiness. But in everything that the world tries, there is no lasting happiness. One of the kings in the Roman Empire, **Abdalrahman**, said this: *I have now reigned above 50 years in victory or peace, beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honors, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to 14! O man, place not thy confidence in this present world!* (Abdalrahman, in The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.)

For 50 years this guy had everything the world could possibly offer and he numbered his happy days as about two weeks total. Quit trying it the world's way and start trying it God's way. You and everyone around you will be happier. *live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing,*

**\*Music\***

And may God's watchful eye always be on you and never His wrathful face!

Do you have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus? You can. Just believe in your heart that Jesus is the only way to Heaven and allow that belief to change your life. Ask Him to forgive you of all your sins and then repent – turn away from – those sins. Do it right now as the music plays.