

One Another Passages in the New Testament

Third Class: Feb. 6, 2022

My friend Dan Christianson reminded me last week that I did not finish talking about the last part of 1 Pet. 3:7. Let me do that here. First, the verse is in three parts. In the first part, Peter tells husbands to live with their wives understanding what a precious gift from God they are. They're not throw aways and they're not common servants. In the second part he tells them that their wives are co-heirs of God's grace, equal in their standing with their husbands before God. In the third part he says,

So that your prayers may not be hindered.

“So that” sounds like a purpose clause. That would focus attention on unhindered prayer being the purpose for treating your wives well. It's not. The words actually signal movement into something. He is saying, do parts one and two and you will be in a position to have unhindered prayer. So, while it is not the purpose for treating your wives well, it is one of the results. It is a by-product.

One of the things I would like to accomplish in this study is that we would gain a deeper appreciation for our spouse. I especially feel that way about the men. Let me share another thing that Howard Hendricks said in his tapes. He tells the story of him when he was in High school. He describes flying out the door with his Grand Mother calling after him, “Howard. You didn't do the dishes.” And he yelled back, “I can't. I've got to go see my girl.” Then he walked several blocks to take a bus. Then he transferred to a streetcar. After that he walked several more blocks to his girlfriend's house. “To do what?” he asks. “The dishes! And to this day, no one can convince me that doing dishes in the presence of that delightful woman is ever a chore. I have no greater joy!” I've had the same experience. I love my wife and doing things for her doesn't feel like work. Is there effort? Yes. But the joy overrides the effort. It is a delightful privilege. I frequently think, “I get the privilege of being this beautiful woman's husband.” And I delight in doing things for her. That helps me to have the same feelings about my Father and doing what pleases Him. And I experience that same joy. We should experience joy, especially at seeing His delight in what we are doing. Do you experience His delight?

I also think that we often associate the word discipline with work. I think we might better re-label spiritual disciplines as spiritual privileges. They are not only an opportunity to serve, they build into our lives the very character of God.

But besides experiencing a deeper appreciation for our spouses, I hope we also find a deeper appreciation for one another and see that our connection with one another is equally important to our appreciation for and relationship with God. Scripture takes us even deeper. God calls us to love one another as we love Him. In 1 John 4:20-21, John talks about how you can't separate loving God from loving one another and vice versa.

If we experience this in our one another relationships, what does that look like? What kinds of things will we be doing? Pastor Trevor has made some suggestions. Do you remember? Invite someone out for coffee. Invite someone over to your home for a meal or a dessert. What else do you have to add? Choose one person to share with each week something good that has happened to you that week or some way in which God has done something significant in your life.

Metaphor of table. Gather six class members around a table. Have each one put their index finger under the edge. At the count of three, have them lift and experience how easy it is. It was amazing how easy this was when we did it.

Last week we mentioned Zeph. 3:17. Let's take a closer look for a moment.

Feeling God's Delight

I want to talk about how God feels about us. Thompson spends considerable time talking about how God delights in us. For example, consider God's feelings toward you in Zeph, 3:17. The context is God's feelings toward the faithful remnant of Israel. It also applies to us.

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take *great delight* in you; in His love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will *rejoice over you with singing*.

You can't delight in what God gives you without delighting in Him. And you can't delight in Him without delighting in what He gives you. So, in all areas, it comes back to Him. He is the center of all our existence.

Let me relate to you something that happened to me recently. There is a young woman that began working a shift with me about five years ago. She was and is

just a delight to work with. When Covid hit and our club shut down for three months, she had to shift her focus to her main employment at the “Thirsty Lion” restaurant.

Later when we re-opened, another young woman began working with me in that same shift. The two are so similar. The second one just finished a course at George Fox that I took 18 years ago and with the same professor. So we have a lot in common. She was also a delight to work with. Her major is Clinical Psychology and a job opened up for here at a psychology clinic. It was a great opportunity for her and she left to take that job.

The two young women have several friends in common but had never met each other. The last day of the one was the day before Thanksgiving last year. The other young woman returned to work the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. While she and I were working together, the other young women came in to pick up her final check. So I had the privilege of introducing them.

The above Scripture and discussion were what I had read in Thompson just before that meeting. And while I was thoroughly delighting in watching them, I suddenly became aware that God was delighting in all three of us. He was watching thoroughly delighted. It was such a warm experience. And I felt especially blessed to be a part of it. It just made me more aware of how much He delights in us when we are doing what He designed us to do.

Did you ever see the movie, *Chariots of Fire*? Do you remember Eric Liddel’s famous response to his sister for why he was running rather than doing what she considered God’s work? He said, “When I run, I feel God’s pleasure.” Does that resonate with you? When we are doing what He designed us to do, He delights in us. Do we feel that delight?

I have another story. Recently my oldest grandson, Jacob (10), was talking with Sue. He thanked her for raising his father so well. He said, “Because, he takes such good care of us.” When I heard that, I could almost hear God standing there and saying, “Way to go, Jake. Keep growing son.” He delights in us getting it right. How often do you feel His delight? Imagine being in God’s presence while He is delighting in you, rejoicing in your presence and singing over you.

I like the way Thompson puts it. The idea of him singing over us evokes so many fascinating images and possible sounds. Thompson says, “He is performing a symphonic opera in your honor because He takes so much pleasure in you.” Let

that sink in for a moment. Do you realize how much He delights in us meeting around opening His Word here in class. Do you realize how much he delights in us learning from Pastor Trevor's sermons? Do you realize how much He delights in our rejoicing through songs each Sunday morning? In the service after this meeting, rejoice in that person sitting next to you. Rejoice in those who are providing worship music for us. Thank Him for all this. And when you do, feel Him delighting in you.

God's Feelings

When you think about how God feels, imagine what his face looks like. Think in terms of Jesus' face. What do you see in his eyes? What does He say? What is his tone? What do you feel as you respond to these things? Do you realize that every time you follow one of His *one another* commands, He is taking delight in you? Look for His presence the next time you are enjoying fellowship with one another. And experience His full delight.

I have one thing I'd like to add. Benner took a whole chapter to describe what he calls a luminous presence. He noted that the perfect example of luminous or shining forth presence was Jesus. He is the one we are to imitate. I think I'd call luminous presence a kind of brightness when a person enters a room.

Shortly after we began attending here, I felt a luminous presence from a particular person here. It was the second or third time we attended. We were eating lunch in the gym. Trevor was doing a Q and A. Then he introduced his wife, Jessica. I saw in her a wonderful luminous presence. And every contact I've had with her since, confirms that.

Since then I have met others with a luminous presence. But the most important thing to me is that every single person I have interacted with here has given me only the most positive presence of acceptance. This is why we decided to become members. And I get the privilege here to thank you all for the way you have treated us.

The Mind

God does not spell out in Scripture exactly how the mind works. But he does give us hints. And science is filling in some of the blanks. But, as Thompson says, we must always be careful to allow Scripture to interpret the research and not the other way around.

Researcher, Donald Hebb coined the phrase, “Neurons that fire together, wire together.” So, whenever you think a thought or perform an action, you are establishing neural connections, building neural pathways, and literally creating structure in your brain. Last week we talked about the complexity of our brains and the unimaginable number of connections they can make. Have you ever thanked God for giving you such potential? We really are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” And have you ever considered what proportion of potential you use for Him and what proportion you use only for yourself?

Recently we heard that in our church community, we are to care for one another. We are actually shaped by one another and we often become like one another. Thompson speaks precisely to this and tells us that neuroscience is confirming this. Thompson says that when we make a connection, or bond with one another, our minds tend to become synchronized. That does not mean we think exactly alike. We think in awareness of and in collaboration with one another. He says that in really deep relationships, it’s almost as though our minds are physically connected. I think that is what marriage was meant to be, and God has given us the equipment to do just that. As I said earlier, the two really can become “one flesh” in the sense of becoming a unitary presence. What if our marriages ran smoothly together as spiritual partnerships? I believe that’s how God originally designed them to be. And I believe that our church fellowship was designed to run the same way with similar connections.

Core Concepts

At this point, there are some important concepts I think we should look at that will impact our study.

First, let’s look at confession of sin in 1 John 1:9. This is probably one of the most familiar verses in the bible. It is so often used, that we can miss its deep importance because of its simplicity.

There are three primary *action* verbs and one verb of *being*. One action verb is about our action. two are about God’s actions. The “being” verb is about God’s nature. And all four reveal aspects of our personal relationship with Him.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

We know that the Greek word, “confess”, is the combination of two ideas: “To speak” and “the same”. It is often translated “to agree”. But in this context, it is

more than just agreement. It means to see through someone else's eyes and to experience what they feel. We need to understand that confession is not real until we see our sin through God's eyes and experience what He feels about our sin. This will also give us a desire to avoid that sin the next time as much as God wants that for us.

Next, John says that He is faithful and just. **What does that mean?** Faithful means that He doesn't break faith. He keeps His promises. "Just", is sometimes translated righteous, and, that can mean He always does what is right. So we can always trust Him to do what is in our best interests.

The act of confession also helps us build intimacy with Him. When we begin to see through someone else's eyes, we begin to feel what they feel. And that builds more intimacy into our relationships. But also, a part of the intimacy we form with Him is that by experiencing His deep forgiveness, we come to love Him more. We appreciate and value more our relationship with Him. As Thompson says, this verse was not meant to be used to beat us up after we sin. It was meant to get us to see our sin from God's perspective, to restore relationship with Him, and to build intimacy with Him; so that we can continue our journey of being conformed to the image of His Son through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Here is another aspect to consider. One of the things science has been telling us is how deep relationships depend on being open and vulnerable. Openness and vulnerability are also at the heart of confession. Think of Ps. 51. After being confronted by Nathan, David is open to God. You can feel his vulnerability in that psalm.

From confession, we also learn something about God's character as well as where we need to grow. So even in our brokenness, it is still all about **transformational** relationship, not guilt and humiliation.

So, our ability to mirror what others are feeling helps us to build intimacy not only with God, but also with one another. It allows us to experience what someone else is feeling but without being overwhelmed with those feelings. This puts us in the perfect position to help one another through difficult times. This also makes confession a way we and the Holy Spirit can work together to bring about restoration of relationship and change in our lives. Confession, therefore, is meant to result in a greater closeness to God.

But what is John saying when he tells us God will **cleans**e us from all unrighteousness? **What do you think?** I think we find the answer when we connect this with at least two other passages.

In 2 Cor. 10:3-5 Paul talks of having the power to pulldown strongholds and destroy speculations. **What does that mean?** *Strongholds* refers to *fortified structures* and *speculations* refers to *mental reasonings*. I believe this refers to tearing down the neural pathways in our brains, the neural structures we form from habits of thought or action, as well as any sinful mental processing. I believe this passage deals with both sinful neural structure and sinful neural process.

Secondly, when Paul talks in Rom. 12:2 of being “*transformed by the renewing of your mind*”. **What do you think that means?** The word “*renewing*” can be translated “*renovating*”. I think that is a more powerful description in our language of what the word means in Greek. To renovate is to tear out and replace. Anyone see the series, Flip This House? It’s a wonderful metaphor. Thompson believes this verse refers to the Holy Spirit literally re-wiring our brains. He is actively deconstructing then reconstructing our brains. I believe this is part of how He is cleansing us from “all unrighteousness”.

But let’s take this back to the original source. Satan traps us the same way he trapped Eve, to question God’s wisdom and His goodness. “Is that really what God said? That’s not true and God knows it.” Eve was attacked on three fronts. She, “... *saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise...*” These are the same areas John noted in 1 John 2:16: “...*the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life...*” But these are also the same three that Satan tempted Christ with: Lust of the flesh—turn these stones to bread. Satisfy your hunger. Lust of the eyes—I will give you all these beautiful kingdoms to do with as you wish. The boastful pride of life—Show off your glory by casting yourself down and letting the angels bear you up. Jesus really understands our temptations from personal experience, not just theory.

But let’s look a bit closer. What is that first temptation all about? It has been said and I think it is right, that it deals with appetite. What are some appetites that we have? There are the physical desires: food, sex, comfort. None of these are wrong in themselves. They become wrong when we decide to satisfy them at the wrong time, with the wrong person, or in the wrong way. C. S. Lewis once noted that Satan has never been able to create one pleasure. He can only distort the pleasures

God has created. Think about that for a moment. God created all possible pleasures. And He designed them for us to enjoy. Our problem comes when we decide to enjoy them outside of His design. In other words, we think we are smarter than God.

What one word describes the dominant force of appetite? **NOW**. I want this now. I don't want to wait.

What is the second temptation about? I think it involves some kind of control. Here are all these material things. You can enjoy possessing them and looking at them whenever you want. They are under your control. You get to decide their use. To Jesus, Satan says, "Here are the kingdoms of the world. You can do anything with them what you want. I will give them all to you for your control." Think how that temptation is being used today with regard to the gift of gender.

What is the third temptation about? It's about thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

The story of the pharisee and the tax collector is found in Luke 18:10 ff. The pharisee says "I thank God I'm not like other people." Then he lists people who commit sins he does not commit. And after that, congratulates himself for all the things he does. But that word "other" is not what the actual Greek is. In fact, it is two words that should be translated, "the rest". The pharisee is saying, "There is me and then there are all the rest." The tax gatherer asks God to have mercy on, "me THE sinner. God be merciful." He doesn't say a sinner but the sinner. He's saying, "I'm as bad as it gets." On the other hand, the pharisee is saying, "I'm as good as it gets." What a contrast.

Back to Forgiveness

Here's where another of our one another passages comes in. In Eph. 4:32 Paul says, "***Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving as God in Christ has also forgiven us.***" The primary verb here is the word "be". Kindness tender heartedness, and forgiveness, flow out of our being. The word, "kind", implies a gentleness toward. The word for "tender hearted", means deep feelings of compassion toward, literally feelings in your gut. Forgiving describes what it means to be kind and tender hearted. So, we are not only to ask forgiveness from God for ourselves, we are also to forgive one another in exactly the same way He forgives us. With kindness and tenderness. Why tender hearted? Because you appreciate so deeply God forgiving your sin when what you deserve is only

judgment. **What are the implications of that?** When we consider that he forgives us, how dare we not forgive one another or hold a grudge? God's forgiveness for us eliminates that as an option.

Let's extend this a bit further. Do you know people who sometimes have difficulty forgiving themselves? When we have confessed and given it to God, and He is working in us, are we not also to forgive ourselves? If we don't, aren't we saying to God, "Your forgiveness isn't complete; and it's not effective?" If He forgives us, how dare we not forgive ourselves. Wallowing in guilt is from Satan, not the Holy Spirit.

Before we leave the subject of forgiveness, let me say one more thing.

Neuroscience is showing us that our brains remain plastic as long as we live. That means they are able to be changed. Does this mean this is always easy? It depends on what kind of structures and how deeply rutted are the neural pathways we have constructed. Addictions are more complex and also more difficult because they run through the pleasure centers of our brains. But is anything too difficult for God? Our Scripture tells us it is not. The plasticity of our brains and the presence of the Holy Spirit gives me great hope that we can cooperate with Him in being conformed progressively into the image of Jesus.