

Theme: Faith in Exile – I Peter 1:17-19

Title: Called to Bless – I Peter 3:8-12

Aim: Exhort us to follow our calling to be a blessing for Christ's sake.

Intro: Reading thru I Peter, I have noticed what I would call a secondary or sub-theme. The primary theme of this epistle seems to be "living as exiles in a world not our own." The sub-theme is following the call of God. In I Peter 1:15, we read, "***As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.***" We are called to be holy as God is holy – set apart unto Him. In 2:9, we read that we who are in Christ have been "***called...out of darkness into His [God's] marvelous light,***" that we "***may proclaim [His] excellencies.***" Called to proclaim Him. In 2:21 we read, "***For to this you have been called*** (endure suffering for doing good), ***because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example...***" Called to endure suffering for Christ's sake. 3:9, which we'll look at today, tells us that we are called to bless, or be a blessing. Finally, in 5:10, we're given the sure hope that we are called by God "***to His eternal glory in Christ.***" If we are in Christ, we all have a calling on our lives. Theme: Faith in exile. We are exiles in this world, called to follow Jesus & live our lives for Him. We've been considering what that looks like. Peter wanted to remind his 1st century readers, who had been scattered by persecution, but more to the point, scattered by God, of who they were in Christ; that they were not abandoned by God; that they were part of a larger family/church, whom they were to love. They were to live set apart lives, honorable in the sight of others, submissive to authority, w/marriages which pointed to Jesus as our Bridegroom. Those exhortations apply to us as well. The world is watching. How we live together matters & reflects upon Christ our Lord. I Peter 3:8-12 [READ]. Why did Peter say, "finally" when in our calculations he had 2-1/2 chapters to go? Don't you hate it when a preacher says, "finally" but then goes 20 minutes more? Peter was referring to his line of

thinking about honorable conduct among the Gentiles, including submission to authority, loving submission in marriage & now a mutual submission to one another in Christ. I) **Note what Peter called for in vs8. Unity of mind** – He was talking to believers who had been scattered & now found themselves together in new surroundings. They may not have known each other before they discovered one another in their areas of exile. They may have had different backgrounds & ways of thinking & doing things. The only thing that brought them together was relationship w/God thru faith in Christ. Doesn't that describe the Church? If we didn't come together to worship, study the Bible, serve, how much time would we spend together? Would we even know each other? Peter called for these believers (& us) to think alike. That doesn't mean to all agree on everything, but to think like Jesus, to share His heart & mission, meaning we may have to lay aside our differences & contrary ways of thinking to serve Him & carry out His work. Unity is a major priority for the Church. We are to live & serve w/the mind of Christ, which always includes others. Sympathy – compassion toward each other regarding their needs. Sympathy calls for action, doing what we can to help each other. But bro/sis, we must take time to know each other if we would see the needs & pray for & help each other. That also means that we need to be open & transparent w/each other, which I confess is difficult for me to do. There's a balance between being in each other's business & being open w/each other. God help us to find it. Brotherly love – we are to be brotherly – not that obnoxious, bully brother, but loving brother. As Christians we are to live as bro/sis, because we are family, & “they will know we are Christians by our love” for one another. Brotherly love is a witness. A Tender Heart – This of course goes along w/sympathy & love. Christians are not to be hard-hearted, but tender toward each other & toward those who don't know Christ. There is also an imp balance between disagreeing w/others'

lifestyles & practices, standing on the truth & being tender-hearted towards those same others, leading us to pray for & serve them in Jesus' name. A Humble Mind – I think that means not thinking you know everything & having a humble opinion of yourself. It doesn't mean putting yourself down but it does mean not exalting yourself. It's seeing yourself clearly & not being haughty. Jesus humbled Himself & we need to do the same. II) **Note the call to bless others & the promise of blessing in return** – vs9. We should always seek to bless others around us, by the way we treat them & love them. We have been called to bless others by giving them God, showing His love, sharing the gospel, serving in Jesus' name. Many of you are very good at that. However, this verse seems to deal specifically w/having been insulted/offended/hurt in some way by another, either w/in or w/out the church family. When you've been hurt, it's hard not to want to retaliate, to "pay back" the offender, at least by w/drawing from them. But as the saying goes, "2 wrongs don't make a right." Peter calls for us to absorb the offense & forgive. Doesn't make the offense right nor hurt less, but it breaks the cycle of offense. Don't seek revenge; let it go. And Peter takes it a giant step further. Instead of seeking revenge, "on the contrary, bless." We're called to bless! What can you do to bless that person who offended you? We can pray for them, not that God would get them but that He would bless them. We can try to understand what led to the offense. Maybe they are hurting in some way. That's no excuse for the offense but you might understand them better & be able to help them. We can try to serve the offender in some way, sharing the love of God w/them. It's not an easy thing but it comes w/a promise from God. "To this you were called (to bless), that you may obtain a blessing." No one can outgive God! As you honestly & humbly seek to bless others, God will bless you. He's a good blesser! And it doesn't just mean He will bless us in eternity, which He will,

beyond our imagination. But this applies to the now/here as well. Peter quoted Psalm 34:12-16 (read vs10-12). If you want to enjoy life & see good days, then keep your tongue from evil (especially against others), don't be deceitful in your communication, turn away from evil (such as seeking revenge – that belongs to God alone), do good (such as seeking to bless others, even those who hurt you), seek peace & pursue it (as far as it depends on you). The promise is that God will see all those efforts, hear your prayers & bless you. It doesn't say how, but the greatest blessing is God giving you more of Himself, drawing you close to Him, being your loving Father, Provider, Protector, Friend. God blesses the blesser! Even tho we are exiles in this world, God has placed us where we are to bless others in Jesus' name. That takes faith – faith in exile.