

TITLE: A Truly Blessed Life – August 17, 2025 (Jon Engler)

TEXT: 1 Peter 3:8-12 (NLT)

BIG IDEA: The “truly blessed life” is not about “living comfortably”, but “living called”.

4 DIRECTIVES in which to LIVE CALLED

- 1. Live called in OUR RELATIONSHIPS (3:8-9)**
- 2. Live called in OUR WORDS (3:10)**
- 3. Live called in OUR PRIORITIES (3:11)**
- 4. Live called in OUR AWARENESS (3:12)**

1 Peter 3:8-12 (NLT)

8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with one another. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. **9** Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and He will grant you His blessing.

10 For the Scriptures say: "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. **11** Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. **12** The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right, and His ears are open to their prayers. But the LORD turns His face against those who do evil."

INTRO: The Stereotypical Context of "Blessed"

As I was preparing for this message, I was thinking about all the uses and contexts that we have for the word "blessed".

- Maybe you're in **Hobby Lobby**, and you see a **wall-hanging** made from carefully-refinished barn wood, hung with tan-colored twine, and on that wall-hanging, in **feminine script**, surrounded by little **floral accents**, you see the word "**blessed**".

- Maybe you're on social media, and you see that one "power couple" who's been dating for all of one week, or that one "perfect family" posting yet another "perfect portrait" with the caption "**so blessed**"...
- Or maybe you go to **someone else's house** in a **high-end neighborhood** for the first time, and as you walk in for the first time, you can't help but notice the **immaculate landscaping** outside, the **luxury furniture** inside, the **expensive cars** in the heated garage... So you say something like, "Wow, this is nice..." And they respond with something like, "**Yeah, we've been blessed.**"

Isn't it interesting how in North American culture, we associate "being blessed" with "being comfortable"?

- Think of that **Hobby Lobby wall-hanging**... That wall-hanging is **specifically designed** to give off a kind of **homey, pleasant** vibe. It just wouldn't come across the same if the sign was made out of **rusty scrap metal** and the word "**blessed**" was spelled out with **barbed wire**, right?
- Or think of the **social media couple**... Whenever they post about "being blessed", it's almost always a **nice, manicured, happy** picture...it's never the **chaotic meltdown** that happened five minutes **before** the photo, right?
- And even with the friend in that **luxury neighborhood**... It's easy to think of the **independently wealthy** as being blessed, but what about

the couple who's content to live in a **modest bungalow** or a **tiny apartment**? Did they **miss out** on being blessed?

So you think of all that...**and then you think of the audience that Peter was writing to in this passage.**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1 Peter was a letter written to Christians who had undergone **tremendous suffering** for their faith.

- At the time of this letter, the **Roman Emperor Nero** had launched a **full-fledged persecution campaign** against the early church.
- These Christians had lost their **livelihood**, their **homes**, their **independence**...
- They had seen loved ones **arrested, imprisoned, tortured, killed**...
- From our **North American perspective**, it may seem like these 1st Century Christians were experiencing the "**polar opposite**" of blessing.

Yet look at the **instruction** that Peter gives...

1 Peter 3:9

9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and He will grant you His blessing.

BIG IDEA

Peter's words are *unflinchingly* clear: *The "blessed life" is not about "living COMFORTABLY", but "living CALLED"*.

That's a hard word...because *North American culture* tends to *believe the opposite*.

- Just look at the *Prosperity Gospel*... This whole movement of *grifters, scammers*, and *so-called "pastors"* who teach that *God's blessing revolves solely around worldly comfort*.
- "No true Christian will ever *suffer*...or get *sick*...or face *loss*...or experience *hardship*..."
- "God wants you to be *happy*, to be *wealthy*, and to *enjoy your best life now*..."
- "*Whatever you want God to do for you*, just *speak that into existence*, and you'll be *blessed*."

If you and I are *honest* with ourselves, we know that we are *all too eager* to associate *being blessed* with *living comfortably*...

We likely think of “the blessed life” as:

- Having *all our prayers answered...*
- Having *all our problems alleviated...*
- Having not just our *needs* met, but having our *preferences* and *expectations* met as well...

But when we look at the Word of God, we discover that *OUR definition of “being blessed” and GOD’S definition of “being blessed” are often two very different things.*

The “blessed life” is not about “living COMFORTABLY”, but “living CALLED”.

Over the next few moments, I want to ask, “*What does it look like to ‘LIVE CALLED’?*”

If the blessing of God is connected **less** with “*comfort*” and **more** with “*calling*”, what *kind of response does that require of us?*

In this passage, Peter gives us **4 Directives of “Living Called”... 4 avenues** where we can experience *God’s blessing* on *God’s terms*.

And the first directive Peter tells us is to “*Live Called in our RELATIONSHIPS*”.

POINT 1 – Live Called in Our RELATIONSHIPS

1 Peter 3:8-9

8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with one another. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. 9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has **called** you to do, and He will grant you His blessing.

In v.8, pay attention to that word “**Finally**”.

One of the ***Bible-reading tips*** that I tell our youth students is to “***look for reference words***”... “Don't just read Bible verses in ***isolation***, but look for ***reference words*** that ***refer or connect to earlier ideas*** that you might not see in the immediate verse.” That's the case with this word “***finally***”.

The reason Peter says “***finally***” is that he's concluding a section of thought that began all the way back in **2:11-12**...

1 Peter 2:11-12

11 Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. 12 Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see

your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when He judges the world.

Then from there, Peter lays out what “**living properly**” **looks like** in **different relationships**...specifically relationships with **government**, then with **slaves**, then with **spouses**...

Now in **c. 3 vv. 8-9**, Peter wraps up that long section by describing how **all Christians ought to act when it comes to relationships in general**.

v.8 “...be of one mind. Sympathize with one another. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.”

That can be **tough enough** on a **good day**.

But then Peter takes it a **step further**...

v.9 “Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing.”

[**Why?** ...Because it’s **easy?** Because it’s **fun?** Because it **makes the world a better place?** No, the “**why**”, Peter says, is:] **That is what God has called you to do, and He will grant you His blessing.**”

Consider for a moment *what Peter's audience has been through*.

- As persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire, they've **seen things** that no one should ever have to see.
- They've experienced **profound loss, horror, and trauma** on an **indescribable level**.
- If **anyone** had a **legitimate right** to **repay evil**, or **retaliate with an insult**, it **certainly** would've been them.
- Yet Peter still tells them—and us—that **the "blessed life" is not about "living comfortably" but "living called"**.

POINT 1 – APPLICATION

If you've **ever been hurt** by someone...then you know that there is a **"twisted comfort"** that we can search for by **clapping back**.

- Someone **insults** you and you **put them in their place?** Yeah, that's **"comfortable..."**
- Someone **hurts** you, and you figure out how to **take vengeance** on them so that they **think twice** before they ever **mess with you again?** Yeah, that's **"comfortable..."**
- Someone **gossips** about you, but then you **discover a skeleton in THEIR closet** that you can **weaponize** against **them?** Yeah, that's **"comfortable..."**

All of those things might **seem** comfortable, but they are **not what God has called us to**.

DISCLAIMER

And I do want to give an **important disclaimer** while we're here:

“Paying back blessing” is not the same as *being a doormat*...or *downplaying someone’s sin*...or *refusing to leave an abusive or dangerous situation*.

If you are trapped in that kind of situation today, don’t go through that on your own; get help!

“Paying back blessing” and “living called in our relationships”...all of that is primarily about the ***posture of our heart BEFORE GOD as it relates to other people***.

- “Am I ***reflecting the character of Christ*** to others?”
- “Am I truly ***sympathetic? Humble? Tenderhearted?***”
- “Even if I need to ***separate*** from a person or ***remove myself*** from a toxic situation...have I ***evaluated my heart*** and ***truly surrendered my motives*** before God?”
- “In my relationships with others, am I trying to ***live comfortably***...or ***live called?***”

The “blessed life” is not about “living comfortably”, but “living called”.

Peter tells us to live called in our relationships, but then he says to “Live Called” in Our Words.

POINT 2 – Live Called in Our WORDS

Over the next few verses, Peter is going to cite **Psalm 34:12-16** and connect “*living called*” to raw truth from the Old Testament.

1 Peter 3:10

10 For the Scriptures say: “If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies.”

If anybody had a *right to speak evil*, it was *certainly* Peter’s audience.

- “Peter, do you know what *Nero’s soldiers did* to my family?”
- “Do you know the *nightmares*, the *pain*, the *evil* I’ve been through?”
- “I *hate* this government so much, it makes me want to *puke*.”
- “I just need to *vent* to someone and tell them how *awful* I feel.”

And not just with *speaking evil*, but even with *telling lies*...

...if some of these Christians had *lied to the Roman Empire* about their faith, or their *allegiance to Jesus*, they might’ve *gotten off the hook*. I’m sure *more than a few of them* had that *specific temptation* floating around in the back of their mind.

Yet Peter **shuts down** both of those temptations with the Word of God.

Here's the original verse he's quoting. **Psalm 34:12-13 (NLT)**: "Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies!"

POINT 2 – APPLICATION

Can we be real today? That **command**, that **call**, to “keep your tongue from speaking evil” – **that's hard!**

Because “speaking evil” is comfortable!

Just look at any **comments section** on **Facebook**, **YouTube**, or whatever **social media platform** you want to, and you'll find that **speaking evil** comes **very naturally**.

- Whether it's speaking evil of a **political party**...
- ...or a certain **sports team** or **fanbase**...
- ...or a **perspective** we don't like...
- ...or an **issue** or a **person** that we have **strong feelings** about...

It **feels good** to **argue!** It **feels good** to **vent!**

- I've had **way too many moments** in **my own life** where I've wasted **significant time ruminating** about someone who **hurt** me...

- Or I'll see someone comment on social media, and I'll spend **20-30 minutes** in full-blown **keyboard warrior mode**, trying to cook up the **perfect argument**, the **perfect counterpoints**, and the **perfect "gotcha!"** to shut up the opposing viewpoint.

And then the Holy Spirit will just **knock on my conscience** like... "**What exactly are you trying to accomplish here?**"

- "What **glory does God get** by you speaking evil?"
- "What **blessing do you get** by airing your grievances to someone else?"
- "Because **whatever short-term comfort** you get by speaking evil **now**, it's not worth the price of **long-term blessing**."

Speaking evil is **comfortable**, but it's **not** what we're **called to**...

- We're not called to **speak evil**; we're called to **speak healing words** that act as a "tree of life" (**Prov. 15:4**).
- We're not called to **tell lies**; we're called to **rejoice with the truth** (**1 Cor. 13:5**).

That's **not living easy**; that's **not living comfortable**; but it **is living called**.

The truly blessed life is not about **living comfortably**, but **living called**.

Peter directs us to “live called” in our relationships...in our words...and then he says that we’re to “live called” in our priorities.

POINT 3 – Live Called in Our PRIORITIES

1 Peter 3:11

11 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.

I also like how the **CSB** renders this verse: “...seek peace and pursue it.” Peter challenges us, “What are you *pursuing*? What are you *prioritizing*?”

POINT 3 – APPLICATION

On *one level*, this seems *so basic*...but on *another level*, Living Called in our Priorities is *really hard*. In fact, it’s not just *hard* – it’s *impossible* without the *transformative grace* of Jesus affecting our lives.

We know from **Genesis 3** that all of us are born with a *sinful nature*...a “*spiritual factory defect*” that *messes up our priorities* from Day 1.

- All of us are *hardwired for selfishness*. (If you’re a parent, did you ever have to teach your kids how to be selfish?)
- All of us are hardwired to *turn toward evil* and *avoid doing good* if “*doing good*” will *not satisfy* our *immediate desires*.

“Doing good” is *not natural* to us, and even “*maintaining peace*” is *not natural* to us either.

- If you’re ***married***, you know that maintaining peace is ***not always comfortable***...but you are ***still called*** to ***be a godly husband***, a ***godly wife***, and to ***reflect*** the character of Jesus Christ to your spouse.
- If you’re a ***parent***, you know that maintaining peace is ***not always comfortable***...but you are ***still called*** to ***build a household*** that is ***godly***, ***stable***, and ***nurturing*** for the ***spiritual needs*** of your kids.

The ***older*** I get, the more I realize that even as a follower of Jesus, ***“living called”*** in my priorities is ***way worse*** than just uncomfortable.

If anything, “living called” will lead me to the POLAR OPPOSITE of comfortable...

...but the more my priorities lock in on “living called”...THAT’S when I start to see the fruit God’s blessing.

- Living called in the Priority of **Physical Health**:
Going to the gym and ***eating healthy***...there’s ***nothing*** comfortable about being all ***sweaty*** at the end of a long workout. There’s nothing comfortable about saying no to ***Krispy Kreme***, or ***Pizza Inn***, or ***Dairy Queen***...but even though healthy living is ***not comfortable***, I’m ***still called*** to be a ***good steward*** of my body...

When I “***live called***” in the ***priority of physical health***, I start to see the ***blessing of feeling better, looking better***, and feeling ***better equipped*** for the work of ministry.

- **Living called in the Priority of Spiritual Health:**

Putting away my phone and ***taking time out of my day*** to ***be still*** before God and His Word... Being still is one of the toughest parts of my day. That’s not living comfortable...but it is ***living called***.

When I “***live called***” in the ***priority of spiritual health***, I start to see the blessing of ***a steadier spirit, clearer thinking***, and stronger ***battle resistance*** when ***trials*** and ***temptations*** try to take me down.

- **Living Called with the Priority of Community Health:**

Going to church every Sunday, when the rest of Rocky Mount is enjoying free-time, football, and a weekend out of town? That’s not ***living comfortable***...but it is ***living called***.

When I “***live called***” in the ***priority of community health***, I start to see the blessing of ***deeper relationship with God, deeper relationships with others***, and ***special family experiences*** that can only be found by prioritizing community with God’s people.

“Living called” in our priorities is not comfortable...but it is what leads to a truly blessed life.

The “**blessed life**” is not about “**living comfortably**”, but “**living called**”.

It’s all about ***living called*** in our **relationships**, in our **words**, in our **priorities**...and finally, Peter says that we can find the “blessed life” when we “**Live Called**” in Our Awareness.

POINT 4 – Live Called in Our AWARENESS

1 Peter 3:12 (NLT)

12 “The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right, and His ears are open to their prayers. But the LORD turns His face against those who do evil.”

This is why “living called” is so important.

- We don’t “**live called**” just to get ***material blessings*** or ***life betterment*** (even though that ***can*** happen, as we just described).
- We don’t “**live called**” just to “***set a positive example***” or “***be the change we want to see in the world***”.
- We “**live called**” because we are ***aware*** that ***God is watching us***.
- We are aware that God is **love**, that God is **holy**, and **how we live our lives will affect our relationship with Him**.

Think again about the **people** Peter is writing to. Even to these dear saints, who have experienced **unimaginable suffering**, Peter is **still compelled** by the **Holy Spirit** to **cite these words** from **Psalm 34**:

“The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right, and His ears are open to their prayers. But the LORD turns His face against those who do evil.”

If Peter’s suffering audience needed to hear this warning back then, how much more do you and I need to hear this warning in 21st century America?

POINT 4 – APPLICATION

- In many respects, North American Christianity has “**neutered**” God, and made Him **extra passive** in regard to sin.
- “God’s not out to get you; He’s not out to judge you; He just wants to be best friends, and if that’s not you, hey, no big deal!”

Listen: God’s love and God’s justice do not cancel each other out.

God is **perfect**, God is **holy**, God is **divine**, and if you and I **willfully choose** to **reject** God’s word, **embrace** our sin, and indulge our **evil selfishness**...**we are putting ourselves at risk of His judgment.**

That's not **shock value**; that's not **sensationalism**; that's **Bible**.

But as much as this verse emphasizes God's REJECTION of the wicked...notice how it also emphasizes God's EMBRACE of the righteous—those who have repented of their sin and confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord.

"The eyes of the LORD **watch over** those who do right, and His ears are **open** to their prayers."

GOSPEL APPEAL

Maybe you're wondering, "Pastor Jon, all of that sounds good... But **how in the world** am I supposed to '**do right**'? How am I supposed to be **righteous enough** for God to open His ears to my prayer? How do I 'do right'?"

The truth is—you can't.

In and of ourselves, you can't do right; **I** can't do right; **no one in this room** can "**do right**" enough, or be **perfect enough**, or be **good enough** to **measure up** to **God's standard** of righteousness.

That's why God sent Jesus.

The Bible says in **2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)**: “...God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be **made right with God** through Christ.”

A big part of “living called” means **humbling ourselves** and saying,

- “Lord Jesus, I don’t want to **live this life on my own** anymore; I don’t want to settle for ‘**living comfortably**’ and being **let down again and again** by the **empty comforts** the world has to offer;
- “I want to ‘live called’ by being **aware** of **who You are**, aware of who I am, and **aware of my need** for **saving relationship** with You. ”
- “**I’m done with living comfortable**; I’m done with **living by my own rules**; I want to ‘**live called**’.”

CLOSING

So over these last few moments together, we’re going to create space at this altar for you to get real with God and get right with God.

- If “**living comfortably...**” has **come up empty** for you...
- If you’re **tired of settling** for the **world’s comfort** instead of **God’s blessings...**
- **Right now** is the **perfect opportunity** to change that.

We're going to sing one more song together...and if you sense the Spirit of God speaking to your heart...

...so it's ***not me*** speaking to you, it's ***not your neighbor*** speaking to you...

...if ***you know for yourself*** that it's time to "***live called***", I'm going to invite you to come down and receive prayer as we sing this last song.

DISCLAIMER: This manuscript was written and preached by Jon Engler for the weekend of **August 17, 2025** at EAG Church in Rocky Mount, NC.

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