

God is Good!

I Peter 2: 1-3

"¹ So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. ² Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, ³ now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness."

As I was reading this passage, Peter shares that it is imperative that we live our lives as **"holy"** people, before a Holy God. He tells us that "holiness" comes by living in obedience to God. An "Obedient lifestyle" comes about by living in a closer and closer relationship with God. By actually trying to live, how the Word of God guides us to live. Not just hearing what the Lord says, but actually trying to do what He says.

The fact is, we are not saved by the things of this world, **"gold or silver,"** or any of the material things many hold on to in this world. Not by the philosophies poured out upon many, or anything this world has to offer. We are saved by the imperishable, everlasting Word of God, and His love for us. I wonder if we really understand what this means for us during the times we live in today?

*"For, all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but **the Word of the Lord stands forever.**"* (I Peter 1:24-25) As His Word stands, so do those who stand upon it.

It's not the house we live in that causes us to stand, although some houses are built really well. It's not the money we cherish so much, although we all need some money to live. It's not that title we hold or the career we strive for, although these things do help provide for a better life.

It is the WORD of GOD, which stands alone, and helps all who grow in it to stand as well...

That is why we are encouraged to read it, seek it, learn it, hold on to it, and do our best to live by it. So, let me ask a question? ***"How much of a priority do we place upon getting into the Word, and allowing it to get into us?"***

We are here but for a short period of time, then we leave this world. ***What holds us, and our families, together while we are here?*** And then, ***"Where will we go when we are done here?"*** There are only two answers to the last question. We either reside with our Lord our God in heaven for an eternity, or, we reside in hell with Satan for an eternity. One or the other. There are no other choices! So, where do you want to be when our time on earth is over?

At the end of the first chapter of I Peter, Peter says: ***"And this is the Word that was preached to you"*** (v.25) meaning the truth of God's Word. So, now we pick it up in chapter 2, with Peter defining more clearly what is expected of those who say they are living for the Lord. I think we need clarity in this world today. If we are seeking righteousness, we will find God grace. If we are seeking the world, and what it has to offer, we will find a place we truly don't want to end up at.

Illustration: There was an article in Christianity Today that suggested the following: *Satan has so deceived so many people. Causing some to think, living in sin is the norm for life. Sin has many manifestations, but at its essence, there is one manifestation that will destroy us. A way of thinking that includes this: "An amoral, unethical being, created to worship before the throne of God, who sits on the throne of his own selfhood, and from that elevated position declares, "I AM" ~ when in fact, he is not!* ***That is sin in its concentrated essence;*** yet because it feels so natural, it appears to be good to most people." Then, ***"What do I do?"*** is the cry of every man who suddenly realizes that he is a usurper, that he is sitting on a stolen throne, and does not have the power to do much of anything, when life is near the end.

Peter has the answer for us: *"Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:36-37) (Christianity Today-Vol. 41 #5)*

Peter understood that everyone should know the Lord, as Peter knows the Lord. I believe that ***we were created to know Christ, grow in Christ, and thus live forever with Christ for the rest of our lives!*** But this is an individual choice.

So, what does Peter have to say to us today to help guide us in that direction?

First - Therefore, rid yourselves....

*"¹ So get rid of all **evil behavior**. Be done with **all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech**." There it is, so simple for us, right?*

Just as sure as I am here today, I realize that we often speak of what we need to do to obtain life in Christ, facing the struggles, the hardships, finding the time to look at what is going on in our own hearts, seeking to remove the evil within. Perhaps, only to feel as though God's love is absent, or, too hard to find, as all we see are the difficulties found in living for Christ. The fact is, ***for the love of God to be evident, (OBVIOUS) in our lives, the evil of this world must be absent, removed.*** That only happens by our own choice. Most of us know what this means. Most of us know what we need to do. It is the doing it, that becomes difficult. Something has to change, and it may require more than just one simple prayer at an altar. That prayer is important and where it begins, but when we get up, we must start seeking to live for Christ!

What do we need to discover, once we accept Jesus as Lord? I believe this is what Peter is alluding to here. That we have some very hard work ahead of us. Choices to make, and a path to follow, which will require all of our strength and the Lord's strength.

It starts by the choices we make. It starts by asking the Holy Spirit to help us remove the things this world has planted within us. Our Lord suggests, ***that we begin by studying - to show ourselves approved, that we must make every effort,*** to add to our lives and our faith.

Taking up our cross and following Him! God never stated, that once you accept his forgiveness, life would be filled solely with all the fun things to do, every day, or even easy things for us to accomplish. The truth is, He said just the opposite... ***“strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.”*** ACT 14:22

“Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses;” 2CO 6:4

Jesus Himself said,

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” MAT 10:21-22 ***Stands firm to the end.***

Peter would say that means living in obedience to God’s Word, or as in this passage today, ***“rid yourselves of all malice, and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”*** (v.1) Do the work needed, with God’s help to strive to live for Christ...

Peter suggests we cast off:

1) malice - which may be taken more generally as all kinds of wickedness. More specifically, Peter was talking about any anger within the heart and soul of a believer. Anger which is allowed to sit and grow, will settling inside someone, until it causes that person to lash out with evil deeds. He says, get rid of it.

2) Deceit - the King James version uses the word, ***“guile”*** – for ***“deceit.”*** Saying what others want you to say, or, what they want to hear, rather than speaking the truth in love. He is talking about the game often played, when life get out of control, or when power goes to people’s heads. He is speaking of the ***Lies***.

3) Hypocrisy - In the matter of religious hypocrisy, he is speaking of where we say one thing, and live another. In the world, many deal with counterfeit friendships. Relationships built for their own benefit. Proclaiming one thing and living in another for personal gain.

4) Envy –Getting upset or grieving over the good fortune of others, their abilities, prosperity, fame or success. The feeling of ***“Why do they have it and not me?”*** and lastly,

5) Slander of every kind – Speaking against another, backbiting with the intent of evil or harm to someone. It’s also easy to see that some people have been doing this so much, they don’t even hear themselves doing it. It has become second nature to them. Lord, help us!

Have you ever purged a computer? (*Purging a computer - takes time, however, sometimes it is the only way to get rid of the corrupt files.*) You get rid of the corrupted data, or file and it works right for once. I think that is what Peter is asking us to do here in our spiritual lives.

Second - Crave pure spiritual milk

“² Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation.”

Simultaneously, while removing the corrupted files, we need to put back the good files. Peter is telling us that with the absence of the bad, there will be a need for some good in our lives. Something to fill the void.

In Matthew 12:43–45 Our Lord shares with His followers,

⁴³ “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits, more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So, also will it be with this evil generation.”

As we remove the evil, we must replace it with good, solid, biblical food. Peter’s duty here, was to help us form a strong, healthy desire for the food every Christians should crave, the Word of God.

I am not a big milk drinker. Are you? I like in on my cereal, or with certain dishes, but I don’t just go get a glass of milk whenever. If we were to translate this passage correctly, it would more accurately say something like, **“the milk of the Word.”** We should crave **“the milk of the Word.”** **Carve** is an interesting word. When I do want or need a glass of milk, I want milk and nothing else will fill that craving.

What I have noticed in many of God’s children is that, in their infancy in Christ, they have a strong, consistent desire for **“the milk of the Word.”** But is it a **“Craving?”** Craving is defined as a **“Powerful desire for something.”**

I believe a Craving starts to build within us with prayer for that craving. If you start drink something you really don’t want, you will not finish even the first glass. You’ll just put it down and start right where you left off prior to accepting Christ. I have also noticed that **“The Milk of the Word,”** is usually picked up when life goes bad, and put it down when life seems to be going well. No Craving... Start by praying for that Craving... Peter’s words are - **“Crave pure spiritual milk.”**

Illustration: Various carvings...

- That butterscotch Sunday craving your wife had when she was expecting, and you had to go get one in the middle of the night, remember that?
- That dill pickles and peanut butter craving, she just had to have and nothing would satisfy her except that.
- That particular piece of candy she just had to have or she would not, could not sleep that night. So, off to the store you went, in fact, to three stores trying to find it.

It’s that kind of craving we need for the **“pure spiritual milk”** which brings the real strength we need in our souls and lives from drinking in the Word.

Lastly,

Third - Grow in our salvation

“so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (vv.2-3)

What is Peter’s reason for challenging us to rid ourselves of the evil, and to replace it with a craving for pure spiritual milk? ***So that we might grow up in our salvation. So, that we can grow in our understanding of who God is and His power.*** Something which might help make that statement clear is this: ***acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives, is not the end results, but rather, the begin of a life long journey.***

A journey which lasts a lifetime. So, consider this: ***Are we growing in Christ? Are we a stronger Christian today, then we were a year ago?*** If our answer is something like, ***“Well, I haven’t slipped backward,” or, “I’m holding my own,”*** then, what does that mean? Have we actually lost ground? We are either growing in Christ, or we are dying, moving away from Christ or toward Him. ***Which is it?*** My prayer is, that we growing in Christ.

Jesus tells a story in the Word which may help us understand where we are in our growth? It’s a parable: ***“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’***

“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. ‘The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” (MAT 13:24-30)

Both the good seeds, and weeds placed there by the evil one, will grow side by side, until the day of the harvest. ***Think about that for a moment?*** There will always be evil around us. On that day, Jesus says, He will tell the harvesters to bundle the weeds for burning, and the wheat to be placed in His barn. ***An Eternity in hell, or, an eternity in heaven.*** Both are growing side by side – which are we?

- Therefore, rid yourselves of all....
- Crave the pure spiritual milk of God’s Word
- You are growing - the question is - as a good seed or a weed? Make sure it is the good seed, growing from the Word of God.

Closing Prayer