

1 Peter 1:22-2:3
The Purifying Power of the Word

[Context: ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.]

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for

**“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.”**

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

2 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Prayer:

Our heavenly Father, thank you for this portion of your Word. Grant us understanding of it and by the Spirit the implementation of it into our minds and hearts. Bless this teaching unto the edification of your people and the glory of your name, in Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

Up to this point Peter has been laying out for us the greatness and mercy of the salvation that God has given to his people. One thing that stands out so clearly in this letter is that salvation comes to lost, sinful people only by the plan and intervention of God. Salvation is of the Lord. Its conception was in the plan of God, its origin was before the creation of the universe, and its execution was established in the sending of the Son of God to earth to shed his blood and rise from the dead on the third day. Its ultimate goal in all this is the glory of God, that God might be glorified in the salvation of sinners.

In addition, this great merciful work of God is something that not only began in the sovereign grace of God but continues in the same way. We are not saved by the grace of God and left to flounder around on our own, like fish poured out from a net on to the

floor of a fishing boat and they are all flopping around helplessly - but quite the opposite. One of the greatest verses in this letter is 1 Peter 1:5, speaking of the people of God “**who by God's power are being guarded ^(A)through faith for a salvation ^(B)ready to be revealed in the last time.** “Being Guarded by God’s power” – this is a present and on going reality. You can’t be in any better position than that.

The salvation from sin and deliverance from judgment which comes to God’s people is totally of his initiative and work. It is the working of God. 1 Pet. 1:3 says “**he has caused us to be born again...**” Why were we born again? It was not our plan but God “caused us to be born again.” If you are a Christian today, you didn’t birth yourself into the kingdom of God, - he caused you to be born again. God did it, not you, nor your intelligence , nor your good works. Only God’s mercy and power.

So Peter has been showing us how the great mercy of God has come to these Christian people and yanked them out of the kingdom of darkness and set them down in the kingdom of light, the way a father would yank his toddler out of the street who had wandered out in front of an oncoming car.

All this is the supernatural work of God. He tells these Christians that they received the good news of the Gospel from preachers who were anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit alone who enlightens human minds and gives understanding of the gospel.

But all this saving work of God, transferring a person from Satan’s captivity to Christ’s Lordship is only the beginning of his gracious work in the lives of his people. Peter tells these Christian in v. 13 to “prepare their minds for action.” In other words, they have been drafted into the Lord’s army to do spiritual warfare on the earth in Christ’s name. He tells them in v. 15 to be holy like their Lord is holy.

There is a great motivation for them and for us to live holy lives – it’s because of the enormous price that was paid to rescue us – Christ’s precious blood. It was not ordinary blood shed on Calvary’s cross, but the innocent blood of the sinless Son of God. It was sinless blood therefore it had power to remove sin.

Christ Jesus is the whole key to our salvation. Had he not come, we never could have been saved. We read in verse 21, “**who through him are believers in God, ^(B)who raised him from the dead and ^(C)gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.**

Why are we believers in God today? It’s through him, through Christ. Our faith is tied to a historical event, and that event was witnessed by many reliable witnesses and recorded in written records. That event, as v. 21 says, is that God raised Jesus **from the dead and gave him glory, so that our faith and hope are in God.** ‘

It’s Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on the third day that is the foundation of our faith. It’s the glorification of the Son of God when he ascended to the Father’s right hand in

heaven that is the event that established Jesus' victory and Kingship. From there he poured out his Spirit upon his people. The invisible Spirit working in our minds and hearts confirms and certifies to us that Jesus died and rose. The Spirit awakens faith in us, he gives us spiritual life where there was none, he regenerates us from spiritual death to spiritual life, and from there on out he continues to work in our lives, helping us to grow in our understanding of the Word of God and grow spiritually.

Growing to spiritual maturity is a life-long process. It's not an easy process. The trees of our lives have to be periodically pruned from sins and habits that are contrary to God's will. Sometimes we experience the discipline of the Lord, as a loving father disciplines his children to help them put away bad behavior and develop instead good behavior.

Today's passage beginning at verse 22 of 1 Peter 1 is linked to what Peter has already said in the previous 21 verses. So, in light of this great and gracious salvation, he says in v. 22, "**having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth...**" Notice that Peter does not say, "You need to purify your souls and you need to obey the truth." He says this has already happened in their lives. It was their obedience to the truth that resulted in the purification of their souls. How do we know they obeyed the truth? Well, they obeyed the truth that is the foundation of all other truth. They heard the gospel; they obeyed the call to repent and believe. So they were obedient to the truth. They were not disobedient to the Gospel call. They heard it and submitted to it. This was the work of the Spirit in their lives.

So this is a present reality in their lives. And because there is this powerful presence of the Spirit in their lives, a mighty work began in their lives. Spiritual realities came alive overnight. Affections and loves that were not there before - suddenly came on the scene of their lives. What do we see happening in their lives.

22 ... your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love...

What happened is that as a result of their obedience to the truth of the gospel – something accompanied their obedience to the truth – it was "sincere brotherly love."

They didn't ask for this sincere brotherly love, it just began to appear in their lives. After all, this seems quite natural, does it not? These other Christians had experienced the greatest even in a human life – they had come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, they had repented of their sins, and they were following him as Lord. So this was the common experience of all these Christians. They had all experienced the life-transforming presence of the Son of God and they had become "new people in Christ."

So, getting to know these people would just naturally produce a camaraderie, a fellowship. But of course, there is more than that, there is a deep spiritual connection between Christian believers. The same Spirit of adoption dwells in all of our lives, we have all been adopted into the same family where Jesus is the head.

So this new family connection has arisen in the lives of all believers and it puts a certain obligation on our lives, v. 22 – “**love one another earnestly from a pure heart...**”

So here is the command from the apostle Peter – he was not only their apostle but the is ours also- he was appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise spiritual oversight for the people of God and even to write two letters that became part of the NT canon, the scriptures. Here’s the command:

I. Love one another earnestly

NKJV - in ^[a]sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart

We are to love one another earnestly – not just if we happen to feel like it, not just if we are in the mood to demonstrate love, not to just love on another half-heartedly – but love one another sincerely, earnestly, fervently.

I think we can look at the apostle Paul as an example of a man who loved the brethren earnestly. Let me just read you a portion from 1 Thess. 2 to get a taste of how this sincere, fervent love would look like in an actual circumstance:

For you yourselves know, brothers,^[a] that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. ³ For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.⁵ For we never came with words of flattery,^[b] as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.⁶ Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle^[c] among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. ⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. ¹¹ For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

We are to love one another with a pure heart – Paul certainly did this. He only sought to bring these Thessalonian people to know the Lord Jesus Christ and then to instruct them in the faith. He even worked with his own hands during all this time so he would not be a burden to them. This is love, sacrificial love - this is how we should love one another.

Always looking out for the highest good of our brother or sister – really being concerned for their well-being. Not just with words, but in reality. Jesus said, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Paul wrote about this kind of love in Phil. 2:3-7:

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^[a] ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant...

Jesus said in Mark 9:35 - ³⁵ **And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”**

We are to do this from a pure heart - because we want the best for the other person, not so we can get something from them. Not trying to manipulate people but to serve them and love them sincerely in Christ.

Peter gives a reason we are to love one another earnestly – it’s because we have been born again by the Word of God. It is **the Purifying Power of the Word of God** that is the cause and foundation of our having sincere and earnestly love for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. He says in v. 23: ²³ **since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;**

The Word of God gives us new birth and that new birth is the fountain, the reservoir from which springs our love for the brethren.

In verse 23 he calls the Word “seed,” first of all, and then calls it the Word of God also. He describes the Word using some of the same terms as he had described our inheritance from Christ in v. 4, not perishable but imperishable. And he calls the Word “living and abiding.” The Word of God is not just words on paper, scribblings of ink, but the Word of God has the presence and power of the living God tied to it and permeating it. Heb. 4:12 says: ¹² **For ^(A)the word of God is living and ^(B)active, ^(C)sharper than any ^(D)two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and ^(E)discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

So the Word of God works in our thoughts and hearts by the power of the Spirit and this is what changes us internally so our outward words and actions reflect the work of God internally in our lives.

Then Peter quotes from Isaiah chapter 40:6-8:

**“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.”**

Here Peter is contrasting the frailty and transience, that is, the temporary nature of human life, with the enduring reality and power of the Word of God.

Peter says that all flesh, and he has in mind primarily human life, is like the grass that grows in the field. It may have flowers in the spring but in time inevitably the grass begins to wither and die, and the flowers fade and die also. In late March and through the middle of April here in Texas the bluebonnets come out and adorn the roadsides but they only last 2 or 3 weeks and then they're gone. This is like our human lives - or a little while we take up a bit of space on planet Earth. But then age or sickness or accident catches up with us and we begin to fade and wither away and then die. This is the weak nature of our humanity. We are temporary residents on planet earth. In the very beginning of this letter Peter called the Christians elect “exiles” indicating the temporary nature of their time on earth.

In contrast to the temporary nature of human life, God’s Word “remains forever.”

God’s truth, God’s will, God himself remain forever. Jesus said,
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Then Peter makes this comment at the end of v. 25, **And this word is the good news that was preached to you.** In other words, the Word of the Lord is the Gospel, the good news. It will remain forever because it is centered around the Lord Jesus Christ and he will live forever. He rose from the dead on the 3rd day, never to die again. Heb. 9:28:

so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

It is the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and our belief in him, our faith in him, our belief of the truth of the Gospel that causes us to be born again and this new birth generates within us sincere brotherly love for one another.

Yet we still live in this world and we are subject to spiritual warfare with the world, our own remaining sinful nature, and the devil. So our brotherly love is sometimes lacking, it needs a shot in the arm to be what it should be. We can all testify that our love for one another is imperfect and we sometimes fail to love one another was Christ commanded us.

This is the reality of the Christian life; we've been born again, the HS has entered our hearts, yet we still wrestle with the old sinful nature which is hard to dislodge from our thinking and behavior. Martin Luther called this phenomenon "simul justus et peccator" this is Latin meaning "righteous and at the same time sinful."

By God's grace and calling and declaration we are righteous in God's eyes and in his accounting book but at the same time we are still sinful. We still commit sin. This is a strange phenomenon but it is reality. When God saves us, though he has yanked us out of the kingdom of darkness and placed us into the kingdom of Christ, he does not yank all sin out of lives.

He leaves us here on earthy to be tempted and tried and to wrestle with our flesh, the allurements of the world, and the temptations and harassments of the devil. It would have been easier for us had he just yanked us out of the world and brought us on to heaven. But he leaves us here to serve him and glorify him in the midst of these problems and harassments so we can grow spiritually and so we can bring him glory on the earth in the midst of all these enemies to our spiritual lives. He leaves us here to fight the good fight of faith. He leaves us here to engage in spiritual combat with these enemies. But he does not leave us alone or without help. He gives us his Word and Spirit and his church, the people of God, to assist us in our pilgrim journey to the City of God. He accompanies us every step of the way. Jesus said, "I am with you always." By his Holy Spirit he is always with us. He never leaves us nor forsakes us – Heb. 13:5.

This is why the NT is full of commands to the Christian person regarding forsaking sins. The next verse, 1 Pet. 2:1, says **So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.** The sentence begins with the word "So" which is the same meaning as "therefore." Because we've been born again by the ever-living Word of God, because the Gospel of Jesus Christ has come to us, because the very life of God has graciously entered our lives, we have been given in innate love for the people of God. Yet our love is imperfect and sometimes fails. We need to be commanded and reminded of exactly how we are to love one another. We need to be reminded of certain mindsets and behaviors we need to forsake – thinking and doing things like we used to before we became a Christian. So in conjunction with "earnestly loving one another we need to **“put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”**

Peter would not have given this command had he not been aware that these sins still existed in the lives of Christians, indeed in his own life. **He says 'put these things away'** just like you'd put away an old expired driver's license in a drawer and not use it again. It's the same idea as taking off the old clothes of sin and putting on the new clothes of Christ's righteousness, of Christ's nature.

“Malice” has to do with evil intent towards another person. Something like what the current leader of Russian is doing with Ukraine. He wants to hurt Ukrain, destroy it as a nation. We should never try to hurt or harm or destroy another brother or sister. We should build them up; not tear them down. This doesn't rule out at times lovingly

rebuking them when they sin, but we should do this in love, with the goal of helping them be aware of their sin and forsake it.

We should also avoid “deceit” in our relationship with our fellow Christians. All five of these sins listed in verse 1 are interpersonal relationship sins. They are sins that we commit in our interactions with fellow humans.

We may treat them with malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. What? You mean a Christian would treat another Christian like this? You mean a brother would treat another brother with these kinds of sins? You mean a Christian spouse would treat their spouse with this kind of sin? The answer is “yes” to all these questions.

I think we need to be aware that these types of sins are lurking in the hidden places of our minds and hearts and can rear their ugly heads and cause harm in our interpersonal relationships.

So we don’t want to deceive one another. This is not being honest; it is lying, it is tricking another person. Let us avoid this.

We don’t want to be hypocrites – pretending to be more spiritual than we really are – like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 who wanted the apostles and others to see how generous they were with their money when they held back some of it for themselves.

These last 3 sins in verse 1 are all in the plural in Greek, hypocrisies, envies, and slanders. So it seems to me to indicate these sins can be doubles or numerous in our lives. If we being a hypocrite in one situation we’re liable to do it in other situations or with other brothers or sisters. To “envy” is like the sin of covetousness – desiring something that someone else has for ourselves – wishing we had it instead of them. It’s grasping for something that God has not seen fit to give us. We should instead be content in what God has provided for us.

And to slander, is, of course, to speak evil of someone else, to charge them or accuse them of some sin or sinful behaviors which they are not guilty of, in an attempt to make them look bad in the eyes of others. This is evil, this is wicked. We want to avoid this.

So what is Peter telling us here?

I. Love one another earnestly

II. Leave off relationship sins

And one more thing. Look at 2:2: **Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.**

When newborn babies get hungry, they cry for food, for milk. They crave it; they must have it to survive. That's really all that matters to them. To imbibe that milk, that sustenance, that nourishing food.

That should be our attitude also, especially as new believers. To feed upon the Word of God. To take its truths into our being. To drink long of that spiritual food which nourishes and strengthens us.

Even as we become more mature Christians, and understand more Christian doctrine, we never leave our need and desire for milk from time to time, for the simple, basic truths of the gospel.

He says in v. 3, **if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

Yes, to have tasted of the Word of God wets our appetite. It brings us life and health and wholeness and peace and joy. The Word of the living God is delicious to our souls, to our spiritual lives. And to taste this heavenly food increases our desire for more of it, to always feed upon the living Word of God, to grow stronger in our knowledge of God and of his salvation.

So what is Peter, this apostle commissioned by Jesus Christ, to instruct us believers, telling us in these verses?

I. Love one another earnestly

II. Leave off relationship sins.

III. Long for pure spiritual milk.

Let's be serious and sincere in our love for one another.

Let's put off, put away those interpersonal sins which can still rear up their ugly heads from time to time. Let's cast them away and not tear down but build up our brothers and sisters.

And let us treasure the Word of God, let us feed upon it, grow strong in it, let us not neglect it, and let us put it into practice in our lives.

We should long for the enduring Word of God, the gospel, because it brings new birth, purification of the soul, obedience, sincere brotherly love and repentance of all forms of evil.

Human glory fades and dies, but embracing the Word of God brings life, salvation, and happiness.

As Peter says in 2 Peter 1:8, ***For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your Word today. Help us, by your grace, to...

I. Love one another earnestly and sincerely

II. Leave off, put away interpersonal relationship sins.

III. Long for pure spiritual milk, so that we can grow strong in our faith.

We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

by Jeff Gregory, Pastor
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