

Studies in 1 Peter-07 1 Peter 2:1-8

by Dwight Pentecost

Peter exhorts believers to lay aside malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, and to desire the sincere milk of the word in order to grow in love for the brethren.

Duration: 38:40

Scripture: Psalm 34:8, Matthew 23:15, Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 4:31, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Peter 2:1-2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "New Nature"

Description

In this sermon, the apostle discusses five things that believers should lay aside: malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. These behaviors are seen as manifestations of our old nature inherited from Adam and Satan. The apostle emphasizes that believers have been born again and are now children of God, not of the devil. He then builds his exhortation on the assumption that believers have obeyed the truth and have experienced the love of God. The sermon concludes with a reference to Psalm 34:8, encouraging believers to taste and see that the Lord is good and to trust in Him.

Transcript

1 Peter chapter 2. We'll wait for Dr. Pentecost to get it. 1 Peter chapter 2. Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile, in hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow by it, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Unto you, therefore, who believe he is precious, but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." Let's look to our Lord in prayer. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit are one, and the believer, the one who has received Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior, has become one with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A believer should experience a oneness with a fellow believer because he is one with God, and that oneness of believer with believer will manifest itself in love for the believer, just as the oneness between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit manifests itself among the members of the Godhead.

The Apostle Peter, writing to these persecuted saints, reminds them in the first chapter of his epistle, in verse 18, that they had been redeemed. That redemption was not purchased with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but they were redeemed with precious blood. The redemption that had been provided for them in Jesus Christ had brought them to a purification of their souls.

Peter will tell us in his second epistle that we are given by the new birth a new divine nature. The nature of God is imparted to us by the new birth that we have in Jesus Christ, and it is God's desire to reproduce himself and his children. That Peter has emphasized in verse 22 of the first chapter, seeing he have purified your souls and obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

God's love has been manifested to the world in the provision of Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world. God's love for his child is manifested in God's constant care in the provision which he makes for his child. And the child of God in whom the nature of God is imparted by a new birth is to manifest a love not only for God, but also a love for the brethren, those whom God loves.

This is foundational to Peter's response to the persecutions and sufferings that his flock is passing through. But when we come into chapter 2, verses 1-3, the verses to which we direct your attention in Peter's epistle this morning, continuing this great theme of unfeigned love of the brethren, the Apostle gives an exhortation. The fact was presented in the previous verses.

We have been loved of God. God is love, therefore we have a responsibility to love another. And Peter's exhortation is found in the first word of the first verse of the second chapter, wherefore in the light of these great truths, in the light of the truth of what God is and of what God demands of us, this is our responsibility and our response.

I drop down to the third verse where the Apostle Peter builds a basic assumption, and this is the basis of his appeal. He is not asking unbelievers to be like God. He is not asking men who are strangers to the love of God to imitate the love of God.

It is as impossible for an unbeliever to manifest the love of God toward a believer or toward another individual as it is for a fish who lives in the sphere of the ocean to communicate intelligibly with an individual who lives on the land. They live in two entirely separate spheres, and it is impossible to communicate across the barriers that separate the fish kingdom from the animal kingdom. What Peter's appeal, we repeat, is not to an unbeliever.

You begin to live like a believer ought to live. You begin to have affections such as you think God has, and somehow this love will grow and increase and develop. The Apostle Peter's exhortation to love for the brethren is based on the basic assumption that they have tasted the new life of Christ, that they have been born into the family of God.

Peter says that I make this exhortation to so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The taste here is more than just a little sampling. It's more than what you wives do over the cookstove in the kitchen when you dip a spoon into what you're preparing for dinner to see if it is seasoned.

You put just enough on your lips and your tongue to tell you whether it has enough flavoring or you need to add more. The taste that Peter has referenced to here means to actually partake so as to have enjoyed what has been provided. The Apostle, you see, is assuming that these people have been redeemed with

the incorruptible, the precious blood of the Christ, the Lamb without blemish and spot.

They have heard, and to them has been imparted the truth of the nature and character of God, and what God is through the preaching of the word. They have obeyed, verse 22, the truth. Now, on the basis of this basic assumption, Peter is able to build his exhortation.

You remember the psalmist in the Old Testament speaks in words that are very similar to those that Peter used in Psalm 34, verse 8. We read this instruction of the psalmist, 34, 8, O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him. The psalmist has been extolling and magnifying the Lord. He has said in the first verse of that psalm, I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Now, why was David extolling and exalting the Lord? It was not because of a testimony that he had heard from somebody else as to how good the Lord was. It is a blessing to us on the evening to have man after man share with us a word of personal testimony concerning what the Lord has done for him. And frequently we leave the service after that testimony with words such as, Isn't the Lord wonderful what he has done for so-and-so? But, you know, you never can base your testimony as to how good the Lord is on what he has done for somebody else.

The only real testimony is a testimony as to what the Lord has done for you, and when the Lord takes you through some trial, through some testing, through some experience, and then shows you the sufficiency of his grace, you can say, I can praise the Lord for what he did for me personally. Now, you see, these believers whom Peter is writing are going through intense persecution and suffering, and they're almost to the point of being crushed by it. And Peter reminds them that what they have tasted of the Lord's goodness is going to enable them to give a personal testimony as to what the Lord does for those who trust him.

For the psalmist, you recall, said there in 34a, Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good, or if I could paraphrase it, taste and see just how good the Lord really is. Blessed are they that trust him, and the man has a testimony who trusts. Testimony and trust go hand in hand.

Now, Peter is writing to those in whose lives the basis for a testimony is being laid, and he assumes the fact that they have trusted. They have exercised faith in God not only for their salvation, but for God's daily sustenance of them in their suffering. They have seen the Lord's sufficiency.

They have seen his grace at work in their lives. When the trials and the persecutions well-nigh overwhelmed them, the Lord put his hand unto them and lifted them up and proved himself sufficient. They had actually partaken so as to have enjoyed the Lord's graciousness and his graces, his sustaining grace to them day by day.

Now, on the basis of that assumption, the exhortation or application is given in the first verse. Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes desire the sincere, pure, uncorrupted milk of the word. In the first verse, the apostle says that there are five things that are to be laid aside.

Malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking. And these five things are manifestations of the nature of our old father, the devil. Do you recall the teaching of the word that when we were born into this world, the first time we were born with a fallen nature? We were born as children of Adam.

We were born as children of Satan. Christ, speaking to the religious leaders of his day, said to them, He are of your father the devil. Now, don't sit back hypocritically and complacently and say how wicked and bad those men were.

You're their child, and you like they were born of your father the devil. And it is natural for the child to imitate his father, and it is natural for the child to manifest the nature that he received from his father. And so, if one is to manifest love for the brethren, he must put off all manifestations of his old man, of his old father the devil.

And these five things that are to be laid aside are all things that characterize Satan, and will you observe, please, they are all sins against love. First one, lay aside malice. Malice is a summary word, or an all-inclusive word, that refers to every kind of wickedness.

Malevolence, bringing together in the compass of his character all sorts of wickedness against love, or sin against love. If we turn into chapter five of this first epistle of Peter, we see something of Satan's persistence in wickedness. He exhorts them, there, be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion talketh about seeking whom he may devour.

He is persistent, he is incessant, he is destructive in nature and character, he does not seek the good of those who are under him, but he seeks their destruction. And those who have taken themselves by faith out of his family and kingdom, and put themselves by faith into the family of God, are the special objects of his attack. He stalks them as a lion stalks its prey in order to devour and to destroy.

He is malevolent, he is incessantly and persistently destructive and wicked, and the apostle says that you God's children, if you manifest the nature of your father the devil, will be as persistently malicious as he is malicious. You see that the word malice and malicious are related words, and there is the possibility that one will not manifest the fruit of the Spirit, which is love for the brethren, and will become a malicious individual so that his life is characterized by the maliciousness of Satan. But then, Satan is characterized in the second place by guile.

Guile has to do with a deception. The word literally means to catch with bait, or to ensnare through the use of bait. I think a good illustration of this is found in the third chapter of Genesis, in verse 1. The serpent was more subtle or crafty or full of guile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made, and he came to offer Eve through guile something which it was impossible for him to fulfill.

He offered to make Eve like God. He offered to set Eve free from any responsibility to God whatsoever. Now, he was wicked and malicious in his temptation, but he did not reveal his maliciousness.

He closed his maliciousness with this subtlety, this craftiness, this guile, or he caught Eve with bait. And it is possible for a child of God to leave the guile-lapped neck, the transcendent purity that belongs to the love of Christ, and to use hypocrisy and guile in dealing with other believers to cover our true desire and true intent. And selfishness is a sin against love which closes itself with guile and subtlety to catch a fellow believer with bait.

The third word that describes the character of Satan in 1 Peter 2 on is the word hypocrisy. This is the word that came from the stage into the language, for the Greek actors did not depend on facial expressions to convey to the audience the part they were playing. The Greek actors played their part with masks, and the hypocrite was one who spoke from under a mask.

It has to do with speaking down so that one's true identity is covered up. What the actor actually looked like meant nothing on the Greek stage. It was the mask that he put on that was the significant thing.

And the apostle said that when Satan comes, he puts on a mask and covers his true character, his true features, he disguises his true intent, and he speaks from under that mask so that one who looks only on the surface is subject to deception by Satan. And the apostle says that it is possible for God's children to clothe themselves with hypocrisy and to feign love for the brethren when down underneath there is maliciousness and guile and evil speaking and envying. And he says that this hypocrisy is a sham of the devil into which you have fallen and has no part in the life and experience of the child of God.

It is impossible to love the brethren with a pure heart fervently from under the hypocrite's mask. The fourth word that he uses is the word envy, and the word envy literally means to talk down, means to defame or to, I'm sorry, the envy has to do with jealousy. I'll drop down to the last word.

Envy is jealousy where one resents what God has given to another believer because God has not given us the same thing. It is not as difficult for a believer to weep with those who weep as it is difficult to rejoice with those who rejoice. For somehow, when we fellowship with a believer in some testing or some sorrow, we consider ourselves lest we be likewise tempted or walk through that valley of dark shadows.

But when God sends a blessing to a man and he shares that with us, we naturally and instinctively react with jealousy. Why did God give that to him and not to me? I deserve it as much or more than he does. And it is so difficult sometimes to share the Lord's choicest blessings with the saints because the saints envy, and they do not know how to rejoice with those that rejoice.

And the apostle says that such a response and reaction is a manifestation of the old nature, and the one who envies is reproducing in his conduct that which is the nature of his old father, the devil. Then the final word is evil speaking, and as I said a moment ago, this evil speaking means literally to talk down. It has to do with defaming, it has to do with slandering.

This was the method Satan used, you remember, in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 5 in his testing of Eve, when he accused God of jealously withholding from Eve something that would have made Eve an equal with God. He slandered God's love, and the inference was that if God were not so selfish in his love, he would share that which he delights in for himself. That slander, that defaming is a temptation which may come to the child of God.

Usually slander somebody else. Defame, seek to belittle a brother in Christ in order to elevate ourselves in our own eyes. We think that we lift ourselves up by widening the gulf between us and the brother by putting him down, and when we fall into such evil speaking, we sin against the love of the brethren, we fail to fulfill his command of verse 22, love one another with a pure heart fervently, we manifest the nature of our father, the death.

Now, would you see a similar vein of thought develop for us, please, in the book of Ephesians chapter 4? Ephesians 4 and verse 30 gives us God's command through the apostle, grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Now, I want you to notice in this context very carefully what it is that grieves the Spirit of God. We know that the Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, and any sin grieves the heart of the Holy Spirit, but as the apostle is presenting this truth, he has one specific category of sin primarily in mind.

In fact, at the beginning of the fourth chapter of Ephesians, the apostle has exhorted us in verse 3 that we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for there is one body, and it is the Spirit ministry to unify the body of believers. It is the Spirit ministry to promote love in the family of God. Now, since that is the Spirit ministry among believers, any sin that destroys or disrupts the unity of believers brings peculiar pain to the heart of the Spirit of God.

Look at verse 29 of chapter 4, "...let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." That would be the evil speaking of 1 Peter 2. Verse 31, "...let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor or loud, incessant talking and evil speaking be put away from you with all mouth." I find in verse 31 that the same categories as are covered in 1 Peter 2 stated by the apostle as the sins that peculiarly grieve the Holy Spirit of God. The apostle was concerned about this division and this manifestation of the nature of their father, the devil. Therefore, he devoted this extended portion of this major epistle to that essential element of the conduct of the child of God, for he was concerned lest a lack of love for the brethren should dissipate the testimony of that group of believers, and that the sin of failure to love the brethren should destroy the life of the individuals in that assembly.

Now, Peter, dealing with the same basic problem, looks upon a scattered flock. They are away from Jerusalem, which had been the center of their life. They are away from fellowship with the body of believers.

They are separated from the oversight of the apostles who administered to them. They are undergoing rigorous persecution. Now, what was the apostle afraid of more than anything else? Not that they would fail in their faith in God, not that they would repudiate the doctrine that God had delivered to them through the apostle.

But Peter was concerned lest in their testing they should lose love for the brethren, and the loss of love for the brethren would remove from them that which bound believer to believer to give them strength in the Lord. He has assumed that they have tasted the graciousness of the Lord. Now, he makes the application of their experience with Christ.

They are to lay aside every manifestation of their father the devil, and all maliciousness and guile and hypocrisy and envy and evil speaking is to be put aside. Now, what is the antidote to this manifestation of Satan's nature in God's children? We come to verse 2. As newborn babes desire the sincere or pure milk of the word that ye may grow thereby. The apostle is viewing these believers as spiritual infants.

They are immature in the love of Christ and in the knowledge of the word. Their immaturity is evidenced by the very fact that Peter has to give commandment concerning love for the brethren, and in the face of this immaturity, Peter gives the antidote as he says, desire the sincere or pure milk of the word. The word desire is the word for appetite, and it has to do with that craving of nature for that which sustains.

You do not teach a newborn baby to become hungry. The sign of life is an appetite, and Peter desires that the appetite which they have because they were born into God's family should be cultivated. It should develop, it should expand so that through the word of God they can fulfill the obligations that are laid upon them by the fact that they have been brought into the family of God.

The apostle does not stand up and say, if you are convicted that you do not love the brethren, then you begin to practice loving the brethren. Just turn on love and start loving them and everything will be fine. Love is not something that can be turned on that way.

It would be nice if we had buttons that could be pushed to turn it on, then we could appoint a committee in the elders as the button pushers for the congregation. There is a relationship between the word of God and love for the brethren, because there is a relationship between the word of God and spiritual growth and spiritual development and spiritual maturity. Love for the brethren is an evidence of the new birth.

It is also an evidence of maturity in the things of the Lord, and there can be no maturity in Christ apart from the ministry of the word of God to the believer. When there is danger that they will manifest the nature of their father the devil, Peter says, get into the work. When the persecutions and the trials that they undergo will get them so obsessed with themselves and what they're going through, they will lose their concern for the brethren, Peter says, get into the work.

When they find themselves selfish and thinking only of their own things, Peter says, get into the work. Peter says, if you see yourself hypocritical in your attitude toward fellow believers, get into the work. When you find yourself tempted to some maliciousness toward another believer, get into the work.

When you find yourself envying the blessing of God on some other believer, get into the work. When you find yourself tempted to speak evil, to gossip of another brother, get into the work. As newborn babes desire the sincere pure milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.

Back in chapter 1, Peter told us that we were redeemed not with corruptible things, but with the incorruptible seed, the word of God. 1 Peter 1.23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, there Peter referred to the incorruptibility of the word of God. Now, in 2.2 he refers again to that incorruptibility, referring to the sincere or the pure word of God.

See, God reveals himself. That revelation is given to us in the word. Satan has reproduced his nature within us, and if we are to learn of God and God's nature and what God demands of his children, we must go to the revelation that God has made.

So, Peter says, if Satan is doing a work in you and is reproducing his maliciousness and his lovelessness, then you get into the word of God, because through a knowledge of the word of God you come to a knowledge of God, and through that knowledge of God you understand what God expects of his children. We affirm again that the inerrant word of God is the believer's defense against the onslaught of Satan. It is the garrison for a believer's life, the foundation upon which his feet must be planted if he is to be triumphant and victorious in his daily life, and if love was to be the testimony to a loveless world concerning the truth of the gospel, then we need to take care in our assembly of believers today that we fall into that snare of Satan, lest the love of God for Christ which should be manifested in the love of believer for believer should not be portrayed to those whom we profess the desire to win to Jesus Christ.

You will not argue a man to Christ, but you can love him to Christ. You saturate yourself with the word of God not so much to be able to meet the arguments of the unbeliever, saturate yourself with the word of God that the word of God might produce love for Christ and love for the brethren in you that that love that the word produces in you may in turn reach out love men for Jesus Christ. You're not going to win man by your vast knowledge of the scriptures.

You're going to win man because of the love of Christ for them, and love of Christ for the brethren manifests in your daily experience. There's only one way a man can come to know the love of Christ, and that is by faith in him as a personal Savior. You can't read about it.

It's not something you can study about, and thus learn. You learn his love by experience. When a man recognizes that he is a sinner, that he is a child of Satan, he comes to Jesus Christ as Christ.

I trust you for my salvation. The love of God that was poured out for that one at Calvary is poured out into his life, and his heart is flooded with the love of God for him. And if you are a stranger to this infinite, gracious love of Christ this morning, I point you to the one who loves you and who will flood your life with his love if you trust him personally for your salvation.

Have you ever trusted the one who loves you unto death? Will you do it now? We pray, our Father, that God the Holy Spirit, desires to reproduce his own nature in the life of the child of God, may reveal to us our lovelessness for Christ, for the Word, for the Brethren, that we might put ourselves under the Word, saturate ourselves with the Word so that we might grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the Word reveal to us our needs, and may it do its work of supplying that need as we love one another by the Spirit's power with a pure heart, fervently. This must us, we pray thee, with the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace upon us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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