

1 Peter 2:1-2
Hope in the storm

Growing up into salvation



FYI – we are doing well in contributions to our Camera Fund. Thank you for your continued support of this ministry effort! It confirms that you believe along with us that this could well be an effective means of reaching people that we could otherwise not reach with the gospel of Jesus! At any rate, I believe with you that it is worth giving it our best effort. So if the Lord lays it on your heart, please continue to give to the camera fund, and hopefully sooner than later we will have a much clearer, better visual and sound transmission of our morning worship service going out over the internet on Sunday mornings.

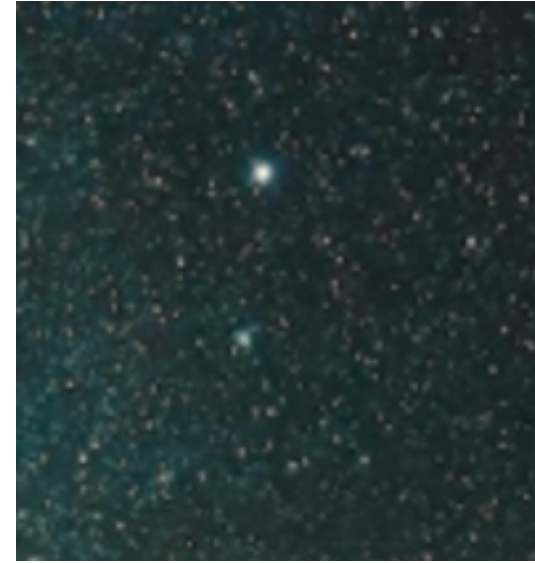
There was a storm blowing around the early church! The Christians had become a movement large enough that it threatened the status quo of cities – of whole regions! The early Christians had fulfilled their calling of being witnesses of Jesus, and because of it, a great many people had responded and had literally flocked to Jesus in belief and trust! Of course, as a movement, they actually threatened no one, but civic leaders were afraid that the Christians would overrun their city streets and destroy their pagan way of life – their status quo! In that, their suspicions and fears were dead-on right! Jesus was radically changing lives, and the old institutions of society and culture were being jeopardized by this burgeoning movement! So the powers that be were unleashing hell upon the church – making it increasingly miserable and dangerous to be a Christian! Christian leaders were being targeted and had to move cautiously for fear of being seized and imprisoned.



~ The apostles themselves were especially endangered as they would obviously have been known by name and reputation. It speaks to the FACTS, that this was not the fabrication of clever men who were seeking money, sex, or power – the usual motivations of cult leaders. These people were willing, even happy, to live in poverty and in purity, because what they had witnessed in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus had so blown their minds and impacted their souls! They were convinced, even in the sacrifice of their own comfort, security, indeed their very lives, that what they were spreading *was the truth*! That Jesus had proven Himself to be God, sent from heaven, the Son of God – and that He had heralded a new covenant with God – a covenant offered to all the nations of the world that superseded the old covenant He had had with Israel. And even though the disciples had seen Him die, they had also witnessed a great and impossible phenomenon - that He had come back to life and was living still! **THIS** was their motivation, nothing else, and they could not be silenced!

[John 1:1-3a]

So, the apostles were carrying on the ministry of the living Jesus. They were about the business of God and therefore they were not content to just hide and survive in a hostile environment. They continued to push! They pushed Christians to be Christ-followers so that they might continue to let His Spirit change them from the inside out – and that they might display the Fruit of the Spirit – and that it might not be just a show that disappeared once the spotlight was turned off. They pushed for Christians to grow in the knowledge of God – to seek to learn the teaching of the apostles. They pushed Christians to love their spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ, and to support them always with love and respect. They pushed further that Christians should fulfill the stated mission of sharing Jesus with the people that were in their lives – family, friends, acquaintances. I have, of course, studied what the writings of the apostles emphasized – what they pushed. They taught who Jesus was, and what He wanted from His followers! They had set a pattern for pastors and churches that was intended as a pattern for future, until Jesus returned. If the effort to teach and push these essentials of the faith lapses in any age or place, then the pastors are negligent and the churches are not churches but some kind of hybrid that pushes a different narrative – their own. But that is not what we will do at B.E. Free. We will emphasize the scriptures. This is not a prideful thing but simply a necessary thing! It is only staying true. *The North star has always served as a reliable benchmark for travelers to keep their bearings and arrive at their destination. It is known to never move. If a traveler keeps their eye upon it, they can't go wrong. But if someone moved the North star, it would no longer be a benchmark. It would be a false lead. Anyone following it would get lost! It is the same way with Jesus and the apostles teaching. It is our standard. We can rely upon it. Change it - over-emphasize the lesser important things, under-emphasize the important things, or, leave something out, add something in, and you end up with a different gospel, and that gospel will misdirect and condemn the person who follows it!



So Peter the apostle in the first salvo of inspired information in chapter one, has gone into both theology – Christology, or who Christ is; **and** the doctrine of salvation; **and** also practical teaching – in other words, what Christianity looks like when applied to the attitudes, and behavior of the Christ-follower. Vs 13-15 of chapter 1 says *”Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled,.. Don’t conform to the evil desires you had when you didn’t know any better,.. And like God is holy, be holy in all you do”*



Vs. 1:22 – *“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth (by applying what you have learned) resulting in love for each other, love each other deeply and from the heart”*. In other words, *feel* a depth of love for each other, **show** a generous love to each other – it’s called “grace” and grace is what God has shown to us! He has shown love for us despite knowing us intimately!

And then chapter 2 begins with this practical teaching. It begins with a brief list of what is **not** compatible with being a Christ-follower and what must be rooted out of our lives and eradicated before God! Here is what we **do not** look like! *“Rid yourselves (vs. 1) of all malice, and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind”* This is not a complete list obviously. These are just some of the well-known behaviors that flow out of our human character deficiencies – who we were before we, by faith, joined ourselves to the beauty and perfection of Jesus! Peter is declaring to Christians – *“Clean it up!”* These were the ugly personal attributes that characterized our **former** life! They were of our own nature and of the world system into which we were born - in which these base qualities are human traits as common as dirt! These are the modus operandi of societies everywhere – literally the foundational building blocks of schools, of businesses, of competitive sports, of government and politics, and I could go on,.. for a long time! But we, (as we saw last week) have experienced rebirth. Jesus has given us a **NEW** life, born of the “seed” of God, *“imperishable seed”*, that is quite different from the old!

Anyway, we've lived the old life and have seen it with our own eyes. And then we also have personal experience with it – definitely with

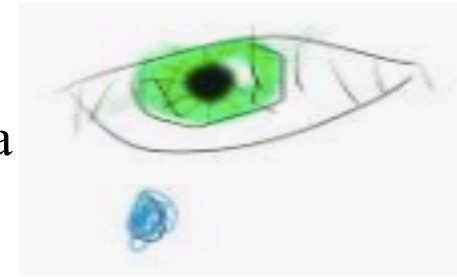
MALICE. If someone is unkind to us, or betrays us, or we become envious of someone to the point of green-eyed jealousy, we can and have wished them ill and maybe even *done* something malicious to them –



undermined, tripped them up, hurt them in some way! Peter admonishes us that this cannot remain in the Christ-follower! “***Get rid of ALL malice***”, he says! We cannot wish harm or do harm! It is all wrong for us! Others, no. With others it seems normal. The world turns on an axis of malice, but that is a bad fit for the Christ-follower! *It's like a person with a size 6 foot trying to walk in a size 12 boot! It looks and feels bad! And **DECEIT**! Not just some of it, but “***ALL***” of it! Don't overstate or understate, not even to protect yourself. If you have done wrong, do not try to lie your way out of it. That is what everyone does. But Jesus wouldn't have, and neither should you! Just tell the truth. Not brutal truth. If you have to tell the truth to someone, this does not give license to be mean. The apostle Paul says to “***speak the truth in love***”! And some things are the truth but do not need to be said. There is discretion involved here too so that the truth is not destructive. Deceit is what the world runs on. But Christ-followers run on truth!

HYPOCRISY is included in this - condemning someone for something we ourselves have done or are doing. Such behavior runs in our blood, and you know it! Not practicing what we preach! Hmmm, this is something all Christians do and, I hate to say it, but, it is something many Christians are known to excel at! In fact, it grieves me to say that we have well-earned reputation in this world of being hypocrites! Of course the world has no right to judge because they practice these evil things without any sense of self-awareness, much less remorse! But Christians have the word of God which holds a mirror to our faces and the Holy Spirit shows us our hypocrisies and compels the true Christ-follower to discontinue such behavior and to live consistently with what we say we believe!

And then there is ENVY - begrudging someone else what they have – believing that we are more deserving of it and maybe even can justify stealing it or taking it from them! That is human history! SLANDER is basically an evil appendage of envy – a way to tear down someone else’s reputation to bring them down to our level. It is particularly insidious because it is leveling a suspicion against them that doesn’t even have to be substantiated for it to ruin their good name or reputation! In the world’s system, it is a means of self-promotion in that it tears the intended victim down and lifts up the slanderer in the eyes of others. In the body of Christ, the church, it should do the opposite. If we are wise, it should open our eyes more so to the sly evil and malicious intent of the slanderer than to the target of their slander! If they will slander someone else, why would they pause at slandering you?! *That* is what it should say to us, louder than the words!



“Slander of every kind” – that would simply be referring mainly to GOSSIP – to badmouth, malign, smear, belittle, betray, confidences - passing on the tasty morsels of someone else’s personal information to someone who has nothing to do with the situation. It is purely for the pleasure of passing on or of hearing it passed on and being entertained by it. Gossip is the way of the world!. *When I was working construction almost 30 years ago, I noticed that the lunch hour was nothing but men’s gossip! Women have a reputation for gossip, but I observed that men can be just as bad if not worse! At least **those** men were! And whoever was not present in the lunchroom seemed to be the target. Even the guys I thought were friends were dolling out juicy stories on each other! They shared a lot of laughs at each other’s expense! I could not figure out why something so meanspirited and embarrassing brought those guys so much entertainment and malevolent joy. But it certainly demonstrated to me that gossip is a people thing, not a gender thing! But a Christian cannot involve themselves in such things! It is all wrong for us. We must back away as we would from a poisonous snake! Now, it is not that we cannot talk about people problems and be realistic about it. But we can only relay sensitive information when someone is involved in the problem or part of the solution. There are also times when someone is misinformed and must be set straight with the correct information so that they do not believe and operate on erroneous information or assumption! This is not gossip!

These are all common characteristics of the world. But Christ has made us *not* of this world! Just as He remained aloof from that which is part of the fall and curse of Eden, He expects us to be a “*peculiar*” (KJV) people – “*in the world, but not of it*”!



This is something that does not happen overnight even when we genuinely give our heart and life to Jesus. **Some of it** disappears immediately because we have had a change of heart, and the miracle of new birth has occurred in which the Spirit of God has entered in when we welcomed Him in, and He made His home in us! But our humanity remains, along with our human inclinations, and faulty value system, and instinctive reactions. Those threaten to always re-emerge and even take over. That is why the apostle, in vs. 2 of our text urges us to “*crave pure spiritual milk*”. He does not exactly define what that means, but it is not hard to discern, I think. It is craving practical instruction like a simple list of the kind Peter has just given us. These are human traits which are encouraged by the unseen forces of Satan purely because they are anti-Christ and cause sinful chaos which is destructive to God’s Kingdom! Therefore they cannot be allowed to have a hold on us! Such basic instruction in the practical application of the life of God to our everyday lives is something that the true Christ-follower should “*crave*” because we know we need these reminders at regular intervals if we are to remain on track as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus in obedience! In this way, we gain insight into ourselves. A mirror has been held up to our face and now we see ourselves more clearly! We will perpetually lose our way if we do not go forward with a clear vision of what that going forward looks like and where we are presently at in our journey! We should be vigilant, lest when we lose our way it becomes permanent! Therefore we receive theological and practical instruction with eagerness, knowing it is spiritual food that will strengthen our knowledge of God and His will for our lives.