

DYING TO SELF

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden,
the God who is our salvation."

Psalm 68:19

The verse so aptly states it, our God is to be blessed as He is fully "*worthy of words of celebration and praise,*" since He alone bears the burden, on a daily basis, for our salvation. There's nothing we can do to earn it, it was never God's intention that the burden for our salvation would be upon us, but instead, before the foundations of the world His plan was to offer His love and grace toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ would die for us (Romans 5:8). Even now, Christ bears the burden daily, as the accuser stands before the throne making accusations against us every time we fail, every time we sin, our Savior Jesus Christ sits beside the Judge, and declares, that's on Me because she's Mine.

Yesterday we looked at the foundation of love that has been laid for us to grow up into the image of Christ. As beautiful as the grass and flowers may be on this green earth, they will eventually fade and die. We, however, have been promised life eternal in Him. Forgiven of our debt, redeemed by Christ. Sanctified by His Spirit, and since we believe that, then our lives should show His character.

We don't always, though, and because of that, confession is needed on a regular basis. Confession directly to God, for it is against God alone we have sinned. If need be, take time now to pray through 1 John 1:9, and then let's begin today's lesson.

Read today's text: 1 Peter 2:1-3

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Peter has used the first chapter to lay the foundation - the why, if you will. And now, he moves on to specifics of how we are to grow spiritually to be more like Christ daily.

"Therefore..." Peter says, because of our redemption, because of the plan carried out by a God who loves us, because we have been given His word, it's time to build on that foundation and we are to desire the milk of the word.

We've talked about our position in Christ - in Him, we are holy, righteous, just, before God, and we've talked about how our experience of living as a Christian can often be the opposite because we don't come to Him holy, righteous or just. Old habits have to be removed, new habits must fill their place. Sinful thoughts have to be transformed to Godly thoughts (Romans 12:1-2). It's a process we talked about in week one called sanctification. The Holy Spirit does the work, while we respond to His work in us. The result is life changing.

Read Galatians 2:20 What is Paul's take on life with Christ?

If it is no longer our life, but Christ who is living in us, our lives will be different, because He is different.

Peter exhorts these believers to lay aside some aspects of their character, "*to make it a matter of principle to repeatedly participate in dying of themselves...*" He's not just asking them to do this once, but to repeatedly die to their natural, earthly lifestyle.

Dr. Welch makes this point, in the Koine` Greek this is an "*Aorist Tense - repetitive aorist - because you are in Christ, you are positionally dead to these things, but you must repeatedly*

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participate with the Holy Spirit in dying with regard to these things experientially. Middle Voice - shows participation - we participate with the Holy Spirit by means of our free-will."

Friend, if we're serious about Christ, our life will show it, maybe not all at once, but as we grow up into stature of Christ, we will be changed "from glory to glory". Peter says, we can start by putting off these harmful character traits:

In verse 1 of chapter 2, list the things we are to put aside:

- 1) _____ : Viciousness in character, ill-will toward another
- 2) _____ : Characteristic of trapping through bait or the use
of a decoy, trickery, deception
- 3) _____ : Play acting, acting differently than you are
- 4) _____ : Feelings of displeasure upon hearing of the
advantage or prosperity of others
- 5) _____ : All acts of speaking against another, true or not

NOTE: The list is of things (nouns) - not a list of actions (verbs). They are characteristics that we must make it a principle to die to, as believers.

If we can agree with Galatians 2:20 then let's put off what rightfully is not who we are anymore. These characteristics are of the old nature, not who we've been born again to be.

Maliciousness can come in many forms. It can be as simple and quiet as a thought, or as a horrifying terror when acted out. It can be a reaction to a driver pulling out in front of you, or, it can be a premeditated planning of evil against someone. Taking joy in another's pain is

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malicious, and because God knows our thoughts, thinking it is as sinful as doing it, in His eyes. Vocabulary.com says, "If someone is malicious he doesn't just make bad things happen; he loves to make bad things happen."

Each of us in our sinful state have the capacity for malice. But there is no malice in our Savior. He has exchanged grace where He could have chosen malice. What we learn from that is we should treat others in grace, too.

Deceit, well, sometimes we call them little white lies, or exaggerations, or getting someone right where we want them. We call it schmoozing, or networking, or manipulation. We use syrupy sweet words to attain something we want. It can take on forms that look right to the world around us, even admired for moving up the proverbial ladder, and in this day of social media it's imperative to guard against any form of deceit on our part, for in God there is no guile, no deception, only truth. We are to be women of truth.

Then we come to hypocrisies, and yes, in the language it shows there are more than one. The saddest hypocrisy of all, is that, as a Christian we do not live out who we are on the inside. We have been redeemed, re-birthed, and yet, we spend most of our time living in the tracks of the old dead man. We make ourselves a hypocrite every time that we live according to the flesh instead of by the Spirit. That plays out in every sin we commit, whatever the form. The only solution is to fall on our knees before God in confession, then get up ready to walk in the newness of the life we have been given. All else, dear friend, is hypocrisy.

Envy springs up, especially if we have a tendency to desire material possessions. But it can also rear its head when we see a couple whom we think have a relationship we want, or be a reaction to a myriad of things, but anytime we want what someone else has, that's envy. It

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could even be envy over Christian characteristics, or ministries. Desiring what another has rather than what God would have for us is envy.

Peter ends this particular list with, putting aside all slander. Most dictionaries state that this is making false accusations about someone, but they go on to expound that meaning by saying, it's any damaging statement, speaking maliciously about another. Sometimes we even slander under the guise of a "prayer request." One pastor defined slander as any statement, true or false, that makes the person you are speaking to think less of the person you are speaking about. That one made me cringe, as I have been plenty guilty of complaining about another person to someone else, making them see them in a lesser light. God's word says, stop slandering!

We need to watch our tongues, we need to watch our thoughts, but first, and foremost, we need to watch that we are allowing the Holy Spirit to control our thoughts and actions so that the old character traits die and we are living the new character we've been blessed with. Not only do we need the Spirit to be controlling us, but we need to be in the word so that we learn what is pleasing to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:8-10)

That is where Peter takes us next. 1 Peter 1:2 he uses the analogy of a newborn baby longing for pure milk. I don't know if you have ever tried to give a baby formula when they are used to milk, but there is no satisfying them with the formula. They cry, they scream, they fuss and fight until they get that pure milk. And then they drink as if there is nothing else to satisfy them. That is how hungry you and I are to be for the word of God.

What reason does Peter give for wanting us to long for the word in this way (v 2)?

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Don't you love "so that" phrases? I love it when God gives us the reason for what He's asking us to do. Even more so, I love that He provides His Spirit to accomplish it in us.

Peter is sending this letter to encourage and to exhort these sojourners, those scattered because of their faith, to remember who their Savior is, and then grow in respect to that salvation. Not grow for salvation, but to grow into who Christ has made us.

As we cooperate with our Helper, His Holy Spirit, and yearn to know the word of God, our minds will begin to get a glimpse of His thoughts, and what will be produced as we submit to the Spirit and apply what is in God's word is Christ's character in us.

Peter gives us one more reason why. Write out verse 3 -

The "If" is a first class condition which means, "Since we have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

Perhaps as you close this lesson you will take some time to write to Him how you have tasted His kindness, thanking Him. Then, let it serve as a reminder to you in the coming weeks:

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Review

- Text: 1 Peter 2:1-3
- Because of who we are in Christ we are to die to self and put aside old characteristics
(Galatians 2:20)
 - ❖ Malice
 - ❖ Deceit
 - ❖ Hypocrisy
 - ❖ Envy
 - ❖ Slander
- As a newborn baby, we are to long for the pure milk of the word.
- So that, we grow in respect to our salvation
- Since we have tasted the kindness of the Lord