“How to Live as Suffering Saints”

1 Peter 2:1-3

The word “therefore” takes us back to the previous context

In this instance, it’s verses 22 through 25 and centres around the Word of God

What is to be the practical outworking of foundational theological truth?

Peter points to some sinful behaviours we must intentionally remove from our lives

He speaks of “laying aside,” or “putting off” or “setting away”

To lay aside is to completely separate oneself from

It’s saying, this unrighteous trait has no part in my life, it does not characterize me in any way

This is a common theme within the New Testament

Romans 13:12: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us *cast off* the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

Ephesians 4:22: “That you *put off*, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lust.”

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Ephesians 4:25: “Therefore, *putting away* lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor’, for we are members of one another.”

Colossians 3:8: “But now you yourselves are to *put off* all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”

Hebrews 12:1: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us *lay aside* every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

James 1:21: “Therefore *lay aside* all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

These sins we are to set aside can be put in various categories

There are sins of the flesh – adultery, fornication, lewdness

There are sins of the mind – lust, envy, malice

There are sins of attitude – ungratefulness, resentment

There are sins of communication – blasphemy, boasting

Here’s how we can summarize this

What we do with our bodies, what we think with our minds, what we feel in our hearts, and what we say with our lips

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Peter specifies five sins we are to set aside

This is no easy task because these sinful behaviours come naturally to us

However, just because this is true isn’t a good excuse for not successfully removing these sins from our lives

Notice how Peter emphasizes the term “all” in verse one, urging us to get rid of all of these sinful behaviors all the time

There should never be a time when someone else says about us, “look at the malice, the deceit, the hypocrisy, the envy, and the ungodly speech in that person’s life”

We may have momentary lapses but we should not have lengthy manifestations

***What is malice?***

It is “the desire to cause pain, injury, or distress to another person” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

It is usually expressed through spitefulness or animosity

I have observed far too many Christians today trying to justify practicing this one

I have mentioned this more than once recently with regard to how people are posting comments through social media

A loving Christian won’t accommodate malice in their life

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***What is deceit?***

It is “the action or practice of deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

So, one is purposefully concealing or misrepresenting the truth for selfish reasons

There’s been a very recent, unsettling example of this in the life of a prominent Christian apologist

The coverup of his true behavior was deceitful to the highest extent

What, if anything, am I intentionally hiding from others right now that goes against God’s principles?

***What is hypocrisy?***

It is “a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not: behavior that contradicts what one claims to believe or feel” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Actors on tv or in movies are essentially hypocrites

They are playing a part which is not their true self

Jesus often used this term to describe the Pharisees

Matthew 23:28: “Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

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In fact, there are 17 references in the gospels where He called them hypocrites

We are all hypocrites to some extent

But we should not be consciously, purposely hypocritical and we should not flippantly excuse our hypocrisy

What is hypocritical about me right now?

***What is envy?***

It is “a feeling of discontentment or resentful longing”

I can’t be content, happy, satisfied unless I have what they have

Unchecked envy can cause us to easily compromise moral, biblical principles to obtain what we feel we deserve

This is why it is such an insidious sin

Does envy occupy any corner of my heart today?

Is there a part of me that’s unhappy with God’s present provisions in my life?

***What is evil speaking?***

Ephesians 4:29: “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

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Ephesians 5:4: “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

You can accurately test the authenticity of someone’s faith by how they communicate more than almost anything else

How much unwholesome talk is spoken from my lips on a daily basis?

We need to make a fresh commitment to stop making excuses for malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking being part of the way we live

It is time to toss rather than tolerate these sinful practices

God’s Word commonly communicates a “do” after a “don’t”

This is where Peter takes us next in the text

Like new-born babies we are to earnestly desire the pure milk of the Word of God

Matthew 5:6: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

The more one drinks of the Word, the more one grows in Christian maturity

God’s Word is essential to every believer’s spiritual growth

Pastors are continually challenging their flock to participate in personal devotions and Bible studies

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They really should not have to do this

Unless there is some underlying medical reason, you don’t have to encourage a baby to drink milk

In fact, they unequivocally let you know when they are thirsty

Our thirst for the Word of God should be self-evident

When we humbly, eagerly, consistently feed on God’s Word, we’re reachable and teachable

When this is true, then we’re not manifesting the sinful behaviours Peter referenced in verse one

When Christians deprioritize investing time in God’s Word, there’s something inherently spiritually dysfunctional about them

How many significant interactions do I have with God’s Word from Sunday to Sunday?

There is no question as to how we have come to fully experience the marvelous, amazing grace of God

This reality should make us yearn for more knowledge of God’s plan, principles, purposes and promises

We, in turn, begin to reflect more of God’s character

The godliest Christians are the most gracious ones