

## **GROWTH IN LIFE AND ITS RESULTS**

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Pet. 2:1-4, 6-8

First Peter chapter one is a complete unit that stands by itself. If we have a bird's-eye view of this chapter, we shall love it very much. I can testify that in these days I have come to love Peter's writings more than ever before. I hope that all the saints will come to appreciate Peter even as they appreciate Paul. Furthermore, I hope that all of us will come to love chapter one of 1 Peter and the three major points revealed there concerning the operation of the Triune God for His economy, the full salvation carried out by the operation of the Triune God upon His elect, and the result of this full salvation in a holy manner of life to express God and in unfeigned brotherly love toward the believers. In the church life we need to live a life to express our holy God and to love all our brothers.

### **PUTTING AWAY FIVE NEGATIVE THINGS**

In 2:1 Peter goes on to say, "Therefore, putting away all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings." This verse begins with "therefore." This indicates that the exhortation in 2:1-10 is based upon what is unveiled in chapter one. Three main things accomplished in the believers by the Triune God are emphasized in chapter one: the Father's regeneration (vv. 3, 23), the Son's redemption (vv. 2, 18-19), and the Spirit's sanctification (v. 2) to make the believers a holy people, living a holy life (vv. 15-16). Based upon this, Peter charges the believers to grow in life (2:2) for the building up of a spiritual house (2:5).

Although chapter one is complete in itself, Peter, according to his experiences, still has more to say. Therefore, with chapter one as his basis, he proceeds to give the charge found in chapter two. He begins by telling the saints to put away all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envyings, and evil speakings. Of the hundreds of sinful things, Peter selects five: malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. I would ask you to spend some time to consider what these are.

According to the sequence of these five matters, malice is the root, the source, and evil speaking is the expression. We may have malice as a root within us. Then there will eventually be evil speaking as the expression of this malice. The development from malice to evil speaking includes guile, hypocrisies, and envyings, three downward steps from malice toward evil speaking. If we have guile, we shall also have hypocrisies; and if hypocrisies, then envyings as well. Hence, the root is malice, the development includes guile, hypocrisy, and envy, and the final expression is evil speaking.

### **LONGING FOR THE GUILLESS MILK OF THE WORD**

Verse 2 says, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word, that by it you may grow unto salvation." Born through regeneration (1:3, 23), the believers become babes who can grow in life unto further salvation, and that for God's building, by being nourished with the spiritual milk.

"Guileless" in verse 2 does not mean unadulterated, in contrast to less pure teachings; instead, it is guileless in contrast to the guile in verse 1. Guileless milk is milk without false purpose, without any other goal but to nourish the soul.

What can swallow up, or eliminate, our guile? The nourishment contained in the guileless milk of the word is an antibiotic for guile. In the Word of God there is a nourishment that is milk for our inner being. Just as our physical body is nourished with milk, so our inner being, our soul, needs to be nourished with the guileless milk of the word. This milk contains an element that can eliminate our guile. Therefore, the milk of the word is guileless milk.

If you are full of malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, you will not have any appetite for the Word. You will not be hungry or thirsty for the Word of God. You will not have the longing, the desire, to drink the pure milk of the Word. If you want to hunger and thirst after God's word, that is, if you want to desire the drinking of the milk in the word, you need to hate your malice and abstain from speaking evil things about others.

Suppose for quite a long period of time, perhaps more than a year, a particular brother has been filled with malice. Certain brothers, especially the elders, he does not like. Because he is full of malice and also full of guile,

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hypocrisies, and envyings, spontaneously he begins to speak negatively about others. He may speak evil concerning both brothers and sisters, both older ones and younger ones. This evil speaking has its source in the malice within him. To be sure, a brother in that condition will not have any appetite for the Word. From experience I know that he would neither hunger nor thirst for the nourishment in the Word of God.

However, let us suppose that this particular brother receives the mercy of the Lord one day to realize his sinfulness. Realizing his need of Christ as the sin offering and the trespass offering, he repents, confesses his sins, and prays, "O Lord, forgive me. For a long time, I have been filled with malice, and I have spoken in an evil way about others. Lord, this shows me that sin is within me. Lord, even though I have been regenerated, I still have sin in me, for my fallen nature is sinful. O Lord, I need You as my sin offering. I take You and apply You as my sin offering. Oh, may the blood of the sin offering cleanse me, Lord! I realize that my evil speaking concerning the brothers and sisters is an offense, a trespass. Lord, I am full of trespasses! Forgive me and cleanse me. I take You not only as my sin offering, but also as my trespass offering. All day long, Lord, I want to enjoy You."

If the brother prays in this way, soon he will begin to have an appetite for the milk of the word. He will desire to come to the Word for nourishment. He will come to the Bible not to gain the knowledge of doctrine, but to drink nourishing milk. Spontaneously as he is reading the Bible, he will be drinking the guileless milk of God's word. Eventually, this milk will get into his inward being and function as an antibiotic to kill the germ of malice. Furthermore, this brother will begin to love all the saints. He may say, "Oh, I love the brothers and the sisters. I love all the elders. All the saints are good, and all of them are better than I am."

### **GENUINE GROWTH**

According to Peter's word in verse 2, we should long for the guileless milk of the word so that by it we may grow. To grow is a matter of life and in life. We received the divine life through regeneration, and we need to grow in this life and with this life by being nourished with the milk conveyed in the Word of God.

We should desire the guileless milk of the word not only to have a spiritual antibiotic, but also to receive nourishment so that we may grow. The guileless milk of the word nourishes us, and by this nourishment we grow.

Many Christians think that to grow is to gain more knowledge. After a new believer has been baptized, others may encourage him to attend some kind of Bible class. He may be encouraged to get more knowledge. However, he may not hear a word that helps him to realize that through regeneration he has received the divine life and that now his need is to grow in life. He may only be helped to learn the stories in the Gospels and then the stories in the Old Testament. Gradually, he may pick up more Bible knowledge, and some may regard this as growth. This concept of growth, however, is altogether contrary to that in the New Testament. According to the New Testament, growth is the genuine increase in the measure of life. Knowledge does not help us to increase in the measure of life.

We need to desire the guileless milk of the word so that by it we may have real growth in life. True growth is the increase of the measure of life. If we are growing in life, the life element within us will increase, and there will be an increase in our spiritual stature (Eph. 4:13).