



The Enduring Word

*²² Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, **love one another fervently with a pure heart,** ²³ **having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,** ²⁴ because*

*"All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
²⁵ But the word of the LORD endures forever."*

*Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (Chapter 2) Therefore, **laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,** ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ **if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.***

Peter ends chapter one saying, "since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren.." That's a little confusing when you first read it because it looks like somehow we're able to purify our souls, and we know we cannot. This is just a poetic way of saying that when we accepted Jesus' work on the cross, our souls were purified permanently. That is our "holy standing" or "holy status." It is not our "temporary status of holiness," otherwise known as holy living. He urges us that since we've accepted the love of God through Christ, we should love each other fervently. We should love as He loves us.

"Fervently" comes from the Latin word *fervens*, meaning boiling, hot, or burning. We are called to love one another with a burning heart. This is a challenge to each of us to keep loving one another with a sincere heart. Don't let the fire go out. Keep feeding that fire of love. I think of this as saying we need to love one another with a burning love. We all forget that our friendships with one another will go on for eternity. We are to do our part while here on the earth to keep that fire going. Loving requires energy. It will cost you time, talent, and treasure.

Keeping a fire going requires putting fuel on the fire. If you don't add something to the fire, it will eventually go out. It needs the oxygen that can be provided by blowing on the fire or fanning it. It needs fuel such as kindling or more wood. We love one another fervently by continuing to invest time, talent, and treasure into each other's lives. For a church body, this goes beyond the pastors coming to visit you. It means YOU are getting out of YOURSELF and serving others in the Church family. Are you doing your part to contribute something to the welfare of those with whom you worship? It might mean burning brush at the church. It might mean turning on the air conditioners. It might mean cleaning a pot or a pan. It might mean greeting others. It might mean taking people you don't know so well out to eat. If you're not involved with others outside yourself, it might be time to think and pray about how you can do that.

Peter then reminds us that we've been born again in an incorruptible way. It is permanent. Our standing and status in Jesus are permanent. Once a child, you're always a child. Once you're saved, you're always saved. I love thinking that my relationship with the Lord is incorruptible. It won't rust away, burn away, or rot away. And Peter reminds us that the Word of God abides forever. I find this very comforting. The Word of God is Jesus. And He is revealed to us continually in the written Word of God, the Bible.

Peter is quoting a Messianic prophecy from the Book of Isaiah. The New Testament quotes this several times, but not much attention is given to the original passage from Isaiah. As a child, I heard it mentioned each week as a preface to the Pastor's sermon. But, there is so much more here. Let's turn to Isaiah chapter forty for a moment.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"

Says your God.

² *"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,*

That her warfare is ended,

That her iniquity is pardoned;

For she has received from the LORD's hand

Double for all her sins."

³ *The voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

"Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make straight in the desert

A highway for our God.

⁴ *Every valley shall be exalted*

And every mountain and hill brought low;

The crooked places shall be made straight

And the rough places smooth;

⁵ *The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

⁶ *The voice said, "Cry out!"
And he said, "What shall I cry?"*

*"All flesh is grass,
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.*

⁷ *The grass withers, the flower fades,
Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.*

⁸ *The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever."*

The reader should read the entirety of chapter forty because Peter says that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. He says, "*Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.*" Jesus Christ is that Word, and the mission He came to fulfill for you and me WAS and IS the "gospel preached to you (and me)."

Peter then will tell us how to live in light of the salvation we each have come to enjoy.

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

No Malice – Desire the best for others

Malice is a funny word. We usually only hear it in criminal statutes like "murder with malice aforethought," etc. Peter says that we are to lay aside all "malice." "So what exactly is malice? The etymological dictionary says its roots come from a word for "bad," meaning when a person has the "desire to hurt another, propensity to inflict injury or suffering, active ill-will,"¹ This means that **each one of us should NEVER desire anything but good for one another.** I often pray for each of you to be the "heart and hands" of Jesus to those with whom you come into contact each day. When we love that way, we're less inclined to say harmful or hurtful things to one another or unbelievers.

¹ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=malice>

No Deceit

Peter says there is to be no deceit among us. The ancient meaning of deceit is rather interesting. It means to "take from another." Specifically, it means "to ensnare, take in, beguile, cheat," from de "from" or pejorative (see [de-](#)) + capere "to take," from PIE root [*kap-](#) "to grasp."² This means that **in our dealings, we're to be careful not to take advantage of one another.** And I would say, don't take advantage of one another's kindnesses.

No Hypocrisy

I think most of us know what it means to be a hypocrite. Again, let's look at the etymology of the word. A hypocrite is a pretender. In the men's Bible Study, we've been studying a man's tendency to "pose," pretending to be something he is not. The etymology is "from Greek *hypokritēs* "stage actor; pretender, dissembler," from *hypokrinesthai*. Peter is **urging us to be genuine with one another. Never should we be fake to each other.** That is contrary to who we are in Christ.

This brings up the thought of truth-telling. You might ask, "If old so and so is a lazy slob, should I point that out to him"? I would answer like my grandmother. If you can't say something good, maybe it's better not to say anything. And, if you're going to point out constructive criticism, do so with what I think Pastor Larry calls a "truth sandwich." You might say, "Pastor, I love your teaching about the 2nd Coming, but I think you might be wrong in the part you said last Sunday. But, Pastor, I realize I might not have it all right either, and I appreciate the thoroughness of you presenting this to us, and I love you".

I'm just making this example, but I want us to understand precisely how we are to "speak the truth in love." We should be truthful to others, but ALWAYS with love and **love, always considers the effect that the truth will have on the hearer.** Always err on the side of courtesy, being understanding, forgiving, and gracious. This especially applies to those of us who live with a spouse or another person.

No Envy and No Evil Speaking

We should never envy another for having more than we have. That is a sin. That is envy. We are to celebrate the successes of one another and never compare ourselves to one another. We should lift one another up and rejoice in every victory we accomplish. We are a family, and we must love and care for one another like a family.

² <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=deceit>

Speaking “evil” is wrong. This isn’t about casting wicked spells or speaking of unmentionable things, although I suppose it could mean that. Instead, it **means pointing out the deficiencies or weaknesses of another** in the body. That’s called “slander.” It might be done to tear down the reputation of another, but it is usually motivated by someone trying to feel better about themselves in a perverted way. The etymological dictionary sheds significant light on the attitude of evil speaking. Evil is “**disapproval, dislike or disparagement**” [OED]. Evil was the word the Anglo-Saxons used where we would use bad, cruel, unskillful, defective (adj.), or harm (n.), crime, misfortune, disease (n).”³

This means we’re not to speak in a disapproving way of others. **I avoid saying I like this person or I don’t like that person.**” When you say that you “don’t like someone,” it is just speaking evil of others. What Peter is saying is that “we should not point out the defects or deficiencies in each other.” A certain amount of accepting one another is required when we’ve been born again and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Peter ends this portion by saying that you and I are to do these things BECAUSE WE HAVE TASTED OF THE GRACE OF THE LORD. That grace is undeserved, and it goes on and on. Let us love one another in that same way.

Let us pray.

³ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=evil>