

## Growing Up into Salvation

A sermon by Larry Kirkpatrick

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So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ESV

Today's message carries forward our understanding of First Peter. Remember, the end of 1 Peter chapter one showed us that what people produce does not last, but that God and His truth are enduring. Therefore we are called to cooperate with Him so that we permit Him to shape our lives by His gospel. It is after this call is made that we lay aside, put away, renounce the five vicious practices listed by Peter.

### **Five Forbidden Practices**

#### Malice

Malice is the intention or desire to harm another. This is not limited to physical harm. We should not harbor in ourselves any desire or intention to harm another human individual, whether their physical person, their influence, their reputation. Perhaps the neighbor holds strange beliefs and the other neighbor is engaging in Bible studies with him. You know that he is teaching error because he told you what he is teaching. It is not sound doctrine. You may pray that his influence will be limited because you know that it is harming another, but you would never intentionally tell a lie about him or his beliefs; that would be to engage in behavior based in malice.

#### Deceit

Guile or deception is prohibited; it will form no part of the Christian's life. We will discuss this item at length just a bit farther on.

## Hypocrisy

Literally, hypocrisy is mask-wearing, to be different on the outside than you are on the inside. Naturally, the kind of mask-wearing behavior people usually engage in is to try to appear to be upstanding and moral, but in their heart to harbor immoral thoughts and desires.

## Envy

To envy is to engage in discontented and resentful longing for someone else's possessions, qualities, or situation. The tenth of the Ten Commandments is that a person shall not covet.

## Evil Speaking

Evil speaking, slander, literally, all “downward-speaking” is to be discontinued. It is dangerous to think in such negative ways, but to speak it has an even farther-reaching effect: it endangers others. As a race, humans are psychologically fragile. Only a few words of discouragement can influence them and turn them onto a destructive downward path. God wants us to recognize the desperate risks that surround the practice of evil speaking.

## **As the Infant Desires Milk**

What does a baby want to consume? She wants to drink milk. Her strongest preference is for human breast milk, the most perfectly designed nourishment possible for her growing body. She wants it several times a day. The desire for milk is directly linked to her need to grow. She is ready to grow. She needs nourishment that will grow her!

You see here a description of the milk. KJV gives “sincere milk”; The ESV offers “spiritual milk.” Peter wrote in the original Greek that the believer is to desire the *adolos* milk. Now, in Greek, the word *dolos* means a baited trap. Something that is *adolos* is something that is unbaited, non-deceptive, unadulterated. By extension, then, it is true, or sincere. It is spiritual too, but that is a rather fuzzy translation. Literally, the Christian is to desire the unbaited milk.

This word occurs only one time in the New Testament. But the word DOLOS is seen several times. But the highest word density in the New Testament is by—Peter. We just read in 2:1 how we are to lay aside all “guile” (KJV). Then we also have the following in 2:22:

[Jesus] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

And 3:10:

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.

Beside these, we recall other texts like John 1:47, where Nathaniel is identified by Jesus as a believer in whom is no guile. Revelation 14:5 describes end-time believers as those in whom there is no guile, no deception.

When the average modern thinks of fishing, he thinks of bait fishing. There is a hook and with the hook is bait. The fish is caught when it bites down onto the hook and it cannot escape. When Jesus said that he would make the fishermen of Galilee fishers of men, what kind of fishing was he referring to? Not bait fishing, but net fishing. There is no deception involved in net fishing. The net is cast out and let down and the fish are surrounded. The net is pulled in and the fisherman goes through the catch, throwing back the fish he chooses not to harvest while keeping those whom he judges are right to harvest.

Although God does not fish with deceptive bait, there are those who do. They offer currently popular forms of “music” as spiritual food. God’s Word is thrown in, mingled in a salad with the bait. People think they are being fed, but it is a concoction calculated to prey upon them. Peter warns the believer to seek the milk of God’s Word unbaited.

When we come to a hard place in the Scripture, about a practice that we should engage in or one that we should not, what do we do? Jesus warned that always there would be two pathways presented (Matthew 7:14, 15); one is close, confined, difficult, the other is wide. Both are proposed as leading to life, but only the difficult way does. Then one path must be baited and the other unbaited. One is easy going, the other is difficult.

Look back at the five points Peter mentions in 2:1. There you see the unbaited road. There is no deception in it, and difficult things are presented. If you would follow Jesus in whom was no deception, then you must give up malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil-speaking.

What? I have to give something up to follow Jesus?

Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:23).

It is not that we must be *willing* to give up all; we must *give* up all for Christ. Then He gives most of it back into our hands consecrated for His use.

The unbaited Word tells it like it is. It allows no half-Christianity. If we have not given all to Christ, we will be inclined to take the baited word, the “Christianity” that we suppose is the real thing and which permits us to keep something for ourselves that is not given to God. A Christianity without sharp moral boundaries is a baited kind. Who offers such bait? Not God, but our adversary. Milk is for growing. We want to have a Christianity that anticipates growth in holiness; that is the Christian norm. In fact, that is the only faith that qualifies as real Christianity.

## **Grow Thereby or Grow Up into Salvation?**

The phrase in 1 Peter 2:2 completes in two different ways depending upon your translation. One says that we desire the unbaited word in order that we may “grow thereby,” and the other, “that by it you may grow up into salvation.” The difference in the original manuscripts is two words which translate as “into salvation.” So, we can check and see if the word in question, “salvation,” is used in Peter. This word is found in only five of the eight New Testament writers (Matthew, Mark, and James do not use it). But we look and find that the word “salvation” is frequent in Peter (1 Peter 1:5, 9, 10; 2:2; 2 Peter 3:15).

It happens that this issue of the missing phrase “into salvation” likely is a simple copyist’s mistake. Sometimes the eyes of the copyist accidentally jump from one cluster of letters to a similar looking cluster on the next line. In this case, the cluster EIS to EIE. The difference is one stroke in one letter. The phenomenon called parablepsis. The earlier manuscripts read that we are to grow up into salvation.

Compare the two ideas. One is that we are caused to grow by means of the Word. The other is that we are caused to grow up into salvation by means of the untainted milk. What is the agency of change? Where does the nourishment come from? Not from the action of drinking, but from the effect of the nourishment that is received. Drinking milk is a necessary condition for receiving the nourishment of the milk. But if you could drink it and its nutrition not be extracted from it, the body would receive no food and would not grow.

Look at how Peter talks about salvation in other places. In 1 Peter 1:5 the text reads in ESV that by God’s power we “are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (ESV). And in verse nine, KJV gives “Receiving the end of your faith,

even the salvation of your souls.” Or, in the ESV, “obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” Peter speaks of salvation as something that comes at the end of one’s experience, not the beginning. Not that there are not ways of thinking of salvation as occurring earlier, but that this Bible writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, places salvation at the end, after a trial of one’s faith. Remember, he is writing not just to believers but to persecuted believers—people who must endure.

But is this idea of growing to maturity a biblical way to think of our salvation? Jesus used it. Recall Mark 4:26-29:

And he said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’

See the process? First the plant is tiny, like a baby. A process of growth occurs. At last, the plant has attained to maturity and brought forth fruit. Then, at the end, not the beginning, comes the harvest.

But some have been urgent to introduce a different idea into the church. Seventh-day Adventists have long considered salvation in similar terms to Peter. We see one of the best ways of describing it as a process of growth. Sometimes we have talked about the first part as “justification” and the last part as “sanctification.” Others have spoken of letting justification include both ideas. Ellen White used both ways. For example,

While God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul. . . . In order

for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 366).

When she speaks of justification as have precursors “before” it can take place, of it being “retained,” of the necessity of “entire” surrender, and of “continual obedience,” it becomes apparent that the idea presented is that justification in at least certain respects, is seen by her to be a process.

Justification by faith in Christ will be made manifest in transformation of character (Ellen G. White, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1071).

Here we see that justification is seen in transformation of character. When one is living in justification by faith, he has faith, and his faith cannot be hidden. He is changed by his faith; he does not do what he used to do but he now chooses to act differently. Others see the transformation. It is not merely internal and theoretical but it is outward and evident.

Here is one that does not use the word “justification,” but check what is said:

God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114, emphasis in original).

Some would think of justification and forgiveness as being the same thing. That is fine, as long as we understand that forgiveness / justification is not merely an empty statement, but that it includes the actual reclamation of a person from sin.

### **Have You Tasted?**

There is one more point in the passage that we want to see. We see salvation discussed in terms of new birth, drinking milk, growing. But there remains the question of how we are to

persist in growth. And here is where Peter introduces an “if.” It is an emphatic if: “If indeed.” And the whole question is “if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

This idea first appears in the Bible in Psalm 34:8:

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!  
(ESV).

What is interesting is that it almost seems out of place in Psalm 34. Psalm 34 is about deliverance. We think that it was composed after David feigned madness and escaped from Achish (1 Samuel 21:10-15). Tasting and seeing that the Lord is good was what happened when David escaped with his life. God provided an escape from something that David realized had been a deadly mistake on his part. David realized he could be killed any moment. He humbled himself by pretending to be deranged.

David was very grateful to escape with his life. By experience of personal deliverance, he knows that God delivers and he gives praise to God as He who is good. “Blessed,” says he, “is the man who takes refuge in Him!” Here is an insight for us. Isn’t it true that each one of us has some tale of God’s special deliverance? We should take it to heart, to consider His unmerited goodness toward us, and see that help as the time when He drew especially close. That was one time, at least, when we tasted, when we saw, that God is good. We agree with David, blessed is the person who takes refuge in God!

### **Conclusion**

When we accept the word of God, which lives and abides forever, new things become possible. Now we put away old patterns of behavior and we learn new ones. We recognize that

we have much to learn from God. We are like children who need nourishing milk, and God is the one and only source for this milk.

Many stand ready to interest us in their mix of God and the world, their half-paths to salvation which are whole paths to destruction. But God's Word is unbaited. As we are nourished by it, we grow up into salvation.

Salvation is seen by Peter as the end result of a journey with God. We should recall our occasions when God delivered us and see those as the times of special refuge in Him, special closeness, in which we tasted and saw that He is good. This motivation will be a help to us in times of trial and persecution, and an encouragement to stay on His pathway, in His narrow way that is not represented as life at its beginning but as the way which leads to life. Its all about Jesus, so gracious, so ready to change us, and give to us eternal life. It continues each day. Which is just what we want!

**Biographical note:** Larry Kirkpatrick has served in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1994. He is a pastor of the American West, having led churches in Nevada, Utah, California, and Idaho. His writings include the books *Real Grace for Real People*, and *Cleanse and Close*. Larry and wife Pamela presently serve in the Upper Columbia Conference, ministering to the [Bonners Ferry](#) and Clark Fork churches in the incomparable beauty of Northern Idaho.