

All the Difference

a Bible study note from Wayne Braudrick

Purify

The base thought in 1 Peter 1:22 concerns internal purification. Both James and Peter focus on this; in fact, they use some of the same verbs to describe the Christian's practical cleansing before God.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22 NIV)

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:8 KJV)

In the previous sections of chapter 1, Peter stressed the rich and remarkable salvation that God has graciously granted. Now he reminds us to live that new life out in healthy, clean hearts. Paul puts the idea this way:

"...in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." (Ephesians 4:22-24 NASB)

Set aside the bad list

The real question therefore is not what we're supposed to do. We're to live pure lives by God's grace. The question becomes "how?" How is the born-again believer in Jesus supposed to live a life of pure love? In the first verses of chapter 2, God grants us two great starting points.

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander (1 Peter 2:1 NASB)

First, in verse 1 Peter reminds us that our natural self is not the answer. What I call "the bad list" of 1 must be set aside. That is to say that these things are naturally part of each of us and we must partner with the Lord such that we effectively set aside our natural nastiness. That's the first "how" – set aside the bad list.

Of course this is easier said than done. Amazingly, the bad list haunts us even when we try to do good. Jeffrey Zaslow recently devoted an entire column in the Wall Street Journal to this reality. He writes:

"Every day, we see the reminders of the limitations, and even the dangers, of good intentions...In Chicago's City Hall, waterless urinals in the men's room were touted for saving 50,000 gallons of water a year per urinal. But without enough water per flush, the copper pipes corroded and urine collected in the

restroom wall. The smell of urine spread through the City Council chambers. Last month, amid snickering, the well-meaning conservation effort was abandoned, and regular urinals reinstalled.”¹

Remember your limitations

This rule of unintended consequences and the reality that the “bad list” clings doggedly to us leads Peter to the second “how.”

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Peter 2:2-3 NIV)

Don't think of yourself as having already arrived. Remember from whence you have come. Think of yourself as a child in continual need of your loving heavenly Parent. Solomon the wise said of himself that he was so continually in need of God's wisdom and grace that he (Solomon) was like a child. Apart from the Lord, Solomon didn't know when to go out and when to go in. (See 1 Kings 3:6-9.) If that was true of the wisest of people, it's true of us! Peter says to remember the kindness of the Lord and how He has saved you, and then apply that justification truth to your daily sanctification living. Just as you & I needed the Lord to rescue and justify us, so we need Him now in our daily living. Our continual need of God's provision resembles nothing so much as the neediness of a newborn child. Recollecting this daily is transformative.

FBC missionary Dan Bolin commented on this in a wonderful note he sent last week:

“Studies show that we generally attribute our success to hard work or intelligence. But when things don't go well we blame bad luck or others for our failures. Human nature takes the credit and shifts the blame. Five times in the Book of Deuteronomy we read the phrase, *Remember that you were slaves in Egypt.* (5:15, 15:15, 16:12, 24:18 and 24:22) The reason for looking back and remembering is to maintain perspective in the present...When we forget where we came from we will begin to think we have earned our positions or possessions and that we deserve any blessing we may enjoy. Only when we remember that we were *slaves in Egypt* will we engage life with gratitude and humility. As we move forward from Easter let us remember the cost of our freedom and the price that was paid to gain our liberty. It is not our hard work, intelligence or good luck that sets us free. God's grace liberates us to serve Him with thankful hearts.”

Purify your hearts for love – by relying continually on the Lord and His Word such that the bad list is set aside. That will truly make all the difference.

God bless,

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"The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith." I Timothy 1:5
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ⁱ Wall Street Journal, March 3, 2010