

Five ingredients of love – five freedoms

- 1. From malice
- 2. From deceit
- 3. From hypocrisies
- 4. From jealousies
- 5. From slanders of every kind
- What Peter has on his mind are breaches of fellowship

Christian Godliness develops

- 1. They are to grow in the word of God
- ‘God’s written word – milk to feed the mind through constant meditation

Peter now opens up what is involved in his appeal for Christian love. First there are five ingredients of love^{□1}. He says: ‘So put away all malice and all deceit, as well as hypocrisies, jealousies, and slanders of every kind’^{□1}. What is involved in this intense loving from the heart that he has mentioned^{□2}?

1. **Freedom from malice.** Love in the fellowship will be damaged by any kind of ill-will, the holding of grudges, the showing of hostility or hurtful attitudes.

2. **Freedom from deceit.** Good loving fellowship will shun any kind of deception or dishonesty towards each other. Cunning and stealthy ways obstruct pleasantness and rouse suspicion.

3. **Freedom from hypocrisies.** Peter uses a plural word, referring to times when the Christians might be tempted to put an outward show of spirituality that is not real. The ‘hypocrite’ conceals his true character or his true motives.

4. **Freedom from jealousies.** The word refers to any kind of envy of others, whether of their advantages, their popularity, their wealth or their eminence in society.

5. **Freedom from slanders of every kind.** The Christians are not to detract from the reputation of others.

These five sins he mentions are not the kind of scandalous crimes that get one into trouble with the state. He does not mention murder, theft, adultery, or any obvious crimes. What Peter has on his mind are breaches of fellowship. There are many Christians who might not be tempted to commit murder or adultery, but nevertheless do damage in the Christian fellowship by their gossipy ways or their jealous attitudes.

Next he mentions the way in which Christian godliness is to develop that which God has given us in the new birth. They are ‘born again’^{□1}. They do have a ‘seed’ of life within them created by the gospel.

1. **They are to grow in the word of God.** Like a newborn baby that instinctively is eager to be breast-fed, they must develop a hunger for the word of God. Peter is not referring to any kind of intellectualism that is hungry for ‘teaching’ simply as a form of intellectual entertainment. It is not the excitement of being a ‘student’ that inspires the Christian. Rather it is something more personal: a hunger to hear God’s voice. He says: ‘Like newborn babies, desire the pure milk of the word, in order that by it you may grow in salvation’^{□1}, since you have tasted that the Lord is kind^{□2}.

‘Of the word’ is difficult to translate here. It is one word (*logikon*) which seems to have two meanings at the same time. It means ‘milk for the mind’, ‘reasonable’ milk (see the same word in Romans 12:2), milk that feeds the inner relationship to God. Yet there must also be some connection with ‘the word’ (*logos*) and so it is also rightly translated ‘milk of the word’. ‘Milk’ is a metaphor for Christian teaching revealed by God. In practice it means the Bible and its being pressed upon them in the fellowship meetings of the church. We need to concentratedly meditate on the written Word of God, beginning with some of its highways (Genesis, John’s Gospel, Romans, Ephesians and 1 Peter) before we get lost in the complexities of Daniel and Revelation! We

□1 2:1

□2 1:22

□1 1:3

□1 2:2

□2 2:3

need to be like the Bereans who when listening to the apostle Paul, examined the Scriptures daily 'to see whether these things were so'¹.

¹ Acts 17:11

2. They are to seek spiritual growth

- We grow in what we already have – laying hold more deeply the salvation God wants to work in our characters

2. **They are to seek spiritual growth.** By the milk of the word they will 'grow in salvation'. They have been 'saved' in the sense that they are children of God, clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. But they need to be progressively delivered from old habits, progressively brought to be like Jesus. Peter calls it 'growing in salvation'^a. There is more of their salvation to be got hold of. Growth is needed as well as new experiences. Christians often want to live without much growth but under the enjoyment of new and exciting experiences. Certainly, God can give us many exciting experiences! But the 'experiences' are given to help us in spiritual growth. Christians often want 'deliverance', or 'power' or 'revival' or new spiritual gifts. All that is fine! But we must not neglect the need to steadily grow in grace. It is not growing 'into' holiness, but growing 'in' holiness. God has given us the new birth. We are alive to God. We grow 'in' what we already have, and more deeply lay hold of the salvation which God is wanting to work out in our characters.

3. They already have the right starting-point

- They have tasted and they have seen that the Lord is good
- Now let past mercies lead on to new mercies

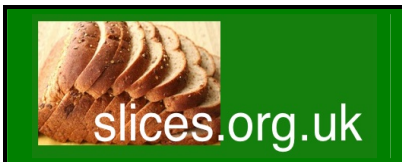
3. **They already have the right starting-point.** They can live in this way, says Peter, because they 'have tasted that the Lord is kind'. He comes back to his constant encouragement when he reminds them again – as always – of who they are, and what has happened to them.

If they meditate on what God has already done for them, they will find many things to stimulate and encourage their moving forward with God. They have tasted that God is gracious. Jesus has died for them. They have been given the Holy Spirit. God has been willing to forgive their many stumblings and failure. They have had many experiences of the sweetness of God towards them. They have tasted and they have seen that the Lord is good¹. They have not simply believed doctrines; they have tasted God Himself in His sweetness. They have had many rich experiences of God's mercy. Now let past mercies lead on to new mercies. If God has been good to them before, God will be good to them again. God wants to be even more gracious to them, and lead them into the ways of loving godliness.

¹ see Psalm 34:8

Footnote

^a Here the Greek *eis* means 'in' rather than 'into', as in 1 Peter 5:12 where the meaning is agreed to mean 'in which you stand' (see M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, Editrice Pontificia, 1990, p. 37). The blending of *en* and *eis* is specially visible in Mark, Luke and 1 Peter.



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