

STRIP OFF SOME THINGS AND CRAVE THE WORD OF GOD

1 PETER 02:01–03

Introduction

This is a forceful passage of Scripture. It uses some descriptive, active words. The imperative “rid yourself” means *to strip off*, and the imperative “crave” means *to desire*. Believers are to strip off some things and crave the Word of God.

- I. There are things that have to be stripped off (v. 1).
- II. There is one thing that has to be craved: the milk of God’s Word (vv. 2-3).

I. 1 Peter 02: 01 Maturity and Spiritual Growth

The believer is to strip off some things. The Greek word for “rid yourself” (apothemenoi) means to put off one’s clothing; to cleanse oneself of those things that defile. Both meanings are applicable in this verse (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 94). There are some things that defile the believer. He is to take these things and strip them off just as he would strip off his clothes; he is to cleanse himself from all that defiles him. Five things in particular are mentioned, and note: all five have to do with what has just been said in the former passage. We are to love one another deeply, from the heart. The very things that we are to strip off are the things that dirty and soil our love. They have to do with how we treat one another, with our behaviour toward our Christian brothers and sisters.

1. Believers must strip off “malice” (kakian). The word means two things.
 - a. In a general sense it means wickedness, all kinds and forms of evil. It is a word that strikes at all the vices of men.

Rom 1:29-32 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

- b. In a narrow sense it means malice, deep-seated feelings against a person; hatred that lasts on and on; intense and long-lasting bitterness against a person. It means ill will, actually wishing that something bad would happen to a person. It means to be vicious, spiteful and to hold a grudge. It means that a person has turned his heart over to evil:
 - => He no longer has any good feelings toward the other person — none whatsoever.
 - => He could care less if something bad happened to the person.
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The charge is strong: believers are to strip off malice — all of their evil and wickedness and all of their ill feelings against others. Believers are to be pure and clean, and they are to live pure and clean lives before their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

1 Cor 5:8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Cor 14:20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Col 3:8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

1 Pet 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.

2. Believers must strip off “deceit” (dolon). The word to deceive and mislead people; to set bait so as to catch them; to bait or deceive in order to achieve one’s own end. It means to be two-faced. Note that deceit or deception has to do primarily with words. When a person wants something, he tries to get it...

- by flattery
- by false tales
- by off-coloured suggestions
- by outright lying
- by false promises
- by suggestive talk
- by enticing words

When a person wants something, he looks at the other person’s weakness or ignorance, and he tries to appeal to it. He appeals to it by deceiving and beguiling the person. The exhortation is strong: believers must strip off deceit. We must not deceive and mislead people.

3. Believers must strip off “hypocrisy” (hupokriseis). The word means one who pretends, puts on a show, acts out something he is not. At first the word simply meant one who replied or answered another person. Then it came to mean acting, as actors play-acted the lines of a scene. Finally, the word was used in the worst sense: play-acting, pretending; one who wore a mask to hide his real self; one who acted one way, but who was really another way; one who put on an outward show.

All kinds of hypocrisies are meant. A person is a hypocrite...

- when he acts as though he loves and believes God, but he does not live like God tells him to live.
- when he pretends to be following God, but he is living like he wants to live.
- when he shows a concern for the things of God, but his real concern is for the things of the world.
- when he professes to believe God's Word, but he questions it and adds and takes away from it.
- when he acts as though he cares for people, but he is really full of selfishness, self-seeking, possessiveness, hoarding, envy and pride.
- when he courts friends, but he is after something.
- when he acts friendly, but he could care less.
- when he promises, but he never intends to keep his promise.

Thought 1. Jesus warns hypocrites, severely warns them. Believers must, therefore, strip off any semblance of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is one of the sins that God hates above all others.

=> Hypocrites shall receive the greater damnation (Mt. 23:14).

=> Hypocrites are children of hell (Mt. 23:15).

=> Hypocrites are fools and blind (Mt. 23:17, 19).

=> Hypocrites are blind guides (Mt. 23:24).

=> Hypocrites are full of extortion and excess (Mt. 23:25).

=> Hypocrites are full of all uncleanness (Mt. 23:27).

=> Hypocrites are serpents, a generation of vipers (Mt. 23:33).

=> Hypocrites shall not escape the damnation of hell (Mt. 23:33).

Mat 23:28 *“In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

Luke 12:1 *Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”*

1 Tim 4:1-2 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

Titus 1:16 *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

1 Pet 2:1 *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

Prov 23:7 *For he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you.*

Prov 26:25 *Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart.*

4. Believers must strip off "envy" (phthonous): a person without God lives in envy (phthonoi). The word means that a person covets what someone else has, covets it so much that he wants it even if it has to be taken away from the other person. He may even wish that the other person did not have it or had not received it. We may look at people and envy their...

- money
- clothes
- position
- social status
- looks
- popularity
- possessions
- authority

The word envy means all kinds of envies and jealousies; it means that we are not to look at a person and envy to be like him nor to have what he possesses. The results of envy are terrible; envy takes a terrible toll upon the life and body of a person.

=> A person who envies *does not have peace or happiness*. He is dissatisfied with what he is and has and is always wanting more and more of what others have.

=> In addition to this, envy often drives a person into *crime and lawlessness* in order to get what he craves.

=> On top of this, envy often leads to *physical problems* such as migraine headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers and other illnesses.

=> Envy also causes *emotional problems* ranging from mild neurosis or depression to psychotic behaviour.

But thanks be to God our Saviour. He saves and delivers us from envy. Through Christ He gives us real life, and He satisfies our hearts and lives with eternal pleasures (Psa. 16:11). Therefore, we must strip off all envy. We must love one another and rejoice in the persons and possessions of others. We must love them, support and build them up, not envy and wish to see them torn down.

Prov 14:30 *A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*

Prov 23:17 *Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.*

Rom 13:13 *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

Prov 24:1 Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company.

1 Cor 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

5. Believers must strip off all “slander” (katalalias). This means to criticize, judge, backbite, gossip, censor, condemn and grumble against another person. It means to talk about and to tear down another person; to spread tales about another person that cut and hurt him and that lower his image and reputation in the eyes of others. The word usually means to talk about a person behind his back when he is not present.

Note that the brother has sinned. He has broken the law of God. He has failed and his failure is known. It is public knowledge, and he is being judged and criticized for his failure. He is being talked about. What he has done is being buzzed and gossiped about, and it is hurting and cutting him and damaging him more and more in the eyes of the world. Now, if we are forbidden to slander a person who is really guilty of sin, how much more are we forbidden to speak against a person just because we dislike or disagree with him?

Note what the Scripture says: this is *slander*. Talking about a person is *evil*. It is just as much an evil as the failure of the other person. Therefore, the person who judges is as guilty as the sinner.

The exhortation is strong: Christian believers are not to judge and slander one another. The reason is clear: we are brothers, brothers of Christ and of one another. All of us are of the family of God.

Therefore...

- we are to be loving, caring and looking after each other, not destroying each other.
- we are to be supporting, encouraging and building up one another, not tearing down one another.
- when one of us falls and gets into trouble, we are to be reaching out and helping him up, not pushing him farther down.

When we criticize a brother or sister in Christ, we are slandering one of God’s own children. Just think: we are actually slandering a son or daughter of God. This alone should keep us from slandering of our brothers in Christ.

Think about something else as well: there is never a spirit of slander in the humble and loving person. There is only a loving compassion for others, especially for those who have come short and fallen. Therefore, when we slander another person it means that we are neither humble nor loving, but the very opposite: prideful and hateful. We are slanderers.

Thought 1. There are several reasons why people tend to judge and criticize.

- 1) Criticism boosts our own self-image. Pointing out someone else's failure and tearing him down makes us seem a little bit better, at least in our own eyes. It adds to our own pride, ego and self-image.
- 2) Criticism is simply enjoyed. There is a tendency in human nature to take pleasure in hearing and sharing bad news and shortcomings about others.
- 3) Criticism makes us feel that our own lives (morality and behaviour) are better than the person who failed.
- 4) Criticism helps us justify the bad decisions we have made and the bad things we have done throughout our lives. We rationalize our decisions and acts by pointing out the failure of others.
- 5) Criticism points out to our friends how strong we are. Criticism gives good feelings because our *rigid beliefs* and *strong lives* are proven again. Proven how? By our brother's failure.
- 6) Criticism is an outlet for hurt and revenge. We feel *he deserves it*. Subconsciously, if not consciously, we think, "He hurt me so he deserves to hurt too." Therefore, we criticize the person who failed.

2 Cor 12:20 *For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.*

Eph 4:31 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

James 4:11 *Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.*

1 Pet 2:1 *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

Psa 101:5 *Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.*

II. 1 Peter 02:02–03 Crave for God's Word

The believer is to crave one thing — the milk of God's Word. Note three points.

1. The charge is an imperative, a command: "You desire, crave and yearn for the pure spiritual milk [of the Word.] And the craving and yearning are to be constant."

- a. The word “crave” (*epipotesate*) means to desire, yearn and long for the Word of God. It is a strong word, very strong. It paints the picture of being an absolute essential, of hungering and thirsting after the Word. If a believer is to grow, it is absolutely essential that he hunger and thirst after the milk of the Word.

Thought 1. Too many believers crave the Word here and there, sporadically. Growth can come only as we live in the Word day by day.

- b. The word “pure” (*adolos*) means unadulterated, unmixed with anything else. Men may seek the milk of other things; they may seek to be fed and satisfied by such things as...
- religion
 - education
 - fame
 - health
 - power
 - psychology
 - philosophy
 - possessions
 - comfort
 - science
 - pleasure
 - counselling

But none of these are pure. There are specks and dust and particles within every pursuit on earth — particles that make everything on earth weak and infirm and to some degree harmful. In addition and most tragic of all, every pursuit of man is doomed to pass away when man passes away. But there is one thing that is unadulterated; one thing that is completely and perfectly pure with no mixture whatsoever, and that is the Word of God. The Word of God lives and abides forever; therefore, we must crave and yearn for the Word of God. It is our only hope of enduring forever.

- d. The word “milk” usually refers to the food needed by immature believers. That is, it is usually used to make a distinction between the milk and the meat or mature teachings of the Word. But this is not the case with the present passage. A distinction is not being made between believers. All believers are seen as needing to grow and to learn more about the Lord. All believers are to crave the pure spiritual milk (food) of the Word.
2. The purpose for craving and yearning after the Word is that we may grow. The most ancient Greek manuscripts have the words “in your salvation” — “that we may grow up in *salvation*.” The idea is that we may grow up to full salvation, until we reach full maturity.

The Greek word that is translated “spiritual” (*logikos*) is translated by some commentators as *the word*. That is, the verse is made to read “desire the milk of the word” or “desire the reasonable and intelligent milk.” This seems to be the correct translation: “crave the pure milk of the Word.” This has clearly been the emphasis of Peter throughout this whole passage. His subject and thrust has been the Word of God (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). William Barclay states it as well as it can be stated:

“Logos is the Greek for word, and logikos means belonging to the word. This is the sense in which the Authorized Version takes the word, and we think that it is

entirely correct. Peter has just been talking about the word of God which lives and abides for ever (1 Peter 1:23-25). It is the word of God which is in his mind; and we think that what Peter means here is that the Christian must desire with his whole heart the nourishment which comes from the word of God, for by that nourishment he can thrive and grow up until he reaches salvation itself. In face of all the evil of the heathen world the Christian must strengthen his soul and his life with the pure food of the word of God” (The Letters of James and Peter. “The Daily Study Bible.” Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1958, p. 227).

3. The result of craving the Word of God is a most wonderful promise: we taste that the Lord is good. God feeds us, nourishes and nurtures us. He reveals and feeds our souls, teaching us all about His grace, His wonderful salvation and promises to us.

=> He teaches us how to live pure and clean lives; how to conquer the temptations of life; how to walk through the trials of life.

=> He teaches us all about the great salvation and promises He has made.

=> He teaches us all about Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious hope we have of living with the Lord forever and ever.

=> He teaches us how to worship, praise and honour Him as we walk in this corruptible world.

God just takes His Word and feeds us, nourishes and nurtures us in His marvellous goodness. As we crave and yearn for His Word, He grows us more and more into His image.

Acts 20:32 “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

2 Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

Psa 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psa 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

***Psa 119:103** How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

***Psa 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

***Psa 119:130** The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

***Jer 15:16** When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.*

***1 Pet 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

***2 Pet 1:19** And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

***2 Pet 3:18** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. ■*