

**Casting Off – 1 Peter 2:1**  
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis  
Union Baptist Church – 6/9/2019

**INTRODUCTION**

What are you pursuing with lots of energy in life right now and why? What do you have your heart set on? What are you longing for? Take an honest moment and identify one or two goals or desires you've been chasing after during the past month. These could be good or bad or neutral. They might be something big like a job promotion; or earning money for a vacation or a new house or car; or training for a marathon; or they could be something smaller like just getting some order in your life; or getting on top of your to-do list; or having a moment to yourself; or finding time for your hobbies. You can identify them by asking yourself: What often takes priority over other things I know I should be doing or even over my relationships with other people? Or what am I disappointed about at the end of the day when I haven't made any progress toward it?

Now if you've come up with one or two of these goals or desires that are important to you right now, ask yourself: Why are these so important to me? What am I hoping to achieve through them? And are they primarily focused on glorifying God and accomplishing his purposes or are they mostly about glorifying myself or pleasing myself? And finally, does my happiness depend on them? I want you to keep these goals or desires in the back of your mind as we study our passage this morning and I think you'll find what Peter has to share with us today very helpful and practical and freeing. Turn with me in your Bibles, if you would, to 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 1. And if you want to fill out the first heading of your sermon notes, it's this: *The pursuit of earthly glory*.

So, 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 1. This is a passage of Scripture that's very close to my heart and that really came alive to me many years ago when I lived in Colorado. As I was studying and meditating on the last part of chapter 1 and then I moved into the first 3 verses of chapter 2, the Spirit really opened my eyes to the connection between the two. And this connection centers around what I emphasized in our study last week, which was how we view all flesh and all its glory – in other words how we view all the achievements and possessions and

earthly goals we so often chase after in our pursuit of earthly glory...that is, in order to get the honor and respect and recognition of other people for our great achievements or our powerful position or our impressive possessions or our respectable lifestyle or our great wisdom – you fill in the blank – or perhaps even to just prove to ourselves that we have value and worth.

If our view is that the pursuit of earthly glory our top priority, and if most of our energy and efforts in life are directed toward achieving some form of it, we will be chained up to it and won't be free to live the new life of love God has for us. But in contrast, if we embrace the view of earthly glory that Peter shared with us last week, we will finally find the freedom to love God and love others above all as God's Word always teaches us to do. And that view Peter shared with us is this: ***All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.*** With this view, we'll be freed to stop living for the glory that's like the short-lived peony flower....beautiful for a few brief days, but then all over the ground, dried up and blown away by the wind before we know it. Do you want to spend your lifetime living for that type of glory? I'll tell you, that if you're willing to give up that pursuit and live for eternal, lasting, enduring, imperishable glory, you'll be freed to live the kind of life that will reveal God's glory to the world like nothing else...the life of loving others as you love yourself.

Today, in 1 Peter 2:1, we're going to look at 5 human attitudes and methods for pursuing earthly glory that we will be able to put aside for good when we give up chasing after the glory of a peony flower. Let's read verse 1 of chapter 2:

***So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.***

### **SO, PUT AWAY, ALL**

As we begin our study of this verse, we're going to start with the first four words, which are packed with significance. In your sermon notes, this section is labeled: *So, put away, all*. Notice first, the word, "So." This is like the word, "Therefore." In fact, some translations use "Therefore," instead of, "So." But the idea again is that what Peter is asking us to do here is the logical response to what he just shared with us in verses 22 to 25 of chapter 1. Since all flesh is like grass and all

its glory is like the flower of grass – dead and gone before you know it – while God’s ways of earnest love for each other last forever and bring eternal glory, this is what you must do. In other words, if you really believe what God says is true and are willing to give up the pursuit of earthly glory, this is what you’ll be freed to do.

And what is it you’ll be freed to do? You’ll be freed to “put away” some attitudes and methods that previously guided you in your pursuit of earthly glory. The picture here in the Greek is “casting off” something. Like getting rid of old, dirty, torn-up clothes...not running them through the washing machine again, but throwing them in the trash can or burning them up. Or perhaps even a better image is how I responded when I woke up one night on my trip to Egypt and felt a cockroach crawling on me. You’ve never seen me move so fast and aggressively to get something off of me NOW! I cast that thing off quicker than lightning and it went flying across the room.

This is the image Peter gives us to describe how we should relate to these old attitudes and methods so widely used by human beings in their pursuit of earthly glory. The Greek word translated, “put away,” is also in the aorist tense which indicates that this is a definite action we’re expected to take (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary*). We have to make a choice to do it and to do it aggressively and repeatedly if necessary. Whenever we’re tempted to fall back into these old ways, we cast them off like a cockroach. We fumigate. We eradicate. We’re repulsed by that nasty bug crawling on us in the night, and we throw it off, squish it and flush it down the toilet. You get the picture!

But there’s one more thing we need to notice before we move on to examining the 5 attitudes and methods Peter instructs us to cast off. And that is this: **ALL** of them need to go. In fact, in our verse today, there’s what you might call a trinity of “all’s.” Three times Peter employs the word, “all,” as he instructs us to cast off these attitudes and methods. Now, if you think about it, the word, “all,” in itself is quite absolute. All means all right? Every last bit. None left. 100%. But to use the word 3 times in one verse seems significant. Peter leaves us with no doubt that God wants his people to have no involvement whatsoever in these kinds of attitudes and methods. All, all, all need to go and be cast off whenever we find them crawling on us!

## THE FIVE ATTITUDES AND METHODS TO CAST OFF

So in the remainder of our time today, I want to briefly walk us through each of the 5 attitudes and methods we become free to cast off when we abandon our intense pursuit of earthly glory. But first, as you look them over in verse 1, notice that all of them involve our relationships with other people. They're all tied to that directive we received in last week's passage to "love one another earnestly." Each of these attitudes and methods involve NOT loving other people because we're allowing our earthly goals and desires to become more important than our relationships...to become more important than loving God and loving each other and in so doing revealing his glory to others.

Let's look now at these 5 *attitudes* and *methods* Peter teaches us to reject and cast off at all costs. The first is an attitude, a way of thinking, called *malice*. The best way to describe malice is having evil thoughts and intentions toward another person. Malice can arise from a wide variety of sources. It may arise out of envy for something someone else has or it could develop from hurt feelings or jealousy or even verbal or physical abuse. Or it could just come from our own self-focus and our intense pursuit of what we think we want in this world. When we're bound up with the pursuit of earthly glory, other people become obstacles standing in the way of what we want, and malice arises easily if they're blocking the path to what our heart is set on.

Malice is essentially desiring bad things for another person. It's the opposite of desiring good for someone. Instead, when we're malicious we're hoping for and perhaps even seeking to bring about the downfall of another person. And it's important to realize that malice is always wrong, even when we may have very good reasons for feeling malice toward someone who's treated us badly or hurt us in some way. All forms of malice need to be cast off us like a dirty cockroach or it will infect us and eat us up from the inside out. Do you have anyone you're feeling malice toward right now? Don't ignore it. Don't let it settle in. Get it off you like a creepy bug before it destroys you and keeps you from displaying the glory of God to others.

The second item Peter instructs us to cast off is a method used extensively by people who are seeking after earthly glory. It's a method called deceit, or perhaps the word, "lying," resonates a little more clearly. We're all too familiar

with this one. Have you ever been deceived or lied to by another person? Have you ever done it to someone else? Why do we use deceit and lying? Why do we try to hide things from other people or keep them from certain information? Would you be surprised if I said it almost always boils down to our pursuit of earthly glory? We usually lie and deceive either because we're concerned about our own reputation and public image; or because we think we need to lie in order to protect our interests or our hind end; or because we're chasing after something that we don't want other people to find out about and compete with us for. And we're quite skilled at rationalizing it and justifying it and calling it a "white" lie, which, of course, is an oxymoron. There's no such thing as a pure lie. Every one of them is black as night. All forms of deception and lying are to be cast off the child of God, and we become able to do it when earthly glory is no longer what we're after above all.

The third item from verse 1 of chapter 2 is closely related to deceit. It's a method called hypocrisy. And sadly, it's most often what Christians are accused of by those who don't know Christ. What's hypocrisy? The Greek word is *hupokrisis* and is associated with "play-acting," pretending to be someone you're not. And again it's easy to see it's connection with earthly glory. With hypocrisy, we're very concerned about what others think of us. We're trying to portray a certain image to others so people can see how great we are, even though when we're out of their sight that's not really who we are. In other words, we're pursuing earthly glory and employing deception to get it.

And there are few things more harmful to *revealing the glory of God through the body of Christ to others* than hypocrisy...For Christians to put on a wonderful show at church, but then reveal to the world that it's all just a show by our words and actions and priorities during the rest of the week. Or just as bad, when Christians, who are to be known by their love for each other, bicker and fight and talk badly about each other and walk away from relationships at the drop of a hat – revealing that their hearts are still set on earthly glory and that earnest love for each other is still not "above all" as it's intended to be.

Hypocrisy...putting on a show. Cast it off. Be a real person, with real humility, and willingness to quickly repent whenever needed. God's not looking for perfection. Instead, he's leading his imperfect, in-progress, children to be real, honest people who aren't putting on a show, because they're not concerning themselves with

earthly glory and what other people think about them...because their hearts aren't set on things of this world and whatever position and recognition and power can be obtained here. Instead, their hearts are set on God and his kingdom and their future with him, and they know that loving him and loving each other is above all. And they won't sacrifice either of those things on the altar of getting what they think they want in this world. What a difference it would make if all of us in the body of Christ operated this way!

We have two more items to look at before we close today. The next is *envy*, and it doesn't need much explanation. *Vine's* describes the Greek word translated, "envy," as "the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Have you ever experienced envy? If we're not being hypocrites today, we can all admit to experiencing envy from time to time in our lives. We look at another person and who they are, or what have, or what they've achieved, and what we see makes us grumpy and discontent with our own lives. Envy is closely related to jealousy, but envy is even a bit stronger than jealousy. Whereas jealousy wants what someone else has, envy would actually like to see what the other person has taken away from them (*Vine's*). Envy would be pleased if the other person lost what they have.

And again this is all connected to a desire for earthly things and earthly glory. We won't be able to let envy go, to cast it off, as long as our hope is still set on this world and what we can get or achieve here. But Peter invites us to freedom. Don't you want it? Envy isn't fun. It has no benefits. It makes us grumpy and creates malice toward other people. It makes us do things and think things we know are wrong. And we can be free from it, we can cast it like a cockroach in the night, when we're willing to set our sights and our hope and our affections on God and his kingdom alone, living like the sojourners he's called us to be here on earth.

And this brings us to our final cast off for today. This one is a method used widely by people who are chasing after earthly glory above all. It's called slander, or "evil speaking." It's "the act of uttering false statements, or disseminating misinformation, for the purpose of defaming or injuring the reputation of another person." Slander often arises out of malice or envy and is a technique for

destroying and bringing about the downfall of another person. And it employs deceit and lying to bring about the desired result.

Have you ever been guilty of slandering another person? Gossip takes unverified, negative information about someone and spreads it around. Slander takes it even further and spreads knowingly false or misleading information about someone with the express purpose of tearing them down. Never take part in either one! Cast them off. These are the ways of your old self that need to go and can go when you don't set your heart on the glory of a quickly fading peony flower.

## **CONCLUSION**

Are you ready for freedom, my friends? Freedom from these washed up, empty, harmful, flesh-eating attitudes and methods so often employed by those who are in competition with each other for the quickly fading glory this world has to offer? By those who's highest priority is themselves, their reputation, their possessions, their position, their own wants and preferences. How often have we seen these attitudes and methods employed even in churches and even in our own church? Someone gets offended or hurt or embarrassed or doesn't get what they want, and suddenly malice takes root, envy rises up, gossip and slander begin to spread, deceit is employed, hypocrisy is exposed, relationships are ended, and people walk away on bad terms. Why does these things happen? Because earthly glory, earthly desires, earthly goals, and human methods have taken over and become more important than the eternal glory of loving God and each other above all.

But this can happen with us out in the world as well. We can become so distracted and consumed with what we think we want in this world that we become willing to sacrifice relationships and the principles of God's Word in our pursuit of these things. Instead of casting off these attitude and methods, we engage in them and employ them to try and get what we think we want...what we think we must have. I don't know about you, but I want to be free from these dirty, disease spreading bugs that so often lead us astray from God and his purposes and destroy our witness as they destroy our relationships.

And I believe we can have that freedom right now. Where does it begin? Well, freedom always starts with repentance. We can't be free from anything until we're willing to admit we have a problem and have a desire to change. If you're

struggling today with any forms of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy or slander, your first step to freedom is to admit the sin, admit the struggle. If you're pretending that that bug's not crawling on you, then you won't be trying to get it off. Come clean with the Lord and ask him to forgive you and change your thinking. Come clean with anyone who's relationship with you has been affected by your hard feelings toward them or your desire for their downfall. Go to them in humility and honesty. Get as aggressive about dealing with these things as you would if a cockroach were crawling on you in the night.

But for long-term change what we need is a change in our thinking...a change in how we view this world and all the glory it can offer us. May our earthly goals and dreams become a distant tenth place to living God's word, loving God and loving others as ourselves. Obtaining the short-lived glory of a peony flower is not worth sacrificing what really matters and what holds great benefits for us from now through the eternal ages to come. Loosen your grasp on what the world is chasing after and you'll be freed to love God and love each other and reveal him with great glory to others. You'll be freed to cast off the bugs of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander and all the other methods used by those who's hope is set on this world and the passing glory we can obtain here.

What's your heart set on in this world? What are you pursuing with all your energy? Let it be God and his kingdom above all. And you'll the freedom you're longing for!