

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1 Peter 2:1-3

Intro: Have you noticed in your reading of 1 Peter how the chapters are tied together with words which show that they are all connected with each other? For example, the first word of chapter 2 is “wherefore,” which indicates that what he was about to say was connected with what he had just said in chapter 1. Moving on to chapter 3 we see that he started that part of the epistle by saying, “Likewise.” This is very likely due to the fact that in verse 15 of chapter 2 he told the servants to be subject to their masters, and so in chapter 3, verse 1, he said that “likewise” wives should be subject to their husbands. And then when we get to chapter 4 we see that he began with “forasmuch then.” He had been speaking of the sufferings of Christ in the latter part of chapter 3, and then he said that the believers themselves should get ready for the same kind of treatment from the world.

In chapter 5 he was writing in the first four verses to elders, but then in verse 5 we come to the word “likewise” again. This probably follows what he had said to husbands in 4:7 where you have that same word, “likewise.”

These might seem like insignificant details, but they are not really insignificant because they are designed to show how Peter’s epistle is all connected together.

I point these out to show that when we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2, we are not leaving one subject to take up another subject, but Peter was continuing on with what he was saying. Therefore, we need to look back into chapter 1 to see how what Peter said here in chapter 2 is tied in with chapter 1 – *and that is not difficult at all to see!*

Peter had spoken in chapter 1 of salvation in one particular way – as a new birth. He first mentioned this in verse 3. (Read.) Notice the words, “hath begotten us again.” We were all “begotten “ the first time by our parents. We were born into the family of our father and mother. We were born as their children. But, if we really have been saved, this means that we have been born again, a second time, into the family of God.

The second mention of this new birth was in the text we had last week – in verse 23. And it is the same verb that Peter used in 1:3. In verse 3 Peter emphasized that we were born of God; in verse 23 he said that we were born by the Word of God.

So these expressions clearly indicate that we have new life, the life of God Himself, because we have been born of God.

You will remember that when the Pharisee, Nicodemus, came to Jesus at night, the Lord told him that if he were not born again he could neither “see” nor “enter” the kingdom of God. So this means that if we are really Christians, if we really have been saved, then we have been born again. And with this new life, we have been changed, and the way we live has been changed. If there is no change, there is no salvation.

Now let me remind you of another point that we learned in chapter 1. Peter told us there that since the God Who has “called us is holy,” we are to be holy in all of our conduct. What this actually means is that, since we have been born of God, we are to be like God. God is holy, and therefore we are to be holy. And those of you who have been with me in our study of chapter 1 will know that Peter actually gave us three basic commands to help us in our pursuit of this holiness. Those commands are:

- 1) In verse 13 we are told to “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- 2) In verse 17 we are told to “pass the time of your [our] sojourning here in fear, that is, in the fear of the Lord.
- 3) In verse 22 we are told to “love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

Doing these three things with the Lord’s help and blessing, will greatly benefit us as we seek to be holy people.

Now, as we move on to chapter 2, we are not leaving this subject of holiness behind, but we are learning that becoming holy is not a matter of seeking some kind of an experience where suddenly we are holy, but that if we are to become a holy people, it will come about as a result of *growing spiritually*. This is the point that the Apostle Peter was making in chapter 2, verse 2.

You see there are some very interesting similarities between being born into this world, and being born again into the family of God. When we were babies we were on capable of drinking milk. It is the same way when we become Christians. We begin our Christian life by feeding upon “the milk of the Word.” This feeding on the Word of God strengthens us so that we grow. And this is how we become mature as Christians; this is how we become holy. Holiness of character and holiness of conduct is the result of growth. Now do you see that Peter in chapter 2 was going on with what he had been talking about in chapter 1. *We can never become holy except we grow!* And that is what we are going to be thinking about today: **THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH**. So let us begin by

looking at 1 Peter 2, verse 1. Peter began by speaking about:

I. SINS WHICH NEED TO BE LAID ASIDE (1 Pet. 2:1).

This is very similar to what the Apostle Paul meant when he told believers to “put off the old man” and to “put on the new man.”

Do you ever wonder why it is that you may be getting very little benefit out of reading your Bible, or out of hearing it as someone else reads it to you? Have you ever stopped to think why it is that going to church, and hearing the Word of God doesn't help you as much as it seems to be helping others? It very likely could be that there are sins in your life that you have not *laid aside*. It may be that you are trying to ignore them, or that you refuse to deal with them because you have not put them off, as you would put off dirty clothes. You have not confessed your sins to the Lord, asking Him to forgive you and to cleanse you. You have not asked Him to search your heart and to reveal to you things in your life that are not pleasing to Him. You have not asked the Lord to let the words of your mouth and the meditation of your heart to be acceptable in his sight. For Peter to begin this chapter as he did, was to show how sin can keep us from growing in the Lord.

Let's look at these words in verse 1 to learn what they mean.

A. “All malice.”

Literally this means *all evil*. It means to get rid of wickedness in every form. But Peter certainly did not mean that we could do this without God's help. We can only do it with God's help, and we even have to ask Him to make us *want* to get rid of them.

The word that Peter used here is a word which speaks of thinking and feeling and acting in ways that are displeasing to God. And how do we know what is displeasing to God? Our consciences help us to know, but it is the Word of God that confirms what is displeasing to the Lord. Peter seems to have had in mind here the many ways in which our old nature manifests itself. This word may be a title for the sins which follow in this verse. If a thing is wrong in God's sight, it has no place in the life of a child of God. One way you can tell that a person has been born again, is that he no longer wants to displease the Lord.

B. “All guile.”

This includes all of the ways in which we may try to deceive people. One

of them is lying. This is very common in business today. People will tell you almost anything to get you to do what they want you to do, and often we wake up too late to the realization that we have been deceived. Every form of guile must be laid aside by the child of God.

A. T. Robertson says that this is an old word which means “to catch with bait.”

C. “Hypocrisies.”

The Lord condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. This means that they were pretending to be what they were not. We have all been guilty. When we are not what we are supposed to be, we pretend that we are. And often we are successful in convincing people that we are better than we are, or more devout than we really are. We are not to be mere actors on the stage of life.

D. “Envies.”

This is behavior that is prompted by jealousy, and which is usually accompanied by an attempt to belittle the good that is seen in another person’s life. Basically it may mean that we don’t want what another person has, but we don’t want them to have it either.

E. “All evil speakings.”

Here we have the word “all” again. Matthew Henry said that “one sin, not laid aside, will hinder our spiritual profit.”

Fausset in the JFB commentary says this about these words:

The vices here are those which offend against the BROTHERLY LOVE inculcated above. Each succeeding one springs out of that which immediately precedes, so as to form a genealogy of sins against love.

“Evil speakings” are those attacks on another person’s character.

So when we look at all of these we see how they can grieve the Spirit of God, and quench His work in us. And to keep such sins in our hearts always hinders our own growth in the Lord, and robs us of blessings which we would otherwise be receiving from the Lord. So any child of God who truly wants to grow in the Lord must deal with those sins in his life which are not pleasing to the Lord.

One way in which we are protected against such sins is by following what the Apostle Peter urged upon believers in verse 2.

II. A WHOLESOME DESIRE FOR THE WORD OF GOD (1 Pet. 2:2).

All of us are acquainted with the illustration that the Apostle Peter gave in verse 2 of this second chapter. The desire that we need for “the sincere milk of the Word” is likened to the way a newborn child desires milk. A healthy baby actually lives to eat, but in the early stages of life can take only the simplest of foods.

But we need to keep in mind that the believers to whom Peter was writing were not all newborn babes in Christ, but Peter was saying that a child of God should always have a desire for the Word just like a newborn desires milk, as one writer has said, “eagerly and frequently” (Grudem, Wayne, *1 Peter*, p. 94).

The word “desire” is a strong word meaning *to long for the Word of God, to have a strong appetite for the Word*. Likened to a newborn baby, it indicates that which a believer craves more than anything else.

God gives us such a desire when we are first saved, but we need to make sure that we not only continue to have such a desire for the Word, but that it increases. This is a desire which makes us want to read the Word. It is a desire which makes us go where we can learn more about the Word, and we cannot be satisfied with anything but the Word of God. We need to be very, very careful when our desire includes even good books about the Bible if they are going to take the place that we might otherwise give to the Word of God.

But be sure that you notice the word “sincere” – “the sincere milk of the Word.” What did Peter mean by that word “sincere”? He meant *the pure Word of God*, not a mixture of the Word with anything else! The Bible will never lead us astray. It is not a mixture of truth and error from which we have to find the truth. It is the very truth of God. And as such, it is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. And if we are to be able to detect error, it is imperative that we know the Word of God.

The Greek also has the word λογικὸν. This gives us the idea that the Word is spiritually nourishing to our souls. Robertson translated it “the spiritual milk that is without guile.”

But in order for us to know the real purpose of a strong appetite for the

Word, the Apostle Peter added, “that ye may grow thereby.” This should always be our primary purpose in desiring the Word: we need to grow and to keep growing. We need to grow in our understanding of the Word, and we need to grow in the practical application of the Word to our own souls and to the way we live from day to day. This is the way we become holy. Becoming holy is not a single experience, but it is the result of the way the Word of God is used in our lives from day to day. All of the food we need for healthy and continued growth is to be found in our Bibles.

Now the final verse of our text refers to that which keeps us coming back to the Word again and again, day after day, throughout our lives.

III. THAT WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO THE WORD (1 Pet. 2:3).

It is that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

This verse can be taken two ways. First, it suggests that there are those who have found the Lord in the Word, and they have been feeding their souls upon Him. Or it can suggest that there were some who were not yet born again even though they professed to be Christians. And so in this latter case we would have a test proposed by which every believer should examine his own heart.

It seems that here the Apostle Peter was thinking of Psalms 34:8: “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

The Bible is a book which speaks of Christ. He is the Key to all of Scripture. In some colleges you will find a Bible course entitled, “The Bible as Literature.” But those who just see it as literature, have not “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” It is a book of life, of eternal life. A book which brings us to God. A book which tells us how our sins are forgiven. A book in which we see Christ as the final and complete revelation of God the Father. And oh, how gracious He is. There is none like Him. He speaks to us through the Word. His kindness and mercy toward sinners is everywhere evident in the pages of Scripture, especially His goodness to those who come to Him through Christ. So whether we take “the Lord” to refer to the Father, or to the Son, the result is the same, isn’t it?

Concl: That old hymn, “Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts,” tells the story of the goodness of Christ and of God. Let me read a part of it to you.

Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts,

Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee All in all.

We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain Head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

Have you “tasted that the Lord is gracious”? Do you know Christ as your Savior? Is He the One Who draws you back to the Word? Then you know what the Apostle Peter was speaking about. And it is Christ Who keeps bringing you back day by day to this precious Word so that you can learn more of Him.

If you do not know Him, let me remind you that this same precious book which tells us about Christ and about God and about ourselves and the need that we have for a Savior. The Apostle Paul who preached the same Lord Jesus Christ that the Apostle Peter did, wrote these words in his epistle to the Roman believers:

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:
for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall
be saved (Rom. 10:12-13).

That is God’s promise. May you claim that promise today by calling upon Him in your own heart that you might be saved.