

FIRST PETER 1:22 - 2:1-3 "Like New Born Babes, Long After
The Pure Milk Of The Word"

Last week Peter summed up our position with Christ and the high cost involved to purchase our salvation; knowing "that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1Pe 1:18-19)

But being forgiven of our sins, having eternal life with Christ is not an end in itself. Jesus purchased us for a purpose, and that purpose is to glorify Himself in us. This is why Peter speaks of obedience in the beginning of this letter.

"To God's elect, strangers in the world,... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance." (1Pe 1:1-2)

He further hits home on this point in 1Pe 1:14-15 "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;..."

Our lives are to reflect the new life we have in Christ which our God has given us. And part of this obedience, this holiness, is seen in the way we treat each other in love. And this brings us to our text.

1Pe 1:22 "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." [Some early manuscripts from a pure heart]

Loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord is not an option, but it isn't to be a chore either. In fact, it should be a part of the way we love our God. We're told that the first and greatest commandment is to love our God with all our heart, soul and mind.

But there's a second like unto it... love your neighbor as yourself. The problem which many in the church have with this second command is that it's too much like work. And so what you have is people going through the motions of obedience in this area and this is where hypocrisy is seen by the world.

People can tell the difference between genuine love and performance oriented tolerance in the guise of real love. And I believe that the reason people can't truly love their neighbor, which certainly includes other Christians, is because they have a problem with the first commandment.

It doesn't go: love your neighbor as yourself and love God with all your heart, soul and mind. We will never truly love our neighbor unless we are first loving our God above all.

You see when we are bowing to Him in love and obedience then our hearts are properly prepared to love others because He's the One preparing our hearts as they are set on Him.

But you will always notice that a true love of God is never separated from His truth. Notice again what Peter says in 1Pe 1:22 "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."

There's a movement in the world today which wants to accentuate love and unity among people who profess Christ, but they're doing it at the expense of truth. It's known as the ecumenical movement. 'Just as long as you name the name of Christ we can all be one big happy family', seems to be the slogan.

The problem with that is that it is not naming the name of Christ that necessarily makes us one. The Mormons name the name as do Jehovah's witnesses and many other groups who do not promote the true Jesus of the bible who is fully God and fully man, who came to die for the penalty of our sins and then rose bodily from the grave.

Then you've got other groups who name the name of Jesus and believe much of orthodox Christianity but in some cases are bringing a false gospel as they incorporate the necessity of adding works as the means of salvation; adding works to faith. Remember we are not saved by good works, but unto good works.

When Paul addressed the Galatians he pointed out how some Jews wanted to add things to faith in Christ alone for their salvation. His response was very blunt and to the point, but it had to be because they were altering the true message, the only message of life eternal in Christ alone. It was a life and death situation as far as Paul was concerned. And it had eternal consequences.

Gal 1:6-9 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

Loving one another must be a result of us loving God above all. But to say we love God and then trample His word is no love at all. And for us to promote unity among others who simply name the name, and yet deny the true Jesus of the Bible and His message of salvation, is no unity at all. It's simply masquerading.

This ecumenical movement which adulterates the truth of God's word is making in-roads into churches around the country. This is why we must be discerning and loving enough to give people the truth in Christ's love.

It was His love which gave us our purification from sin; the direct result of Jesus Christ washing us clean with His blood. But we are constantly cleansed in a sanctifying work by the word of God as well. This is what Peter is talking about in our text.

Paul also touches on this when he speaks to husbands to love their wives just as Christ loved the church.

Eph 5:25-27 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

Cleansing comes through the living word of God. Our obedience to the truth, which is the gospel, speaks of believing in Christ, but it also carries with it the idea of being cleansed from the impurities we face in the world each day.

This is a work of the Holy Spirit but it is in conjunction with the means the Holy Spirit gives us to grow, and that's the Word of God He has inspired for our growth in this salvation. We'll talk more of that in a few minutes.

What Peter does here in verse 22, which is just a continuance of the holiness he speaks of in verses 15-16, is to translate this holiness and obedience into practical living. And so, in other words, Peter says, if you've been purified in the truth through faith in Christ and you're continually being purified by the word of God in your life, then it will show itself as you love the brethren in truth.

Dr. Wayne Grudem makes the point that "Christian growth cannot be self-centered and individualistic, for it occurs in the context of fellowship, a fellowship which must deepen and remain for all eternity."

Loving the brethren is very important to Jesus Christ Himself. In fact He states that this is one of the most clear evidences that we have salvation and that the Spirit of God is working in our lives.

He says in Joh 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

This comes in the form of a command, but as I've mentioned before our obedience is not the result of being forced by God to comply, but because we want to obey out of love for God and the salvation He's given us in Christ. We now have a new life with new desires.

The apostle John reiterates what Jesus said.

1Jo 3:23-24 "And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us."

"We know it by the Spirit he gave us." And the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we belong to Him and we know that we belong to Him because our desires come into conformity with His desires. That's the new nature we have in Christ which was not there prior to our coming to Christ.

By the way, this should give us hope because what God is doing is putting to death the deeds of the flesh. He's working in us for His good pleasure. And His pleasure is to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:12-15 ¹² So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- ¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

We are His children and He is our Father. And we are now able to love others in the way He desires because He first loved us and has given us His love which is to be given away to others.

Peter takes this next step in describing where these new desires come from. They come from a new life that only Jesus can give.

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

In other words, you had a spiritual rebirth. It's the exact same rebirth Jesus spoke of to Nicodemus.

Joh 3:3 "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. [Or born from above]"

But the seed of this life, found in the living word, is not like the seed of the natural man. One is perishable, one is imperishable. Dr. Hiebert in his commentary states that "the seed out of which natural life springs is perishable, corruptible and subject to decay and death. But the new life of the believer is not derived from such a transient source; it springs from that which is imperishable, not subject to corruption and death. It has the same nature as the inheritance that awaits the redeemed."

And notice too how Peter brings the word of God back into the picture as it relates to being born again. He calls the word of God two things. Living and enduring. The NAS says living and abiding.

The word of God is not some text book which we study to simply gain knowledge. The word of God is living. What this means is that it actually affects your life; first by being the means the Spirit uses to bring us to Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And so the word of God is not static, it's a word which the Spirit of God takes and uses to mold us and strengthen us and equip us for every good work to His glory. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way.

Heb 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

The Spirit of God through His word really does change us. But if we're not in the word of God it stands to reason that we're not using the means the Holy Spirit has given so that we may grow in Christ.

Let me also add that the reason the word of God is living and active is because it is the Holy Spirit who gives it life, with Jesus Himself being referred to as the living word. This is spiritual food.

But Peter also says of this living word, that it's abiding or enduring. We can stand on the word of God. It's the reason we can trust God who is faithful to His word.

You see, because it's enduring, it stands the test of time; it is always relevant. People today want to add to it or take away from it. The philosophy of men has deemed the word of God to be insufficient for modern times and therefore has tried to bring it up to date by adding what they think it lacks.

There is nothing lacking. It is complete and all sufficient for every problem of life, not the least of which is the solution to men's greatest problem; the problem with sin separating him from his God who came to take away the sin of the world and give life to all who believe in Christ alone for the remission of sin.

It is a word given to us by God Himself. And anyone who thinks they can improve on what God has given us just doesn't understand the Almighty and everlasting God.

This is why Peter says in our text in 1Pe 1:24-25 "For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." [Isaiah 40:6-8] And this is the word that was preached to you."

He's making a contrast here between that which is finite and that which is infinite. Peter compares men with grass and flowers. You don't need to be a botanist to know that grass and flowers perish.

One of my favorite flowers is the Gardenia. It's pure and white and the fragrance is wonderful. But once they bloom it's only a matter of a week or two before they begin to turn brown on the stem.

Peter reminds us that what glory we may think we have, and that we have a tendency to boast in, is only fleeting compared to the eternal things of God which are able to give us life eternal in His glory forever.

On the other hand, unlike flesh or flowers and grass which perish, the word of the Lord abides forever. Peter is quoting the prophet Isaiah in Isa 40:8 "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

By quoting the O.T. and incorporating it into the New he makes it quite clear that both the Old and the N.T. are God's infallible word.

But what's interesting about this quote in 1Peter is that instead of using the word God as it's found in Isaiah, ... "the word of our God stands forever.", Peter uses the word Lord which is Kurios in the Greek and means Supreme in authority.

It's the same word that all the N.T. writers use for Jesus when He is called Lord. Dr. Kistemaker in his commentary on Peter states: "In the O.T., the word God signifies the "self-disclosed name of the Covenant-God of Israel, Yahweh, Jehovah. With the term Lord Peter highlights Jesus' divinity; he shows that the word of God is identical with the word of the Lord Jesus....."

..... For that reason, Peter concludes this section in these words: And this is the word that was preached to you. The word the apostles preached was the gospel of [the Lord] Jesus."

It's the gospel which gives us life eternal as the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see our need for a Savior and enables us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But now that we have new life in Christ, what's next?

Peter tells us what's next in the next chapter. And what he begins to tell us in the next chapter is that we must now begin to grow in

this new life. And guess what he says is the means to that growth? You guessed it; he continues with the same thought at the end of the first chapter, that "word of the Lord which abides forever."

1Pe 2:1-3 "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

He begins with a negative and ends with a positive. The negative is designed to contrast the new life we have in Christ with the old life, or old nature from which we've been delivered.

"Therefore"! Remember whenever we see the word therefore we want to review what the therefore is there for and it's there to tie in what was just said.

What was just said is that we've been given new life through the imperishable seed of Jesus Christ, His precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish. And since we have life we want to elevate the living word, Jesus, as we take His word and live by it every day of our lives.

In contrast to this new life are those things that want to rear their ugly heads in our lives. Those are the things Peter says to rid yourselves of. The NAS and KJV uses the terms putting aside or laying aside those things.

In the Greek the term refers to removing clothing. Dr. Kistemaker says that "Peter figuratively tells the readers to take off the garments of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander."

Paul essentially says the same thing.

Eph 4:22-24 "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

What both Peter and Paul are saying is that we as believers must make a conscious choice to choose God and the things of God, as we consciously turn away from the evil desires of the flesh, the old nature.

Peter mentions some things of the old man. Malice which refers to all sorts of wickedness. "Deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander." By the way these last four are all plural in the Greek and so they're not limited to one type but are all inclusive.

I think they speak for themselves and so we won't do a word study on these things we are to put off. But Peter doesn't want to stop short. It's not enough to put off, we must also put on in its place.

If we are to grow away from the old man and grow closer to Christ, he gives us the answer.

1Pe 2:2 "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"

Peter uses the words babies and milk not to designate their spiritual maturity or lack of it, as does Paul and the writer of Hebrews in other portions of the word of God, but rather to paint a word picture.

He's saying, 'imagine your two month old infant has decided it's breakfast time at two in the morning.' And think back on the sounds that broke the morning. Remember? And try to rationally think of why your baby insisted that you get up at that hour?

At that moment there was nothing in the world that was more important to your baby than being satisfied with milk. No singing him a lullaby, no changing his diaper, no walking and cuddling will do. One thing and one thing only will satisfy him and also be the means for his growth. Milk.

Peter says because you've tasted the kindness of the Lord you know what it means to want to grow in Christ. But your growth is directly tied to the pure milk of the word. And your attitude needs to be the same as that infant. Nothing will satisfy you for your growth but the pure word.

The word pure in the Greek means unadulterated. It was used in agriculture as a way of saying that this grain (for example) is not adulterated with things like dust or chaff. It's pure. And God's word is pure and He does not want us adulterating it with any wisdom of man.

The two do not mix. You and I, however, have a problem in this area of longing like new born babes after God's word because the old nature wants to convince us that we're not hungry, and that

when we do get hungry, the spiritual junk foods of this world will more than satisfy.

Unlike a baby who doesn't need any discipline to raise his voice when he's hungry, we need to be disciplined to hunger after the word and find that therein is where the Holy Spirit is able to feed us and strengthen us and to encourage us.

We've been given a spiritual life and we need this spiritual food. Without it we'll remain babies. With it we'll grow in respect to our salvation and we'll be used by God as the soldiers of Christ we are.

As we read and study and meditate upon the Word of God we will find ourselves being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ; this same Jesus who is referred to by John.

Joh 1:1,14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Glorify the Son of God in your lives through the power of His Spirit, and may we all be obedient to Him as we love Him above all and seek Him in prayer and seek Him in the word He gave us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, delivered by His prophets and apostles.

The same word that Paul speaks of when writing Timothy.

2Ti 3:16-17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."