

GROWING UP

1 Peter 2:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- In recent times, more and more scientific studies are showing that “pandemic babies” – those born in the last 18 months – have significantly reduced verbal, motor and overall cognitive performance, compared to those born previously
- Public health guidelines such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, social distancing and mask wearing have isolated children and removed necessary social stimulation, depriving them of normal developmental experiences
- We expect babies to grow and develop into mature adults, and it is tragic when the growth is hindered, especially when the means of growth has been deliberately withheld from them
- So too in the spiritual realm, it is expected that the believer grows in spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:14-15)
- But too many of those who have been saved fail to “go on unto perfection” (Hebrews 6:1; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; 14:20)
- This growth is a growth in grace and holiness – the sanctification of the believer
- These verses refute errors of sanctification that are prevalent today
 - ✓ Second blessing/Keswick sanctification
 - ✓ Entire sanctification/sinless perfection
- Though this is the beginning of a new chapter, it continues the thought of the previous chapter in which we are commanded to love one another (1:22) seeing we have been born again by the word of God (1:23-25)

- “Wherefore” connects to the new birth of 1:23; before there can be any spiritual growth, there must first be spiritual life through regeneration
- In exhorting believers to grow in a holy walk, Peter employs four pictures of the Christian life in this chapter: putting off garments, growing infants, stones in a building, and priests offering sacrifices

If we are to grow in holiness, we must do these three things:

I. DETACH FROM EVIL (1)

A. Sin remains in the believer

1. Though justified and declared righteous in God’s sight, believers can and do sin
2. While we remain in these bodies of flesh, the sin-nature continually strives within us (Romans 7:15-17)
3. Those who say they have no sin are self-deceived (1 John 1:8)
4. God has his purposes even in our remaining sin
 - a. It magnifies his grace, which dwells in such vile creatures as we
 - b. It magnifies his mercy to us, in multiplying his pardons to us for daily sins
 - c. It magnifies the love of Christ to us, that, despite our sins, nothing separates us from his love
 - d. It magnifies our love to him – he that has been forgiven much, loves much
 - e. *“In a word, some of the clearest proofs they have had of his excellence, have been occasioned by the*

mortifying proofs they have had of their own vileness.”
(John Newton)

B. All sin must be “laid aside”

1. This word (*apothemenoi*) describes a complete removal of something, as in taking off and discarding filthy garments (cf. Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22,25; Colossians 3:8; Hebrews 12:1; James 1:21)
2. The early Christians in their baptism ceremony would remove the old clothes before descending into the water, then putting on new garments upon coming out, representing the new life of holiness
3. Note the repetition of “all” – there is not to be a mere reduction of these sins, but a complete eradication

C. These sins are contrary to the spirit of brotherly love (1:22)

1. Malice (*kakian*) – evil generally, and particularly ill-will, hostility, resentment, and a desire to do harm to others
 - a. It always thinks the worst of others’ actions and motives
 - b. Malice is part of the old Adamic nature that must be purged out of the believer’s life, and out of the church (1 Corinthians 5:8)
 - c. The world generally operates under the spirit of malice, in hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, grudge-bearing, wishing harm, and results in all manner of cruel acts committed against others
 - d. Malice rejoices when an enemy falls (Proverbs 24:17), but grace loves, blesses, does good and prays for enemies (Matthew 5:44)
2. Guile (*dolon*) – deceit, dishonesty, lying

- a. The word originally applied to a fisherman catching with bait
 - b. Guile takes advantage of others for personal gain, primarily with words
 - c. It includes flattery, false promises, enticement, suggestive words and outright lying
 - d. To “beguile” others is to imitate Satan (Genesis 3:13)
 - e. The blessed man is one who is without guile before God (Psalm 32:2)
 - f. The Lord Jesus commended Nathaniel for having “no guile” in him (John 1:47)
 - g. The 144,000 also are described in the presence of Christ, “in their mouth was found no guile” (Revelation 14:5)
3. Hypocrisies (*hupokriseis*) – pretending to be something we are not, a fake, counterfeit
- a. The scribes and Pharisees were full of hypocrisy (Matthew 23:28) and were severely denounced by Christ for it
 - b. Christ warned the disciples to “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1)
 - c. Like leaven it often enters undetected, it will pervade the whole life, and puffs up with pride and vanity
 - d. Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites (Acts 5:1-10)
 - e. Peter himself committed hypocrisy by refusing to eat with Gentiles for fear of the Jews (Galatians 2:11-13)
4. Envy (*phthonous*) – jealousy, the displeasure felt at seeing the prosperity of others

- a. Envy is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:21), a trait of fallen man (Titus 3:3), and hence this world is full of envy (Romans 1:29)
 - b. Envy moved Cain to kill Abel (Genesis 4:1-8), Joseph's brethren to sell him (Genesis 37:3-11) and the Jews to deliver Jesus to the Romans (Matthew 27:18)
 - c. Envy carries its own punishment, as those who harbour it are never satisfied, and it becomes "the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30)
5. Evil speakings (*katalalias*) – slander, defaming, backbiting
- a. As with the other sins, it is characteristic of the world (Romans 1:30), yet is sadly also found among God's people (2 Corinthians 12:20)
 - b. It literally means to "speak down" about someone, and includes gossip, spreading rumours, telling half-truths, mocking humour, etc, that comes from an envious heart, and is all designed to make one's self look good

II. DESIRE THE WORD (2)

A. Believers likened to newborn babes

1. This links to the new birth of the previous chapter
2. It does not necessarily mean that Peter's audience were newly converted, but is emphasising the need for spiritual growth and the means of it
3. As the new life *begins* through the word of God, so it is *maintained* and *nourished* by the same word of God

B. This is a command to desire God's word

1. The word "desire" (*epipothēsate*) means to crave, yearn, and long for (Psalm 42:1)

2. Unbelievers are slaves to their fleshly desires
3. But believers, having a new nature, can have victory over fleshly lusts, and instead develop desires for godly things (Psalm 37:4)
4. We increase our spiritual appetite for the word by making continual use of it, so that in time we cannot live without it
5. The attitude of love, delight and desire for the word of God is found in all of God's saints throughout history (Job 23:12; Psalm 1:2; 19:10; 40:8; 119:11,16,24,35,47,48,72,92,103,105; Jeremiah 15:16; Romans 7:22)

C. The word of God is sincere

1. This word (*adolos*) means pure, uncontaminated, and without deceit
2. Every word of God is pure (Proverbs 30:5) and is thoroughly trustworthy
3. This is in contrast to the deceitful traits listed in v.1

D. The word of God is like milk that promotes growth

1. The use of the word "milk" here does not mean the basic truths of the gospel as in other places (1Co 3:2; Heb 5:12), but to the whole word of God as the nourishment of the growing Christian
2. As the mother's milk has everything the baby needs for growth and health, so the word of God contains everything necessary for the spiritual growth and health of the Christian
3. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be

perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

4. How vital it is then, that we as believers make the word of God the top priority in our lives, setting aside time daily to read, study, meditate upon and memorise the word of God
5. Equally important is our attendance upon the preaching and teaching of the word of God in the house of God, where God has appointed teachers to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2), and “feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2)

III. DEPEND UPON GRACE (3)

A. The born-again believer has “tasted” God’s grace

1. Note that “taste” in Scripture does not merely mean to have a cursory acquaintance, but to have a full, personal experience of something (cf. Matthew 16:28; Hebrews 2:9)
2. Tasting is the means by which we ascertain the nature or quality of an object
3. Peter is quoting from Psalm 34:8 – “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him”
 - a. Note that Peter clearly equates Jehovah of Psalm 34:8 with Jesus Christ who is the “Lord” of vv.3-5
4. Salvation is described as eating Christ’s flesh and drinking his blood – that is, coming to him and believing on him (John 6:35; 7:37-38)
5. To taste the grace of Christ is to respond in faith to his gracious invitation (Matthew 11:28-30)
6. To taste his grace is to experience the forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, the joy of the Holy Ghost

7. Peter here is exhorting the saints that “Since you have experienced the grace of God in salvation, now continue in that grace by putting aside sin, and by feeding upon God’s word that you may grow unto perfection”

CONCLUSION

1. Can you say you have truly “tasted” God’s grace, by personally coming to Christ in repentance and faith, receiving him as Lord and Saviour?
2. If there is any doubt, seek the Lord diligently by prayerful searching of the Scriptures, as the word of God is the means by which faith and regeneration is worked in the soul
3. One of the marks of a true Christian is a love for the word of God – is this mark found in you?
4. The normal Christian experience is to continually be changed and transformed by the word of God as the years progress (2 Corinthians 3:18)
5. Do I see clear evidence of changes in my life through the sanctifying influence of the Scriptures?
6. The reason many Christians fail to overcome sin, and never become effect in the kingdom of God is because of their neglect of the Bible
7. *“To put away the Scriptures from the mind’s study is the certain way to prevent their influencing the outward conversation. Backsliders begin with dusty Bibles and go on to filthy garments.”* (Spurgeon)
8. If you find a lack of desire for the word of God, ask God to give you a hunger and appetite for the word: “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psalm 119:36)