

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (Part II)

Introduction

Last week we saw that having already purified our souls by our obedience to the truth **for** a sincere brotherly love, we are now to love one another unwaveringly (we are to persevere in loving one another always more and more faithfully until Christ returns). We are to do this **because** we've been begotten anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "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." And this word is the good news that was preached to us.

Not only have we been purified **from** all our former self-seeking, self-promoting thoughts and ways, we've been begotten anew **into** a life of loving one another by seed that is imperishable, incorruptible, never fading away, and never dying. **This** (the Church as God's new creation) is the reality that will last forever, **not** the world around us, and not the things of the world. So therefore, our love for one another is to be as reliable and unchanging, and as persevering and faithful as the powerful Word of God by which we have all been begotten anew. We **must** love one another with an **equally imperishable, incorruptible, never fading away, never dying love – from the heart.**

Peter prefaces or sets up his fourth imperative with these words: "**Having purified** your souls by your obedience to the truth **for a sincere brotherly love...**" And now notice how Peter prefaces and sets up his fifth imperative by basically saying the same thing, but just going into a little more detail:

I. 1 Peter 2:1 — *Therefore, having put off all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders...*

These are the things we've **already** put off—these are the things from which we've **already purified** ourselves—through our initial obedience to the truth of the Gospel. So, now we're reminded and empowered to **keep** putting these things off today in **continued obedience** to the truth of the Gospel. We can't start out in the Christian life through obedience to the truth of the Gospel and then continue and finish the Christian life by means of anything less than continued obedience to the truth of the Gospel! So I've been asking myself this week, and now I want to ask you, "Are you living, today, a life of obedience to the truth of the Gospel – a life that conforms to and acknowledges in every way the truth of the Gospel?"

Peter says that the fundamental mark of this life of obedience is **love** – specifically, a sincere, unwavering love for those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. The purifying power of the Gospel isn't just about reconciling us and God, but also about reconciling us fully and in every way to each other in a brand new humanity – a brand new kind of people – a brand new creation. The goal and the purpose for which we were saved is reconciliation, and peace, and wholeness with one another not in outward appearance only, but in actual inward reality. It's impossible to overstate how our thoughts of one another, and our words to and about one another, and our actions toward one another all stand at the very core—at the very heart—of the Gospel itself.

So, when Peter sets up his fifth imperative with these words, “*Therefore*, having put off all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders...”, isn’t it obvious that the theme of this imperative is still going to be our **love** for one another? Yes, it is! And yet what we actually go on to read is probably not at all what we were expecting.* “*Therefore, having put off all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders...*”

II. 1 Peter 2:2a — ...like newborn infants, *crave* the spiritual,[†] pure milk...

Most translations say “*long for* the spiritual, pure milk,” but I like the NIV’s “*crave*” because I think it fits better the picture of a newborn infant. I don’t think of newborn infants yearning and longing for something so much as I think of them craving and requiring something. We all know the sound of an infant’s cry, and we all know very well that the **only** thing in all the world that can satisfy that infant’s cry is his mother’s milk. As Christians we are commanded to have a certain incessant and unceasing craving – **just like** the craving of an infant for his mother’s milk.

In other places in the Bible, milk is a metaphor for the **most basic** and the **most elementary** doctrines and teachings of God’s word. So the writer of Hebrews says:

- **Hebrews 5:12** — For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food.

And Paul says in 1 Corinthians:

- **1 Corinthians 3:1–2** — But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.

But Peter is using this metaphor of milk in a very different way from Paul. Peter’s isn’t contrasting milk with solid food as though his readers were all new believers who might soon be growing out of their need for milk. Peter’s point is that as Christians, we are **always** to be **like newborn infants** because we are **always** to be **craving** this spiritual, pure milk. We are never, ever to grow out of this craving, or become too “mature” for this milk.

So what is this milk that we’re to crave? Let’s start by thinking more about the analogy Peter uses. What’s the **complete**, and the **only** source of a baby’s nourishment? When it comes to food, what’s the one and **only** thing upon which a baby’s life, and growth, and development all depend? It’s mother’s milk, and that’s it. So we can think of milk for the infant as that which is very simply life-giving, and life-sustaining. Milk is everything – it’s nourishment, and health, and growth, and in the end, for the infant at his mother’s breast, it’s wholly and completely

* For examples of what we might more naturally expect, see the examples from Paul in Col. 3:7–9, 12–16 and Eph. 4:25, 31–32.

† The NASB’s “long for the pure milk of the word” (cf. NKJV and NCV) is an interpretive gloss. Jobes points out that if this is what Peter had wanted to say, he could have actually said it: “*to gala tou logou.*” But, in point of fact, what Peter actually says is this: *to logikon adolon gala*. It is universally agreed that *logikos* is not the semantic equivalent of *logos* (word). For my understanding of *logikon* (“spiritual”) see below. (See also Jobes, Michaels, and Watson)

satisfying. Therefore, the milk that we crave as Christians must be the milk that nourishes and feeds that ***new life*** that we have as those who've been **begotten anew** by God. Do you remember that from last week? If we were begotten anew to a brand new **kind** of life by imperishable **seed**, and not by the perishable sperm of a human father, then we're also going to need **milk** that's appropriate to this new life – milk that's fitted for this new life and able to sustain and nourish and satisfy all the cravings and requirements of this new life. Obviously, a human mother's milk, just like a human father's seed is perishable, and it can only sustain perishable life. But as Christians, the milk that we crave is the kind that sustains and nourishes a life in us that will never, ever die. This seems to be Peter's point when he says that the milk that we crave is ***spiritual*** milk.

The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*, and the word for “spiritual” as we normally think of spiritual is *pneumatikos*. (26x's in the New Testament) But the Greek word that Peter uses here is totally and completely different – it's *logikos*, and it appears only two times in the entire New Testament. The other place we find it is in Romans chapter twelve:

- **Romans 12:1 (NKJV; cf. NET)** — I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your ***reasonable*** [*logikos*] service.

What Paul is saying is that this is the ***kind*** of service and worship that's ***reasonable*** or ***appropriate*** to the new realities of your life now in Christ. The NIV says, “this is your true and proper worship” (cf. NLT) – it's the worship that's **fitted** and **suited** to the saving mercies of God that have come to us now through Christ. So when Peter says here that we are to crave the “*logikos*” milk, what he means is that we are to crave the milk that will feed not the life that we have by the perishable seed of our human fathers, but the milk that's **fitted** and **suited** for the nourishment of that eternal life to which **God** has begotten us by His imperishable seed. (cf. Jobes) What does this mean? It means that this will be a milk that feeds and nourishes our **faith**, a milk that feeds and nourishes **hope**, and most importantly for Peter here in this context it will be a milk that feeds and nourishes our **love for God and our love for one another**. These three things (faith and hope and love) sum up the life that we have from God and so it's these three things that tell us the nature of the milk that we are to crave. (cf. Goppelt) We are to crave the milk that nourishes and sustains and grows **these things** in us.

Remember how Peter says in verse one: “Therefore, having put off all malice and all **deceit** and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders...” The word for “deceit” is *dulos*. And so having put off this deceit, Peter then commands us in the very next verse to crave “pure milk.” And do you know what the word for “pure” is? It's *adolos* – *no* deceit! The milk that we crave is unmixed with anything else, it's undiluted, and in every way “pure.” And so as we drink this milk, it will always grow in us a love for one another that ***shares*** in its own purity – a love that is sincere, and pure, and wholly unmixed with any selfish motives or desires.[‡] So even though it might not have been obvious to us at first, are you seeing how Peter's whole point in commanding us to crave the “***pure milk***” is so we might be a people characterized by a love for one another that's **also pure**? We'll come back to this connection between the milk that we crave and the love that Peter

[‡] Note the contrast between a “sincere (*anypokritos*) brotherly love” in 1:22 and the “hypocrisy” (*hypokrisis*) that we have put off in 2:1.

commands at the very end of the message, but now we go on to read in the second half of verse two:

III. 1 Peter 2:2b — ...like newborn infants, crave the spiritual, pure milk, **that by it you may grow to[§] salvation...**

The NIV says, “so that by it you may grow up **in** your^{**} salvation” – in other words, the salvation you already have. But Peter’s point here isn’t the salvation we already have; it’s the final, ultimate salvation that we don’t have yet and that we’re still waiting for. In verse five, Peter talked about “**a salvation ready** to be revealed **in the last time.**” In verse seven, he talks about “the tested genuineness of [our] **faith**... [which will] be found to **result** in praise and glory and honor **at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**” In verse 9, he talks about “obtaining the **outcome** of [our] **faith**, the **salvation** of [our] souls.” And in verse thirteen, Peter says that we are to “set [our] hope fully on the grace that **will** be brought to [us] **at the revelation of Jesus Christ** (13) So think about it this way: If this final salvation on the day of Judgment is the outcome of our faith and the result of the tested genuineness of our faith, then can’t you see how this final salvation also **depends** entirely on our constant feeding on the milk that nourishes that faith?

We shouldn’t miss what Peter is saying here: There is no final salvation without the growth that comes from drinking this spiritual, pure milk. I just want to ask one of those obvious questions: What happens to a baby if he doesn’t have milk? He dies. So also what would happen to us as Christians without the milk that sustains our new life in Christ? We would very quickly and most definitely perish. Those who **will** be saved on the final day are only and always those who are **growing now to** that salvation. Therefore, how **desperate is our need** as Christians for the constant intake of this milk – that **by it** we may grow to salvation! How **imperative** it is that each and every single one of us be craving this spiritual, pure milk!

So, then, what **exactly is** this milk? Isn’t that what we most need to know right now? If God’s word is the imperishable **seed** by which we’ve been begotten, is God’s word **also** the pure **milk** by which we grow to salvation?

When we think of the Word of God we very rightly think of the printed word on the pages of our Bibles. But let me ask you a question: If **the word of God** is imperishable seed, then why doesn’t **the Bible** always beget new life in those who read it and hear it preached? I’m going to say something here that we really have to be careful about – so please listen carefully. Sometimes when the Bible refers to the word of God, it’s referring to “more” than that word written down in the Scriptures. We know that the Scriptures (as in the words on the page) don’t inevitably, irresistibly beget new life in the lives of those who read them and hear them. And yet there **is** that **word** of God that **does** inevitably and irresistibly beget new life in those who hear it. There **is** that word of God which, as imperishable seed, never fails to beget new life in the very

[§] Cf. NET & NET translation note; Michaels’ translation. I translate “grow to salvation” instead of “grow up to salvation” because the “up” is unnecessary to further explain the meaning of “grow” and because this helps us to better see the intrinsic connection between growth and salvation as its purpose and goal. (cf. Goppelt, Schreiner; Michaels; Watson; Clowney; Achtemeier; Davids; contra Grudem)

^{**} “Your” is not represented in the Greek, but is an interpretive gloss supplied by the NIV. If Peter meant “*in* [your] salvation” his choice of “*eis*” seems someone awkward given the much simpler and more obvious choice of “*en*.“

moment that it's spoken. Remember the word of God in creation, "Let there be," and "there was." In the same way, we read in Ezekiel:

- Ezekiel 37:1–10 — The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones... And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD" ... So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

God is picturing for Ezekiel how He will give new spiritual life to His rebellious covenant people. So when God speaks His word, **all** of the rebellious sinners to whom that word comes **will surely live!** We see the same thing in John chapter five:

- John 5:25 — Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, **and is now here**, when the dead **will** hear the voice of the Son of God, and [all the dead] who hear **will live**.

We read in John chapter ten:

- John 10:2–5, 27 — He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep... The sheep **hear his voice**, and he calls his own sheep **by name** and leads them out... The sheep follow him, for they **know his voice**. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers... My sheep **hear my voice**, and I know them, and they follow me.

In all of these passages, what is the word of the Lord? It's not simply the equivalent of our Bibles. And yet neither is it something "above and beyond" our Bibles as though it contained any other message or Gospel than the Gospel revealed in this book! In all of these passages, the word of the Lord **is** the Gospel contained in these pages, but coming to us not simply as words on the page but in the full, saving power of the Spirit of God.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:4–5 — For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word [as in words spoken or words on a page], but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

It's by **this** word of God which calls us out "by name" that we've been raised from death to new life. It's by **this** imperishable seed of God's Word—and so not simply by "the Bible"—that you and I have been inevitably, irresistibly begotten anew. **Are you seeing this very important "wedding together" of the imperishable, live-generating seed of God's word on the one**

hand, and the Scriptures which infallibly and without any error reproduce and mediate to us the whole content of this word which has come to us in such irresistible, saving power?

So, let's come back, now, to the milk. If the **seed** by which we've been begotten to new life is not simply "the Bible," then we should already be able to see that the **milk** that nourishes this new life will also not "just" be the Bible. In other words, Peter's point is **not** that a good Bible reading plan—or simply reading the Bible—is all we need in order to grow to salvation. But if that's so, then what *is* the milk that we're to crave? What is this milk that's so essential to our future salvation? Peter answers: "Therefore, having put off all malice and all deceit and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders, like newborn infants, crave the spiritual, pure milk, that by it you may grow to salvation—"

IV. 1 Peter 2:3 — ...if indeed you have tasted that **the Lord is good.**

What have the Christians in Asia Minor tasted? Or perhaps I should say: **Who** is it that they—and we—have tasted? When God spoke His final and ultimate word to us, that word was **Himself** – the **WORD** of God incarnate, coming down *in Christ* to dwell among us and be with us and in us. (cf. Heb. 1:1-3; John 1:1-4) This is the word—this is the Gospel—this is the good news preached to us—by which God has begotten us to new life as His sons and daughters. And so now it's also **this word** of God—**Jesus Christ Himself in the Gospel**—that as newborn infants we are to be continually craving as pure milk. This is the **only** milk that nourishes and sustains that eternal life to which we've been begotten—that life of faith, and hope, and love—and so this is the only milk by which you and I can grow to salvation. Let me just ask you: Isn't it in Christ Himself that we have finally and ultimately tasted the goodness, and the kindness of the Lord? Peter's thinking, once again, of Psalm 34:

- Psalm 34:8–10 — Oh, taste and see that **the LORD is good!** Blessed is the man who **hopes [LXX] in him!** ... The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who **seek the LORD** lack no good thing.

Here in this Psalm it's the Lord, Yahweh, in all His acts of goodness, and kindness, and salvation that the Psalmist has tasted, and savored and that he calls others to be continually tasting and savoring. And so now, when Peter quotes from Psalm 34, we should be able to see that the milk we crave is not "the Bible," per se, but the Lord God Himself who is now incarnate with us in the person of Jesus Christ. **The milk we are to be continually craving and tasting and savoring is all the saving goodness, and kindness, and mercies of the Lord in the Gospel—IF INDEED** we have already tasted that the Lord is good! Peter assumes we've already tasted of this goodness, but he wants to make sure we don't take this for granted. He wants us to first ask ourselves the question: "**Have I tasted and savored, and experienced** in my redemption the goodness of the Lord?" But who has once tasted of something so sweet, and so good, and so satisfying and not, for the rest of his life, craved and longed for more? Therefore, brothers and sisters, crave the spiritual, pure milk of knowing and savoring Christ and all the blessings of our salvation that are daily flowing to us from Christ. (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-9)

But where is it that we find Christ? On the one hand, we cannot divorce the word of **Christ Himself** in the Gospel from the record and the revelation of this same Christ on the printed pages

of our Bibles. On the other hand, we must never, ever divorce the words on the printed pages of our Bibles from that imperishable **seed** of the Gospel by which God has irresistibly called us to spiritual life and the pure **milk** of Christ Himself by which this new life is nourished and sustained in us and grows always to salvation. On the one hand, we need to be guarded against an unhealthy devotion to “rules” or “principles” or “doctrines” without the living Christ. The spiritual, pure milk that we crave isn’t simply a book or the word on the page, but ***that word*** actively proclaimed to us by the power of the Spirit so that in the reading and hearing and receiving of that word through faith, we’re more and more able to taste, and savor, and know the goodness and the kindness of God in Christ Himself. That’s the one hand. On the other hand, we must never forget that the word of Christ—that imperishable seed by which God has begotten us anew, and that pure milk by which our new life is nourished and sustained—is nothing more nor less than the record and the revelation ***of*** that word in Scripture.

“The word of the Lord constantly presents the Lord of the word... What ***we*** taste in Scripture is not simply the variety and power of the language. What ***we*** taste is the Lord... Those who read the word of God, and surely those who teach it, must never forget why the word is given and whom it reveals. The word shows us that ***the Lord is good***; his words are sweeter than honey to our taste because in them [and in the Christ that they testify to] the Lord gives ***himself*** to us.” (Clowney; emphasis mine; cf. Jn. 8:31; 15:7; 2 Jn. 9)

Have you already tasted and savored the goodness of the Lord? And now are you craving continuously, like a newborn infant, that spiritual, pure milk?

Before we conclude, we have to ask now: What does **craving** the spiritual, pure milk have to do with **loving** one another? Back in chapter one, verse fourteen, Peter warned us against “the **lusts** of [our] former ignorance.” Can you see how this **craving** for spiritual, pure milk is the polar opposite of all the self-seeking, self-promoting lusts of our former ignorance? This craving for spiritual, pure milk is by its very nature unselfish. It’s a longing that can’t help but turn us outward in love for one another. It’s like this: As we taste and savor the goodness of God and are fully satisfied in Christ, we’re freed from all the selfish lusts of our former ignorance. As we taste and savor the goodness of God and are fully satisfied in Christ, we’re wholly freed to love one another sincerely and unwaveringly from the heart. The Psalmist writes:

- Psalm 34:8–10 — Oh, taste and see that **the LORD is good!** Blessed is the man who **hopes** [LXX] **in him!** ... The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who **seek the LORD** lack no good thing.

And then he writes, on the basis of this tasting and being satisfied in the Lord:

- Psalm 34:11–14 (cf. 1 Pet. 3:10-12) – Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil [LXX: *kakos*] and your lips from speaking deceit [LXX: *dolos*]. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

“Therefore, [brothers and sisters,] having put off all malice [*kakia*] and all deceit [*dolos*] and hypocrisies and envies and all slanders [all the lusts of your former ignorance], like newborn infants, crave the spiritual, pure milk, that by it you may grow to salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”