



1 Peter 2:1-3
Growing Up

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,
 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,
 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

What's the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian? Obviously it isn't that Christians are wealthier, or smarter, or better looking, or their teeth are whiter than their unredeemed neighbors, I'm obviously living proof of that.

It also isn't that they live longer, or that their lives are free of suffering or that they never experience pain or sickness. In Peter's time in fact, Christians were more likely to suffer than their non-Christian neighbors, and that's still true in some places in the world. So if there is a difference it isn't to be found merely in their circumstances.

What does the Bible say? While the Bible says there is a difference between Christians and non-Christians and it isn't external, it's an internal difference, a spiritual difference, but one that produces perceptible differences in what they believe and what they do.

The difference, as Peter has already told you, is that Christians have gone through a renewing process that natural men haven't. The Christian has been regenerated or born again by the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore he has a changed heart and a different principle guiding his life. The Christian is as 2 Corinthians 5:17 puts it "a new creation" – the old person that they once were has been crucified with Christ, they are new men, they have been united to Christ through Faith, and therefore if you have been born again you are called to "***reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" That means that many of the things that they loved when before they became believers are things they now hate, and vice versa. And as time goes on they grow in holiness, they become less like the person they were before God changed them, and more like Jesus Christ. That is why we read so many exhortations like Paul's in:

Col. 3:8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Both Peter and Paul, frequently compare new believers to newborns, and it makes sense to do that, if you are a new believer, you've only recently been born again, you are a newborn in Christ. It's no coincidence therefore that Peter picks the list of things that the Christian newborn should lay aside in

verse 1, because they are all things you don't tend to find in newborns. Obviously even Newborns aren't entirely without sin, but these are sins that develop later.

These sins are also all related to one another.

Malice –it is to hate others and to actively desire evil to happen to them

Deceit – Guile. It is the opposite of transparency, it is the mode that people adopt instead of purity.

Hypocrisy – That's a word that came from the masks Greek actors would wear. This is the mask that those committed to guile use to conceal the truth about themselves.

Envy – A spiteful resentment that others have been blessed in ways that we haven't

Evil Speaking – or slander, this of course is malicious speech designed to cause harm to those whom we envy.

All of these qualities will have been present in us to greater or lesser degree before we became Christians, but they can no longer be part of our lives if we have honestly been born again. They are part of old life, they are the qualities of the Old man who was crucified. They should literally smell like death to us. They will be our ruin if we persist in them and they are antithetical to Peter's instruction from 1:22 **to love one another fervently with a pure heart**, so they will tear apart any church. So we are to remain as innocent as newborns in regard to sin, but we are not to remain as newborns in **all** things, far from it, we Christians are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature."

Now kids what does a newborn need to grow? *Milk*. Well what does Peter say Christians need to grow – *the pure milk of the Word*. What he means there by **Milk of the Word** is the Bible preached and read and studied, in church, in your daily devotions, and in your family worship. You see God's word doesn't just convert us, it is also the means God has appointed to sanctify us to grow us in grace. As bread is nourishing to our bodies, God's word is manna from heaven that nourishes our souls.

The Biblical Milk that we should want is *pure milk* the word pure there is ἀδολοῦ it's a Greek word that means not watered down, or adulterated the way some unscrupulous wine merchants watered down their inventory to get more money. He says we should want our Gospel Whole, and Rich, full of things that will promote our growth in the way that it is mothers milk is just chock full of vital nutrients and antibodies that best promote an infants healthy growth. That means we need the full counsel of God, not the biblical equivalent of fat free skim milk. Yeah, there will be things that offend, but even those rightly understood will work to grow us and mold us. Brothers and Sisters, I can't tell you how many things in the word rubbed me the wrong way when I first became a Christian, but now I can tell you, I needed to hear those things. I needed them to grow in ways I didn't even know at the time.

Peter also says we should *desire* the word. We should want it in the way a newborn wants milk. The Newborn cannot go more than a few hours without milk without crying in hunger, we shouldn't be different. "**Christians must be addicted to the Bible**" – Ed Clowney

Now if I can make three applications of these verses:

- 1) One of the things that I try to point out in counseling is that for the Christian, its not external circumstances that are critical to our spiritual well being our happiness, or out growth. So its not your

job, its not your location, its not your spouse, its not your kids, its not your education or your bank balance.

Its not even suffering and deprivation. Paul and Silas rejoiced and sang God's praises even in the middle of a jail. The church is growing in places where they have nothing and stagnating in places where there is a superabundance of things. The things that really prevent our growth and impede the growth of the church all lie in within us. Brothers and sisters, if we don't lay aside the sins of our former lives and pursue their opposites we will never enjoy the fruits of the Spirit. It's been my experience that often Christians are tremendously fearful of doing just that, we are mortally afraid of the consequences of getting rid of the masks that we wear with one another, or dealing transparently, or just dying to self. We fear being exposed, or that if we don't look out for ourselves, no one else will. So because of fear we end up living like the old man instead of the new. The degree to which we do that, is the degree to which we don't trust God's promises or his provision and the degree to which we don't enjoy those wonderful fruits of the Spirit: "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*"

Please believe me when I say no saint who has laid aside the things that Peter lists here has ever suffered from it or regretted it in the end. I hope you have all reached a point in your lives when you can honestly say, I want to walk *with* Christ not *away* from him, I want a life that is full of Love not Malice, Transparency not Deceit, Truth and Not Hypocrisy, Contentment and not Envy, and I want my speech to be a blessing to all.

2) Imagine you are a Doctor, and a family comes to you for advice. They shamble into your office, they are skin and bones, their eyes are sunken in, they're drowsy. You ask them what on earth is going on in their lives and the husband says to you, "*Well we don't normally eat any food, but one day a week we usually go out to eat, for one hour most weeks we sit down to a feast, but we're so unused to eating that we are only able to digest about 10% of the meal, and we're so weak we're distracted and listless. We know we have a problem, so we've come to you for advice on how to solve it. I think we should just stop going out to eat altogether, my wife thinks we should go to another place with smaller amounts of real food, and more synthetic fillers that will make it easier to swallow. What do you think?*" Now I'm sure you'd all say, that's ludicrous, your problem isn't the food you eat once a week, it's the fact you aren't eating on a daily basis.

Well brothers and sisters, you've just diagnosed the problem of many if not most modern Christians, they aren't taking in the spiritual food that God has given them. And the problem isn't a lack of food, I think we have more access to the Word today via books, magazines, radio, the internet, videos, and so on than we have ever had. The average American family has three bibles in their house. Our problem isn't lack of food so much as spiritual anorexia.

There are reasons that a Christian might feel little desire for that pure milk of the word. The greatest is simply that the very desire for God and his Grace is something that grows as we eat and diminishes as we do not. Put quite simply, the more milk you take in, the more you will want. As Jonathan Edwards put it: "*the kindling and raising of gracious affections is like kindling a flame; the higher it is raised, the more ardent it is; and the more it burns, the more vehemently does it tend and seek to burn. So that the spiritual appetite after holiness, and an increase of holy affections is much more lively and keen in those that are eminent in holiness, than others, and more when grace and holy affections are in their most lively exercise, than at other times. It is as much the nature of one that is*

spiritually new born, to thirst after growth in holiness, as it is the nature of a new born babe to thirst after the mothers breast; who has the sharpest appetite, when best in health.”

The more you take in, the healthier you will become, and the greater your appetite and ability to digest will be.

But if a Christian has no desire for the milk of the word, there can only be one explanation. As Peter puts it in verse 3 – you will desire the milk and you will grow *if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. In other words, only those* who have come to the Lord by Faith in Christ - who have truly tasted and seen that the Lord is Good will desire the milk of the word. If you don’t, then please don’t kid yourself, as Bill Harrell put it: “A Lack of spiritual appetite indicates a lack of spiritual life”

Brothers and Sisters it is my fervent desire, that all of you would pure milk of God’s word, and grow, but I also don’t want to fool you or have you fool yourselves, if you have never truly seen your overwhelming need of Christ and his forgiveness, if you’ve never closed with Christ by faith, then encouraging you to make progress is silly its putting the cart ahead of the horse, and encouraging you to run a race you aren’t in. Calvin put it well: “he only makes progress in the Gospel, who in heart comes to God.” Therefore if you are thinking even now, that’s me, then I would say start that the place to begin is grace not milk, start by coming to Christ through faith, and learn the sweet taste of the honey of God’s grace before you move on the milk of the word.

Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!