

What is the Food of Your Soul?

1 Peter 1:22–2:3; Canons of Dort 3/4.17

Studies in the Canons of Dort #26

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YOU must be born again. We heard Jesus’ powerful and memorable words last Sunday evening. Being born again, or being regenerated, means that the Holy Spirit gives us who were dead in sins new spiritual life. This is so wonderful that we sing with Peter, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3). Now that we are born anew, how is this new life fed? Let’s have our Bibles opened to 1 Peter 1–2 as well as in the back of our *Psalter Hymnal* to page 106. There you will find the Canons of Dort 3/4.17.

The Analogy of Food

Let’s think first about *the analogy of food* in relation to our spiritual life. As newborn children of God, we have a twofold life. We have an outward life of the body and an inward life of the soul. We have a temporal life and we have eternal life. And just like we need to eat food to nourish, strengthen, and sustain our outward and temporal life, so too with our

spiritual life. This is why Peter can write about our inward and eternal life based on the analogy of our outward and temporal life. He speaks of our inwardly being **born again**, just as we were born temporary; he speaks of the **perishable seed** that gave us temporal life and of the **imperishable seed** that gave us eternal life (1 Peter 1:23); he speaks of our being made spiritual **newborn infants** who **long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation** (1 Peter 2:2). This is why our Canons are on biblical footing when they say, “As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but requires the use of means...so also the aforementioned supernatural operation of God by which we are regenerated in no way excludes or subverts the use of the gospel.”

The application for us is to be concerned for our inward and eternal life as we are about our outward and temporal life. As Paul told Timothy,

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 Tim. 4:6–8).

The Food of the Soul

So let's focus in especially on *the food of the soul* here in 1 Peter 1–2. And Peter speaks of our new spiritual life in terms of our initial regeneration and our subsequent preservation here. We see that in our Canon, which speaks of “the seed of regeneration and food of the soul.”

Peter speaks of our *regeneration* beginning in verse 23: **Since you have been born again** (1:23). What's so powerful about this verb is that Peter puts it in the perfect tense. That means this is something that has already been accomplished. How were we born again? Jesus said in John 3 that the Holy Spirit is the one who does this work. But how? Peter explains with a quotation from Isaiah 40: **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** (1:24–25). In Isaiah's day, the people of God were wasting away like grass and flowers in the desert in their exile in Babylon but God comforted them with the truth that his reviving word remained and did not change. And then Peter applies this to us in that little explanation at the end: **And this word is the good news that was preached to you** (1:25). How were you and I regenerated? By the power of the Holy Spirit through the means of the preaching of the gospel.

Peter then speaks of our *preservation* as the children of God in 2:2–3: **Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.** I never knew what it was for a baby to long for milk until I became a dad. Cyprian was so big when he was born that for the first couple of days he was not able to be satisfied with just his mom’s milk. So he was crying out in hunger. I had to supplement his milk with formula that I fed him with a little syringe and tube that I held to the side of his cheek. And he guzzled that formula! Now, we all know that **milk** can be used negatively in Scripture of those who are so spiritually childish and immature that they old feed on milk (1 Cor. 3:1–2; Heb. 5:13). But Peter uses it positively because milk is appropriate for sustaining new life.

As God the Father’s **newborn infants** we are called to **long for the pure spiritual milk**. What is this **milk**? That’s the big surprise here. In verse 1 Peter tells us to that we have already and that we must continue to **put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander**. The surprise is that he does not now give a list of virtues in contrast, but simply mentions dependence on the Lord.¹ Notice that **the**

¹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 81.

pure spiritual milk is parallel to **if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good** (v. 3). And how have we tasted of the Lord's goodness? Back to 1:25: the preaching of the gospel! Look again at the Canon with me:

Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and to the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the influence of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline; so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God by separating what He of His good pleasure has most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions...

Why are we to long for it? Peter says **that by it you may grow up into salvation**. Our children are born and they are members of our families; their status is not in doubt. In the same way when we are born again by the Father's will our status as his children does not change. **Grow[ing] up into salvation** (2:2) is our maturation in the salvation we already have. We are to long for the Word so that we will grow! Look one last time at the Canon, which says:

...and the more readily we perform our duty, the more clearly this favor of God, working in us, usually manifests itself, and the more directly His work is advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen.

Let's long together for the pure Word of God! Amen.