



BETHEL
PRESBYTERIAN

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 18 Issue 31

August 25, 2019

Feasting on the Word Part 2

Luke 10 details the relationship of Mary and Martha and Jesus. Martha was so “worried and bothered” that, in hosting Christ and His disciples, the whole time she stayed in the kitchen fussing over the upcoming meal. Eventually, it spilt over into a formal complaint to Christ about her sister not helping. In contrast we see Mary sitting at Christ’s feet, soaking in His rich teaching and taking great delight in her Lord.

Amazingly, this account has been referenced to demonstrate the difference in the personalities

of the two women. Martha had a type-A personality which was set and focused on “doing.” Mary had a type-B personality which was relational. The dishes and food could wait; she preferred to enjoy Christ’s presence. And yet this is a grave misunderstanding of both the teaching and point of Luke 10. It wasn’t personality that made the difference between Mary and Martha, but their individual choice.

Luke 10:41-42, “But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only* a few things are necessary, really *only* one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’”

Do you understand the implication of this passage? The difference between Mary and Martha came down to a choice as to what was important in life. Martha chose to focus on the temporary and made much of her current struggles. Mary chose to focus on Christ and as a result she feasted on the Living Word!

As we consider the elements which lead a person (as it did Mary), to feast on the word of God we also see that just as there are predictable elements which accompany success in the realms of education, sales, and physical fitness, so also there are crucial elements to feeding effectively on the word of God. And those elements are identified by Peter in 1 Peter 2.

Feasting on the word of God begins with the conviction that life is housed exclusively in God. If you are going to know and enjoy life, it will only occur as you seek the Lord in His word. Jesus alone has the “words of life” (John 6:68). It involves an active rejection of the “life” offered by the world. In our world two sources of life are offered, yet only one gives it. We can look horizontally within or without hoping to find fulfillment from the things of this life: people, positions, an activity, a drug. These will continue to be “broken cisterns which can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13)! However, those who feast on the word of God reject this earthly food! They want the life that only comes from God!

Thirdly, feasting on the word of God encompasses a commitment — a choice — to be in the God’s word on a regular basis. When Peter references the newborn child, Peter exhorts us to cultivate the habit of frequently and regularly feasting on the word of God. He wants his brethren to arrange their life in such a way that feeding on the word is not simply a choice, but a habit — a way of living!

With these in mind, notice a fourth characteristic that accompanies those who feast on the Word, is that feasting immediately is after one thing.

1 Peter 2:2b, “Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word...”

The sentence here is somewhat complicated. Peter does NOT use the typical term for “word” which would be *λόγος* (*logos*). Rather, here he uses *λογικός* (*logikos*)- a term found in only one other passage in the Bible, Romans 12:1 where it is translated as “*spiritual* service of worship.” As a result, there is a lot of discussion on what Peter meant by this exhortation,

most of which argue that Peter is calling us to long for God's word. Accordingly, by λογικός (*logikos*) Peter is referencing NOT literal milk, BUT *spiritual* milk, that is, God's word. This is in keeping with how both the Rabbis of Christ's day as well as the Old Testament¹ spoke of God's word!²

Secondly by identifying the "milk of the word" as "pure", Peter is telling us something about the Bible. The Bible is unmixed with human advice, untainted by human opinion, and so nothing less than God's word.³ This is what it means to say that God's word is "inspired." It is the direct and exclusive by-product of God... "God breathed." Accordingly, Peter would later teach these same believers about inspiration.

2 Peter 1:20-21, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation [IOW, rightly understood, God's word is free of any human interpretation], for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

This is the word of God! It is NOT a compilation of a bunch of religious notions or commands. RATHER it is nothing less than truth! When you and I recognize this — that what we have in our hands this moment is truth, the natural inclination will be to feast upon it! The world is filled with false notions and outright lies. Christ tells us this about Satan.

John 8:44b, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*; for he is a liar, and the father of lies."

As such, this world is full of lies and half-truths.

2 Corinthians 4:4b, "...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving..."

We see this throughout our world. In advertising we are told that if we purchase a certain product, we will be happy. In psychology we are told that the secret to fulfillment is NOT denying the flesh BUT indulging it. In religion we are told that God exists to make us happy. Christ warns us of this tendency.

Matthew 24:24, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."

Even in Christ's day non-believers recognized this such that at one point during Christ's last hours, the governor of Jerusalem, Pilate, rhetorically said to Christ, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Isn't it glorious to know that we need NOT speculate as to what truth is? We have it in Christ and His word, again, recall the words of Peter when asked by Christ if the disciples wanted also to stop following Him.

John 6:68, "Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of

eternal life.”

Christ told Thomas and so all His disciples He was the truth.

John 14:6b, “...I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

Later in His High Priestly prayer, Christ made this incredible statement about His word, the Bible:

John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.”

In this world of deceit, half-truths, and error, how glorious it is to know that in our hands is nothing less than truth! The Bible rightly understood is the pure, unmixed/unadulterated word of God! You understand this, and you will long to feast upon it! And yet, feasting requires us to discern the pure/true teaching of the word. See God deigned to communicate His word to us NOT through a supernatural act where truth would be downloaded into our brains BUT through propositional statements... in a language which now is dead! Accordingly, the question of the hour is: how do we arrive at the truth of God’s word?

This is one of the more difficult things confronting us in any study of the Bible — understanding it without imposing upon it our bias. This is why two very important doctrines came out of the Reformation. First one must interpret Scripture with Scripture, the less clear in light of the more clear.

During the interval from the close of the Apostolic age up to the Reformation, the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture was to understand the Bible in light of the established teaching and interpretation of fallen man. It was believed that the church had authority over the Bible and therefore determined what it meant. From start to finish I hope you see that this approached was and is flawed. Church courts err! They are run by sinful man no matter their godliness, calling, or position.

Accordingly, 1,500 years after the close of the Apostolic Age, when the church had arrived at all kinds of bizarre interpretations of Scripture, many said, “Enough!” Recall Martin Luther’s famous statement at the Diet of Worms, “Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures... then I cannot and will not recant... Here I stand. I can do no other.”

Accordingly, one of the fruits of the Reformation was the understanding that God’s word alone is that which only can and ought to interpret God’s word, the less clear passages in light of the more clear passages.

A second important doctrine that came out of the Reformation is “Reformed and Always Reforming.” By this it is meant that everything and anything we believe to be true concerning

God's word must constantly be re-baptized by God's word and so subjected again and again to the teaching of God's word. Brothers and sisters, we must be very intentional here! Let our doctrines and views NOT be untouched idols placed high on pedestals. But let us approach the word of God with a passion to allow it always to mold and shape our understanding of truth! Recall the commendation given to those Christians in Berea:

Acts 17:11, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, *to see whether these things were so.*"

This having been said we need to come to grips with a grim reality! Because we are sinners, no matter how diligent you might be on this point, every approach to the word of God involves some *eisegesis* on our part (that is, reading into God's word). This is why solid, Biblical scholars have arrived at such awful views at times. And this is why we must be mindful of the excess baggage we bring to our study of the Bible.

For example, did you know some of the most solid theologians of the 19th century — who loved the Lord, preached His word, and endeavored to serve Him — nevertheless argued for slavery? Yes, slavery is referenced in the Bible, but in no way does it resemble the slavery of the Antebellum South. Biblical slavery was more akin to a contract employee today. Yet these solid exegetes in so many other areas allowed the opinions of their world to influence how they read the Bible. And if you think you are above that, you are arrogant and at grave risk of error. Rather, we must make it our goal to sit under God's word and read out of it (*exegete* it) and not into it (*eisogete* it)!

All of this reflects a fourth conviction when it comes to any and all who feast on God's Word: God's word, properly/accurately understood, is truth! That being said, we come to a fifth characteristic that accompanies those who Feast on God's Word. They ultimately have one goal.

1 Peter 2:2c, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow [this is a passive, literally meaning 'that it may grow you'...] in respect to salvation."

The word for "that" is a *ἵνα* (*hina*) clause which is a purpose clause. It tells us that the next statement references the purpose or telos of Peter's argument. So, what is the purpose or ultimate Goal of Feasting on the Word? It is "growing in respect to salvation."

We tend to think of salvation as a past reality, specifically the time when God converted us. And that is fine. However, we must see that there is much more to salvation than just our forgiveness. There in fact are three-time frames to our salvation referenced in the Bible.

- Salvation Past — when we were forgiven our sins and brought into the family of God (cf. Ephesians 1:13; 2:5; Acts 4:12; 16:30-31; Romans 1:16; 10:1, 9-10; Hebrews 2:3; 2 Corinthians 7:10). We read of the Philippian jailer, "And after he brought [the disciples]

out, he said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.’” (Acts 16:30-31).

- Salvation Present — which refers to the “working out of our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). This essentially encompasses our holiness and perseverance in the faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Philippians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:15).
- Salvation Future — which speaks of that time when God will confer upon the fulness of our salvation, specifically glorification (cf. Romans 13:11; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Timothy 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9; Hebrews 1:14; 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 3:15). Peter spoke of this describing the child of God, he said that they, “Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5).

The clear emphasis of 1 Peter 2 is on our present and future salvation. God’s word enables the child of God to grow in respect to their present and future salvation! Do you understand that when you were saved God gave you new life such that you began living the life which you shall enjoy the rest of eternity? Eternal life does NOT begin when we die, BUT when we are converted. Salvation therefore brings with it an organic refashioning of the sinner into the image of God (cf. Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:24)? In other words, in Christ you have become a new and living creature who grows, matures, and so increases!

2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Death is no miracle worker? The life with which you exit this world is the same life with which you begin eternity. Now granted, when we enter eternity we enter as sinless beings which no doubt will have a dramatic effect upon our person. That notwithstanding, the depth of our walk, our Christian maturity, is that with which we shall see the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 1:5, 9) when we die.

If you understand this then you understand that what we do today has eternal consequences (I’m not talking here about where we will spend eternity, but how we will enter into it). As all that is true, then one of our greatest passions as Christian is to grow in respect to our salvation. After a lifetime of service in God’s Kingdom we want to meet the Lord as mature men and women; we want to grow up in Christ and so mature in our love, devotion, and service. And how do we do that? Maturation comes by feasting on the word of God! In fact, the word is described in the Bible as “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17)! From this we conclude it is the tool by which the Spirit of God brings about God’s word in our lives. And this we see in Scripture.

Recall the Law of the King. It was the duty of every king in the Kingdom of God to be in the word of God on a daily basis.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20, "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that [1] he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that [2] his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that [3] he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left; in order that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel."

What is the net-effect of having God's word in our lives? Maturation!

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Or how about the glorious description of the ministry of God's word in the lives of God's people?

Psalms 19:7-8, 11, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes... Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

So why ought those to whom Peter is writing "long for the pure milk of the word"? "That by it you may grow in respect to salvation"! That brings us to the final element that results in the Christian feasting on God's Word, it all flows from a previous taste.

1 Peter 2:3, "If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

The "if" here is better understood as "since" which makes this an important statement. Those who feast on the Word are ones who first have "tasted the kindness of the Lord." This is a direct quote from Psalms 34:8.

What does it mean to "taste the kindness of the Lord"? "Taste" speaks of more than just sampling a food; it speaks of a taste with a view toward consuming, eating and so being nourished.⁴ When I think of this, I always think of the words of H. P. Barker who wrote this:

As I looked out into the garden one day, I saw three things. First, I saw a butterfly. The butterfly was beautiful, and it would alight on a flower and then it would flutter to another flower and then to another, and only for a second or two it would sit and it would move on. It would touch as many lovely blossoms as it could, but derived absolutely no benefit from it. Then I watched a little longer out my window and there came a botanist. And the botanist had a big notebook under his arm and a great big magnifying glass. The botanist would lean over a certain flower and he would look for a long time and then he would write notes in his notebook. He was there for hours writing notes, closed them, stuck them

under his arm, tucked his magnifying glass in his pocket and walked away. The third thing I noticed was a bee, just a little bee. But the bee would light on a flower and it would sink down deep into the flower and it would extract all the nectar and pollen that it could carry. It went in empty every time and came out full. (Naismith, 1985, p. 15)

Commenting on this, John MacArthur wrote this:

Some Christians, like that butterfly, flit from Bible study to Bible study, from sermon to sermon, and from commentary to commentary, while gaining little more than a nice feeling and some good ideas. Others, like the botanist, study Scripture carefully and take copious notes. They gain much information but little truth. Others, like the bee, go to the Bible to be taught by God and to grow in knowledge of Him. Also like the bee, they never go away empty. (MacArthur, 1986, p. 372)

That is the idea behind “tasting.” It is feasting spiritually upon a morsel of God’s word. And what is that morsel? Peter identifies it as “...the kindness of the Lord”!

This is so beautiful! “The kindness of the Lord” references those attributes that were unknowable prior to the Fall, for they involve those facets of God’s character which can only be seen in the context of treachery, specifically that of the rebellion of Adam in the garden. In His justice, He is right to condemn. But in His Kindness, He does NOT condemn, BUT rather He:

- Loves.
- Forgives.
- Pardons.
- Suffers long.
- Draws near.
- Upholds.
- Is merciful and gracious.
- Strengthens.
- Comforts.
- Does not condemn, but grows, strengthens, and matures the wayward sinner.

It is this we are called to taste! And yet, what does this mean?

By the grace of God and as image bearers, we wonderfully have the ability to imagine! For example, let me ask you these questions:

- How many of you believe that Prince Edward Island of Canada (Anne of Green Gables) is a most beautiful part of creation? How many of you think that standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon would be a most awesome experience?
- Yet, how many of you have ever seen Prince Edward Island in the flesh? How many of you have ever stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon? And yet you believe it to be beautiful and awesome!

- Now for those of you who have seen Prince Edward Island or have stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon, do you think any of us have a clue what it is like on account of our imagination?

Brothers and sisters, this is my fear. We can read a passage like 1 Peter 2:3 and imagine that what Peter is saying here is true. “Tasting the kindness of God” would most certainly impel us to fellowship with God via the reading/studying of His word. But then we will just walk away... without tasting ourselves! Christian, don’t simply imagine. Today/this week bow before the Lord with the sole purpose of “tasting His kindness.”

How do you do that?

- Read any passage and there discern what the text teaches about God and about you!
- Then approach God in prayer...
 - Ask Him to enable you to taste His kindness.
 - Spend time — a lot of time — adoring God on account of what you just read about Him. This is what is meant by meditation.
- As you pray/praise, consider the fact that that God whom you’ve been praising has set His love upon you- which means the basis of your standing before Him has been radically altered!

In Christ we have gone from relating to God on the basis of our conduct to relating to God on the basis of Christ’s conduct.

Psalms 103:10-14, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [Again, this reflects a massive change in how God relates to us and us to God. It no longer is based on our conduct, but God’s grace...] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. [And so...] Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. [You say, ‘But He doesn’t know me’! But He does...] For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.”

Spend time each day “tasting the kindness of the Lord” in this way, and you will not walk, but you will run to spend time with the Lord in His word! What is the ultimate springboard into feasting on God’s Word? It is enjoying God — tasting of the riches of His kindness, love, glory, goodness, greatness, and grace! Oh Christian! May God give us the grace so to feed!

References

- Davids, P. H. (1990). *The First Epistle of Peter (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Grudem, W. A. (2009). *1 Peter (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP Numbered))*. Chicago: IVP Academic.
- MacArthur, J. (1986). *Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series)*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
- Naismith, A. (1985). *1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

End Note(s)

¹ Cf. Psalms 19:8-9; 119:140.

² That means the focus here is NOT on elementary doctrine (milk vs. meat as in Hebrews 5:13 and 1 Corinthians 3:1-2). Rather, the focus is any and all teaching of God's word untainted by man- which is what is behind the word "pure".

³ "Pure (adolos) when applied to objects like wheat or wine has the sense 'pure, unadulterated' (MM, p. 10, gives several examples from Greek papyri), so the spiritual milk in view here is free from all impurities." (Grudem, 2009, p. 100)

⁴ It does not refer only to tasting as opposed to eating or drinking something, but to experiencing the quality of something, whether negative (e.g., death, Matthew 16:28; Hebrews 2:9) or positive (Luke 14:24; Acts 20:11; Hebrews 6:4-5)—it can in fact be synonymous with eating for the sake of enjoyment of the food." (Davids, 1990, p. 84)