

Feasting on an Eternal Diet

I Peter 1:22-2:3

INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (NASB)

²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For,

“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word which was preached to you.

² Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Prayer

One thing I have learned in life is that good material things don't last long!
When I finally break in a good pair of shoes to fit perfectly, they wear out.
When I find a favorite pair of jeans, they fade out and the knees rip out.
And how about the human body? Whew!, does it ever break down with the passing of time!
Have you looked in the mirror lately? What do you see that wasn't there 20 - 40 years ago?

- Wrinkles?
- Gray hair or, even worse, no hair?
- Sagging this and sagging that?
- Bulging this and bulging that?

ILLUSTRATION:

An older woman took a package to the post office to mail and was told it would cost \$3.95 for fast delivery or \$2.30 for slower service. This was obviously several years ago!

"There is no hurry," she told the clerk, "just so the package is delivered in my lifetime." He glanced at her and said, "That will be \$3.95, please.

"Why the higher price?", she asked.

He replied, "Some of us are fading faster than others."

Two elderly couples were enjoying a friendly conversation when one of the men asked the other, "Fred, how was the steak house that you took your wife to last month for your anniversary?" "Outstanding," Fred replied. "The steak was tender, had perfect seasoning, and was cooked perfectly".

"That's great! What was the name of the steak house?"

Fred went blank. His mind was spinning, but he couldn't come up with the name.

Then a smile broke across his face and he asked, "What do you call that flower with the long stem and thorns?" "You mean a rose?" "Yes, that's it!" He turned to his wife and said, "Rose, what was the name of that steak house we ate at?"

I seem to come by my memory loss naturally. A minister asked me as I was walking out of church one Sunday during my college days, "**What is your girlfriend's name?**" I went "UGH" and June said "JUNE". **Enjoying the moment**, he THEN asked, "**What is her last name?**" I went "UGH" and June said "SCHONEWEATHER". **Apparently thinking I had not endured enough embarrassment**, he asked a third question, "Where is she from?" Of which I quickly responded "RICHARDS!" I couldn't remember her name, but I knew where she was from!

Unfortunately, my memory is not getting any better with age. As many of you know, I have a terrible time trying to remember a name. It is embarrassing, but I have to deal with it!

But, there is **GOOD NEWS!** There is something in this world that will never perish or fade away and that is the **Word of God!**

Jesus said:

Matthew 24:35 (NASB)

³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Isn't it great to know that what we believe is **eternal** truth? It will never die or pass away. And it's not just the Word of God that will never pass away. There is something else that is extremely valuable in the eyes of God that will never pass away.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS?

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ **The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**

It is also important to note that it is **NOT JUST** the righteous who will live eternally, but Jesus also told of the fate of the unbeliever.

Matthew 25:46 (NASB)

⁴⁶ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

We all will live eternally, the critical question is "Will we live eternally in punishment or in the presence of God?"

That is what Peter is trying to relate to us today. We must feast on the eternal Word of God and grow in our faith.

Spiritual growth in a Christian bears a remarkable similarity to the physical growth of a child.

Just as in physical life...

1. **Spiritual Life Requires a Spiritual Birth.**
2. **Spiritual Growth Requires a Hunger for Spiritual Food.**
3. **Spiritual Growth Requires a Good Diet.**

BODY:

I. Spiritual Life Requires a Spiritual Birth

As in physical life so also spiritual life requires a moment of birth.

1 Peter 1:23-25 (NASB)

²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For,

“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word which was preached to you.

There is no physical life without a physical birth, and there is no spiritual life without a spiritual birth.

You know it is true. A baby cannot be born unless there has been a planting of physical seed. That seed produced a physical body and physical life which is subject to the laws of decay and death.

Like I said last week, "**LIFE IS SHORT!**" The grass and flowers give us a short term picture of the brevity of physical life.

We also said last week that "**DEATH IS CERTAIN**". But, unlike our earthly life, Peter tells us that spiritual life is produced by the **imperishable** seed of the Word of God. ²⁵ **BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.**"

Our new life in Christ was planted with imperishable seed. This is the gospel. This is the Word of God which endures forever. "**ETERNITY IS FOREVER**".

There is no spiritual life without a spiritual birth.

Once we have experienced a spiritual birth, we should hunger for spiritual food.

II. Spiritual Growth Requires a Hunger for Spiritual Food

1 Peter 2:2 (NASB)

²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

ILLUSTRATION:

Is it not a miracle that from the moment of birth, every baby has an instinctive sucking motion, and an urge to find a source of milk?

Watch it in a litter of puppies without their eyes open still finding their mother's milk.

Watch it in a newborn calf or colt, whose legs are almost too wobbly to stand on, finding its mother's udder. And watch the tail begin to twitch in delight when that milk begins to flow.

Listen to a baby cry when its hunger cannot be satisfied, and you get a picture of what ought to be true of every newborn spiritual Christian.

Now why am I taking time to tell you about this? I'm taking this time, because many people are complacent about their life as a Christian.

It is not until a person has a hunger for the Word of God that they begin to see and feel God at work in their lives. They begin to see change, and growth and evidence of real life.

How do we **know** that we are living a new life for Christ and what is the **evidence** of this change?

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NASB)

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature*; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸Now all *these things* are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Your life is different than it was before you committed your life to God. You live a **NEW LIFE IN CHRIST!** Or, as Paul tells us, you "**are a new creature**". You are no longer **self-centered** desiring to do sinful things. You are committed to be **Christ-centered** and avoid sin. You begin to dig into the Word of God, learning about **Jesus** and **faith** and **freedom from sin**. Without that hunger for the Word of God, there will be no change in your life.

Note that Paul also tells us that **true faith** will also **Produce Action!** Our new life in Christ does not stop at avoiding sin, it also requires that we proclaim to others about our new life and how they can experience it too!

Since God reconciled (or brought us back to Him) through Christ, He now expects us to tell others how they can **also** be reconciled back to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸..... who reconciled us to Himself through Christ **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**, ¹⁹ and He has **committed to us the word of reconciliation**. (or entrusted us to **proclaim the message** that **heals and restores our broken relationships** with God and each other.)

Do you have a hunger for the Word of God?

III. Spiritual Growth Requires a Good Diet.

1 Peter 2:2 (NASB)

² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, **so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation**,

If a baby doesn't grow, it causes alarm and leads a parent to get the baby to a doctor to find out what's wrong.

As a baby will stop nursing and begin to fuss when gas is present, so it is true that a Christian will not feed on God's Word, and will become fussy and irritable when sin gets in the road.

1 Peter 2:1 (NASB)

2 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

Peter here warns that in the Christian life, it is essential that sin be laid aside in order for growth to continue.

Peter lists five items on the junk food menu that the Christian must stay away from. In fact, we need to see them as leftovers from the days before we tasted the goodness of God.

1. Malice: Malice is the evil, natural desire to hurt somebody else, or to at least wish that something bad happen would happen to someone else.

2. Deceit: Like malice, deceit is love's opposite. Deceit is the desire to harm others through dishonesty and lies.

3. Hypocrisy: A hypocrite covers up his own evil intent with a show of righteousness. He pretends to be something he is not.

4. Envy: If there is any such thing as spiritual salmonella, it is envy. It is truly spoiled meat. He is unable to rejoice with those who rejoice and truly grieve with those who grieve.

5. Slander: Finally, there is the leftover junk food of slander. Slander's purpose is simply to destroy another person's reputation.

Now these are merely examples of sins that can short circuit spiritual growth and result in that person's being set on the shelf, unable to be used of God.

I want you to go back with me now to the beginning of the passage which we read...

1 Peter 1:22-23 (NASB)

²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.

Here is the goal we seek: spiritual maturity. Having purified our souls: this is a constant process. Day by day, every day, we seek to **grow in the Word**; we **seek spiritual cleansing** through the Word; we respond by **confessing sin** revealed by the Word. Spiritual growth takes place through **obeying** the Word, and **it results in love** for your fellow Christians.

John 13:34-35 (NASB)

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Essentially, Peter tells us that if we are going to love our Christian brothers and sisters deeply then each of us must properly “**eat**” a spiritual food so that we might grow. To assist us with our **spiritual diet**, the Apostle gives us a “**menu**” with good options that stimulate our spiritual growth

In the very last verse of our section this morning, Peter points out that those who have “**tasted**” the Lord understand and admit that He is “**good**.”

Interestingly, the Word of God is referred to both as “milk” and “meat” (or “solid food”).

Hebrews 5:12-13 (NASB)

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

Peter reminds us that as newborns we are to crave pure spiritual milk. Milk refers to the elementary truths of the Gospel—salvation, grace, forgiveness, baptism and the resurrection. These are the foundations of our beliefs. With them we stand on common ground. But, we are not to be satisfied with milk. The Hebrew writer says that we are to move onto solid food, or meat.

Meat refers to the hard realities of living out our faith in God. This requires us to move on to sacrifice, service, forgiveness, and especially **LOVE**. The **meat** of the Word means that our lives are producing the fruits of the Spirit and using the gifts of the spirit for the betterment of the body of Christ, not ourselves.

ILLUSTRATION:

A minister by the name of George Crane told of a wife who entered his office full of hatred toward her husband. “I do not only want to get rid of him;”, she said, “I want to get even. Before I divorce him, **I want to hurt him as much as he has hurt me.**”

Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan. “Go home and act **as if** you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him a real believer that you love him. After you’ve convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then **drop the bomb!** Tell him that you’re getting a divorce. That will really hurt him.”

With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, “Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!”

For two months she enthusiastically played the acting game of "AS IF". She showed him love and kindness. She listened carefully to him and tried to be as sweet and considerate and generous as possible. She shared her deepest "AS IF" thoughts with him.

When the two months were up and she hadn't returned, Crane called. “Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?”

“Divorce!” she exclaimed, “Never! I discovered I really **do** love him.”

Her actions had changed her feelings. Motion resulted in emotion. The ability to love is established not so much by thought but by often-repeated actions.

CONCLUSION:

Spiritual Growth comes through hunger for the Word of God, and from true obedience to His Word.

“I am hungry, Lord”. **Are you?**

Peter reminded the Christians he was writing to...

1 Peter 1:25 (NASB)

²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word which was preached to you.

The Word of God has indeed been preached to us. Over and over. Again and again. And if we have truly heard the Word and responded by faith and obedience we will be different people. We will be better people. We will be in Christ, living a life of faithful obedience, a life of love, and a life that is looking forward in faith to eternity.

May the words of Christ be said to you on Judgment Day, **"Well done, my good and faithful servant!"**

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again, By His counsels guide uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you, God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet...Till we meet, Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet...Till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.