

It's Time To Grow Up

1 Peter 2:1-3

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Let's go back to 1 Peter 1:22. Peter says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Last Wednesday night we studied this exhortation that we should love one another, love the brethren with a pure heart fervently, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed," this is going to introduce 1 Peter 2:1-3 on the power of the Word to mature us and grow us. So, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed,"—which is our physical birth—"but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever,"—the living abiding Word—"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." That corruptible seed is a metaphor for our bodies, our physical bodies, and that our bodies are like grass and the flower of the field that withers and falls away. But the contrast is, verse 25, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Now, there's no break in the chapter right here, and we need to keep reading into chapter two, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2 As newborn babes,"—or newly born babes—desire the sincere milk of the word,"—here's our theme tonight—"that ye may grow thereby: 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

Years ago I heard of what's called the Peter Pan syndrome. Have you ever heard of the Peter Pan syndrome? Okay, the Peter Pan syndrome is a legitimate thing, it's mainly males, but it's a male person who grows older but wants to stay youthful. He wants to be a youth. They developed a new title for this, they call them manolescent. That's an actual word coined in the Urban Dictionary, a manolescent. It describes a man of any age who shrinks responsibility and doesn't want to grow up. Well, the truth is a lot of Christians don't want to grow up and mature in the Lord.

Peter tells us in verse 2, that's our theme of chapter two, he says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,"—and here's the theme—"that ye may grow thereby." In 1 Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Paul says there's that time when we're children, we think as a child, speak as a child; but when we mature, we need to put away those childish things. My question tonight before we unpack these verses is, are you growing as a child of God? Are you a growing Christian or are you a Peter Pan Christian? Are you maturing in your walk with the Lord as you grow in the knowledge of God through His Word or do you want to remain a spiritual adolescent?

Peter wants us to grow up so that we can stand. The theme of 1 Peter, if you peek at it real quick, is 1 Peter 5:12 where Peter says, ". . . I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God"—and here's the theme—"wherein ye stand." Peter's telling us, "I

wrote briefly to you to teach you about God's grace in order that you might stand." When we mature and grow in the Lord, we're standing in our salvation, we're standing in submission, and we're standing in suffering. That's the three divisions of 1 Peter—stand in salvation, stand in submission, and standing in suffering.

How do we grow out of spiritual adolescence to spiritual manhood? Peter gives us three steps. We're going to cover three verses and it's really simple, there's three steps, verses 1-3. Here's step one in verse 1, lay aside sin. Take off the old sinful habits and put on the new. Go to 1 Peter 2:1, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings," stop right there. Peter opens chapter two with a "Wherefore." Now, we know that whenever there's "wherefore," we ask, what is it therefore, right? This is why I read back in 1 Peter 1:22-25. Peter has been talking about being born again by the living Word of God. Go back to 1 Peter 1:23, having been, "Born again"—that's the tense of that, having been—"Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,"—which he describes as—"by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." So, we've been born of the Spirit of God, we become the children of God, and thus we have the ability and the capacity to be able to love the brethren, which is the exhortation in verse 22. Christians are born into God's family, now as newly born ones, 1 Peter 2:2, we need to grow and mature as believers in the family of God.

When Peter uses the phrase in verse 1, look at it with me in chapter two, "laying aside," this is a popular imagery or picture that Paul liked to use. It's the picture of taking off soiled garments. You go out in the yard and maybe you work and you get dirty. Before you come into the house you take your shoes off, knock the dirt off them, maybe you take your shirt off (guys) and shake it in the garage before you bring it in and you're careful not to track any dirt into the house (by the way, that's what an adult male should do), then you should put it in the clothes hamper.

When I'm thinking about adolescence, I'm thinking about, why is it men have such a hard time putting soiled clothes in the clothes hamper instead of just throwing it in the closet somewhere? I have this top ledge in my closet, I just throw my stuff up there, and it piles up real high. Pray for me. I'm a manolescent.

When you have dirty...I'm sure most of you came tonight, Lord willing, with clean clothes. You work during the day, maybe you have to take off some work clothes, you put on clean clothes. The picture is taking off, that's that phrase "laying aside." It's a very forceful term in the Greek, it means with intention and purpose to take off or to remove, to lay aside. It's a picture of taking off a garment, as I said. Some translations have, "get rid of."

I'll mention it right here, that notice it doesn't say, "Cast out." So, you don't have a demon that needs to be exercised, you have sins in your old flesh that need to be put aside or laid aside. It's going to develop like this, in order for you to desire the Word of God and grow, you have to deal with sin. The first is negative, verse 1, get rid of sin so that you can desire the Word of God in your life. So, we are to grow here in the things we need to lay aside—sinful attitudes—and we're going to look at each one, and words that will hinder our growth.

This phrase, “laying aside” is also a command. It’s an imperative, so it’s not an option. He’s wanting us to lay aside sins that keep us from desiring to love the brethren, 1 Peter 1:22, and that keep us from hungering for the Word of God. It’s all to be done in the tense of the verb, once and for all. So, it’s a command or an imperative, and it’s to be done once and for all lay these sins aside. These sins must not be condoned, they must not be excused, they must not be covered, they must be put off by repentance and turning to the Lord.

Now, the first sin, let’s look at them quickly, is “ . . . all malice.” You’re going to note the repetition of that word “all.” He uses it three times, “ . . . all malice, and all guile, and all evil speakings.” That phrase means every kind of, so not just certain kinds of malice, but all aspects of malice. It’s all inclusive. It’s an all-inclusive word used for evil, malice, and it’s sometimes rendered ill will or spite. If you have malice in your heart toward others, you’re to take it off like a piece of soiled garment. The desire to get people back for hurting you, it also involves an unforgiving spirit. If you’re a Christian, you should lay that aside.

I heard the story of Leonardo da Vinci when he was painting the The Last Supper, that he actually came to paint Judas, and he had someone that had wronged him recently and he was angry with this person, so he decided he was really going to get him. He was going to paint this person’s face as Judas in his picture. He painted that. Then, he took his brush and cleaned it and started going back to painting the face of Christ, and it just wouldn’t come together. He tried again, it wouldn’t come together. He realized until he changed the face of Judas and forgave this individual, that he wouldn’t be able to really see Christ clearly or paint Him accurately in The Last Supper picture. It’s a reminder to us as Christians that we can’t carry malice or hatred in our hearts for anyone.

The second sin to lay aside is, “ . . . all guile.” The sin of guile is deceitfulness. It’s crookedness. It’s dealing with people in a deceitful, crooked way. It disrupts fellowship. By the way, these sins in the context keep us from, 1 Peter 1:22, loving the brethren fervently with a pure heart. We’re not going to be able to love the brethren the way we should if we don’t get rid of malice and deceitfulness or crookedness or guile in our hearts and our lives.

This word actually comes from a Greek word that was used of a fishing hook. Now, I’m not a fisherman. Fishermen are deceivers. They cover the hook with their bait, right? Or, they use a lure, they lure that fish to try to trap them. This is a picture of being deceitful or crooked or trying to trick individuals, and it uses a malicious grudge towards others who had done things that upset them.

Notice in 2 Corinthians 8:21, write it down. Paul says, “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” We need to have no guile, no trickery. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira feigned as though they were giving their all to the Lord when they were not and God struck them dead and they had to be taken out of the church.

Notice, thirdly, there’s what’s called “hypocrisies.” Notice that that’s in the plural, so it’s all kinds of hypocrisy, and it’s tied in very closely to guile. It’s to be out of the life of the believer. It’s

pretense or playacting or pretending to be what you are not. As I said, it's in the plural so all expressions of phoniness. Christians are not to be phony. They're to be sincere, genuine, or authentic. I heard of a preacher in the south that said, in his very humble way, "Be what you is, and not what you ain't, because if you ain't what you is, you is what you ain't." You got that? I'm going to ask you to quote that for me after church. Be real. Be genuine. Be authentic.

Notice, fourthly, we're to take off or to lay aside envy, verse 1. Envy is a clear indication of spiritual infancy. It's used in the New Living Translation translated "jealousy," and that is far too common sadly in the church today when somebody is given a ministry or an opportunity or maybe the limelight or a responsibility that you wanted and you become jealous toward them. It's a malicious grudge toward others who have what you want. You know, one of the great qualities of a true believer should be that we rejoice with those who rejoice and that we weep with those that weep. I've got a few friends that just amaze me. When anything good happens to others, they actually are glad. When anything bad happens to others, they're actually sad. We should rejoice with those who rejoice, we should weep with those that weep, and we shouldn't be jealous of others. If there's anything that will keep you from being used by God, it's the green-eyed monster of jealousy.

In 1 Timothy 6:6 Paul says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." In Philippians 4:11 Paul said, " . . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

I heard a story about these two demons that were tempting a holy man. This demon was doing all he can to tempt this holy man to get him to stumble, and it was all to no avail. He went to his head demon and said, "Look, I'm having a real hard time getting this guy to fall into sin. Do you got any recommendations?" And he said, "Watch this." He went up to the holy man and whispered in his ear, "Your brother has just been made Bishop of Alexandria," and the green-eyed monster of envy just filled his heart. Be careful that you don't get envious or jealous of others that God has promoted or that God is using or that God is blessing.

The fifth is evil speaking, there in 1 Peter 2:1, which is the word "slander," speaking against. The phrase literally means talking down or we put people down in order to elevate ourselves. It can also be what we know as backbiting or getting down on others. Again, it's one of the favorite Christian pastimes—getting down on other people and bringing them down to exalt ourselves.

In Ephesians 4:29 it says this, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." You know, we shouldn't be slanderers. The devil is the slanderer, let's leave that to him. When you're going to speak, you should ask yourself, Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? That will really limit a lot of things you say. Before you speak, think and ask yourself, "Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?" A lot of times you start to say something, you say, "Well, I'm not absolutely sure it's true. I don't really know that it's necessary, and I certainly don't think this is

very kind,” so that should limit what we say when we think about other people or want to put them down.

These five common sins of the saints are named specifically by Peter. I heard recently someone say that preachers shouldn't name sins. I couldn't believe I was hearing that. I thought, If a preacher reads the Bible and expounds the Scriptures, he will name sins. Now, we're all sinners, and we're all separated from God by sin. These are specific sins that manifest into our lives from our sinful flesh, our sinful nature, and that's why we need to be born again, that's why we need to be filled with the Spirit, that's why we need to be feeding, verse 2, on the Word of God. Any preacher worth his salt will specifically name sins. “. . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine,” 2 Timothy 4, Paul told his protege Timothy. I don't know how you get by it, they're listed right there in the text, “. . . malice . . . guile . . . hypocrisies . . . envies, and all evil speakings,” which is all sorts of evil speakings that ought to be out of our vocabulary. These common sins, again, keep us from living holy lives, 1 Peter 1:14-16, where God says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy,”—says the Lord, and keep us, 1 Peter 1:22, from loving the brothers and the sisters—“. . . with a pure heart fervently.” These things are to be cast off.

If you're here tonight and any of these specific sins hit home, then you need to say, “Lord, forgive me,” 1 John 1:9. It says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Now, to confess your sin means you just agree with God that you've sinned, and then God forgives us and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Verse 1 is the negative step, what we are to put off; now, verse 2, is the positive step, what we are to take on or into our lives, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Verse 1, what we are to lay aside, sin; verse 2, we are to desire Scripture. So, lay aside or denounce sin and, verse 2, desire or feed on the Word of God. We move from what hinders us from growing to now what helps us to grow.

John Bunyan is said to have had in the flyleaf of his Bible the words: “This Book can keep you from sin, or sin can keep you from this Book.” It works both ways. The Word of God can sanctify us, we're going to see that tonight, but we can also stumble and let sin keep us from feeding on and reading the Word of God. We go from what we must lay aside, sin, to what we must receive, the Scriptures.

Notice Peter is using another analogy. The first analogy in 1 Peter 2:1 is take off the soiled garments. The next analogy is that we are newborn babies, and we must crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word. Some translations have “spiritual milk.” We who are born again, that's in the greater context, we must have a hunger for God's Word. One of the greatest indications that you have been born of God is a hunger for the Word of God. Amen? Nature determines appetite. It wasn't in my life true that I loved God's Word and read God's Word until I was born again. Once I was born again, I couldn't get enough of God's Word in my life. We need to be born again, and God puts a hunger in our hearts to feed on His Word. It's a sign

that you are saved.

When he says, “As newborn babes,” some scholars believe that it's an indication that these believers addressed were baby Christians. That's possible, but I don't think highly probable. I think rather that he's just using an analogy of, what does a baby crave? And, I'd ask you that, “What does a newborn baby want? Does he want Coca-Cola? Dr. Pepper? Sprite? A cup of coffee?” No, he or she wants milk. My wife and I are going to go up this next week to see my new granddaughter. Of course, she's just eating great. She's growing. What little babies want is milk, right? That's what they desire.

What do Christians want? The Word of God, the unadulterated Word of God. That should be what we hunger for, what we thirst for, what we desire. Again, the New Living Translation renders this, “Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk.” You know that when a newborn is hungry, they let you know it, like “Waaaaaa!!!” They don't just say, “Excuse me. I'm quite thirsty. Whenever you get around to it, if you don't mind, I'd like something to drink.” They're just, “WAAAAA!” They want that milk, they hunger for that milk; so should a Christian, the child of God who's been born into God's family, hunger for the Word of God.

We are born again by the Word of God which lives and abides forever, now we are growing, thus sanctified by the Word of God as we feed on God's Word. The word “desire” in verse 2 means to crave. It's an intense yearning or longing. I love Psalm 1, “Blessed is the man, Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But”—here's the word—“his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

Notice it's, verse 2, “ . . . the sincere”—or pure—“milk of the word,” so no mixture, no adulterated word, just “ . . . the sincere”—pure—“milk of the word”—of God. God's unadulterated Word.

I believe the job of the pastor is to give God's people nothing more, nothing less, than the milk of God's Word. Now, this is not the milk as opposed to meat, this is just an analogy of how a baby desires milk, we desire the Scriptures. A Christian that doesn't want to read the Bible, doesn't like reading the Bible, doesn't read the Bible, you have to question whether or not they've been born again and born into God's family.

If you're a believer, and you don't have a desire, ask God to search your heart and give you a desire and a hunger and a thirst for God's Word. As I said, I was raised in church. I was a prodigal during my high school years, and my senior year in high school I came back to Christ. I began to just read the Bible, read the Bible, read the Bible, read the Bible, read the Bible like I'd never read it before. It was a brand new Book to me because I had a new heart, I had new eyes, I had a new desire. Nature determines appetite. You know why dogs like dog food? Because they're dogs. All these fancy new dog foods, incredible what people feed their animals. But we have a hunger and a desire as children of God for God's Word. That's one of the reasons why we want to read the Bible because it is the Word of God, the Word of the Lord.

Why don't more Christians feed on the Word of God? Woodrow Kroll said, "Bible illiteracy is not a problem in the church; Bible illiteracy is the problem in the church." Bible illiteracy is the problem in the church today. We are suffering in the church today for a lack of vitamin "B," a good dose of the Bible. Amen? Now, a lot of times the excuses are, "I don't have the time to read." Well, we take time to eat that we might survive, we need to take time to read the Word of God. Or, "Reading the Bible isn't a priority in my life." We need to make it the priority of our life. The Scriptures say, "I desire thy Word more than my necessary food." Another excuse that people use is, "The Bible is boring." You know, when a baby has milk, they're not bored by it. They delight in it. So, if you've been born of God, you will delight in the Word of God.

Some say, "Well, I can't find what I want in the Bible. When I read the Bible, I don't find what I want," but most people kind of read the Bible with this real kind of helter-skelter jump around. Maybe they read a devotional book with one little verse, they never get the context, they never get it explained and how it applies to them. Listen, when you read the Bible, you look at what it says. Secondly, you ask, what does it mean? Thirdly, you ask, how does it apply?

You don't just read the Bible and then say, "Well, I want it to mean this," or "It means this to me." What does it mean to the original author? You need to get to what's called the authorial intent, so you need to read it, you need to study it, and then you need to apply it—put it into shoe leather in your daily life. You don't just get up in the morning and say, "What shall I read? Okay, Lord," (close your eyes and point to a verse). You look down and it says, 'Judas went out and hung himself.' "No, let's try another verse for the day. What shall I read?" (pointing to another place in the Bible) It says, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' It's not the best way to study the Bible, so we need to read the Bible as it was written, book by book, understanding who wrote it, why it was written, who it was written to, what the author's intent was when we read, so we're feeding on the pure, unadulterated Word of God.

J. Vernon McGee, who I so highly respect, long since gone to heaven but still on the radio, thank God. He said, "The pure unadulterated Word of God is actually the whole Bible, the whole counsel of God, all of Scripture must come into play." It's so very, very important. We don't desire the Word because we can just learn it, we desire the Word because we meet God and we come to know God. It's so very important.

Notice this, back up again to 1 Peter 1:23. It's called there, " . . . the word of God." Look at 1 Peter 1:25, it's called, " . . . the word of the Lord." Look at 1 Peter 1:23, it's called living, in 1 Peter 1:23 it's called eternal, " . . . abideth for ever." In 1 Peter 1:25, it's known as the enduring Word, it's eternal. All those qualities are the Word of God.

Write down 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"—God breathed. Write down 2 Peter 1:20-21 where it says, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved"—or carried along—"by the Holy Spirit."

If you get a chance and you haven't listened to my sermon from a couple of weeks ago, I

preached Psalm 19 on the sufficiency of Scripture. I went into great depth of what the Word of God is, what the Word of God can do in your life, and how it can transform your life. So, we need to hunger for God's Word because that's how we grow. We need to grow through the Word of God.

Let me lay it out for you. The Word of God brings salvation, 1 Peter 1:23, born by the seed, the Word of God. The Word of God brings sanctification or growth, 1 Peter 2:2, and John 17:17, Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." In 2 Timothy 3:17, it equips us for service. Salvation, sanctification, and service, it's how we grow and how we're used by God. We must grow by it, 2 Peter 2:2. Only as we feed on God's Word can we grow.

Here's the third thing we need to do, verse 3, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," then you should, ". . . desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," so remember God is good. So, lay aside sin, desire God's Word, and remember—don't forget—the goodness of the Lord. I love that, verse 3. When he says, verse 3, "If," in our Bibles, that could be rendered "since you have." He's not questioning if they had been born again or the Lord was good or they tasted His goodness. He's saying, "Since you have," it's a fact, you have tasted that the Lord is good.

How many of you have been born again and you have tasted the goodness of the Lord, raise your hand. Okay, well if that's true, you should want to feed on God's Word. Why? To get to know the good Lord. Amen? To get to know the goodness, the mercy, and the grace of God.

I read this statement in a commentary today that I really love. I wrote it down. This commentator said, "The God-given Word is to be desired not for its own sake but because it enables us to feed upon its Author and to appropriate His grace," to feed upon its Author and to appropriate His grace. Some people study the Bible just to get information. What we should be doing is studying the Bible to get to know God better and to experience God's grace. The goal of Bible study is not an enlightened intellect, it's a transformed character, and that only happens when you meet God in the pages of His Word.

Write down Psalm 34:8. The psalmist says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good." If you've tasted and you know the Lord is good, you're going to want to feed upon His Word. So, you are born of the Spirit, you grow through His Word, and you taste of the goodness of God. We are God's people. We find God in His Word. We walk with Him and get to know Him better.

Here's the three points: Lay aside sin, feed on Scripture, and remember the goodness and the mercy of God. If you have not been born again, then, verse 3, you've not tasted of the goodness of the Lord; but if you have, you'll have a hunger for more of God's Word in your life. The only way to grow, and you've heard me say it a million times, here's a million and one, is by feeding on His Word. You can't grow apart from that. You can't grow apart from that. You need to pick up the Book and you need to take a look at the Savior and experience His goodness and His mercy. Amen?