

XV. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“Axiom #3 for Elect Exiles”

I Peter 2:1–3

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June 10, 2018 • Morning Sermon

This is our 15th study and I’d like to start by looking at I Peter 2:1–3. This is the Word of God which I now read. I Peter 2:1–3 says [1] *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. [2] Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— [3] if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I like the New American Standard version of this passage which reads [1] *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.* I believe I understand why the ESV used the word ‘so’ to start off verse 1 but I like the word ‘therefore’ because it tells us that what we are about to study cannot be understood without connecting it to what went before it. This is a connecting word, a verbal linguistic connecting tissue.

So what have we learned before us? We learned that Peter inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote this book. Do you remember what one of the last things Jesus said to Peter after He restored him after Peter denied Him three times? He said ‘Feed My sheep. Tend My lambs.’ That is exactly what Peter is doing in the writing of this book. Churches he has never yet visited and Christians he did not know he is writing these epistles to feed the sheep, to care for the flock. We now get the blessings of it because we are also what he says we are.

We are elect exiles. We are not covenant people who have been dispersed to the nations. We are a covenant people who have been brought to Christ from all the nations and reside in the nations with a supreme commitment to the Kingdom of heaven. Therefore we have a mission, a message and a ministry as we are staying on our journey as elect exiles to the Kingdom of heaven. The picture you can see is the people of Israel being freed from Egypt, in the wilderness heading to the Promised Land. We have been freed from our sins, we are in the wilderness, in this world on the way to the Celestial City. God’s eternal, redeeming love is our hope. It’s not our love to Christ that’s our hope but it’s His love from all eternity that we place our hope in and that’s who we are in Christ.

He expounds that in I Peter 1:3–12 in praise and honor to the Triune God. Then having told us who we are in Christ as the elect of God, kept by God and for an inheritance that God has provided for us Peter then tells us what it means to be an exile. Here is what it means to be a good citizen as a Christian but with your supreme allegiance to the King of Kings and your citizenship in the Kingdom of God. So now Peter gives us commands as to how we are to live on this journey and I have called them axioms.

We have already studied two axioms that we learned from I Peter 1. The first axiom is a Divine summons to the personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness. As ambassador citizens living for Me in the nations of this world I want you to pursue a pervasive personal holiness. You have already been given a positional holiness. Your sins have been eradicated by the atonement of Christ and you have been clothed with His righteousness. I Peter 1:16 says [16] *since it is*

written, “*You shall be holy, for I am holy.*” He didn’t say be holy to be saved because Jesus did that for you. Be holy for your Savior because He is holy. That is I want everything in my life to be uniquely owned by Him. I Corinthians 10:31, says [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

I want my marriage to be holy. I want my job to be holy. I want to do my work heartily as unto the Lord. I want my worship to be holy. I want my witness to be holy. I want everything in my life to be holy for Him, not to be saved but because my Savior is holy and I want to bring it all to Him in praise, glory and honor. That’s the call to a pervasive pursuit to holiness. Then you realize as you look around that you’re not the only one on this journey. I have brothers and sisters which brings me to the second axiom.

The second axiom is a Divine summons to sincerely and earnestly love one another from the heart. This is a sacrificial love for one another. We not only have the Lord with us but we have one another with us. I need you and you need me and the church of Christ.

How do we pursue this Divine summons to be holy? Peter says we have to start with our mind. You have to get rid of stinkin’ thinkin’ because that’s the way you used to live where it’s all about me. Now I need to transform my mind. I have a new heart, a new family, a new record but I don’t have a new mind. I need my mind renewed so Peter tells us to prepare your mind, fix your mind and have a sober mind. Don’t be intoxicated with the things of this world. Have your mind in hand, the hand of the Lord. With your mind in hand it leads to your soul being purified in obedience to the truth which then allows you to love one another from a filled up soul and heart – a heartfelt, sincere, earnest, sacrificial love.

So in this pursuit of personal pervasive holiness how many of you are scoring 100? None of us are scoring a 100. We’re falling short. We are positionally holy but constitutionally we’re still sinners. We will never be sinless this side of heaven but we do sin less so we haven’t attained perfection even though the call is to be holy as He is holy. Are we perfect in our sincere, heartfelt, sacrificial love of one another? No. So then Peter reminds us of two precepts that helps us with these two axioms.

The first precept is our justification is imperishable because it is secured through the imperishable blood of Christ. We were not justified by gold and silver even though people live and die for this. In heaven we throw gold and silver out to walk on it for its paving material in heaven. Because of the blood of Jesus we don’t lose our status with Him when we fall short and that is where our hope is.

The second precept is that our regeneration is imperishable for we were born again by an imperishable Seed. That imperishable Seed was the Word of God which was preached to you. We praise God for His Gospel blessings for we have been delivered from sin’s guilt because of the imperishable blood of Jesus we are right with God. I have been delivered from sin’s power because of the presence of the Holy Spirit – the imperishable Seed of the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit that has set me free from the dominion of sin and brought me to the dominion of grace. So Peter gives us these comforting precepts. Now he is ready to give us the third axiom.

The third axiom is given to us in I Peter 2:1–3. These axioms are the framing commands of Lord but even in my own ecclesiastical circles today there has come this notion that if we talk about Jesus giving commands to His people that somehow we’re losing the Gospel of grace. That the Gospel of grace is a command less Christianity. I’ve heard people in my own circles say there are no ought to’s in Christianity. Do you mean the Ten Commandments have been suspended? They were commandments and not suggestions. If we develop a revulsion to the

commandments of Jesus that is not a valid step to defend the Gospel of grace. That is revealing the lack of our love for Jesus, because when you love someone you want to know their commands.

In John 14:15 Jesus says [15] *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* You can’t keep what you don’t know. Lord, I want to know what pleases you. Why do I love the Law of God? It can’t save me and I can’t save myself with the law of God but I love the law of God because it tells me with four commandments how to love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind and then it gives me six commandments to know how to love you. I want to know from my Savior the commandments of how to love Him rightly and others effectively. To develop a revulsion to the commandments of God diminishes the Gospel of grace and it reveals our shortcoming of affection to the Lord because if you have a love for the Lord you want to know and keep His commandments.

So through Peter we have seen two of God’s commands which are pursuing holiness and loving one another. Now with the third commandment Peter wants us to look inward for all of this starts inside. We have you well-bred when you were born again so now we need to get you well fed so that you grow in this Gospel of grace. We can see what this third commandment is immediately as we look at I Peter 2:1–2 which says [1] *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. [2] Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

The command is that we long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word. The word long is only used 6 times in the New Testament. Paul uses it like this when he says ‘I long to be with you... I long to be with the Lord.’ It literally means a craving, an undeniable relentless desire and appetite. It can’t be stopped. It is a yearning. So what is it that you’re yearning for? I have to say I prefer the New American Standard Version and King James Version translations of I Peter 2:2 which says [2] *like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.*

The reason why I like these versions better is because as I am longing for the milk it has two adjectives to define the milk. The first adjective is the Greek word *adolon* which means pure, unadulterated, sincere, unmixed, unpolluted. So why did the NAS add ‘of the word’? It is because of another adjective which is *logikon*. It sounds very similar to logos which is the word and I think a literal translation of this verse could be ‘long for a pure, wordy milk’ where you would have to take ‘word’ and turn it into an adjective and that is why no translation would use it this way. The NAS and KJV knew you couldn’t use the adjective ‘wordy’ so in their translation they just made it a preposition to modify it.

That is the command that Peter gives us here, to long, crave, yearn for the pure, wordy milk of the word. Notice that this verse doesn’t tell us to ask God to give us an appetite for this milk for it calls us to develop an appetite and to do this you have to rely on the Lord. This command calls you into the activity to long for, yearn and develop an appetite for something. So in order to pursue holiness and love one another you have to start inside of you by growing in your salvation by developing this longing and craving for this unadulterated, unmixed, unpolluted milk which is the word of God preached.

This is the context of these verses in I Peter 2 because the last verse from chapter 1 says [25] *“but the word of the Lord remains forever.”* *And this word is the good news that was preached to you.* There is the milk of the Word through the delivery system of the preaching of the Word. So this is what the command is and now how are we to long for the pure, wordy milk of the word?

In I Peter 2:2 he tells us how to long for this word and that is like a newborn babe. I believe this is the only time the word ‘newborn’ is in the Bible in the Greek. Now I think the ESV rightly used the word ‘infant’ in their translation rather than ‘babe’ because this is referring to a child, an infant that is fully and absolutely tethered to the mother for all nurture, care and all nourishment. Can we bring a substitute for the mother’s milk? Yes but every child will know it’s a substitute. They know a substitute for the mother and for her milk.

I see this every time I do a baptism in the front of the church with a baby. As the baby goes from the mother to the father it tends to go bananas and then when the baby goes from the father to me it goes double bananas but as soon as I give the baby back to the mother it goes into complete serenity. That’s called home base. They know that mother and those arms. They know that mother’s nourishment. We are to crave the mother’s milk from the Lord that He has provided for you like a newborn babe.

With this illustration Peter is tying this back to I Peter 1. I Peter 1:3, 22–25 says
*[3] 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 through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. [22] Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, [23] since you have been **born again**, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, **through the living and abiding 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,

[25] but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

*And **this word is the good news that was preached to you.***

Like newborn babes you are born again. A man once said to me ‘I don’t think that guy is a born again Christian.’ I said, ‘Can you name for me another kind?’ That’s a redundancy to say a born again Christian. I understand why we say it for it’s an instructive redundancy because we’re trying to make a point. If you’re not born again then you’re not a Christian. It’s that simple. You can’t see or enter the Kingdom of God until you have been born again by the Word and by the Spirit.

I don’t know who to give credit to on this but one of my mentors quoted this; “the seed with which we’re bred is the Word of God by which we’re fed.” How are we born again? It is through the imperishable Word that was preached to you. That is how you were bred. How are you fed? You are fed through the Word of God preached to you. Are there other axillary things that God uses? Yes, like sacraments, fellowship and all of those but the primary means is the Word of God that comes to us.

Have you ever heard your mother say ‘Don’t eat that you will ruin your appetite’? My wife even tells me that. Don’t eat that for it will suppress, distort, ruin your appetite. So when we are told to long and crave the Word of God preached that’s the positive for you were bred by it and are fed by it but now Peter tells us not to ruin our appetite. There are five things that are going to ruin your appetite and we see it in I Peter 2:1.

I Peter 2:1 says *[1] So put away all **malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*** I actually don’t think it’s five but three and the giveaway is the word ‘all.’ I love the NIV translation which say ‘rid yourself of all...’ It’s like an old coat that is worn out and worm eaten. Rid yourself, shed, throw off, put off, put away, put it in the trash bin, all malice and all

deceit... and by the way there are two things that feed deceit and that is hypocrisy and envy and then all slander.

Malice is not an act to get rid of for it's an attitude that motivates your actions that you need to get rid of. Malice is an attitude that becomes a motivation to a sinful act. So Peter says let's first go to the heart where the malice is generating these actions that militate against your appetite for God's Word. This isn't an exhaustive list of sins but if you embrace these things you will not yearn for God's Word. You will avoid God's Word. You won't go to the milk of the Word but you will go to the garbage heap of the world if malice is allowed to fester.

As you get rid of all kinds of malice you get rid of all kinds of deceit. Deceit is where you disguise as to say something that sounds true but is actually false where you are fraudulently deceiving people. For example when someone says 'well it depends on what is, is...' where technically it's the truth but it misleads or deceives another. So you get rid of all malice because it will lead you to deceitful communication. There are two things that motivate deceitful communication and that is hypocrisy and envy.

What is hypocrisy? It is the Greek word for an actor. The Greeks could put on a play with ten characters and only hire one actor because the one person would play all the parts by putting on a different mask for each character. Jesus uses this word the most when He would say things like 'You hypocrites' who are playing a part deceitfully from malice – out of malice deceitfully playing a part. Hypocrisy is not falling short of being a Christian. A hypocrite is one who tries to appear to be something they are not. Why? It is because you will envy the people who will applaud you.

Do you see how these things work together? Malice leads to deceitfulness which is supported by hypocrisy (playing a part) and this is encouraged by envy and it all comes to fruition with slander. People automatically think this just means telling lies about people. Slander can be a lie about someone but slander can be the truth about someone that is told to the wrong people at the wrong time. Slander is taking lies or truths to destroy people. So let me pull all this together for you.

Can you think of anyone who had malice toward Jesus who was identified by Jesus as hypocrites and who slandered Jesus? It was the Pharisees. The reason He called them hypocrites was because they had malice toward Him and they were deceitful. Matthew 22:15–16 says *[15] Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. [16] They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are.* They are lying here. They didn't believe this themselves. They thought He ought to be somebody that should be killed! They didn't see Jesus as a teacher from God. So they used deceitful language to try to catch Him.

It's no wonder Jesus says a couple of verses later to them in Matthew 22:18, *[18] But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?"* Why did the Pharisees do this? It was because they envied Him because all the people were going after Jesus. Do you see the connection here? Malice – they want His destruction so they deceitfully converse with Him and they act as hypocrites motivated by their envy and then they go around and slander Him all the way to Pontius Pilate. Now we have this in our own lives for Peter wouldn't be telling us to get rid of it if it wasn't there, but if we embrace it in our life it will suppress and distort our appetite for God's Word.

So Peter not only tells us to long for the Word like a newborn babe but get rid of those things that are killing your digestive system and suppressing your appetite for the Word. Throw all that malice, all that deceit, and all that slander into the trash bin. Get rid of all of it! Why do we do this? We do this because we want to grow. I Peter 2:2 says [2] *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

In past grace we have a salvation that is complete in Jesus but in present grace we who have been delivered by the power and penalty of sin are now being delivered from the practice of sin and one day will be delivered from the presence of sin. So I have a salvation that is full and complete in Christ but I am also being saved as I'm becoming more like Christ and less all about me. I want to grow in this and the way I do this is the very Seed that brought me into Christ is the Seed from Christ by which I'm fed is what makes me more like Christ. The Word preached brought me in the hands of the Spirit to Christ, the Word preached is what makes me more like Christ. What bred me is what feeds me.

I don't know about you but I'm not where I want to be in Christ but I do want to praise the Lord that I'm not where I used to be. I used to be dead in my sins but now I'm alive in Jesus because the Spirit of God with the Word of God preached brought from death unto life. Then I began to grow in Christ – up, down, three forward, two backward, six forward, five backward etc. I have entangling sin I'm still wrestling with over forty plus years. I have some sins that He microwaved out of my life which I praise Him for but I have other sins that He is crockpotting out of my life but praise God I'm not where I was even though I'm not where I want to be. I thank God for that but I want to grow!

I want you to grow! You don't grow through a preacher but you do grow through preaching of the Word. I Corinthians 1:21 says [21] *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly (foolishness) of what we preach to save those who believe.* I want you to nurture that appetite for the Word and it there for you and I to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ our Lord. The Bible was given to you so that you can read but it was designed to be preached for you. I believe those are some crucial things to getting rid of the things that would suppress your appetite for the Word.

This is not talking about baby Christians here in I Peter 2:1–3. Yes you will go through stages in your Christian walk from a baby Christian to a young Christian and then to a mature Christian. I feel that every time I preach where I know some are attending who are searching and I want to speak specifically to those as I try to get it off the shelf right in front of you. Some of you are new Christians and I'm trying to put it on the bottom shelf. Some are what I call 201 Christians and I want to get it on the middle shelf and there are some I'm trying to make stretch for it because you need to, for you've been Christians long enough where you need to start giving it to somebody else. I understand all this but this passage in I Peter 2 is not talking about this.

This I Peter 2 passage is not a season of life for this is a way of life. We are to long like a newborn babe for the pure, wordy milk throughout our whole life in Christ so that we may grow in respect to our salvation in Christ. This is what Peter is saying to us through this passage in I Peter 2:1–3. So what is our takeaway? It is our third Divine summons.

The takeaway is a Divine summons to grow by the grace of God through nurturing a relentless appetite for the preaching of the Word of God. That is His command for you that you may grow up by it which you were born again – the Word of God that was preached to you.

The church I was at before this one a man said to me right before I was leaving to come here 'Harry do you have room for another sinner in this church?' I said 'That's the first

requirement to join.’ One might be thinking ‘What do you mean Harry?’ This is our membership vows when one joins this church. The first vow says ‘do you acknowledge that you are a sinner and without hope except in the sovereign grace of Christ?’ That’s not the only requirement because the second vow is ‘Have you put your hope in Christ alone?’ And the third vow is ‘Will you use the means that God has appointed for you to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ?’ That is where Peter is bringing us in this passage.

I am a sinner saved by grace and I’m on a journey for the Lord. That journey is one in which I want to grow in grace while I’m on it, by longing as a newborn babe for the pure milk of the Word of God. Do you remember that last verse we read? I Peter 2:3 says [3] *if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good*. If you have tasted then you want to gorge. Once you taste of the Lord you want to feast.

When I was growing up I wish you could taste of what I had over the summers. Usually this would happen about once a week where we would take out the ice cream churn and my three sisters had one job. They had to take turns sitting on the ice cream churn while I was the one who turned the churned for I was the oldest. My mom and dad would never buy an electric one for it would cost too much money. My mother would tell me it’s not as good if it is done by an electric one. If I could ever get a spoonful of my mother’s homemade peach ice cream in your mouth, your tongue would slap your brains out trying to get more of it. That’s how good it is! That ice cream was just unbelievable!

Well, you taste the Lord, if indeed you have tasted it and that Word that was preached brought you to it, then you want to feast upon Him unless you have allowed some appetite suppressants. So let’s get rid of those suppressants and nurture that appetite to stay on the journey and pursue holiness for Christ as we love one another from the filled, to overflowing growing heart. Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha (Luke 10:38–42)? What Martha was doing was good but you have to remember what’s essential and Mary has chosen the essential – hearing the Word of God. God, give me a heart to nurture a relentless appetite for Your Word and Your Word preached. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for the time we could be together in Your Word. God, would You speak to our hearts? Be silent right now while the Holy Spirit speaks to you. You may be reading this and the Word preached is not feeding you but it’s breeding you where you are being brought from death unto life and you want to confess Christ as Lord and Savior. You want to know more about this Jesus. I invite you very confidentially to call me at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and I would be glad to talk and pray with you. Father, for those of us where the Seed was used to breed us, would You now give us a heart to nurture an appetite that is relentless so that same Word would feed us? God our God, thank You for Your relentless love of sinners that we’re born again and Your persistent love of Your children that we would grow by the Word preached even as the Word preached was used to give us life, I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

TWO AXIOMS – TWO PRECEPTS

AXIOM #1

A Divine summons to the personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness.

AXIOM #2

A Divine summons to sincerely and earnestly Love One Another from the heart.

PRECEPT #1

Our Justification is Imperishable

PRECEPT #2

Our Regeneration is Imperishable

AXIOM #3

What?

How?

Why?

LIFE TAKEAWAY

A Divine Summons to grow by the grace of God through nurturing an appetite for the preaching of the Word of God.