

Salvation Renovation, part 3

1 Peter 2:1-3

(preached Pine Grove 9/1/19 Sun PM)

Introduction

As a kid, I craved butter.

I would often sneak to the fridge, unwrap a stick of butter, run my finger through it and then eat it off my finger.

I can remember doing it multiple times as a kid.

We didn't have the country crock tubs of margarine or vegetable oil that we have now.

If we had those, I would have probably used a spoon.

I now am grossed out about eating butter in that fashion, but for a while, it was an incredible craving in my life.

Today, my cravings center on sweets.

A key lime pie won't last more than a couple days at the house.

Neither will a 2 liter Diet Mountain Dew.

At times, I crave peanut butter.

Other times, I crave plain Hershey bars.

It is possible that I am nothing more than a pile of sugar with two arms and two legs.

The dictionary defines craving as felling a powerful desire for something.

1 Peter 1:2 says that we should crave the pure spiritual milk of the word of God.

Some translations even say that we should desire or long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God.

Do you have that craving for Scripture?

Do you long to read it?

Do you desire to pick up the Bible and learn it?

Do you crave the knowledge of God and wisdom of God contained in it?

You should.

In fact, Peter says that it is a duty of every believer to long for the word of God?

As we come to 1 Peter tonight, we arrive in verses 1-3 of chapter 2..

Peter is writing this letter to Christians to help them with suffering.

The first readers of this letter were 1st century Christians who were dealing with Roman persecution.

The year was 64 AD.

The city of Rome had just been destroyed by a fire, and the emperor was pointing his finger at Christians..

So Peter was inspired by God to write a letter to help them endure the affliction they were experiencing..

But this letter is timeless and it has continued to help Christians who suffer all throughout church history.

And the source of comfort in affliction is simply a focus on our salvation..

For the first 12 verse of this letter, Peter is essentially reminding his readers that the world may throw punches but it will will never knock us out of God's hand.

God has saved us, so what can upset us?

God has redeemed us, so what can trouble us?

God is protecting us, so what can threaten us?

And then after those opening 12 verses, Peter begins to offer some duties of the Christian in light of his glorious salvation.

The point is simple.

The world may attack, but we as believers cannot throw a pity party.

We are safe and secure in our salvation and we must obey the Lord regardless of the conditions in which we live.

There was on duty on Peter's readers to obey even though they were living under a hostile government.

And I would remind us that we are certainly expected to obey since we live under way more favorable conditions.

God has saved us and we are secure.

Therefore, we obey.

So for the past two weeks, we have looked at these commands of God that come through the pen of Peter.

We have listed these duties of the Christian now that we are saved..

They effectively become part of the renovations that happen in our lives as a grateful response to being saved by God.

The first 3 commands were what we called our duties toward God.

1 Peter 1:13 commanded us to *fix our hope* on Christ.

Though we often see commands of God addressing outward actions.

We also have a duty to change the way we think.

We must repent of anxiety and worry and other thoughts that replace our hope in Christ with despair.

Then we saw the command *to be holy* in verses 14-16 of chapter 1.

That was followed by a 3rd command to to be *reverent in our attitude toward God*.

Peter wrote in verse 17 that we must conduct ourselves in fear during our time on earth.

Yes, we are saved.

Yes, we are redeemed.

But we must continue to have a healthy fear of the Lord.

And those were our duties toward God.

Then last week, we saw our duty toward other believers in verses 22-25 of 1 Peter 1.

We called this *our duty to love*..

And we are commanded to love fervently.

To love other Christians to the point that it stretches us...

But Peter is not quite done with these commands from the Lord..

So in verses 1-3 of 1 Peter 2, Peter offers duty #5 for the believer..

Since God has offered his glorious salvation to us, we have a duty to crave and desire and long for his every word..

In sense, this is our duty to ourselves.

We have seen duties that we owe to God, - a duty to hope, a duty to be holy, a duty to be reverent.

WE have have seen our duty to other believers, which a duty to fervently love them.

And now we see a duty to ourselves.

WE must desire the pure spiritual milk of the word of God.

Now, let's look at these verses a little closer, and the first thing we need to examine is the command and it sits at the start of verse 2..

The NAS translation says,

“2 like newborn babies, long for the [e]pure [f]milk of the word,”

The picture that Peter paints here is very clear for anyone.

WE are to crave and desire the Word so much that we resemble babies longing after their milk.

Peter could have used all sorts of pictures here, but the Spirit moved him to write about an infant and his milk.

And this may be one of the greatest relationships in the world..

Babies scream for their milk.

Babies hold their milk tight.

Babies walk around with their milk

This is picture of what the Lord commands His people to be like in terms of our relationship to his word.

WE are to cherish it.

WE are to carry it with us.

WE are to grieve when we don't have it.

And I ask you ask again?

Are you living in obedience to this command of the Lord?

Are you fulfilling your duty to have a strong desire for the spiritual milk of the word?

And look, this isn't a command for new believers.

This is a command for new believers, mature believers, and everyone in between.

And obedience to it is not optional..

So the question is how we we cultivate this desire?

How do we become people who long for and desire and crave the word of God?

I am glad you asked because Peter surrounds the command with 5 ways to grow your desire for the word of God..

I am going to give you them in the negative...

In other words, here are 4 actions that you must not take if you want to grow in your desire of Scripture.

The first one is found in the first word of chapter 2..

The word is simply "*Therefore..*"

And the help is this..

A. Don't forget what the word has done

If you look back at the closing verses of 1 Peter 1, the command is to love fervently...

And how can we love fervently?

Look back at verse 23..

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.

If you are a believer, you have been saved through the truth of the word of God.

Yes, the Spirit called us to salvation, but he calls us through the truth of the Word of God.

Even if never read the Bible, the truth that saved you was from the Bible.

Salvation never bypasses our intelligence.

You have to believe truth to be saved.

You have to believe God's truth to be saved.

You don't believe in something that a preacher makes up or something that an evangelist makes up or something that a friend makes up.

If you are saved, you have responded by the Power of the Spirit that works through the Word of God.

And Peter is simply saying this..

If the truth of the word was powerful enough to save you, why do you now ignore it once you are saved?

When I was learning to play golf, my grandfather had one rule, keep your head down.

In order to make proper contact with the ball, you have to be looking at it when you swing.

But this principle never loses its power.

For instance, even the best golfers in the world keep their head down while they hit the ball.

It is basic principle of golf, but it is also a lifelong principle.

It would be foolish to start taking your eye off the ball once you started getting better at golf.

In the same way, it is foolish to have to have your head in the Bible in order to be saved, but then take your head out of the Bible once you are saved.

If the word was sufficient to save, it is sufficient to help you for the rest of your life..

That is why Peter uses the word therefore to begin chapter 2..

Therefore, since the word caused you to be born again, crave it all the more now that you are saved..

So if want to increase your craving for the word of God, don't forget what the word has already done in your life.

Number 2..

B. Don't fog up your life with sin

After Peter uses the connection of the past work of the word to motivate our craving of it, he now offers a great barrier to our desire for the word in verse 1..

putting aside all [a]malice and all deceit and [b]hypocrisy and [c]envy and all [d]slander,

Many people have written the following quote in the front of their Bibles..

Most attribute this saying to Dwight L. Moody, and it goes like this.

“The Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Bible.”

And both of those statements are very true.

Psalm 119:11 is probably the first verse I was told to memorize as a new Christian.

Psalm 119:11 says this..

*I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.*

And that is very true.

God's word is a protection from sinning against him, but it is also equally true that sin will keep you from the Word.

You see that right here in verse 1..

If you are trying to grow a desire for the word of God in your life, you need to grow your hatred of sin.

Well what specific sins inhibit our desire to crave the word?

Well, the first one listed here is malice.

And malice is a general word for all sinful behavior.

But it likely refers to sin directed specifically at others..

And the command here is to put aside all malice.

But that is not the only sin that hinders our desire for the word of God.

There is also the sin of deceit.

The Greek for deceit is dolon and it was often used to describe bait for fish.

Deceit is baiting someone to use them for your own good or pleasure.

Deceit is used to get the better of someone for your own selfish desire..

Hypocrisy is a 3rd sin listed here that must go if we hope to cultivate a desire for the word..

Hypocrisy is the act of deception where someone says one thing but practices just the opposite.

Hypocrites are two faced people.

They want a certain appearance before men, but they don't live out the truth that they claim to love.

The 4th sin listed here is envy..

Envy is the emotion of displeasure when someone else does well or has more.

Envious people simply can't be happy for others success.

And then the final sin mentioned here is slander..

Slander is language that seeks to harm another person's reputation.

It may happen in the company of the person being spoken of, but it often happens behind their back.

Spurgeon describes slander in this way,.

“Mrs. Tittle-tattle is up as early as possible, and calls on Mrs. Scandal, and says, “Have you heard the sad news about Mrs. Absent? I hope it is not true.” Mrs Scandal replies “No, I have not heard it.” “Well, don’t mention it to anybody else. I hope it is not correct, but I have heard so-and-so.” And the two sit down, and they make breakfast over the news. And they both say they hope it is not true, while all the time they are as glad of it in their hearts as ever they can be. They go on telling others they hope it is not true, and telling them not to mention it to anybody else, before they have stopped to check on and inquire of Mrs. Absent.”

The roots of slander are pride because the slanderer elevates himself or herself by pushing others down.

And here in lies the problem.

All of these sins are the sins of selfishness and pride.

All of these sins, - malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, are sins designed to protect and elevate the people committing them.

Often times, the worst gossips and hypocrites and liars in a town are also the ones who are most insecure about themselves.

So they get the focus off themselves by attacking and taking advantage and harming others..

In turn, they also avoid the Bible because it doesn't make them feel better about themselves..

Instead, the Bible describes them as wretched and deprived and sinful.

And if you are insecure, who wants to read about those truths?

If you are self-centered, who wants to read a book on God.

If you are trying to get the focus off yourself, the Bible should be the last book you pick up..

Because the Bible regularly identifies our sinfulness, our fallenness, and our hopelessness.

In short, people who are living in sin and committing sins against others are trying to avoid conviction of how evil they are.

So, they continue on in their sin and they avoid Bible reading and preaching at all costs.

The point that Peter is trying to make is simple.

A desire for God's glory cannot coexist in a heart consumed with seeking our own glory.

People have asked me, "How did I become more consistent in my Bible reading?"

According to 1 Peter, that desire begins with our repentance of seeking to slander and lie and cheat and disparage others.

The more you practice love of others, the more you will love the Word of God.

It is truly that simple..

But there is more help here in cultivating a love of the word..

We will call this...

C. Don't forfeit your growth

As kids, we all desired to be the biggest, tallest, strongest or fastest in our class..

Well our parents played on that desire and told us to eat our vegetables if we ever hoped to become any of those superlatives..

Those parents also knew that growth would also take care of itself with age..

But little minds don't understand so we forced down the broccoli and brussel sprouts while holding our nose and gritting our teeth.

As believers, we also have a desire to grow in our faith.

The Holy Spirit puts a desire to know more so we can obey better and please the Lord greater..

But growth in the Christian life is not a matter of time.

There are some Christian today who are teenagers in terms of the number of years that they have been saved but they have never gotten out of diapers much less crawled or walked..

There are some some Christians today who are adults in terms of the number of years that they have been saved yet they are barely walking.

Here is the issue..

You will not grow without a love for the word of God..

People come to me frequently and express a desire to return to the Lord and really become the Christians they should be, and they ask me what to do..

I tell them to make daily Bible reading and praying and obedience a way of life.

Most given me a look that says, “That’s it. That doesn’t sound too magical.”

And the reality is that spiritual growth is not some mystical experience where you wake up Mr or Mrs Super Christian.

Spiritual growth is the result of spiritual discipline.

If you want to grow, you won’t grow overnight.

You must regularly read the word and put yourself in churches that study the word and apply the word to your life.

That is not the exciting formula for spiritual growth that most people want to hear, but it is the truthful and biblical formula.

Look again at what Peter writes at the end of verse 2..

long for the [e]pure [f]milk of the word, so that by it you may grow [g]in respect to salvation,

I can't tell you how many times I have seen people who really wanted to get their lives back in order and were all excited to do it..

But a few months later they were back to their old ways simply because they were not willing to read their Bible, pray, and obey.

I get criticism when I tell people that reading the Bible is key to spiritual growth.

Some people tell me that spiritual growth is more than just reading your Bible.

I agree to a certain extent, but love of the Word of God is the foundation of spiritual growth.

1 Peter 1:2 says so.

If you want to crave the word of God, seek to grow in your faith.

As you desire to grow, the Holy Spirit will put a desire for the word in your heart.

A 4th final help in growing a desire for the word of God is found in verse 3..

We will call this..

D. Don't fail to remember the Lord's goodness

Verse 3..

long for the [e]pure [f]milk of the word, so that by it you may grow [g]in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted [h]the kindness of the Lord.

The word “if” that starts verse 3 would be better translated as “since”.

In other words, long for the pure milk of the word since you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

What Peter is saying is this..

If you know from experience that God is good and kind, why in the world would you not want more of that kindness and goodness of God that is found in His word.

I love a good steak.

We have friends back in Union that love to cook.

Every time we came home from Union, we stayed with this family.

And they would cook.

Ribs, Hamburger steaks, grits, gravy...

And everything was so good, but they never seem to cook steak.

Well, a year or so ago, they invited us up just to visit, and he told me on the phone that he had learned how to cook a good ribeye..

Look, I didn't need to hear anymore.

I knew it would be good before I ever got to his house.

And why did I know that?

Because everything else that I had ever eaten by Him was delicious..

And when we got there, it was one of the best steaks I have ever eaten or will eat.

Look, God has been good to you in so many ways.

He has proven his faithfulness and love and protection and care and healing and kindness and grace over and over.

You have literally tasted the Lord's goodness in your life.

So why in the world would you ignore a book that contains a 7 course meal on the Lord's goodness.

If God has given you a small taste of his goodness, why not devour all the goodness of God that comes to us through the study of His Word..

God's grace in your life is an appetizer to make you want more of His goodness that comes through his word..

If you want to cultivate a love of the Word, don't fail to remember all that God has shown you in your life...

Conclusion

I will end with this well know but true story..

There was a young French girl who was born blind.

After she learned braille, someone gave her a copy of Mark's gospel.

And she loved learning about Jesus through raised letters of Braille..

So much so that her fingertips got calloused from reading Mark's gospel over and over..

Desperate to feel the words of Jesus with more sensitivity, she actually tried to cut off her fingertips.

Sadly, the calloused fingers were now replaced by scar tissue and her fingers were less sensitive as she read Mark's gospel.

Once she reached the point of having no feeling in her fingertips, she borough the brought the book to her lips and kissed it goodbye, saying..

"FAREWELL, FAREWELL, SWEET WORD OF MY HEAVENLY FATHER."

As the words left her mouth, she realized that her lips could read the title of the book..

She then spent the rest of her life reading the Braille of Mark's gospel by pressing it to her lips..

What a great picture of literally tasting the sweetness of the word of God.

What a great picture of craving the word of God.

May we as people blessed with sight be willing to put the word of God before us with such craving.

Let us pray.