

The Sincere Milk of the Gospel

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[0 : 00] I'm going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 34, Psalm 34 at verse 8.

O taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God is saints, none that in fear shall be with want oppressed.

The lions young may hungry be, and they may lack their food, but they that truly seek the Lord shall not lack any good. O children, hither do ye come, and unto me give ear, and shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear?

What man is he that life desires? To see good would live long. Thy lips refrain from speaking guile, and from ill words thy tongue.

Depart from ill, do good, seek peace, pursue it earnestly. God's eyes are on the just, his ears are open to their cry.

[1 : 11] And so on. We can sing these verses, verse 8 down to 15 of Psalm 34. O taste and see that God is good.

O taste and see that God is blessed, who trusts in heaven's rest.

O taste and see that God is blessed, who trusts in heaven's rest.

O taste and see that God is good.

and bound to be here I shall give tears to understand how Jesus Lord should be here what man is he the mighty child who seekly the word of Lord thy lips repay from sweet and eses and all new works thy tongue.

[3 : 43] Depart from hell your good and peace and soon in earnest sleep.

God's eyes are gone, just as it is, man open to the kind.

I'd like us for a short time to turn to the passage that we read together in the New Testament Scriptures the first epistle general of the apostle Peter.

And we can read at the beginning of the chapter. 1 Peter chapter 2 at the beginning.

Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

[5 : 13] As you will appreciate, the first word there is a word we must pay attention to because clearly it links what the apostle is going to speak about with what he has been speaking about.

It is a link with what has been said prior to this. But sometimes, although there is that link, and you would imagine that the link is immediate, that chapter 2, verse 1, follows on from chapter 1 on verse 25.

So, verse 1 and verse 25 are the immediate link. But sometimes, you need to go back further in order to find out where the apostle's thoughts begin.

And sometimes, when you delve more deeply into what he is saying, it's perhaps hard for us to follow the chain of thought.

But if we, in this case, we take note of the fact that Peter has emphasised the relationship that exists between Christ and his church, between Christ and his people.

[6 : 48] And the things that are true of them are true of them because of that relationship that exists between themselves and Christ as their Lord.

They believe in his word, and I think that's probably key. His word to them is all important. And it is the basis for what he expects them to be and to become.

By the hand of the Spirit, the world has been life-giving. You remember the sequence, and I think it's a remarkable sequence of questions in the Shorter Catechism, where we read of the process involved in bringing the redemption of Christ into the knowledge and experience of the people of God.

The Shorter Catechism tells us that how we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ. And it is as if the divines are wanting us to understand that what Christ does must needs be applied in the experience of the sinner.

If that doesn't happen, then the redemption that Christ has secured cannot be their possession. So, the process, if you like, or the sequence, as we have it in the Shorter Catechism, brings us to the truth that the Spirit applyeth to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

[9 : 05] So, the Spirit is responsible for bringing the truth concerning Christ to our attention and by grace applying it to our hearts and minds so that we understand our need of redeeming and understanding the way that God does it.

Jesus promised, you'll remember when he was praying that remarkable prayer, what's called the High Priestly Prayer in John 17, he explains even in that prayer what will happen when the Spirit comes.

When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth and that is what awaits the Church, that is what is promised by Christ and once the work of redemption had been accomplished, then this had to follow.

I mention that because not only must we believe that this takes place in our effectual calling, when the believer becomes a believer, when the sinner becomes a saint, when the enemy of God becomes reconciled to God, that that is but the beginning and from that beginning whole outcrops of other activities must follow and sometimes those who are misunderstanding the way God works, they have the order completely wrong, they think this is what I must do in order to be saved, this is, I must do this and I must do that and because I am doing these things then God will receive me to himself,

God will accept me as his child but what the apostle is insisting on here is that the spirit must work faith in the believer in order for that person to come into that saving relationship with Christ but having taken place then that must be followed by other elements being brought to creation and just as I suggested becoming a believer is for a new beginning that must be followed by growth and development and progress to maturity and therefore this is what Peter is alluding to here at the beginning of the second chapter he is wanting to emphasize that this progress and this development must take place and

[12 : 15] Peter describes it in a very specific and helpful way in order that the believer can understand where they are at when they come to faith in Christ and what is expected as a consequence of that new relationship that they have with Christ that they don't at that moment rest on their laurels the divine don Carson refers to the flow of Peter's logic and thinking and he takes us right back to verse 15 where you see the apostle there say but as he which has called you is holy so be ye holy in all manner of conversation you would think that the link as we spoke of doesn't need to go back that far but this is the aspiration this is the purpose of

God's calling not just to take you as you are and leave you as you are but to take you in order that you become something yet you are not so what Carson says now that you have purified yourself by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers love one another deeply from the heart it is the initial obedience that is part of becoming a Christian being submissive to Christ with repentance bowing to the gospel now that's something that you want to think about how much emphasis do we as individuals put on the submissive aspect of the Christian's relationship to Christ there is very little evidence of it in many people that they are humble and that Christ has made them submit to him as their

Lord and that that submissive spirit prevail in them Carson says now you have purified yourself by obeying the truth now that you have become a Christian now that you have submitted to the Lordship of Christ now that you have embraced the gospel therefore love one another deeply so holiness devoted to God has manifested has revealed itself in love to fellow believers so Peter having established that having insisted upon it now further invites us to think about the necessity of growth that speaks of that growth and development and maturity that cannot but emerge from this wherefore he says laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envious and all evil speak it's truly remarkable that he is saying this to you who are a

Christian and to me who am a Christian that this is where the chapter begins laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envious and all evil speakings these are the things that you would expect to find not in the Christian but in those who are not Christian do we really need to delve into what these things mean I'm sure every one of us understands what it is to be malicious to demonstrate guile in a very and I think the word that he uses there is a word that speaks of a malicious form of guile guile that is that is intended to deceive and cause distress towards those that that is demonstrated to hypocrisy envy and all evil speakings we know these are negative elements and they are not they are not nice they are not pleasant they are not things you would encourage or want to see in any person let alone in a

Christian but it is to the Christian he is speaking without grace these things will come to the fore and without watchful spirits these things will emerge in some measure in the life even of a believer and this is what Peter wants us to understand when we are dealing with growth nurture development progress these are the things that were once prevalent in our lives these were the things that we gave place to these were the things that we left and we did not control them and we did not in any way suppress them we give free reign to them as unbelievers but now because we are in this relationship with

[18 : 28] Christ because his life is in us his word is our guide his truth is our touchstone his word is what we look to to ensure that we are on the right path these are the things that we will see counteract our progress and go against any hope that we have of development the Puritan Alexander Nisbet in his commentary on the first book of Peter first epistle he writes the following even even even the children of the Lord are ready to cleave very close to their unmortified corruptions they are ready to cleave that word is a word that we use when we are binding something together so that they're barely recognisable as two separate things there is a cleaving we use it the word is used when you're describing the union that comes to place in the marriage between a man and a wife there is a cleaving they two become one flesh and that's the word that is used by

Alexander Nisbet they cleave very close to their unmortified corruptions to forget the necessity of a further degree of mortification than what they have already attained to and to entertain their corruptions as if they were necessary for them yea and to account them their very ornaments this man was unwilling to shed his garment even though they be old and full of vermin quite a horrid picture but he's speaking of what needs to be done if it is left undone the damage is grievous it's harmful not only to yourself but to others it's damaging to your own reputation and the reputation of Christ whose reputation you espouse when you profess his name and when you close in with him by faith but what are the means that he turns to in more detail for growth what does he describe to us in verse 2 he says to us we put aside these things put them aside as if they are filthy garments we want nothing more to do with them these things they were once dominant in our lives now we want nothing more to do with them but instead he says as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby when you read that how do you read it is he saying that you are a newborn babe is he bringing you back there to to to you beginning your

Christian life is that what he is saying no what he is what he is emphasizing I believe is this that he is referencing or using the illustration of the desire the demand even that the newborn babe makes when they are thirsting for their mother's milk you cannot it's almost it's the worst thing you can do to deprive a child who is hungry who is thirsty and who are clearly wanting to be fed and when you see that happen you know that child is hungry you know that child is wanting to be fed there's an urgency about it there's a need for it now

Peter is looking at that picture and he's saying to the Christian believer as a believer you are to be like the newborn child who is thirsting for its mother's milk but you are wanting the milk of the world you are wanting what sustains the believer you are wanting what satisfies the soul you must have that longing for it that desire for it because it is for your good it is for your edification it's for your nutrition it's for your growth it's for your development it's for your progress in holiness occasionally you read I'm probably never as convinced as I've ever been that there is very little reading being done by many

Christians today very little reading to supplement the doctrines of scripture heard from the pulpit very few people read and I think that can be argued from it doesn't matter how much reading is available there's people who actually make use of it but in your reading if you do read you will read occasionally that somebody will have said or will say or go on saying that never has there been a need as there is now for holiness on the part of the believer never they'll say has there been a need like there is today well don't believe them because that is wrong there is always a need and that need has always been there and it's not diminished it's not in any way been diluted by the passage of time every

[25 : 29] Christian is duty bound to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and that is a necessary progress towards holiness be ye holy says he as I am holy and that is something that is always with us it's not something that you and I think that was true about a past generation it has to be true about this one just as it had to be true about the previous generation the one previous to that and if it is not the staple diet of the Christian believer there is stunted growth there is lack of development there is failure to progress and that is true for every individual that is true for every congregation that is true for every denomination that is true for every generation if there is not an understanding that there is this need to desire the sincere milk of the word in order to grow a longing for the word of

God you know if this what I've said is true that it is this insatiable appetite for the truth that equates with the insatiable appetite of a newborn child to be fed from its mother's breast because without that breast breast milk that child will perish and it's a natural instinct on the part of the child to survive and to survive in this way it knows no other truth it knows no other lesson nobody taught the child that nor should anyone need to tell you this you have the word of God and because it is the word of God this is what is the staple diet upon which you're not just survival but progress in the life of grace depends upon in recent days and often

I'm sure some of you have seen this if you've ever had to meet somebody and they're very ill perhaps a person is suffering from a terminal illness and one thing that that illness has done has affected their appetite one thing that becomes apparent very quickly is the wastage that takes place how that person begins to waste it's inevitable and unless there is some intervention that prevents that you'll soon see the layers of fat and then muscle begin to disappear that's the way it is by nature but it is the same in spiritual terms as well there is clear evidence in our own life if we shun the word of

God we become emaciated you know there are terrible pictures that you come across some charities advertise the charity charity that meets the needs of famine torn nations and you see these children who are emaciated just skin and bone you'll see them because they're starving and they're a desperate sight you remember pictures of the holocaust they're a desperate sight well if you visualize what it is like for an emaciated soul outwardly it might appear to be the same as anybody else but it is true when a person is outside of the provision that God has made for us by which he is able to sustain us seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit and to infinite love of the brethren see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently there we have a link again as newborn babes decide us in the world that you may grow there but why would we link this in at this point

I think it's something that we might overlook if we focus narrowly on the word exclusively on the word we miss what Peter is saying here he is saying it to his people he is saying it to God's church he is saying it to those who are part of that church because of the word and because of the Christ of whom the word speaks but together those who are part of that church are necessary for that growth as well now you know that the bible reminds us of the way that there's a mirror you stand before it and you see yourself in the mirror of God's word you've heard that said you look in the mirror and there you see what you really like is that not right well there's a galley quotation which

[31 : 43] I'm not really sure if I can translate it into English in the proverbial sense smach skach and soul carriage you know a good mirror is the eye of a friend the eye of a friend is a good mirror and that I suppose means simply this that if you have a friend and they're in a good relationship with you if there's anything wrong with your appearance they'll remedy it and they won't be abashed at doing that and you won't be abashed by them doing it I was at a funeral service this morning and I saw somebody and he had he was quite unaware of he had a sticker under his ear I was looking at it and I was thinking what on earth is that sticker doing under his ear but I knew him well and I was able to take the sticker away because well it didn't belong there to begin with but the sticker was a sticker that belonged on a hearing aid battery and when he had inserted it into his ear the sticker had stuck under us somebody might have been offended by that intervention but I didn't feel that I was doing anything other than a friend would do but in spiritual terms we depend upon one another to act as those that will tell us where we are with the

Lord just as surely as we look to the word of God we need one another in order for the progress that we are expected to make continues apace and if there is progress then we need to be encouraged to see it because sometimes as they say about sheep they can't see their own marks but some others can so there is that side to it we can encourage one another in the Lord we can encourage one another when we see marks of grace on one another but we can also see when these marks are not as obvious as they could be when they're not as much in evidence as they should be and in the Lord's cause and the Lord's house and the

Lord's family we should be able to have that relationship with others and Peter he's saying that remember you have to find the link and the link takes you right back and he's talking about unfailing love of the brethren he's talking about loving one another with a pure heart fervently and sometimes that fervent love will require us to speak the truth in love to those who are not walking as they should it should be part of our remit as Christians to encourage one another in the Lord in every way that is expected of us that's why he puts this here if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious some translate that because you have tasted because you have tasted well

I believe that what Peter is saying here is something that every one of us should reflect upon whether we have head knowledge good but we need heart knowledge and that knowledge is a knowledge that we are given of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord and anything and everything to do with him becomes of the utmost import to us the more we live in this world and these things that are so negative it's where it began where for laying aside all of these things malice guile hypocrisies evil speakings envies speak to your soul and ask are these things are they been given a place in my life and where they intrude into my life what do they do what is the fruit of that what is the outcome of that well it's not healthy and it's not wholesome so we need every encouragement to look to the world and to look to those who have looked to the world in order to grow the way

God would have us grow and may he bless to us these few thoughts let us pray gracious God we give thanks that you have helped us this something that we can turn to at any point in our life at any moment during the day hour of the day or the night and if we are in need and our need is great through the word you are able to put that need into into the right frame so that our mind would be in the right frame to understand what you are doing and what we are doing and what the outcome of that will be help us to be constant in our relationship with yourself through the word and with yourself through your people so that we would be the means by which each one of us is going on a pace in the

[38 : 24] Lord cleanse of the name in Jesus name Amen I'm going to conclude with the words of Psalm 25 in Gaelic Psalm 25 at verse 9 Psalm 2 1 1 1 2 1 2 2 2 3 2 3 2 3 4 4 5 5 6 5 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 7 8 8 7 8 7 8 9 8 8 9 9 9 10 9 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 11 10 10 11 11 10 11 11 12 11 12 12 13 12 14 12 14 14 11 14 14 15 15 15 15 15 15 15 15 15

I just hope it's a healing rain And I hope it's a healing rain And I hope it's a healing rain
And I hope it's a healing rain And I hope it's a healing rain