

Desiring Spiritual Milk

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- [0 : 0 0] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.
- And now, today's sermon. I want to remind us a little bit of last week's sermon because we're going to be building on it. His thought is still flowing.
- And so if you just turn back to verse 22, it'll help us just refresh our minds of what it is that Peter is saying and why it's important. He says in chapter 1, verse 22, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.
- Peter's thought in the opening of his letter is that we have new hearts because of the gospel, because of what the Holy Spirit has done to us. Our obedience, which was given to us by faith, it's a gift of God.
- That is what he's speaking of, this newfound motivation, earnest, pure hearts. And Peter transitions from the positive, how to love one another, and the experience of the love, to something that we need to take away, something we need to remove.
- [1 : 1 6] He says this in the opening chapter 2. He says, so put away. That word put away there in the Greek is just one word. The idea of it is the removal of one's clothing, to put it off, to get rid of old garments, and then put on, as we are told, the righteousness of Christ.
- You probably have heard this phrase before, but the put on, put off. A really famous passage is Ephesians 4, if you want to turn there with me. Paul talks about what does it mean to put off our old self, our old attitudes, our old habits, and put on new ones.
- In the first three chapters are our motivation, which is the beauty and love of Christ. So in verse 17, Paul kind of starts this idea of the put off, put on concept.
- He says, Ephesians 4, 17. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.
- It's not a word we use every day, futility. It's a good word, though. And what it kind of really means is, one translation put it this way, thinking worthless thoughts.
- [2 : 2 4] Futility of mind. The worthlessness of their thinking. This is how they act. They are acting based upon no knowledge. This is when Peter says earlier in the book, you were acting out of ignorance.
- So they were not being guided by wisdom. They are not being guided by truth. Addictions often is what causes them to do these actions that they're putting off.
- It results in deception and dishonesty, theft, and even violence, so that they can fulfill the relentless cravings that they have. They are driven by the cravings of the body.
- Look at verse 18. Ephesians 4, 18. They are darkened in the understanding and alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.
- Same thing Peter says. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. I think it's interesting how it says greedy.

[3 : 28] They just can't get enough of this impure sensuality. But that is not the way you learn Christ. Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus.

To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through, here it is, deceitful desires. And to be renewed in the spirit of your minds.

And to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in righteousness and in holiness. This is the same point Peter's making in chapter 2.

He's going after the contrast of those who have truth and live in light of it versus those who are driven by passions, who are driven by desires that are sinfully satisfied.

So when you go back and read chapter 2 verse 1, he's making that, that's what the so is there for. He's saying this is who you are in Christ. You're a creature of love now.

[4 : 31] Of pure love and earnest love. Because you've been washed by the blood of Jesus Christ. So, verse 1, 1 Peter 2, 1. So, put away all malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander.

You know, if you were to just summarize each one of these, they're rooted in self-preservation. I will take what I want. I'll protect what is mine.

And I'll do it by any means necessary. That's what all of these are related to. Why does Peter say to put this away? Because it's a problem for those who live in a world, this is normal.

You see, this is the normal way of acting. We romanticize it and we'll even make it seem clever and wise. To be selfish and greedy. May the best man win.

Things like this is what we say. If you start paying attention to what the world shows you as their desires, the motto of today is, if it makes you feel good, famous, or rich, then do it.

[5 : 43] Because that's the ultimate aim in life. This is what Peter is saying. This is what Paul is saying. Their minds are under the control of their desires, and therefore it's wisdom to them.

And instead of their minds being informed and controlled by the truth, which the truth comes from Christ, if you keep reading, if we just go back real quick to Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 18, just read this again.

I think it's so powerful how he describes it. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their heart.

So when you think about the wisdom that comes from the world, when the world tells you how to live your life, Paul says, that's the source they draw from. When they go to respond to you, how should one live?

They're drawing from a darkness and a slavery that has them passionately pursuing the very opposite of what God is. Verse 19, they have become callous and having given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

[6 : 56] You can see this everywhere in our culture. I don't even need to give you examples of the sensual impurity. But Peter isn't just saying, stop acting that way.

Stop thinking that way. It's not just a command by itself to just put it off, get rid of it. It's bad. He says, those who follow Christ are not just absent from sin, but we are filled with something.

And so far last week we learned, we're filled with genuine, pure love. And this week he's talking about the truth of Christ, the truth of God in his word.

Each one of these is different than how, originally when it's talking about being rooted in selfishness, now we're rooted in God's love. We're rooted in the beauty of who Christ is.

Yesterday at the Men's Grace Academy, which was recorded and we'll put it out later, we covered the topic of fighting for purity. And almost like a preparation for today. In scripture, we are called to do something, which is to be pure, but that's not the only thing that we're called to do.

[8 : 16] So much of the Christian life is focused on what we should not be doing. It's exhausting and overwhelming. Because we live in a broken body, in a broken world, it feels like a losing battle.

I shouldn't be angry, but I am. I shouldn't be lazy, but I am. I shouldn't be envious and lustful, but I am. And every day it feels like I do not do the things I'm supposed to do, and everything I'm not supposed to do, that's what I desire to do, as I quote Paul, right?

Flying up right, great comfort from Paul. Many of you have grown up in Christianity, where the emphasis of the Christian life is finding your comfort in comparing what you have not done.

It's really easy to become self-righteous and judgmental when you say, well, I haven't cheated, and I haven't murdered, and I haven't acted, and I haven't...

And then we really like sermons that emphasize the things we haven't done, because we're like, well, yeah, I haven't done that, and shame on everybody who has. We really like those kind of sermons.

[9 : 39] But that's not what the Christian life is about. Both men and women in this room, we all struggle with envy and lust, anger, discontentment, and being told that it's wrong, it is helpful.

Being reminded that we shouldn't do that, we should fight against it, it is helpful, but it is not the source and purpose of our life.

Anytime I play a new game, the most recent game I learned how to play last year was pickleball. And the game isn't that fun if you don't know the rules. I kept breaking the rules. Like, you stepped in the kitchen.

It was just like, what is a kitchen? You can't serve it like that, and you can't hit it like that, and you went over the line. So I was like, all right, give me all the rules here, because this is, you know, you keep telling, I'm not having any fun, because all you keep telling me is everything I'm doing wrong, you know?

So finally I learned the rules, and then I started to strategize with my partner, Ben, and we swept the camp. It was awesome. I finally figured out what I shouldn't be doing so we could focus on what we could do, which is to win, right?

[10 : 41] This is what Paul and Peter are trying to help you understand. Here's where things go wrong, and you want to identify where things have gone wrong in your life?

Here's a good list. But the list is identifying wrong motivation, and where the source comes from.

So it's wrong motivation and the wrong source. So the source being our flesh, and the motivation being self-preservation. When we look to Christ, Christ provides us the source in his word, which is truth, and the motivation is love, not dread, not fear, not anger.

When we were talking about this yesterday, to be a slave of the body, we've all experienced what that feels like, and what the Bible offers us is the freedom and the joy of what it means to have a significant life, and the significance has nothing to do with your personal gratification and pleasure.

It's really hard to believe that because the world emphasizes that, but to lay your life down for the king and his kingdom provides supernatural joy you cannot replace with sensuality and money and fame.

[12 : 03] So then he says this in verse two. Very famous phrase. We often use it. It's gonna be fun to pull it apart. He says, like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation.

If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. The way we make it through this dark and weary world is through life, instead of self-preservation, it's life-giving truth that comes from a trusted source, a God, I loved Dick Holmes' prayer, a God who keeps his covenants, a God who keeps his promises.

This is what makes his word valuable to us. Peter does not have new believers in mind, just so you understand. Comparing, he's not saying the milk of the word as like Paul uses it, milk and meat.

He's talking about the desire side of it, right? The desire of the believer. And he uses this picture that like newborn babies who have this, they live on this milk.

Because they understand it's their source by nature, they desire it, right? You can hear them cry out and long for it. Paul uses, or Peter uses this picture, but notice how he caveats it in verse three.

[13 : 37] If indeed you have actually tasted the spiritual milk. They tasted it. And what does he say? That the Lord is good.

So to desire the word will cause you to not only grow up into salvation, or to reflect the salvation that you have, this transformation out of the world and being living in this new light.

But it's, you begin to desire it once you have tasted it. So sometimes we read that as a command.

It's like, you need to have this desire. You need to, some of you have felt this within you. I need to love God better.

I'm just gonna try harder. And you wake up. How's that go for you? I feel like I love him worse. You know, I'm like, oh man, that was horrible. The harder I try to love God, the worse I am at it.

[14 : 35] Anybody else feel that way? Same thing in my marriage. Like, she's not in here so I can talk about her. You better tell her I said nice things. But sometimes the harder I try to love my wife, based out of my own efforts, I end up trying to change her because I need it to be easy.

And loving other people is not easy. And loving God is not easy. It requires something. It's called God's love for me. This is the part of tasting that God is good.

You want to be able to put off the self-gratification and you want to desire the pure milk of the word. Peter's like, you have to first taste and see that he's good.

It's not fear, dread, judgment, anxiety. That's not what he says. You've tasted to see and you better be aware of what's coming. He says, you tasted and saw that he is a good God.

So here's the image. We are replacing our passions of the flesh with truth. Understanding the passions of our flesh cause damage and hurt everyone around us and we take advantage of them and be the subjectiveness of what we do to each other through lust and through our greed that we use each other as if we're consumable products.

[15 : 58] God says, when you taste and see the Lord is good and his truth comes to live within your heart, it is so satisfying. It becomes a source you want to live on.

Now this sounds very familiar to a passage of scripture that we'll look at in a minute. But I want you to just notice, there's so much out of this sermon I had to cut out. Just write this passage down.

Right after the put on, put off in Ephesians chapter four, Paul makes this statement. He says this, and give no opportunity to the devil. So the contrast is this.

We fill our hearts and our minds with the goodness and the wonder of Jesus Christ. We fill our hearts with that. Or, we pursue the passage of our flesh. And opportunity means we allow Satan the opportunity to trip us up, to control us, to consume us.

Peter later on in his passage says, he's a roaring lion seeking human may devour. We already learned this last or two weeks ago when it talks about we have to protect our minds. Everything is happening here.

[17 : 02] The actions of our mouth and our heart comes, I'm sorry, the actions of our mouth comes out of our heart. So he's talking about you have a new heart, you have a pure heart, now fill it. Fill your heart, fill your desires, fill your faith with the truth that God is good.

Now, to apply this, what does it mean then? How do you do this? Because it is fascinating. How do you then every day desire the pure milk of the spiritual word?

How do you live on it? How do you do that? We're going to look at three areas of application from the text and it's important that you look at all of the text because we can make our own local interpretations.

We'll apply it to our context and miss really the real application. So here's the first thing that we have to look at. We have to see what's happening in history. When Peter writes this to these churches, what's happening in history at this moment?

Maybe, from the best that we know, maybe half the New Testament is written. At best, we have ten books left. So when they're thinking about desiring the pure milk of the word, you and I immediately want to jump to the New Testament.

[18 : 21] But these books would be missing. Titus, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, John, the gospel, 1, 2, 3 John, Revelation, that's a lot of the books of the Bible are missing.

So when he says desire the pure milk of the word, you have to ask yourself what does he mean? That would mean that the churches not only of the copies of the New Testament they did have, they would have one or two copies of them because their job was to receive it, to write it, copy of it, and then send a messenger off to the next church so that church could have it.

This is how it was distributed by hand. This is why we have so many manuscripts of the scriptures because they were copied by hand so many times.

But the one thing they did have, most of them in completion in the access to the synagogues or the temples or the local churches, they would have access to the Old Testament but they themselves would not have personal copies.

It was very rare. They could have a scroll. They maybe have a scroll but that was it. So when you start thinking about how the application of the truth would come into their heart, that part of history is important.

[19 : 35] Now he didn't say it was impossible for them to be engaging in the word but the application here isn't necessarily the personal reading of scripture is how it's going to be applied.

So we've looked at history, now let's look at the context, the literal context of what he's writing. Peter's making this divergence between desire and knowledge before we were driven by our worldly passions that were senseless and abusive.

Now we live by the truth given to us by God's word. So when you read verse two again it says, like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual work that by it you may grow up into salvation.

So spiritual growth comes through the word but in the contrast it's first love in chapter one and then behind our sinful passions are overtaken by the truth of the gospel or the truth of who Christ is.

So we used to act without truth and desire, now we act with truth and from that truth the reflection of our salvation comes out of us.

[20 : 57] I think what we're missing here in the context is that Peter is trying to convince the church of what the truth does.

Are you following me? What it does. We go to the application of I need more of the word. Well, you know, we often don't use that which we don't believe works. If it's not functional, right?

Does anybody else have something in your home that you purchased but you never use it because you just don't think it really works? I have a garage full of those things, right? Someday I need to stick them to the dump.

Peter is convincing the congregation not that they need to be consuming more of his word but that the word in them produces life.

Therefore, he wants them to live on it. That's what he's saying. As a baby understands the value of the milk because they live on it, I want you to understand the value of the spiritual truth of Jesus so that you'll live on that and not your flesh.

[22 : 07] So there's the difference. It's not stop being conceited and lustful and taking advantage of each other. He's saying, see, that is how the flesh works but when you live by the spirit, look what it produces.

Love, joy, sacrifice. His concern is that the source by which we trust, we either trust our flesh which the world around, it's so easy.

It's so easy to trust the flesh because everyone around us does it. It's so hard to trust the spirit and his word because it's contrary to the world that we live in but this is his, this is his hope and his desire and his aim.

So he's looking at what's happening historically, he's looking at what's happening contextually and thirdly, he's helping us what's happening spiritually. Real quick, if you're in 1 Peter, turn back to chapter 1.

He's already laid this foundation. I need to point it out again because the two are connected. This is the part of the truth we're longing for. This is the goodness of God we have tasted. Verse 3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 21] According to his great mercies, his abundant mercies, his overflowing mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We're about to celebrate his resurrection soon. to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, which means our future is set. And, except for if you mess up your future.

Well, Peter says, no, no, I have good news for you. Keep reading. Kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be real to the last time.

See, even the home that you live in and the inheritance that waits you is not kept by your power. See, this is good news. This is tasting and seeing that the Lord is good.

When I was his enemy, his love was poured out on me through the death of his son. And then Peter says, not only have you been cleansed, you are now clothed.

[24 : 23] The son clothes you in his obedience. The father looks down upon you as if you are a perfect child. There's something about us humans, we like to be respected.

We like to feel good. I can tell you right now, when I play golf and there's strangers around me and I hit a really good golf shot, oh, my head is up high and I got a strut going on.

Like, yeah, y'all saw that. But when I top it, I'm like, walk in, I want to get out of there, I want to get back in my car and go home. And then I saw Tiger Woods shank one this week and I was like, he's human. He's human.

That's the essence of, child, you're clothed, you have every reason to hold your head up high and be confident in your walk before God because the way he sees you is the way he sees his son.

So now, live in light of what you have received. You've received purity and hope and joy and God's love. So now, reflect that in the way in which we act.

[25 : 28] Look at verse six. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. The rejoicing is not in our performance.

The rejoicing is not even in us putting off the old person. The rejoicing is not even in what we are doing in our obedience. The rejoicing is in what God has and will do that you might taste and see that he is good.

Therefore, trust him to be your source. I want to point this out. Where did they learn this? Where did Peter learn this?

Where did the knowledge of the goodness of God come from? To reflect back on what we've already said, they learned it from, they received it from their Old Testament, from the Torah.

When Jesus is being tempted to trust in his flesh by Satan, he quotes the Old Testament. We know this passage well, don't we?

[26 : 31] What does he say? Matthew 4, 4. But he answered, as it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

What does it mean to live by every word that comes from God? God, because we're so physical in nature, it's hard for us to understand a spiritual application.

He says, everything in your life is governed by the truth that comes from God. This is so hard. We are so driven by sensual passions, passions that can control our minds.

All of us at some point have probably felt an addiction to something. Sugar, caffeine, alcohol, drugs, sexual something, and it feels like it consumes you.

Some of you have even been addicted to drugs in our congregation. You understand when the body speaks, you feed it, and it's hard to contradict that.

[27 : 43] And Peter is saying, but you can. You can live a different life. Not out of fear, not out of anger, but come to him and see what God has done.

Not what you must do. See, often what addiction happens, what you do with addiction is you remove one addiction and you replace it with another. Because you're just still dealing with fleshly issues.

Here, he's saying, we need to be replacing our old life with the truth of the goodness of who God is. This is why the psalmist says in Psalm 34, 8, oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.

And I love this. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Blessed is the one who comes and lives under that.

Realizing, I'm safe here in God's love. I'm safe here in his gospel. I will take refuge there against my flesh and against my future.

[28 : 46] Blessed is that man. Encouraged with joy is that man. Congregation, this is where Peter is saying, you can leave your old world behind because God is good.

You can taste and see that he's good. Not only is he good enough for you to overcome that, but you can survive on him alone. His truth alone you can survive on.

So how would Peter's readers have applied this verse to their everyday life? They're sitting there, they're reading Peter's letter, the pastor gets done reading it.

How is it that they go home and apply it? Well, their primary diet at that moment when there wasn't a new letter to be read would have been the Old Testament.

And what's interesting about the Old Testament, you know why most of us struggle? Maybe it's just me, you can correct me if I'm the only one here, but I'm going to assume some of you has started your Bible reading plan and by February you got to Deuteronomy and you skipped to the Psalms and the New Testament.

[29 : 59] Right? This is bloody and convoluted. convoluted and then there are parts of our Bibles we just ignore because they don't fit our worldview. Our worldview is physical, scientific, and logical.

The Bible has zero logic when it comes to its explanation of how things are done. You mean to tell me that God dividing the sea and human beings walking across it is logical?

Is that logical? They ate manna every day in their shoes. Is that logical to you? Talking to dead people, is that logical? Donkeys talking, is that logical? No.

You see, your Bible presents a story to you that is supernatural in nature because you love and serve a supernatural God. That's the one he's talking about by the truth of what you have learned of God in the old and fulfilled in Jesus in the new.

This is what you live by. You see, Israel kept living by the passions of their flesh and that's what drove them to stay in the wilderness for 40 years.

[31 : 06] Peter even says later on in his book, that was an example, so Paul, that was an example for you so that you too wouldn't fall prey to the same passions. That being said, I think our church would do well to spend more of our diet in the largest section of our book and believe what you read.

I think after we're done with Peter, we're probably going to go and spend time in the first five books of the law. This is what is quoted most by Jesus and the apostles.

It's the first five books of the law. This is where they teach us of who God is and the spiritual realms of dark forces and light and angels and demons. It's all a world that they are saying we live by but it's one we're not aware of.

Number two, the primary means would have been the church. So the church would have been teaching them the story of God's redemption through the old and the war between the dark forces and that of the spirit of light.

As Paul says, you were transferred out of the domain of darkness into the domain of light and the church would have been the one who was proclaiming that to them because the book of Acts says you need deacons to serve the physical means of the church so that the elders can dedicate themselves to the study in the preaching and teaching of the word.

[32 : 25] That's how it would have been applied because these people wouldn't have access to it so they would have to rely on each other. I love this, Ephesians 4. We talked about this in the church membership class, in the church membership audio that we did a couple of weeks ago.

It's on the app, you should listen to it. The primary way in which the church becomes strengthened in its ministry is through the teaching and preaching ministry of our church. Men equipped well to know how to teach you so you can do the work of the ministry and then number three, their application primarily would have been in the community.

We often hear this and say I need to live by the pure milk of the word and we go home and we think to ourselves okay how do I apply this to me personally? What's interesting is that the concern of Peter and Paul in their epistles is the unity of the church and that the church would care and love for each other.

We're going to get into this in the next verse. As a matter of fact, you can't apply the end of the chapter one by yourself so that you would love yourself with a pure heart? Right?

So you would earnestly love yourself? That's what he says. The application in Peter's mind is a community who hears the word of God, believes the word of God, obeys the word of God and receives the benefits of the word of God and in the end they say God is good.

[33 : 41] You know, some people are offended when I tell them you actually can't do the Christian life on your own. It's not biblical but there are many of you in here who are exhausted by your sin.

You're exhausted by feeling lonely and failing and you hear oh wait, I don't have to do this alone. I can have the help of others and God's supernatural spirit will come and liberate me from my sins and give me a purpose to live for.

That sounds exciting because I've tried every other plan and it doesn't work. Maybe it's time we try God's plan.

It is God's word and God's people who live on God's truth alone and we reject the ideology of the world. What comes of this promise? It says joy.

In this you can rejoice because you've abandoned yourself. You've abandoned your ways. You've embraced the goodness of God and you live on it alone. You will not allow any other lie to replace the truth of the scripture.

[34 : 52] when we were about to go into communion and baptism this morning when we think about both of those signs the church was constantly practicing these signs as they were growing.

They were bringing new converts they were adding them to the congregation and they were administering the sign of baptism which is this sign. It's the sign of the old being washed away and the new coming out.

Right? We are buried in the likeness of his death. We are raised in the likeness of his resurrection unto Paul's new life.

So baptism isn't just us washing away our sins in its symbolism but baptism is us being united with each other because you know what happens immediately after someone is baptized in the New Testament?

they're added to a family who is protected and loved by God. They aren't sent off to figure it out on their own and then I think it's fascinating that the meal that happens should only happen the Lord's table only happens when the church gathers.

[36 : 02] It's a supernatural spiritual food centered around the gospel and we gather as a family both those signs are designed to do this to help us long for the pure spiritual word because it's a communal event centered around God's truth and then applied so we get the benefits of hearing the truth it comforts our hearts and then we love and show the affection towards each other and we are constantly putting aside anything that would cause us to fight with each other.

I think that's a safe application of what Peter is saying based upon context. So for our purposes this morning when we see baptism remind yourself that you have been washed, cleansed and put into a new family.

When you receive the table this morning remind yourself that the promises of Ephesians 4 says when the body functions properly the preaching teaching of the word baptism in the table when the body functions properly it builds itself up in love and you should not leave here discouraged but you should leave here saying the Lord the Lord is good.

His mercies are never ending. His kindness towards me is true. It is the kindness of God it is the goodness of God that leads us to live by his word.

Let's pray. Our Father we are thankful that we can stand here with confidence from a book a large book that proves to us your goodness your kindness towards sinners.

[37 : 40] May Peter's words live deep inside our heart this week when the passions of our flesh arise may we run back to the truth of your gospel and realize we are set free from those passions from lust and anger and envy bitterness and strife and when we are weak Lord may we reach out not only through prayer but reach out to our brothers and sisters and ask for comfort to be accountable to each other that we may not fall back into our old habits in Christ's name Amen.

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