

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

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[0:00] He saw her death and was buried. On the third day he rose again, in accordance with the scriptures. Amen.

Amen. Please be seated. I invite you to open your Bibles to 1 Peter.

It's on page 1203 of the Pew Bible. We'll continue in verse 22 of the first chapter this morning. Now, some of the questions we've been asking through our series is, where does an exile belong?

And in the very first verse of this letter, St. Peter called believers. He called believers. Elect exiles in the dispersion.

Believers scattered across the provinces of Asia Minor, which is present-day Turkey. And who, by confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, these believers, by their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, has lost their footing in the world.

[2:03] They've become strangers to the world. Old friendships had cooled. Trade associations and family tables that once welcomed them, now regarded them with suspicion.

They've become estranged from the very society they once belonged to. So where does an exile belong?

Peter has been answering that question since the latest opening line. And this morning, he answers it even more directly in the passage that is before us.

The exile belongs in the household of God. The Christian's first home is no longer the society in which he happens to live.

But his first home now is the church. The family of God into which he has been born, he or she has been born again.

[3:04] Remember Peter's chain of commands from last week. Each one resting on what God has already done. First, he said from last week, he said to us, Set your hope fully on the grace coming at Christ's revelation in verse 13 of chapter 1.

Second, he says, Be holy as your father is holy in verse 15. Then thirdly, he says, Conduct yourselves with fear through the time of your exile in verse 17.

Notice that those three commands all run vertically. What I mean by that is that they're concerned with our relationship with God. Hopefully, be holy as your father is holy.

Conduct yourself with fear. They all have to do with our relationship with God as our father.

However, the fourth and fifth commands that he gives to us this morning, those run in a manner horizontally.

It runs towards one another in this family, in this home that is now ours in the church. A people who hope in God, a people who imitate God, and a people who fear God, must now learn to love the family of God that God has given them.

[4:21] And to feed on the grace that sustains that family's life. Here again, in verse 22 of chapter 1, the age verse that connects to last week, Peter continues, he says, Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

The command itself is brief. Love one another earnestly from a pure heart. That's it. But every word in it carries considerable weight.

Peter surrounds it with the reasons why we should do so. He never issues bare commands in this letter without first calling us to attend to the reasons why we should do as God calls us to.

And here he gives two grounds for this love that we're meant to have for one another, on each side of the command. The first reason why we should love one another earnestly is that it's because we have been purified, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for sincere brotherly

love.

[5:51] Notice first what has happened to you. Your souls have been purified. What does that mean? You have been consecrated, set apart.

It's like when Israel consecrated herself before meeting God at Sinai. If you remember Exodus, before God came and met them at the mountain, they had to consecrate and set themselves apart. Peter is saying, it's just like that. You have been set apart. It's like when the people sanctified themselves before crossing the Jordan into the promised land under Joshua.

This is something that places the believer in a settled state. This is something that happened in the past and its effect still holds true currently, presently in your life.

You have been set apart. You have been consecrated unto the Lord. You belong to Him, body and soul.

[6:57] And when did this happen? At your conversion? When you obeyed the truth of the gospel. When you hear it and you obeyed it.

When you turned to Christ in repentance and faith. And what signifies this to the believer? Your baptism. Your baptism stands as the outward seal of that consecration.

That you belong to God. It is the seal of God upon you as a baptized believer. This one is mine. The gospel is not merely a message to be admired.

It is a summons to be obeyed. I said that last week. And those who have obeyed. Who have obeyed and answered to that summon.

A beckoning call of the gospel. And put their trust in Jesus Christ. Those who have done that have been set apart from the world. You are no longer free to relate to one another as the world does.

[8:05] Notice secondly what Paul says. And this may surprise you. Why God did it. Having purified your souls. By your obedience to the truth.

For sincere brotherly love. That little word for. States the purpose for which you have been purified. You have been consecrated. You have been set apart.

For what reason? God cleansed you in order that you would love. Your brothers and sisters. That is the reason you have been set apart. For a sincere brotherly love. Sincere love within the Christian family.

Is not an optional extra. Does it sound like I'm repeating myself? Because we've gone over this. About a month ago. In 1 John. Well I'm not.

The Bible is repeating itself. Christian love. Is not an optional extra. Bolted unto salvation. And reserved for the especially devout people.

[9:03] In the family of God. Christian love is the water in which we are meant to swim in. If we belong to God. It is one of the stated ends. Of our redemption.

We have been saved. Set apart. Consecrated. For brotherly love. God did not save you merely so that you would ascend to true doctrine.

Though he certainly requires you to believe rightly. But that's not the purpose for which he saves you alone. It's not just for your mental ascent. He saved you so that your relationships. All your relationships.

Would be transformed. And therefore on Peter's turn. It's impossible to be an individualistic Christian. That's an oxymoron.

How could you be set apart for brotherly love? When you have no brothers and sisters to love? How could you be set apart for brotherly love?

[10:03] When you don't show yourself among the guided saints. Regularly to love and share life with them. So to be chosen by God. And sprinkle with the blood of Christ.

As chapter 1 tells us. And verse 2 puts it. Is to be brought into covenant. And covenant with God always means. I want to repeat.

I want to say that. I'm going to repeat it. Covenant with God always means. Fellowship with God's people. Do you want to hear it again? Covenant with God always means.

Covenant with God always means. Fellowship with God's people. But we must let scripture define the word love. Of course. Because if we leave it to ourselves or to the culture.

I don't need to say anymore. Let's let scripture define the word love for us. The love Peter commands is not a warm feeling.

[11:00] That's not all he's talking about. It's not merely the pleasant superficiality of conversation over coffee after the service. That's not what he's talking about.

Though true love may include warmth. And may suddenly happen over coffee. That's true. But the real love he's talking about. The biblically defined love he's talking about. Is righteous relationship. Treating one another according to the character of God himself. Love is what God's character looks like.

When it takes up residence between two redeemed sinners. And mark the manner Peter requires us to do this. This love is to be sincere.

Literally unhypocritical. That's what it means in the Greek. Unhypocritical love. Without a mask. It is to come from a pure heart.

[12:02] From the center of your being. Not from social performance. And it is to be earnest. The picture looks like something stretched to full extension.

That's what it means. Picture here. A runner. Straining. For the tape. For the final tape. Straining. To finish. That's how Peter described the earnestness of our love.

It must always be straining. Striving. To love one another. This is not love at your convenience. When it soothes you. This is love at full stretch. When it costs you. Brothers and sisters. There is nowhere to hide from this command.

Maybe in a congregation of thousands. You might manage a lifetime of anonymity. But we don't have thousands here. Here in a small parish like ours.

[13:07] We know one another. Or we are meant to know one another. Which means we know one another's feelings. Proclivities. Pet peeves.

And we are known in ours. And that is precisely where unhypocritical love is tested. Not in loving the stranger you see once or twice.

But in loving at full stretch. The brother. Whose weakness. You can list from memory. And we are very good at listing each other's weaknesses. Aren't we?

I am an expert in that. But I don't want to list my own weakness. But nevertheless. Even as we know each other's weakness. We are meant to love. And we are called and commanded. Yet to love one another.

And you know that your brothers and sisters may be able to list yours. And they are called to love you the same. And Peter's second ground for the command follows in verse 23.

[14:11] He says, love one another. Since you have been born again. Not of perishable seed. But of imperishable. Through the living and abiding word of God.

Here Peter returns to the great note. On which he opened the letter. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy. He has caused us to be born again.

Now he said that in verse 3. He returns to that theme now. In verse 23. But now he tells us the means of that birth. Every birth requires seed.

Yours, he says, requires two kinds. And you must know the difference between the two kinds of seed that requires your birth. Your first birth came from perishable seed.

Human parents. Human flesh. And everything born of perishable seed. Shares its nature. It flourishes for a season.

[15:14] And then it fills. And falls. And withers. That is the first seed. But your second birth. Came from imperishable seed.

The word of God. Which Peter describes with two words here. This word of God is living. And because it is living. It can give life.

And it is abiding. And because it abides forever. The life it gives is eternal. The seed determines the nature of what is born.

Perishable seed. Perishable fruit. That comes from it. Imperishable. What happens? The seed determines. You know, we are born children of Adam. We are born as children of Adam.

And what do we inherit? We inherit Adam's mortality. Children born of God's eternal word. On the other hand. Inherit a life. That cannot die.

[16:16] This is the same word Peter used for inheritance in verse 4. When he says that it is imperishable. Undeified. Unfading. And of Christ's blood in verse 18 and 19.

Which ransomed you. Not with perishable things. But as silver and gold. Peter is building one great contrast.

Through this old chapter. He wants you to see that everything in this age. Will perish. And does perish. But everything God gives.

In Christ. That endures. For eternity. Now why does new birth ground the command to love? In this verse 23.

Because birth determines nature. And nature produces likeness. Those begotten of God's seed.

[17 : 34] Will bear God's character. And we've been told. God is love. Then when Peter commands Christians to love one another.

He's not asking you to manufacture something foreign to you. He's merely commanding you to let the family likeness show in you.

A child of God who would not love the children of God. Is contradicting his own birth. And rejecting his own birth. Spurning. The father who loves and gives.

And redeems and gives new birth to him. And then Peter continues as his abbot. He proves his claim from scripture. He quotes Isaiah 40.

All flesh is like grass. And all its glory. Like the flower of the grass. The grass withers. And the flower falls.

[18 : 36] But the word of the Lord. Remains forever. Well. What kind of people do you think Isaiah was writing to.

When he first wrote those words. He was writing. Like Peter. To a people in exile. Israel. Israel. Carried off into Babylon. Stripped of their temple.

And land. And standing. Wondering whether God's covenant promises. Had failed. And into that despair. God cries. Words of comfort.

And the ground of the comfort is this. Every empire. Is grass. Babylon the great. In all our glory. Is like the flower of the field. Brilliant today. But falling tomorrow. But the word of God. The word of the God.

[19 : 36] Who promised redemption to his people. That word. Stands forever. And therefore. Because that word stands forever. The promise stands forever.

Peter has already told us. In verse 10 through 12. That it was the spirit of Christ. Himself speaking in the prophets. And that they were serving not themselves. But you. You sit here now.

And so Peter doesn't hesitate. To take covenants. From Old Testament. And apply it. Even now to us. Although that word was first applied. To exiles in Babylon.

Babylon. He now addresses it to exiles. In the Roman Empire. And just like Babylon the great. Which fell. And passed away. The Roman Empire.

In its greatness. What happened. What will happen. Even as you. Peter's audience. Are looking. And looking at the Roman Empire. And its greatness. He's saying that. Even the word of God.

[20 : 34] To you now. And the promises of God. To you. Would outlast. This great empire. The eternal word of the Lord.

Is not a distant concept. Peter says. Plainly. This good news. That the word of God. Will last. This good news.

That was preached to you. This is the good news. That was preached to you. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's standing in your own ears. That you believed.

And by which God. Begat you anew. And. Article 6. Of our. 30 articles. Confesses this. What does it say. About Holy Scripture. It contains all things.

Necessary to salvation. And here is why. The word written. And preached. Is the very seed. Of everlasting life.

[21 : 30] The word of God. Is the very seed. Of everlasting life. Consider what they said. To Peter's first readers. As they looked out. To the Roman Empire. Around them. Rome seemed.

To them. Eternal. Or legions. Or roads. Or temples. Or caesars. Ailed as lords. And gods. What could be more permanent.

In the hearing. Of Peter's first audience. Than the Roman Empire. And its greatness. But the Bible says. All of it is like grass. It will wither.

It will fall. And isn't that true. What's the Roman Empire today? The empire that persecuted. These very Christians.

Has now fallen. And yet. The word of God. Preached by these Galilean fishermen. That word. Of power. Outlasts.

[22 : 28] Every empire. And will outlast them still. Whatever power. Presence upon the church. In our own day. Whatever it may be.

That power may be. It may be the scorn. Of a secular culture. It may be. It may be. Human. And secular institutions. That treat the faith. As a relic.

As something to be put in museums. Rather than living. And abiding faith. It may be. Capitulations. To the culture. All of these things.

Will one day wither. Like the flower of grass. Do not trade. Your imperishable inheritance. For the good opinion.

Of a flower. That is already. Falling. And perishing. And withering. So. Peter continues. Therefore. Beginning in verse 1.

[23 : 25] Of chapter 2. By the way. This is an artificial break here. There is no break in Peter's. Argument here. So Peter continues. Therefore.

In the light. Of this new birth. That you have. In light of this new birth. Put away all malice. And all deceit. And hypocrisy. And envy.

And all slander. 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.

This is one continuous thought. From the passage. That we have just read. In chapter 1. Peter is saying to us. Your life in Christ. Was generated by God's word. And now Peter tells you.

How it is to be sustained. This new life. But before he names the healthy food. And the appetite you must have towards it. He first warns us.

[24 : 23] Away from the things that will poison us. That will poison the church. He says to us. Put in a way. The word pictures. Out there.

Is stripping yourself. Of soiled gamut. Put it away. What are these things? Malice. All malice.

And all deceit. And hypocrisy. And envy. And all slander. Now let's look carefully at that list. Every one of them is a sin.

Against the community. The poison that will kill a congregation. From the inside. Malice. Is nursing a grudge in the heart.

Deceit. Is shading the truth. To gain an undeserved advantage. Hypocrisy. Is the friendly mask.

[25 : 19] Over a cold heart. Claiming to love a brother. On Sunday. And slandering him on Monday. Envy. Is resentment.

At another's gifts. Or another's blessing. What about slander? It's literally. Speaking against. That's what slander means.

The gossip. That lowers a sister. In someone else's eyes. Is slander. Now. No persecutor. From outside.

Can do. To a church. What these five poisons. Can do. From within. Peter is telling us. What verse 22 looks like. In the negative.

This is what earnest love. Is meant to remove. From us. And understand the connection. To the appetite. That follows. You cannot crave.

[26 : 16] The pure milk. While you are still chewing. On grievance. And eating. And stewing. And stewing. On malice. The putting up.

Is not on a separate duty. From the craving. It is the very motive. Of it. In the craving. Of the pure milk. You are also putting up.

The poison. And vice versa. A mouth full of slander. Has no room for grace. And a heart full of malice. Has no room for love.

And so the command. Is this. Brothers and sisters. Like. Newborn infants. Long. For the pure. Spiritual milk.

Now. Peter is not calling. All of us. Immature. When he says. Like newborn infants. That's not what he's doing. I know. In other places. In the bible. This milk. Versus meat.

[27 : 14] Contrast. Of like. For example. In Hebrews. It's meant to. Communicate. Immaturity. And maturity. But in this instance.

That is not what Peter is doing. He's not saying. Like newborn infants. Like. Immature. New Christians. He's saying. Rather. All Christians.

However old in the faith. You may be. You are to be. Like newborn infants. Craving this milk. All our lives.

The point. Of the picture. Is the. Is the quality. Of the appetite. We're meant to have. That's what Peter is pointing to. Have you ever watched. A newborn feed.

He is a goodness to be received, ingested, lived upon. And where in the order life of Christ's church does taste and see find his appointed home?

Where? At this table. Where, as our prayer book teaches us, we feed on Christ in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The supper of the Lord does not exhaust the meaning of the milk here in this passage. But it is the milk set before you in bread and wine. The Lord given himself to sustain the life of his word and conceived in you.

And what is the purpose of this healthy appetite for the living word? To what end are you to have this healthy appetite? It is so that by it you may grow up into salvation.

[34 : 20] Now salvation in Peter's usage is really the finished deliverance to be revealed at the last day. So that you may grow up into maturity.

Until that day when the work of salvation is finally consummated. A believer who will not feed on God's word will not grow.

And Peter has no category for a Christian who has tasted that the Lord is good and then lost the appetite for ongoing feeding on his word. Brothers and sisters, this morning, where are we in regards to this?

Will we take the word of God? We will crave it as pure milk. Like newborn infants. We will see Christ and drink of Christ from his word.

We will gather as God's people faithfully to sit under the word of God preached. Humbly, with humility and with eagerness, knowing that Christ is there to meet us and to feed us.

[35 : 38] The grass withers and the flower falls. But the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word, this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Not to someone else, but to you. The eternal word of God has come to this parish. Ascended in your ears.

Has begotten you anew into new life. Therefore, beloved in Christ, put off what poisons the family of God. Put it off.

Love one another at full stretch with earnest heart and come like newborn infants craving the pure spiritual food that can make us grow.

Knowing, knowing that as we do, that the Lord is good. let us pray. Lord God, we ask that you would give us an abiding hunger for your word and continue to grow in us a loving heart, pure, earnest love towards one another as we resemble you so that we may grow increasingly in godliness in Christian maturity and evermore resembling our head the Lord Jesus Christ.

[37 : 18] It is in his name we pray. Amen. Amen. On page 6 of your bulletin let us pray for the church and for the world saying and we'll be going to be with you and of the world and you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you and I will be to be with you lip