

Throwing Out and Growing Up

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[0 : 00] Let's turn this evening to 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2, we're going to look at verses 1 to 3. We can just read through these verses again.

So 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 to salvation.

If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Particularly verses 2 and 3, although verse 1 is important and tied to it as well.

Last week I had a good clear out from the garage, from the barn. Lots of stuff that had been piled up over, I don't know, many months at least, if not longer.

It would have been much easier, of course, if I had done that earlier. And easier still if I had done that regularly. Much less painful, much less sweat, much less of a labour at the end of it, such as it was last week.

[1 : 15] And the same is true of our lives spiritually. Because these verses here, especially verse 1, is talking about a clear out. Getting rid of things which clutter up our lives and not just clutter them up, but actually cause positive harm to us and even to other people as well in relationship with us.

That's what he's saying here. Put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk.

So this clear out that he's talking of here, and it's a very strong word that's used here, these words putting away, it actually does mean something like clearing out or getting rid of or ejecting.

It's something that you do with a fair amount of force. It's not something that you engage in lightly or without being serious about it or gently.

Because the things that he talks about there are of course themselves important things to get rid of. But he's not just talking about a clear out. Peter is here while he's addressing these people who are suffering for their faith and going through many difficult things.

[2 : 31] As he tells us throughout the letter, he's saying to them, not only must you clear out these things, but at the same time, you have to do it in a way that grows up spiritually in your lives as believers.

So along with the throwing out, there's the growing up. And I was thinking that I would have to be careful in indicating these two titles that I didn't get them mixed up.

It's not throwing up and growing out. It's throwing out and growing up. And we'll see how they're related together in these verses and how they contain some very important issues for ourselves in our daily lives as we go on from day to day in relationship with one another and particularly with the Lord.

So let's look at this throwing out first of all that he mentions in verse 1. Put away all malice and all deceit and all hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

I'm not going to go into any great exposing of the meaning of these words. They're all pretty self-evident. We all know the meaning of them really anyway.

[3 : 46] And they're just like they are in their ordinary daily use. These words malice. When you have something deliberately against someone else that would even seek to harm them or have something happen to them that's not good.

Deceit. Well, obviously that is something where you try and pretend that something is what it's not. A deceit is something that enters into so many different ways in relationships and in our own character as well. And of course the Bible tells us that one of the characteristics of our hearts naturally is that it is deceitful above all things.

And we remember too that the Bible describes sin in the epistle to the Hebrews as the deceitfulness of sin. The deceit is something that lurks within each one of us.

And for the Christian, for somebody who has come to taste that the Lord is good, which we'll see in a minute, really means somebody who's come to know the Lord for themselves as their saviour and has come indeed into salvation, their concern must be to put away all malice and to put away all deceit.

[5 : 03] And then hypocrisy, which really is putting on a mask, pretending to be something that we're not and trying to pass ourselves off as something which we know deep down is not really true of us spiritually.

And then there's envy and slander. Envy which has at the very root of it the Bible's references to covetousness, that great sin that is indeed part of the law of God that refers to covetousness in the Tenth Commandment, you shall not covet.

And where the New Testament too in John's writings and Paul's writings refer to covetousness, even speaking of covetousness as idolatry. Because when we covet something, when we really desire something that's not proper for us to desire, that means that we're actually making little gods of ourselves and our self is then being presented as that which we serve instead of God, so that becomes our idolatry.

And then there's the final one, slander, when we deliberately set out to falsify someone's reputation. Slander is something that is, you can see an idea of it later in the chapter when these Christians that he's writing to, when people speak against you as evildoers, he's talking about something there that is set, an accusation or something that's said about them that's not true.

This is what he's saying, that this will happen to them. That's what happens with slander. Slander is always important to bear in mind when you carry about something, about someone else, when you actually say something about someone else that's not true about them, or even that you're not sure if it's true or not.

[7 : 04] It's better not to say anything, because if it's wrong, then you're slandering them. You're bringing their name into disrepute. And again, you're breaking the commandment of God that we are to honour our neighbour as ourselves and love them.

So these are the things that he's saying must be put away. But then, I want to ask the question, where does the impetus or the energy, where does the force that's necessary to expel these things, where does that come from?

Where is the throwing out? I mean, when you come to throw out things out of your garage or whatever, ordinary things, then there comes a moment when you say to yourself, well, that's it, I can't let this go on, it's just piling up, I've got to do it.

It comes from within yourself, and you're motivated to do it because there are certain considerations that make you do it. But spiritually, where does this urge, where does this power, where does this force, where does this energy, what Thomas Chalmers called the expulsive power in a Christian's life, he called it the expulsive power of a new affection.

And that's really what Peter is talking about here as well, because it's the new affection that he mentions in the previous chapter. It comes firstly from what he calls there a sincere brotherly love.

[8 : 29] You love one another earnestly from a pure heart since you've been born again. And when you come back to what he's saying there, that sincere brotherly love, that of course means love for male and female, brotherly love being Christian love, the love of believers.

That love is itself the source from which this expelling of these things comes. Because it's when you love the Lord, and you love his people, and you love his reputation, and you love his church, then you hate malice, and you hate deceit, and you hate hypocrisy, and you hate envy, and you hate slander, and you will not allow them to actually abide in your heart, and in your life, you throw them out.

You expel them, because you know that contrary to the kind of standard that God expects, and that you yourself, by God's creation in your heart, desires for your own life.

So there's that throwing out from that sincere brotherly love. And of course, what that tells us is that both the love that's a sincere brotherly love, and the putting away, the throwing out of malice, and deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy, and slander, that's not something that happens just in our lives personally, as if we lived in a little world of our own.

My garage, or my barn, may not affect anybody else, but myself. And if I let the rubbish pile up, it's not necessarily going to affect anybody else's life.

[10 : 17] But if I have malice in my heart, and if I'm showing envy in my heart, and if I have hypocrisy, and slander, and deceit in my life, as I relate to others in the church of God, and even in

the world around me, that is going to affect their life, that is going to have an impact on them, they are actually going to make conclusions from that, that will not be in favor of God, or of his people, or of me personally as a Christian.

And that's a different thing to what Peter is saying, that they accuse you wrongly, that is when we would place ourselves, when we would be accused rightly, of having such things.

So that sincere brotherly love is one of the sources for the power that ejects these things. Because your love extends to the whole of God's cause, and God's church, and God's people.

And you cannot allow these things then to live within that context. But it reminds us of something else. And we're going to see how these things are in fact attached to our growth as Christians, as believers.

And growth also, because of the way it's said in this context, it's very easy to see it, you don't grow as a Christian again on your own.

[11 : 38] You don't grow as a Christian isolated from other believers, isolated from people in the world. That's why being part of the church of God, even if you think of the church in the widest sense, let's think of it tonight as just the congregation here itself, not necessarily everybody is saved yet, though we hope they all come to be, those that are not.

But if you think of the visible church, all those who make up the worshipping people of God as they gather together, as they belong to a congregation such as our own, it's so important to belong to that place, to that number, to that people, especially, because that is where God has deposited his truth.

And it is there especially that we come to grow, not isolated by ourselves, but along with all God's people, we grow with them as we interact with them.

If you look at some people, you'll come across of course, some people that say, well I don't need to go to church. We mention this every so often, but you still come across it so frequently, we have to mention it.

People will say to you, well I'm a Christian, but I don't need to go to church. I can worship God at home. I can read books, and I can read my Bible, I can pray to God, I can do all of these things myself, and anyway, which church am I going to go to?

[13 : 13] And all the churches around me, I don't find one that's really suitable as far as I'm concerned, so therefore I'll just not go to any of them, and I'll just sit and be devotional here privately by myself.

That does not fit with the biblical pattern of someone who is born again, whom God has placed in a relation with himself where he's required to grow.

You don't grow isolated from other Christians, you grow in fellowship, you grow as part of a body, you grow as part of a people, a people who follow the same God and worship the same God, and whose concern it is to help one another in growing spiritually.

If you look at any of the batches of trees that are growing in different places in the island, where they're packed together closely, that have been planted over years, and some of them are now grown to maturity.

But if you look carefully, you'll often find that some seeds have been cast out of that batch of trees, and have lodged in the ground some distance away, and have grown there, and grown into a tree, isolated from the rest.

[14 : 40] And if you look very often, you'll find that that tree that's growing on its own is a different shape to those that are growing together, closely together, in the batch of trees that were sown originally.

Why? Because it's exposed on its own to all the weathering, to all the gales, to all the winds, to everything that batters it from week to week and month to month.

And you'll very often find that it grows in a way that's distorted. It's not impossible to be a Christian just by living at home and not going to church.

But you'll be a very distorted Christian. You'll have a shape to you that's not in accordance with the shape that God's word itself sets out. You'll have a shape that's very different to those who enjoy fellowship with each other, and who realize that they belong to a body of people within whom God has placed them so that they will grow.

That's why he's saying put away plural, all of you, each of you, but all of you together, put away malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander, and how that is rooted in this sincere

brotherly love where you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love.

[16:08] love. That is a love that has regard for all others who are like minded, and who have a regard in such a word for them that you long to continue to be with them and to grow together spiritually in the Lord.

There's something else though. The sincere brotherly love itself comes from another source. So really we're saying that the power, the expulsive power that comes to expel these things, the malice, the deceit, the hypocrisy and so on, yes it comes from a sincere brotherly love, it's rooted in that love, and this obedience to the truth that's along with that.

But that itself you've got to go further back with it and ask where does that come from? Because I wasn't born with a sincere love for Christians. I wasn't born with that Christian love in my heart. I didn't come into this world with the highest regard for God's people and God's church. If that was the case with you since you were an infant child absolutely to the good that's a great thing. You don't have to wait till you're grown up to love Christians, to love God, to love his people. Every child, every young person in here tonight can sincerely love those who love the Lord, those who follow the Lord.

[17:34] And I hope that's what they themselves will have as young people, as children, even before they reach adulthood. But none of us is born actually with sincere spiritual brotherly love.

It comes from the other thing that's mentioned there in the previous chapter in verse 23. Since you have been born again.

born again not through perishable seed, but by the imperishable living and abiding word of God. And you see, that's then what connects with the desire to grow by drinking in this spiritual milk, the nourishing word of God.

Before we get to that, that's the link with it. You've come to be born again through the word of God. God. And from that great act of God in bringing us spiritually to life, this rebirth in which we are given faith and spiritual desire and a recognition of our need of fellowship with other Christians and everything else that arises from that.

But that is the impact point, if you like, from which this desire and from which this energy, this power comes to expel the things of sin.

[19:04] That's why Chambers, you see, called it the expulsive power of a new affection. Where the new affection comes in, the things that are contrary to it must be thrown out.

The love that God creates in our hearts demands that everything contrary to it be thrown out. The love that God creates in our heart, love for himself and love especially for fellow believers, is a love that cannot actually occupy the same living space as malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander and everything else like them that is contrary to that love that God himself creates and to the other things that God creates in our hearts such as faith and hope and a desire to be holy and a following after holiness and all of the things that come from being born again.

That is why it was called by Chalmers the expulsive power of a new affection. Not just a new affection, it is a new affection that clears out the things which are unlike itself.

And there tonight is a challenge for yourself and for myself. Not just for those of us who have maybe not yet come to know the Lord personally for ourselves like we were saying this morning, it's a very personal thing, a very private thing.

An interaction between a soul and Jesus Christ or God and ourselves. Like Joseph and his brothers in that room, Joseph putting out all those of the Egyptians who were there so that between himself and his brothers in the privacy of that engagement they could listen as he revealed himself to them.

[20:58] And that's how the Lord deals with us. Personally, individually too. And in that respect we are born again by this word of God, this imperishable seed of the living and abiding word of God.

And it is that great change that introduces the expulsive power in that new affection.

It's an affection that God has created in our rebirth. There is a challenge, unfortunately, to those who are not necessarily yet saved, maybe seeking the Lord, maybe having been seeking him many years, maybe becoming a bit dissatisfied even that it hasn't happened yet.

Well, just continue to look to him through his word, to wait upon him, to follow his own directions, to use his word in the way that he himself says, and wait for that light to come, or for further light to come.

But it's also true that the lives of Christians get cluttered up, just like it is without computers.

[22 : 24] You've got to deal from time to time with all the clutter, this digital clutter that happens as the computer is used, and the hard disk that stores all the material, it becomes cluttered up all kinds of bits and pieces of programs and all sorts of things, so that your computer then begins to get sluggish, and if you don't look to it, it gets very slow indeed, and you've got to really then attend to it and clean it up.

And you get programs of course to do that. Well, it's like that with our life too. It's not at all impossible for a Christian to let malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander and other things like that.

It's not impossible for elements of these, even if they're not there in full-blown power, it's not impossible for elements of these things to actually be in our hearts and not be attended to and just left to pile up bit by bit until they slow your life down, until they make your soul sluggish.

And when your soul becomes sluggish, and when you slow down spiritually, through all of these things cluttering up your soul, you've got to throw them out. You can't just stand by and think somehow it's going to happen.

We've got to get down to it and attend to it ourselves and deal with it. And whatever it is needs to be cast out, then we've got to cast it out.

[23 : 59] We've got to get back on the rails again. So that is how we throw out these things, because we've said it's in a relationship that we grow in relationship with other people.

These things affect our lives personally, but they affect other people as well. They affect the cause of God, the church of God, and they're part of our pursuit of holiness and our growth spiritually.

And that brings us to his mentioning of growing up. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

He talks here about growing up to salvation. He's talking to people already saved. He's writing to believers. He doesn't mean here they're going to grow up until they're actually saved.

What he has in mind, as you find throughout Peter, his reference is to the day of the Lord, the final aspect of salvation, when we come finally to be in the Lord's presence, or especially at the Lord's return, when he comes to complete what he has given to his church and the salvation of his people.

[25 : 19] That's the salvation that's mentioned, or that aspect of salvation that's mentioned to you, that you may grow up to salvation, right up to that point. But you see what he's saying is, like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk.

And it's the word of God that's meant by this pure spiritual milk, because it follows on, although the word, the reference to the word of God is not really specified in verse 2, though it is in the AV translation, it's not the original text, but it's quite enough to put it there, because it follows on from what's in the previous chapter, and it's obviously the word of God that he's still speaking of, that he still has in mind when he talks about this pure spiritual milk, that we are to desire like a newborn infant desired milk.

It's that word of God, this word that's in our Bibles, that's what he's saying is the great medium through which we grow. Now think of what he's saying, it's a very easy illustration to understand of course, when you look at a newborn infant or an infant that's just quite young, one of the chief characteristics of that infant is the craving for milk, the desire for milk, and it's expressed through the cry of that infant who cannot yet talk, but who can communicate to his or her mother or father that they need fed.

And it's that craving, that desire that that infant has that gives Peter this illustration of how it should be with ourselves.

Now we must clarify something. The Bible elsewhere in the likes of 1 Corinthians chapter 3 talks about milk, spiritual milk, as something that young believers or new converts need.

[27 : 18] one of the things Paul is saying to the Corinthians is you've not yet progressed as you should have done beyond the stage of just basic feeding. You're still spiritual infants, and you need to now think of maturing, of actually being able to dig in more solid food spiritually.

Now that's not what Peter is talking about here. He's not here saying, well some of these would have been young believers of course, but the illustration is not simply about young believers, the illustration is for every believer at whatever stage, they ought to be characterized by a spiritual hunger, by a spiritual appetite illustrated by the appetite, the craving, the demand of a newborn infant or a young infant that shows its need of being fed.

Now think about that infant. What is milk to a newborn babe? What is milk to an infant that's not very old?

It's not a luxury. It's not something that's an additional thing that you can do without or have or not have as you may, as the mother may think.

Milk for that infant is a matter of life and death. It's the prime source of nourishment. It's a daily necessity.

[28 : 52] It's something that in itself is a scapeful diet. There's nothing else that comes before milk for a newborn baby. It's absolutely crucial that it gets that milk.

And what Peter is saying is that's how we should think about the word of God. Our attitude to the word of God if we're concerned to grow as Christians must be this is my pure spiritual milk.

This is not something that I can choose to accept or not accept like you would have a luxury food which you don't really need to have in your life. this is my staple diet.

This is my basic food. This is the food without which my soul will shrivel up and I will spiritually die. This is the food that I cannot grow without.

That's why it's so important to have the word so centrally placed in our lives that we can say every single day of our lives if I don't get today my portion of the spiritual milk my soul is going to decay and we're going to become malnourished and you've seen yourselves sadly the picture of children who are malnourished who don't have the basic necessities in places like Africa and other parts of the world especially times of famine when there's times of famine and mother's milk dries up and they don't have artificial milk to give to the children then you look at that child that malnourished child that deformed child and you say that child sadly is lacking the basic necessities of life and that's how it must be for us now thinking as Christians too our spiritual health is closely attached to the use we make of

[31 : 06] God's word our spiritual growth is inseparable from the use we make of God's word and that's why Peter is saying like newborn beads crave long for the pure spiritual milk that you may grow thereby that you may grow for it in other words whatever form the word of God comes to you in in a form that's right and acceptable if it's reading it for yourself if it's reading a good commentary or a book that explains it for you if it's like it is just now coming to church to hear the word of God expounded in preaching which the Bible itself tells us is the primary means that God uses for the increase of our lives in faith and in spiritual stature and growth then every single way in which the word of God is available to us rightly we have to use it we have to take advantage of it we cannot live without it it's the pure spiritual milk through which we come to grow and related to that is the reference in verse 4 at the beginning as you come to him a living stone that is connected to if indeed you have tasted that the

Lord is good that's part of the imagery of the infant having tasted for the first time of that milk through which it comes to be fed once it has that taste of the milk it knows that that's something it needs again and that's where it begins to cry when that milk is required well he's saying you've tasted that the Lord is good he's not doubting it here when he says if indeed what he's saying is since this is in fact the case seeing you have come to taste that the Lord is good to to to really to to to to to to to to to to to to to to to to to do that you've come to do it not detached from the word of God but through this word you have come to be born again and the same word through which you were born again is the word that now nourishes you as pure spiritual milk isn't that such an amazing thing in itself the quality of this word of

God God uses it to bring us to know himself for our rebirth we're born through the word of God he brings it home to us with power and having done that he doesn't put the word aside and say you need something else if you're going to go I have to give you something else no he says the word through which I caused you to be born again you don't need anything else for you to grow spiritually the same word is designed to do that for you that's why he describes it with two very important qualities he calls it pure and he calls it spiritual Peter and Paul lived in days I'm sure it still happens when people used to go about selling things like for example wine but those who were unscrupulous would sell wine that was highly diluted with water they would still sell it as wine but it was adulterated it was diluted it wasn't pure and that's the kind of thing in the word that Peter is using there when he's saying pure the pure milk of God's word he's saying this word of God is not adultery it's not been diluted it doesn't have harmful additives in it unless people choose to add it themselves that's where false teaching comes in that's why these apostles were so concerned to keep false teaching out to kick that out to expel that with all the other harmful things

because what that was doing was diluting the word of God and when you add water to whatever it is you're diluting you're drastically affecting the quality of that it becomes an impurity in the sense in which it is no longer what it was intended to be and that word of God well how thankful tonight friends we should be that we are in a position where for ourselves personally and in the practice of the church of our congregation and where

I hope in the preaching of the word as well we maintain the purity of God's word we don't add to it we don't want anything taken away from it we maintain it as it is as it's been given us by God that's the milk that he's passed on to us through which he's saying if you use this if you don't dilute it if you don't add your own ideas to it if you don't adulterate it if you don't put handful add this into it you will grow by it and it's also a spiritual word it is an interesting reference to a quality in the word of God it's a word that also is used by Paul in his epistle to the Romans in chapter 12 at verse 1 I appeal to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to

[37 : 10] God which is your spiritual worship that's translated here the authorized version has which is your reasonable service and the idea of it being spiritual is probably not as good a translation as the word reasonable because what Peter and what Paul mean by that is that the word of God is a reasonable rational word in the sense in which it is actually designed to fit with the mind that God creates when he brings us to be born again you need a certain type of feeding for a mind that's been renewed and the type of feeding that God has designed for us is this very word it's a reasonable word it's a word that's compatible fully with what God has designed in our new mind in the renewed mind the mind that now knows

Christ and that lives in fellowship with God that new mind if it really is as it should be that new mind is not going to be satisfied if you throw any sort of food at it it's not going to be satisfied by any of the philosophies of the world that actually say this is just as good as anything you find in the Bible that new mind is not actually going to be satisfied even if many people actually try and persuade them that the Quran actually is on a par if not superior to the Bible or at least alongside it or the writings of Buddha or whatever other philosophers or previous spiritual leaders you might have had in the history of the world if you have that spiritual mind that God has created as a new mind in Christ Jesus this is the only food that will satisfy that mind you can pack it full of all the other stuff but if

God has given you a spiritual hunger it's a bit really like like going through the day naturally with your body and you maybe don't have time to take lunch and you just nibble on digestive biscuits or something well by the time you get to tea time you realize you can't go on just feeding on digestive biscuits they're not going to satisfy you they're not going to keep the hunger away at all you need a good proper steak or whatever it is that's how it is with God's word people may suggest to you that there are many alternatives much satisfaction and that will bring you just as much of God that's false teaching that's not going to do you it's not going to nourish your soul one bit oh you may learn a lot about the world you may learn a lot about other things and there's nothing wrong with that as long as you don't put it out instead of the milk which is designed for your soul like newborn babes desire long for the pure spiritual milk that you may grow up to salvation and one thing in conclusion because the time is gone and

I'm always impressed by how great they are at their attentiveness and their patience it's good to have them and it's good to see parents bringing them but there's just this final word that you may grow up to salvation the word grow is in a tense you call passive in other words growing is not something you do yourself it's something that's done by God in us or for us by his work in our lives you have a hunger for the word as a Christian you express and act out that hunger for the word by using the word of God by taking in its teaching we have to do all of that we are responsible to do that that's what God is saying but the growing must be left to him you will grow but it is

God who causes the growth not yourself and the growth that you and I need to have as Christians yes it depends on our use of the word it depends on our actually having the word of God as pure spiritual milk as an intake of it every single day our growth depends on that but it's God himself who causes the growth to come about we are depending on the power of God to enable us to grow just like Paul himself put it in another context Paul may plant and Apollos may water Paul needs to plant Apollos needs to water but it is God who gives the increase you desire to grow you set your heart upon growing as a Christian but leave the creative power of growth to

[42 : 59] God himself you get on with using his word and leave the cause of the growth to God himself may God bless his word let's pray gracious Lord help us we pray to grow spiritually in the way that you yourself set out for us in this word help us to be thankful for the word that you have given us for our own readiness to use it for the way in which you have promised that in the using of it we will grow unto salvation bless it to each one of us we pray this evening help us to continue to hunger and thirst after righteousness through your own word help us to grow for Jesus sake Amen