

Gods Word Is Addictive

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Date: 05 July 1992

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[0 : 0 0] Turn, if you will, in your few Bibles to the first letter of Peter on page 216 in the back of the book.

Page 216. I was going to talk this morning about stones, but I've never got there, and so I'm going to just read the first three verses of chapter 2.

But I'm going to begin with the last line of chapter 1, which says, The word, that word, is the good news which was preached to you.

So put away all malice and all guile and slander and insincerity and envy. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation, for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

As you look at that, let me pray. For God, these words are totally revolutionary in terms of our world and our lives.

[1 : 3 6] And I guess we know that that revolution is your purpose for us.

And so will you burn these words in our hearts and in our memories? And will you nourish our will by them to do what is acceptable to you?

We ask in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Now there is two very simple things in this passage that I think are the anchor points on which you can hang it.

Look at it again, and let me show you what those two things are. They are two imperatives. And the two imperatives, the thing that Peter says you are to do, and the commentators say that Peter is quite obviously talking to a whole congregation.

So this isn't for you alone. This is for you in company, one with another. And it's very important that you recognize and acknowledge that fact that you are a Christian among a community of Christians and that you're not an isolated spiritual working out your own journey.

[3 : 0 5] You belong to a company of people. And that company is addressed by Peter in these words. The first imperative he gives to the company is to put away, see that in the first line of chapter 2, get rid of, discard, trash, have nothing else to do with.

That's the first imperative. The second imperative is in verse 2, and it is long for, have a burning desire for.

That lovely Psalm 42, which says, which is in the hymn, says, as pants the heart for cooling streams, heart being spelled H-A-R-T, when he did in the chase.

That desperate longing, you are to deliberately cultivate. So the two imperatives are put away and long for.

And very dangerous to deal with one without the other, as you will see. Two things I want to say by way of preface before I get into this.

[4 : 3 1] There was an interesting story about churches in Los Angeles that deal with addicts.

And there was a picture of an addict in the story. A woman with five children, who in order to supply her addiction, taught her daughter to steal, sold all her clothes, and finally sold her refrigerator, on the grounds that it was more important to have cocaine than it was to have food.

And I would like to hold that addict before you as an exemplary kind of person who has a single goal in life to which everything else is secondary.

And of course, that's what, you know, I'd like to be. I'd like to be that kind of an addict, totally committed to something which was infinitely worthwhile, which cocaine isn't.

But, but the addiction idea, I think, you need to get a hold of to understand these three verses. What it is to be an addict. So that was the first thing I wanted to tell you.

[6 : 01] The second thing is more by way of confession, which I would like to make to you for my benefit.

If not, I don't know whether it's any benefit to you. But I seem to have spent most of this year fairly close to mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual breakdown.

And just on teetering all the time and not very happy. And, and I am very grateful for the dominant reality that during this time a lot of people have ministered to me.

Now, the way it's all set up and structured formally here is that I am the minister and I minister to you. Please get that straight. The reality is, in my experience, and I hope in your experience, that you find many people in this congregation who probably unconsciously minister to you as they do to me.

and, apart from whom, I don't think I could carry on. I mean, I think that's the reason why I am retiring because I want to give this job to somebody else because it's too big for me.

[7 : 38] And, so I am looking forward to that in that sense, at least. I don't know that I am but, the main thing I want to say is that is the sense of having been ministered to by other people and to confess to you that I haven't done the things the minister is supposed to do.

I haven't been very good about visiting the sick or the bereaved or lots of things I haven't done simply because I haven't been able to do them. And, and that's alright too I think because one of the discoveries that you might make during such a time is that lots of other people can minister adequately to you if you will let them in the formal structures of Anglicanism that's not generally acknowledged to be the way things should be done but in the reality of the kingdom it's the way it happens and you need to recognize and acknowledge that.

Well that I just wanted to tell you that because because it serves for my purposes to introduce something which which I think is very critical to understanding this passage you have the idea of addiction in mind and and you have the idea of how people minister to one another and how essential that is for all of us well look at the passage again chapter 2 verse 1 and the first imperative put away get rid of what it says is the things that you are to get rid of are malice that is all that is evil in an evil world you are to get rid of guile insincerity envy and splendor now it is very clear that it says get rid of them and as I thought about it you know

I realized that if we did get rid of them our whole way of life would collapse you know cocktail parties would suddenly become stony with silence but then probably so would prayer meetings and you know locker room conversations would become like a monastery sworn to silence silence there wouldn't be anything to talk about that all because our life is made up of these things they're not they're not strange things to us they're the the very the things we snack on all the time emotionally we need this we were let me say addicted to these things they they're what make life go round envy and hypocrisy and guile they're just part of who we are they're always there and it suddenly occurred to me that one of the big difficulties that I think we have as a congregation just because of the culture and the social setting we're in and the place we're in on the secular society of the west coast is we've come to the happy conclusion contrary to what

Peter says that you can sophisticate or domesticate these things so that the malice doesn't really do much harm and the envy is simply restrained envy and the deceit is not maliciously intended and the hypocrisy is for a good cause to make the wheels go round so that we've in a sense learned how to live with these things and how to make them look respectable and when Peter comes along and says get rid of them he's just a raving fundamentalist that's all and he doesn't understand some of the nuances of the kind of life we're called upon to live so we've accommodated most of those things but the imperative is very clear it says get rid of them the second imperative is what you replace that with and what you replace it with is a consuming passion the thing that absolutely grips you the thing that you desire the thing that you are totally addicted to that is to take its place to take the place of these things that you've got rid of now that

[13 : 58] I've set you up for that I'm not sure you're going to like it but I'm going to proceed anyway so you do like what it says is long for the pure spiritual milk milk and this is kind of a mainline drug that that it is entirely appropriate that we should be totally addicted to that is the pure spiritual milk we are to long for that and when you look at what that means you find out three things that it means you're to long for it because you are newly begotten of the father by the word that is

God has taken this life which is characterized by and necessitates malice and envy and guile and hypocrisy and slander he's taken that world in which we are addicted to that pattern of behavior and he has said there is a new life and that new life has begun with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead so that we are begotten of the father to a new life through the word of God remember that's where we ended chapter two the word of God which is the gospel preached to you we are begotten to a new life and when it says as newborn babes I think that's misleading because it might make you think that you're only an infant a tiny child but the new thing is not you because you may be quite elderly the new thing is that to which you have been begotten by the father through the word it's the father's begetting that is something new so that in terms of the new life which is yours in sharing the risen life of

Jesus Christ you are inevitably an infant because there's so much more for you that belongs to your new life in Christ so that when you get as old as I am or even as some of you are you may think that life is all over but when you look at the fact that God has begotten us unto a new life means that we're all infants in terms of the growth that must still belong to us in fulfillment of the purpose of God that's the first thing you see that has happened that we are begotten again to a living home by God the Father the second thing is that having been begotten as children we are to have an unappeasable appetite for the word of

God the same word by which we were begotten is the word by which we are nourished we've been begotten unto a new life through the word of God we are nourished in that new life through the word of God that's why it says long for this milk this milk which is the word of God you may find this too crude for your sensibilities and it may seem too crude to me to tell you about it but what in effect it comes close to saying is that the semen by which you are begotten is from the word of God and the milk by which you are nourished is from the word of God and therefore you are to long for it desire it because that is your life and you see if that is your life then to have all our energies emotionally and psychologically consumed with those the the the narcotics of malice envy guile slander to which we are addicted that's a waste of all our energy put that aside and be addicted to the one thing you're meant to be addicted to and that is the word of God which brings new life and nourishes you for what in you have been begotten you are nourished what's the rest of it that you may grow up to salvation which is

God's eternal purpose for you which is not subject to death which is not subject to time that's that's the thing that you are to grow up into well that seemed to me to be a very powerful verse what it says when it concludes is this I mean just these verses you have tasted the kindness of the Lord and what I think that means in perhaps contemporary parlance is you are hooked because nothing else ultimately will satisfy you nothing else because you have tasted the goodness of the Lord and you can live a mediocre second rate kind of life if you want you can live in the enjoyment of all that this earth are for you can live the good life as it's defined on the west coast if you want but it's been spoiled for you ultimately because you have tasted the goodness of the

[21 : 09] Lord and therefore you can't be satisfied and ultimately you won't be and that's why Peter goes on then to talk about what happens as you have been begotten nourished grow up into salvation having tasted the goodness of the of the Lord and God's purpose is fulfilled as you are made a member of the community of Christ a living stone and I want to quit but let me just give you this part which I want you to look at you're made a part of the community of Christ which is the coming to the living stone you yourself are living stones built into a spiritual household to offer spiritual sacrifices that is to live lives which are worshipping of God if you look back in Isaiah which is one of the sources that Peter seems to have turned to in using this analogy of the living stone you will find that the living stone was that the stone was that which came in to a society that was totally committed to a lie and the stone comes in and smashes the lie so you can't live by it any longer and that's what

Christ is that's why I wanted you to have the picture of what an addict is because what we are meant to be is not those who with moral and religious fervor have managed to tame malice and envy and hypocrisy so that it doesn't appear to do much damage where that's not who we are that's not our religion our religion is our faith that we are newborn babes begotten of the father by the word nourished by the word so that we will grow up into salvation and that we will be totally addicted to the

Lord whom we have tasted and seen that he is good and so as you come to communion this morning it's all a very sinister plot because the purpose of your taking communion this morning is to reinforce your addiction to Christ who died for you so that you will know more surely that without this you're dead amen for oh