

TITLE: Responding to the Word of Grace (Part 5)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:2-3

THEME: The Believer's Response to the Word of God (the Gospel of Christ)

NUMBER: 1PET37-0106

DATE: January 22, 2006

Read Passage

This AM ==> Part 5 of "Responding to the Word of Grace"

As I mentioned last week, this is a passage that drips w/the power, sufficiency, authority of God's Word. No less than 6 refs. to Script. in these 7 vv. As I said few wks ago, this passage resonates w/Reformation tenet of "Sola Scriptura."

Reformation Novelty?

Some dismiss S.S. as a novelty - a position that was not found before t/16th c. Reformation. Of course, that accusation is false. Not only does t/Bible uphold t/concept of Sola Scriptura, but t/early CH fathers did also.

Cyril of Jerusalem (born shortly after t/turn of t/4th c) ==>

"In regard to the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, not the least part may be handed on without the Holy Scriptures. Do not be led astray by winning words and clever arguments. Even to me, who tell you these things, do not give ready belief, unless you receive from the Holy Scriptures the proof of the things which I announce. The salvation in which we believe is not proved from clever reasoning, but from the Holy Scriptures." [cited in James White "Sola Scripture and the Early Church" in Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible, Don Kistler, Gen. Ed., 27]

Augustine (4th - 5th c.) ==>

"What more shall I teach you than what we read in the apostle? For holy Scripture fixes the rule of our doctrine, lest we dare to be wiser than we thought. . . . Therefore, I should not teach you anything else except to expound to you the words of the Teacher." [cited in James White "Sola Scripture and the Early Church" in Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible, Don Kistler, Gen. Ed., 39]

"Let those things be removed from our midst which we quote against each other not from divine canonical books but from elsewhere. Someone may perhaps ask: 'Why do you want to remove these things from the midst?' Because I do not want the holy church proved by human documents but by divine oracles." [cited in James White "Sola Scripture and the Early Church" in Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible, Don Kistler, Gen. Ed., 40]

Testimony of t/Bible itself, along w/witness of t/early CH fathers– as well as t/Reformers demands we uphold t/sovereign authority of God's Word.

As vv. 23-25 remind us ==>

You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and enduring Word of God. For all flesh is like grass and all of her glory is like a flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. And this is the Word which was preached to you.

That Word of our Lord that we hear we are also to heed. We are to "Hear" it and we are to "Heed" it.

I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)

A. Rekindle Your Love for the Brethren (22) "*What is the Depth of my Love?*"

B. Remember Your Response to the Word (23-25) "*What is my perspective on Scripture?*"

Three things ==>

1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)

You have been born again through the imperishable seed of God's Word.

2. Remember the Nature / Character of that Word that Saved You (23b-25a)

it is living and enduring . . . unlike the grass of the fields and the transient nature of humanity; it remains forever

3. Remember the Preaching of the Word that Saved You (25b)

And this is the Word which was preached to you.

I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)

A. Rekindle Your Love for the Brethren (22)

B. Remember Your Response to the Word (23-25)

Last week ==>

C. Resist Your Temptations to Sin (2:1) "*What am I Putting Aside?*"

Therefore, putting aside all malice, and all deceitfulness, and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow with respect to salvation–

1. Go back to verse 1

Therefore [in light of all that you've seen in vv. 22-25] [put these things] aside . . .

Five specific sins listed ==>

all malice, and all deceitfulness, and hypocrisy and envy and all slander

In ==>

I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)

2. You are literally to remove these from your life as one would remove filthy garments

a. Greek verb ἀποτίθημι- literally of taking off clothes

Aorist middle ptcp functioning as an imperative.

[remove from yourself the garments of] all malice, and all deceitfulness, and hypocrisy and envy and all slander . . .

I told you that vv. 1 & 2 complement each other (why I didn't want to stop at v. 1 last week). There's a neg. followed by a positive. The Neg. is ==>

C. Resist Your Temptations to Sin (2:1)

This 3rd point actually is a transition to the 4th ==> the positive in v. 2==>

D. Renew Your Spiritual Hunger (2:2)

1. Verses and two stand in contrast

V. 2 is specifically talking about a hunger/appetite for God's Word. V. 1 gives some preconditions that are needed in order to fulfill that hunger.

a. See same thing in James 1:21==>

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

b. Sin in our lives is to hunger for the Word what a magnet is to another magnet when their polarities are opposite

They repel!

Does anyone remember those two little plastic Scotty dogs with magnetic bases? Popular toy when I was a child. I think they came in pairs, one was white the other black. Magnets were such that they repelled ea. other. If you moved t/white one close to the black one, the black one would scoot away from the polar force of the magnet.

That's an illustration of sin in our lives. Black dog is sin. White dog is hungering after God's Word & righteousness. They're not compatible.

I've seen it many times. A professed Xn starts to stray. Black dog sets in. Then, they're no longer really interested in being a part of the body of X (they stop coming to CH). Desire for t/Word wanes & ceases.

(1) That illustration can be an overstatement

BTIM - it doesn't always have to be that stark. We can also tolerate what we might call "lesser" sins in our lives. It may not be murder, adultery, robbery. It might be ==>

. . . **malice** ["hate your brother you've murdered him in your heart], **deceitfulness** [which is itself robbery], **and hypocrisy** [being two-faced] **and envy** [violation of t/10th commandment] **and all slander** [violates the 9th commandment]

As I said last week, this list is by no means exhaustive. Your particular sin of choice not here? (Puritans called them "besetting sins.") ==> Anger? Take it off * Inappropriate language? Take it off * Sexual lust? Take it off * Unforgiveness? Take it off * Bitterness? Take it off * Laziness? Take it off * Greed? Take it off * Apathy? Take it off * Worldly-mindedness? Take it off * Don't ruin your appetite!

Can't wear robes of righteousness while you're still clothed with t/dirty garments of the old life. You're a new creation in X; old things have passed away; you're new; you're no longer a slave to unrighteousness, but a slave of that which is good and pure. Live as who you are!

C. Resist Your Temptations to Sin (2:1)

Then ==>

D. Renew Your Spiritual Hunger (2:2) "What Taste is in my Mouth?"

I ask that because vv. 2 & 3 ask that very question. A healthy infant has a specific taste in his mouth; he longs for his mother's milk, not vinegar. A healthy Xn has "tasted of God's kindness" (v. 3) & therefore longs for more of t/same. A healthy Xn as a certain taste in his mouth.

Shared this true story w/you last year. I couldn't help but think of it as I was pondering this point [^]

A man attempting to siphon gasoline from a motor home parked on a Seattle street, he got much more than he bargained for. Police arrived at the scene to find an ill man curled up next to a motor home near spilled sewage. A police spokesman said that the man admitted to trying to steal gasoline and plugged his hose into the motor home's sewage tank by mistake. The owner of the vehicle declined to press charges, saying that it was the best laugh he'd ever had. [True story received Sept. 1997]

Again, let me ask you==>

"What Taste is in your Mouth?"

1. Hunger for That Which Brings Salvation Growth (v. 2)

Like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow with respect to salvation,

This relates to t/doctrine of our "new birth" (B.A.) that we saw in 1:23.

a. Two parts to this verse: Illustration; Motivation

(1) Here's the Illustration:

Like newborn babies . . .

(a) Word "babies" is the plural form of the noun βρεφος

There are two other Gk. words that are used to refer to children: τεκνον (a child); παιδιον (a young child). A βρεφος is a newborn or even unborn baby.

i. Same word that's used in ==>

Luke 1:41 **And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb . . .**

Luke 18:15 **And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them . . .**

2 Timothy 3:15 **and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

ii. We're talking infant here

It would have been enough to say ==>

like a βρεφος . . . (like a baby)

Peter adds t/Adj. ἀρτιγέννητος = newborn). Peter's going out of his way to clarify that he's talking a newborn. Implies a just-born baby ready to feed on its mother's milk for the first time. Desperately hungry.

Like newborn babies, long [for what?] for the pure spiritual milk . . .

(b) Don't misunderstand the illustration

Some commentators read too much into this and claim that this implies that Peter's readers were either recent converts or they were immature believers. Usually, the ref. is made to ==>

1 Corinthians 3:2 **I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. . . .**

Hebrews 5:13-14 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature....**

Historically, these were not as a whole recent converts. Contextually, there's no reason to accuse them of being immature.

Peter is simply using an analogy. Milk fits the analogy. Be silly for Peter to say, like new born babies, long for a nice thick porterhouse steak!

This is t/analogy that t/H.S. chose; it is applicable to all of us regardless of maturity level.

(c) We are to long for the pure spiritual milk

i. For those of you interested in grammar:

2 adjectives & 1 noun. Noun is "milk" (Rabbis commonly referred to the Word as "milk"). 2 Adj. describe this "milk" - it is pure & it is spiritual.

(i) It is "spiritual" in that it pertains to the Word

Some translations render it "pure milk of t/Word." Implied idea. λογικός normally used as an adjective. Root ==> λογος. λογικός can mean spiritual, rational, reasonable, or pertaining to the Word. Only other use is in Romans 12:1 ("spiritual" - s. service of worship).

* No matter how you translate it the idea remains

Whether it's "spiritual" or "word" the context tells us that Peter has in mind the Word of God. {context}

* You might compare Psalm 119:20 and 131

119th Psalm is the longest chapter in t/Bible (176 vv. and God's Word is referred to at least 174 times, using diff. words such as "commandments, precepts, word, path, law, statutes, ordinances").

Psalm 119:20 *My soul is crushed with longing After Thine ordinances at all times.*

Psalm 119:131 *I opened my mouth wide and panted, For I longed for Thy commandments.*

What I want you to note is that t/verb longing/longed is used in refer. to Scripture in both passages {repeat}. If you were to cf. the LXX (Gk. translation of t/OT that was in use in Peter's day) you would find that Peter uses t/same verb here that is used in both of these Psalms: ἐπιποθεω - to long for or strongly desire something.

(ii) Not only is it "spiritual" - it's also "pure" (2nd Adj.)

It's ἄδολος (w/o deceit, genuine, unadulterated). Was almost a technical term for agricultural products that were free from contaminants [Barclay, 192]

Prior to the process of pasteurization, contaminated milk resulted in thousands of deaths, mostly in children, The sickness that resulted from this tainted milk was called, "Milk Fever."

If I can play off of this analogy, might I suggest that many Xns are suffering from spiritual "milk fever" due to drinking contaminated milk. Our pulpits & CHs are filled w/peddlers of bad milk. From rampant charismania; health wealth heresies on one hand to blatant faith-denying liberalism on t/other. From Pelagianism (denies t/sinful estate of men) to Arminianism (denies t/sovereignty of God). From t/misguided seeker-driven CH's that bow to t/god of pragmatism to an ecumenical movt. that sacrifices truth on t/altar of supposed unity. It's all contaminated milk.

One can almost picture t/lamentable picture of starving children in third world countries as a metaphor for what t/CH in America looks like today.

"In view of postmodern culture's relentless output of informational junk food through radio, television, films, the internet, computer games, books, periodicals, and even so-called Christian pulpits—all of which causes spiritual malnourishment and dulls appetites for genuine spiritual food—believers must commit to regular nourishment from God's Word." [MacArthur, 100]

* The milk is to be "pure" which speaks of the necessity of sound doctrine

- * We are to be nourished on sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6)
- * Duty of a pastor-elder is to exhort in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9)
- * We are to speak the things that are fitting for sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)
- * We are to be an example of good deeds w/purity of doctrine (Titus 2:7)
- * We should adorn the doctrine of God our savior in all ways (Titus 2:10)

Even as we do these things we are to realize that it won't necessarily be t/popular thing to do. 2 Tim. 4:3 tells us that we live in an age where sound doctrine is not tolerated .

"What Taste is in your Mouth?"

Like a newborn baby, do you ==>

... long for the pure spiritual milk ... ??

(d) Might I suggest that your appetite or lack thereof stands in direct proportion to your spiritual health?

One indication of a healthy baby is his/her appetite. A healthy baby desires that which makes for growth & health physically speaking. ISW - a healthy Xn desires that which makes for spiritual growth.

D. Renew Your Spiritual Hunger (2:2) "What Taste is in your Mouth?"

Do you hunger for more truth about God so that you may know him more intimately & worship him more passionately?

Remember I said that ==>

a. Two parts to this verse: Illustration; Motivation

(1) The Illustration:

Like newborn babies long for the pure spiritual milk . . .

(2) Here's the Motivation

... so that by it ["the pure milk of God's Word] you may grow with respect to salvation—

(a) KJV leaves out the phrase "with respect to salvation"

Probably because some copyists were confused by t/idea that spiritual growth is connected to one's salvation. But t/phrase is found in t/best & earliest MSS & should be retained.

(b) What we have is what's called in Greek a ἵνα clause

ἵνα w/subjunctive indicating purpose or result. "So that" or "in order that."

Like newborn babies long for the pure spiritual milk SO THAT [or IN ORDER THAT] by it you may grow with respect to salvation--

(c) What's the "salvation?"

Someone asks, "How can someone grow w/respect to their salvation? I thought you were either saved or you weren't?! Can't grow into it or out of it can you?"

Sounds confusing. Confusion isn't w/God, it's w/us. God's not confused. Reason why some people are confused on this is because we don't know what words mean. We tend to throw t/word "salvation" around as a "one word fits all" kind of thing. "Salvation" is a broad term that encompasses all of our deliverance from sin. There are a lot of sub-terms that speak to different aspects of our salvation, works like election / predestination / effectual calling / regeneration / repentance / justification / sanctification / perseverance / glorification.

Our justification is always viewed as past-tense. Legal or forensic aspect of salvation whereby once an elect sinner is regenerated and comes to believe in JC God declares him or her righteous on the merit of X.

Our justification is normally viewed as a past event. But t/word salvation can be viewed as yet future when it's used in t/context of all that is our salvation. IOW in saying ==>

... so that by it you may grow with respect to salvation--

Peter is including our sanctification & perseverance in t/process. It's our growth as believers in JC (growth fits t/analogy of t/context - babies). It's our persevering in t/faith ==> 1:5 {read} * 1:9 {read}

Philippians 2:12-13 . . . **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**

i. There's no confusion here

By God's design we are not saved/justified apart from growth. We cannot remain βρεφος. Just as a healthy baby grows and matures, so a healthy Xn grows & matures.

ii. God's Word is the agent of spiritual growth in our lives

No real growth in t/grace & knowledge of JC comes apart from growing in His Word. It's always t/Word of God galvanized & applied by the Spirit of God.

(d) Five Practical Points

i. Listen to it Passionately

This goes back to "preaching" above; in 1:25. We specialize in what John Stott called "sermonettes" – Preaching today really isn't preaching; it's a "talk"; "homily"; "vignette" – we're concerned w/being entertaining. Being a captivating speaker. Having lots of jokes, stories, application. Unfort. t/Word is kept off the stage in t/shadows. "sermonettes = Xnettes"

There's something to be said for how God builds the CH through t/faithful t/preaching of His Word. 17th c. theologian John Owen ==>

"The first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word." [John Owen, cited in Whatever Happened to the Reformation, Gary L.W. Johnson and R. Fowler White, Eds., page 232]

God blesses the steadfast preaching of His Word. Unique & powerful.

Sometimes people who haven't heard me preach ask me, "Are you a good preacher?" How do you answer that? For some people good means 5 stories and 15 minutes. I knew a guy who thought good meant you walk around the stage w/o notes and sweat a lot. I'll let God judge what "good" is; I just try hard to be faithful.

I have a sign on the wall in my office w/these two passages (reminder)==>

2 Corinthians 10:17-18; **But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.**

1 Thessalonians 2:4 **but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts.**

I do know this: It is an inseparable part of our worship. Mark Dever, whom I quoted last week, tells the story ==>

"Once, when I was teaching a day-long seminar on puritanism at a church in London, I mentioned that puritan sermons were sometimes two hours long. At this, one person gasped audibly, and asked, "What time did that leave for worship?" The assumption was that hearing God's word preached did not constitute worship. I replied that many English Protestant Christians would have considered hearing God's word in their own language and responding to it in their lives the essential part of their worship. Whether they had time to sing together would have been of comparatively little concern. Our churches must recover the centrality of the Word to our worship. Hearing God's word and responding to it may include praise and thanks, confession and proclamation, and any of these may be in song, but none of them need be. A church built on music--of whatever style--is a church built on shifting sands. Preaching is the fundamental component . . ." [Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, Internet Quotation from The Expositor's Quote of the Week, 2003]

i. Listen to it Passionately

To be passionate is to be eager; quick to hear; worship God thru his Word. Thomas Watson gave several guidelines on how to listen to a sermon: "Come to the Word with a holy appetite and a teachable heart. Sit under the Word attentively, receive it with meekness, and mingle it with faith. Then retain the

Word, pray over it, practice it, and speak to others about it." Then, Watson also warned his people: "Dreadful is there case who go loaded with sermons to hell." By contrast, those who respond to Scripture as a "love letter sent you from God will experience its warming transforming power." [Cited in Whatever Happened to the Reformation, Gary L.W. Johnson and R. Fowler White, Eds., page 232]

ii. Read it Regularly

This is your responsibility on Monday - Saturday. To be in t/Word.

Psalm 119:9 **How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word.**

11 **Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.**

16 **I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word.**

3 chapters per day = little over a year; 4 chapters = less than 10 mo.; 6 chapters = 6 mo. 1 chapter per day = 3 years and 3 mo.

Start somewhere! We who are literate and have eyes that work & Bibles at our fingertips have no excuse.

Evangelist Robert L. Summer, in his book "The Wonder of the Word of God," tells of a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. His face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He had just become a Christian when the accident happened, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible. Then he heard of a lady in England who read braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in braille. But he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been too badly damaged to distinguish the characters. One day, as he brought one of the braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. Like a flash he thought, "I can read the Bible using my tongue!" At the time Robert Summer wrote his book, the man had read through the entire Bible four times. [cited in Whitney Spiritual Disciplines, 30-31]

iii. Study it Carefully

A spiritually healthy Xn is a hungry Xn. Seen that from our passage. One of the greatest marks of a healthy Xn life is the desire to learn.

To be a "disciple" a μαθητης is to be "a learner." We are all enrolled in t/school of God's kingdom. No excuse not to learn.

The great Bible expositor of the past, Dr. Donald Barnhouse, once stated that, "If I had only 3 years to serve the Lord, I would spend two of them studying."

Someone once said, "to fail to learn is to learn to fail."

iv. Meditate on it Worshipfully

Psalm 119:15 I will meditate on Thy precepts, And regard Thy ways.

When you hear it, when you read it, when you study it, don't forget to meditate on it.

Chew on it as did the Psalmist who wrote==>

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Jeremiah 15:16 Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

v. Obey it Faithfully

James 1:22-25 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

"When I was youth director in a church in Illinois, a boy in the junior department had memorized six hundred verses word perfectly. We even had him on a Christian radio program and tested him on the air. Later we were told someone apparently was stealing money from the junior-department offering each Sunday. A committee was appointed to investigate, and--you guessed it--the kid who knew the six-hundred verses was the culprit. I called him into my office and repeated to him a verse of Scripture (which, by the way, he told me I misquoted). I said, 'Do you see any connection between that verse of Scripture and your stealing from the offering?' 'No,' he said at first. And then, 'Well, maybe there is.' 'What do you think is the connection?' 'I got caught,' he said." [Howard Hendricks, Teaching to Change Lives, 95]

Close this section w/a quote by Martin Luther who said ==>
"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me. The Bible is not antique, or modern. It is eternal."

I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)

D. Renew Your Spiritual Hunger (2:2) "What Taste is in my Mouth?"

1. Illustration

Like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk . . .

2. Motivation

. . . so that by it you may grow with respect to salvation

3. Qualification (v. 3)

if indeed you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Clearly Peter is thinking of Psalm 34:8 - "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

a. First Class condition Considered true.

if indeed you have tasted the kindness of the Lord [and I'm confident you have]

b. If you know JC you have tasted of His kindness

χρηστός - translated as "delicious" when used of foods; such as "milk" (word play).

If one has tasted of God's kindness, he will want to continue to taste, drink in, His Word.

"There is a fulness in God that satisfies, and yet so much sweetness, that the soul still desires. God is a delicious good." [Thomas Watson (1620-1686) "Man's Chief End" in A Body of Divinity]

Have you "tasted of his kindness?" Have you savored his glory? We end on t/same note from which he began in v. 22