

## Taste and See

1 Peter 2:1-3

There is one thing about the book of First Peter that I have been emphasizing from week to week, one thing I want you to take from this study. I would like to apply the 3:00 am test to this idea, that is, if I were to wake you up from a deep sleep at 3:00 am and ask you to identify one thing that is so characteristic of Peter's letter, I would want you to be able to answer. And I would put it this way, that Peter goes back and forth between the promise of the gospel and applications of the law.

Back and forth. Over and over. The two are inseparably intertwined. Perfectly balanced. The promise of the gospel. The application of the law. There is no conflict between them. No tension whatsoever. And hopefully, nothing at all confusing about how they interact with each other. The law and the gospel, the gospel and the law.

We read of the gospel in,

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

And then the great application of that gospel in the duties and responsibilities of the law, otherwise called holiness.

1 Peter 1:13 "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

You know the gospel, as Peter puts it,

1 Peter 1:8 "...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

And you know what that means for your life, don't you?

1 Peter 1:22 "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

Peter just goes back and forth, gospel and law, each one leading to the other, and he does it again this morning in our text. It is a text that focuses upon a great application. An obvious and practical application. And it is an application that is built upon and grows out of the foundation of the gospel. So where is the gospel in our text this morning?

v.3 "...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

And where is the law, the application of that gospel in our daily lives? Well, that's obvious isn't it?

v.1 "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking..."

I have had many pastoral conversations over many years with people wrestling with these very things. People wrestling with the questions of how to understand the encouragements of the promise of the gospel in their own life as they continue to struggle with sin. Some people struggle with an overbearing sense of the law's demands, feeling themselves to be condemned. Others, perhaps, so focus upon the promise of the gospel that they are lazy and unmotivated in the battle with personal sin.

Questions abound. If I continue to sin, am I still a Christian? If I am a Christian, why doesn't God just take the sin away? Lots of conversations. I've had a lot of those conversations in the three months I have been here, and I've had some of them even this week. It's a really important matter to get right. Peter emphasizes the promise of the gospel. And he emphasizes the application of that gospel to our lives. It's not either or, but both and. And our text this morning begins with the application of the law and ends with the motivating promise of the gospel, so that's how I will preach this sermon. Beginning with the application.

It's an obvious application,  
v.1

We'll look at each of those things individually in a moment, but first the overall idea. These are things we are called to "lay aside." Literally the word means, "put it away." Take something from over here and put it aside over there.

There are certain things that, as a Christian, you must lay aside. The idea is very similar to Paul's description of putting off and putting on. Take these things off, like you would do with an old pair of socks. Get rid of them. Take off those old clothes and put them in the laundry basket.

Paul uses the language of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. The old man is what remains of your sinful nature. You are a new creature in Christ, but the grave clothes still hang around. As a Christian, you still have what Paul calls the flesh, waging war with your soul. You still have the old desires and inclinations of the old man, and the Christian life is all about putting those things to death.

## **I. YOU MUST PUT OFF THE OLD MAN.**

Paul puts it this way,

Eph. 4:20 "But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Peter is saying the same thing, isn't he? He tells you what you must lay aside, what you must put away from your life. And he starts with,

### **A. Malice.**

Literally, this word is simply the word "wickedness." It is an all-inclusive term for all that is evil. And in the context of interpersonal relationships, it is clear. It means thinking evil of others. Thinking badly of others. Especially, to their harm. Wishing them harm. Desiring them harm. Ill-will.

So the question is, are you harboring any evil thoughts of other people? Are you thinking badly about anyone, especially anyone within the church body? Are you entertaining thoughts in your mind about other people that hinders brotherly love, that harms your mutual relations with one another? Are you grumbling or complaining about anyone, speaking about them with any gossip or slander? If so, put it away! Put it all to death. Confess it as sin. Repent of that evil that still lurks in your own mind, and crucify it. Lay aside all malice.

Paul puts it this way,

Eph. 4:31 "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."

Then Peter identifies,

### **B. Deceit.**

The older word is guile. Anything deceptive. The word comes from the word meaning “to catch with bait.” A fisherman’s rod is deceptive, isn’t it? It looks good to the fish. That’s the whole point. The fish bites.

Any such deception in our relationships with one another must be done away with. A lack of honesty and integrity in your relationships with others.

So, is there any deceit, any guile, in your actions towards others, again with particular emphasis upon the church body? Lay it aside. Put it to death now.

This is especially important for children, young children and young adults. Don’t ever practice deception, deceiving your parents to avoid getting into trouble or to obtain what you want. It’s more than just lying, but it certainly begins with lying. Don’t ever deceive your parents, or your spouse, or your friend. Lay it aside, put it away. All of it. Along with,

### **C. Hypocrisy.**

Pretense. Putting on a show. Saying something, but meaning something else. The Greek word has reference to actors on a stage, and that is the danger—when life becomes a stage. When the church becomes a stage, and you pretend to act a certain way but in reality, think and judge entirely differently. Hypocrisy means that you honor people with your lips but dishonor them in your heart!

Hypocrisy means that you are pretending to be someone else. You are covering up what is evil in your heart, and putting on a

show for others to see. Maybe you can succeed here, but you cannot succeed before God.

So please search your hearts for this bad fruit of hypocrisy and put it away. Lay it aside. Next comes,

### **D. Envy.**

That spirit that begrudges someone else. That spirit of your heart that looks at something in another person and wants it for yourself. That spirit that resents other people, or makes you jealous of them, because they have something you want. They enjoy something you aren’t able to have.

And so often, all of these things find their way into,

### **E. Evil speaking.**

It could be translated “slander,” but I think the broader sense of “evil speaking” is even better. The NIV puts it, “Slander of every kind.”

Speaking evil. Backbiting. Defamation.

So think about it, and apply this list to yourself. Have you ever been guilty of backbiting, speaking down someone else, belittling them, maligning them, defaming them, harming their reputation or the honor of their good name?

And worse of all, have you done that while speaking to someone else? Speaking evil of a person, to someone else.

People of God, nothing is more harmful to a church, nothing is more injurious to the unity and the peace of a church than such evil speaking. So put to death the old man. Lay all these things aside. Put them to death. And instead, put on the new clothes.

As Peter's application of the gospel continues, it is not just a matter of don'ts or prohibitions, not just a list of things that you must not do. He also describes the positive things that replace the negative. The new clothes of the Christian that replace the old clothes.

The idea is simple, the application of the gospel is straightforward. You must put off the old man. And,

## **II. YOU MUST PUT ON THE NEW MAN.**

Look how Peter expresses it,  
v.2

Why the reference to babes? I think here it is Peter's reference to the new man, the new creation. I believe he is referring to the one who has been born again, regenerated. Made new. And so he is saying to these newborn babies, that as a Christian,

### **A. You live as a new creature.**

I don't think there is anything disparaging here about the reference to babies. I don't think it is a recognition of the helplessness and immaturity of babies, but rather the glory of their newness. They live and exist as a separate creature from their mother. They represent a new life, a new person. And as a Christian, that is what you are! That is what you are. A new person. A newborn baby. There is great hope in that, great encouragement.

2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

That leads so obviously to the point Peter really wants to

make, namely that,

### **B. You live with God's own nourishment.**

In human life, with our own babies, that nourishment is simple. We are mammals, so the nourishment of our infants is milk. God has created women with the ability to provide that nourishment for their children, and it really is an amazing thing. A baby feeding and nourishing from a mother's own supply of milk, produced by her body just for that baby.

Pure milk, as Peter puts it in verse 2. But notice how masterfully Peter engages this image, this illustration. Notice how completely he intertwines the illustration and the reality of the situation he is seeking to illustrate.

v.2 "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word..."

So the milk of a Christian, the nourishment of this new creature we call a Christian, is pure milk. There are no additives. Nothing mixed in. No artificial preservatives nor any ingredients which we find in all our processed foods. Nothing but pure mother's milk. With no genetic modifications.

And that milk is the Word of God! "spiritual milk," as the NIV puts it, though somewhat strangely leaving out the obvious translation of the Greek word for "word". The nourishment for our Christian lives is the Bible. The food by which we gain health and strength is nothing other than the inspired Word of God.

Notice again Peter's exact words. "Desire the pure milk of the word." Long for it. Now, let me ask you, what does that mean?

Well, what is the craving of a baby like? How does he show it? That's obvious, isn't it? I'll bet you all know the answer. It is the same for every baby. If a baby is hungry at 3 AM, a 6:30

breakfast just isn't good enough! When a baby craves milk, he craves it now! And he lets his mother know about it with every ounce of his little body. And with the loud noises he can create in his lungs. A baby's cravings are such an evident, obvious thing aren't they?

And regular. At birth, it's every couple hours. Then maybe every three hours. Every four hours. Not much time passes for a baby, and it is time to eat again! That's the life of a newborn.

Dear friends, that is to be the life of a Christian. You are to crave that milk of the Word as a baby craves his next feeding with all the intensity of his acute hunger pains.

So how is your appetite? How is your appetite for the Word of God? How are your cravings?

I've known some Christians over the years who would have been very easy babies, using this illustration. You see, they didn't crave much food. They might wake up late in the morning, they might even oversleep their alarm clock, and in their weariness, seem to say, "No thanks, Mom. I don't need to eat today. Maybe tomorrow."

The mother offers the food at the regularly appointed hour, but the baby just says, "I'm really not that hungry right now. I'd rather go play, if you don't mind."

That's how many Christians are when it comes to the "pure milk of the word." They don't crave it at all.

So how many days can you go in your own life without reading the Bible before you really get hungry? Interesting question, isn't it? You see, reading the Bible isn't just a habit. It isn't just a good

routine that you ought to follow every day. Rather, it should be the result of your craving for spiritual food and nourishment. You read because you are hungry!

You come to church and you listen to the sermon, maybe even take notes, because you crave the Word. It doesn't matter who's preaching. It doesn't matter what the text is. It doesn't matter if the sermon is five minutes too long. Or if the preacher isn't very interesting. What matters is that you are a newborn baby, and you can't survive without your next feeding.

v.2 "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word..."

So how is your appetite? Are you that newborn baby that can't even get through the night without a feeding? Are you that teenager whose stomach is a bottomless pit, who needs a refill in some form every three hours or so, either a full meal or at least a hearty snack?

People of God, "desire the pure milk of the word." And if your appetite isn't what it should be, then stimulate it! Feed yourself regularly.

If you aren't in the habit of reading the Bible every day, then let me urge you to start. I would suggest that you start with the gospels. Read through the NT, day after day. Then the Old Testament. Day after day. Feeding and nourishing your soul, just as your body requires it's own nourishment. That's the only way you will grow!

And look at how Peter puts it,  
v.2

### **C. You grow when well nourished.**

Some Christians are downright anorexic. Almost no appetite.

No interest. No cravings. And no health either! As it is with the body, spiritual anorexia can be deadly. It will most certainly be destructive of your health. You grow when you eat!

v.2 "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."

So, is this easy enough to understand? Children, do you understand. From the first day you can read, read the Bible! And parents, until that day, read to your children. Have them memorize that word even before they can read it themselves. Teenagers, more than anything else in your busy schedule, be sure that the reading of God's word is a priority that you simply do not neglect. Adults, parents of young children, I know you are busy. But don't ever be too busy to eat!

And you who have read the Bible for years and years, don't stop indulging your cravings for the Word just because you are familiar with it. Don't read the Bible just to remind yourself what you already know, read it fresh. Read it as if it were the first time. Whether you are 20 or 84, read it with the craving of that littlest infant among us.

And if your cravings aren't that real, if they aren't that persistent, first of all repent. And then stimulate them! Indulge yourself in the rich food of the Word of God, and let that Word itself stimulate all the cravings you will ever need. Read the Bible every day. Listen to the Bible as it is preached, every opportunity that God gives you. Stay this afternoon as we study that Word again.

It is the only way you will grow up. It is the only way you will mature.

v.2 "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word,

that you may grow thereby."

And then look at verse 3. Peter puts all of this in a glorious context, doesn't he?

v.3

Here's the foundation for all these exhortations. Namely, the promise of the gospel. Here is the basis for everything that I have said this morning, everything that Peter writes in this great epistle.

v.3 "...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

People of God,

### **III. YOU MUST REALIZE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD.**

God's goodness is his name, it is his glory. But what is,

#### **A. The meaning of God's goodness.**

I can't pick between the English words "good" or "gracious." It's both. It means useful, it means kind. It is all of that all wrapped together in one. It is God, and God is good.

And in that goodness, he shows us grace.

Eph. 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

Here is where the appetite for God's word begins, with this

conviction, this certainty and awareness of “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” People of God, believers in Jesus Christ,

Titus 3:4 “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

That’s where your spiritual appetite begins, with the realization of God’s kindness in your salvation. And if you are not a believer, if you are not a Christian, then that same kindness should lead you to salvation.

Rom. 2:4 “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

Don’t despise God’s goodness. He offers it to you in Jesus Christ. Don’t despise his forbearance, lest you die in your sins and be condemned to the eternal condemnation of hell.

It is by God’s kindness that you can be saved. And it is by God’s kindness that you can live your life. Consider David’s own testimony,

Ps. 34:1 “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. 5

They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”

That’s goodness, beloved. Not necessarily a positive answer to every one of your prayers. Not necessarily relief from the afflictions of this life or from the trials of this world. But in the very real spiritual reality of living by faith not by sight, God’s goodness is well stated as the Psalm continues, “The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing... The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.”

But one more thing. One more important thing. All of this is not left to the realm of the intellect. All of this is not left to the realm of knowledge, nor to the context of doctrinal assent. Oh, that is all part of it, a crucial part. But the climax here is,

### **B. The experience of God’s goodness.**

The personal experience. Your personal experience. Your personal realization and awareness of God’s goodness.

So this is not just a ritual of preaching that we go through every Sunday. This is not just a routine, business as usual. No, beloved, all of this hinges upon your experience of God. With your own senses. Taste and see for yourself. “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good.”

So be holy in all your conduct. Lay “aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.” Earnest desire, crave “the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”

With this thought in mind, with this experience in your soul, that God is good.

Oh beloved, I can preach that to you, and I will. God is good to his people, in every way, even those ways that seem so hard and trying. God is good. It is his nature, it is his being. Everything about him. I can preach that doctrine to you and you must learn it. You must understand it.

But here is the experience that you must have yourself. You must taste it for yourself. You must taste the goodness of God as he has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. And tasting of that goodness, experiencing that goodness in the reality of the experience of your own soul is the foundation upon which all these exhortations unto holy living are to be found.

As a minister of the gospel, I can only offer you the food. I am nothing more than the waiter at your table. So please, take this pure milk of the word and feast upon it. For as you do, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit within you, you will taste God's goodness for yourself.