

Healthy Christian Community

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

- Ecclesiastes was a wonderful book for the pandemic — uncertainty and exceptions to norms.
- 1 Peter is a wonderful book for this even more recent crisis, as it speaks about the people of God, a diverse people, who give a foretaste of the coming kingdom.
- It also speaks about our character, our mission in the world in word and deed.
- It speaks about the government, conflict, persecution, pastoral leadership, and perseverance.
- Today, it's about healthy Christian community; a counter cultural community called to love one another. Sounds timely, right? This country needs the church, a biblical church not a political church. I'm glad we're here. **[Read/Pray]**

There's a little jingle that John Bunyan wrote in the 1600's that I love. (Bunyan was imprisoned for 12 years where he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*). It helps summarize what's going on in this portion of 1 Peter. (Peter has been talking about the church as the new covenant people of God, and continues that today). Maybe you've heard it:

John Bunyan

*Run, John, run, the law commands,
But gives us neither feet nor hands.
Far better news the gospel brings:
It bids us fly and gives us wings.*

I love this for many reasons: (1) it highlights the dynamic power of the gospel. The gospel gives us the power to live out God's word ("**it give us wings**"), and (2) it illustrates how the New Covenant is in a sense raising the bar, as it clarifies and deepens God's expectations (we are to "**fly**" **not just** "**run**").

This passage shows that the gospel really does change us and empower us.

- It brings new birth.
- It calls us to a new love for one another, a familial love.
- It gives us new taste buds for true joy.
 - **WE HAVE NEW WANT TO'S** as a result of being new creations.
 - **I don't have to attend worship, I get to, I get to join a church, I get to give, pray...**
 - **"You have to KISS YOUR WIFE"; I DON'T HAVE TO; I GET TO!**

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Last week we looked at our calling to pursue holiness, as the people of God. Our text this week has a **corporate/community focus**.

Grammatically, there are two imperatives in Greek: (1) **love one another**, (2) **long for pure spiritual milk**.

- “Put away” is not technically one, though it reads that way in English, but it carries the force, so I want to consider it with the other two, framing our outline.

Here are three essentials for a healthy church, for a healthy community of faith.

1. Love One Another
2. Remove the Sins that Destroy Community
3. Crave Spiritual Nourishment

The gospel makes us loving, and it makes us hungry for more and more grace and truth.

#1: Love One Another (1:22-25)

Peter develops a beautiful picture of the church in the letter.

Here, the church is identified as a family, called to love one another as brothers/sisters.

The theme of this first paragraph is stated in verses 22b: **love one another**.

- This is basic to NT Christianity.
- **Jesus taught the disciples this “new command” in the upper room, after he washed their feet. (John 13)**
- Peter was there for that sacred occasion.
- Jesus taught the disciples that the world will know we are his disciples by our love for one another.
- **Our public witnessed is damaged when we aren’t characterized by love and harmony.**
- **Internal fighting and division sadly marks many fellowships.**
- **The real enemy is not internal; and to be faithful in mission, the church must be together, standing side by side together for the faith of the gospel (Phil 1).**
- **Unfortunately, they’re often standing face to face against each other!**
 - **Movie: *Remember the Titans*, about the integration of black and white students at TC Williams High School.**
 - **The players represent the racial tensions present in that initiate.**
 - **Tempers are hot, but then they go away to football camp, and become a family.**
 - **Eventually they’re singing in the locker room and lunch time...**
 - **At the end, there’s a moving scene, when Gary is in the hospital (white leader is paralyzed from the waste down), Julius (one of the black leaders come to see him in tears). Gary’s mom, says “he only wants to see you.” When he enters the nurse says, “Only kin is aloud in here; Alice, don’t you see the family resemblance. That’s my brother.”**
 - **As he visits he says, “When all this is over, we gonna move in the same neighborhood together...”**
- **They stopped fighting with one another and became a family, and excelled as a team.**
- **It’s an appropriate illustration for us: “Recognize the real enemy - it’s not your brothers and sisters. Pull for one another, support one another, care for one another – love one another as family.”**
 - **Don’t you see the family resemblance!**
 - **If football can bring people together, how much more should the gospel!**

- One of the most remarkable things said about the early church was their love for one another. **Aristides sent by Emperor Hadrian spied on the Christians and came back with a report saying, “Behold, how they love one another.”**
- If someone spied on the church today, would that be the conclusion?
 - I suppose that depends on which church, right?
 - In some situations the report would be “Behold, how they criticize one another!”
 - Behold how they hurt one another!” “Behold, how they fight with one another!”
- **There’s enough brother bashing and sister smashing going on today – in person and online – so let’s do something different IDC.**
 - **Let’s obey this text and love one another earnestly.**
 - As Peter says in 4:8, “keep loving one another earnestly”
- Further, he has just emphasized **faith** and **hope** (v. 21); and now adds love.
 - It’s important to see that even in suffering, and some extreme situations, Peter doesn’t teach anything unusual, but that which is normal: faith, hope and love.

Reason: Conversion

- Around this command, are two perfect participles, which give the reasons/foundations for this command.
- The perfect tense indicates something **that has taken place in the past but has ongoing consequences.**
- The first is taken from ritual **purification**, and the other from **divine begetting**.

i. Having Purified Your Souls By Your Obedience to the Truth (22a)

- This **purification** we have already been told came through the sprinkling of blood (1:2).
- The **truth** here being the truth of the gospel.
- The saints had heard the good news of Christ’s atoning death and believed.
- **“Obey”** is used in various places to express the appropriate response to the gospel. (1:14)
 - **1 Peter 4:17**
 - **Romans 10:15-16:** “And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel.
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:5–8:** ⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus
- **Every proclamation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus implies that the listener believe and follow Jesus as Lord – hence, they are to “obey the gospel.”**
- **We don’t say this is often as we say “faith” because we want to safeguard the idea that salvation is by works; that’s a right concern.**
- **But this is one way of describing our response: obeying the gospel. Why?**
- **One of the things this phrase underlines is how salvation is not merely an intellectual ascent to some ideas; but it involves a personal transformation.**
- **It’s not just an intellectual activity; it involves submitting the Lordship of Jesus.**

22b: The purpose or goal or result of this conversion: “for a sincere brotherly love.”

- As a result of obeying the truth, you’ve been brought into a whole new realm of love.
- You were converted for this.
- Philadelphia – brotherly/familial love.
- You were saved into a family
 - Can’t you see the family resemblance? That’s my brother!
 - I got to see my sister this week, and while we were they’re to grieve over the loss of a loved one, we had some fun times together... including corn hole. At one point, she said, “Doesn’t my brother look like me!”
- What makes us brother and sister isn’t externals, but a fundamental commonality: we have been born anew into this family, and call God Father.
 - We look alike by our Christ-likeness. Shared values, mindset, worldview.

22c: After stating the command, he describes the nature of this love: “earnestly from a pure heart.”

- In contrast to casual indifference to the church, love one another earnestly!
 - We should not this: love definitely involves action, not mere feelings, but this phrase does express feeling.
 - Love is a passion that leads to sacrificial action/
- Not just those you get along with easily - there’s nothing supernatural about that!
- In contrast, to hypocrisy (2:1), love from a pure heart.
- The heart is central in Scripture because everything flows from it.
- God has changed our hearts, and gives us the capacity to love in ways that we never could or never did.

ii. Since You’ve Been Born Again (1:23-25)

- “*Begotten again*” or “*conceived again*” – *that’s dramatic!*
- Peter grounds the call to love in this phrase referring to conversion also.
- John also puts the new birth and loving one another together (1 John 3:11-18)
 - This is how we know we’ve passed from death to life!

23: The Instrumental Cause of the New Birth

- The means by which God brings us new life is the Word of God, specifically the gospel.
 - As an application: We should speak it to as many people possible because this is how it works!
- Peter’s argument is saying we should love one another because we have been born again – we are the Father’s kids.
- God begat us through the “**imperishable** seed” not perishable.
 - Peter likes this word: 1:4; 18; 3:4
 - The seed God uses to bring life is invincible and incorruptible.
- “The **Living** and **Abiding** Word”
 - God’s word brings life!
 - When the good news is preached (v. 25) life change happens (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:2-3).

- This living Word continues to nourish us! (2:2-3)

24-25: Scriptural Support for the Enduring Word of God (Isaiah 40)

- In that context, God is comforting his people who are in exile.
- He promised to restore them from Babylonian captivity.
- He proclaimed good news (40:9), declaring that no enemy could triumph over his purposes.
- The nations were declared to be like grass and flowers that perish
- Recall Peter's audience: in exile, and they're marginalized and suffering.

25: The main point of the quotation: the word of the Lord endures forever.

- No nation, no enemy can stop God's promises.

“Good news was preached” – the fulfillment of God's promises in the Lord Jesus has become a reality in the gospel.

- Earlier, Peter argued that the prophets preached something that was intended for Christian believers.
- Likewise here, he adds that the promises in Isaiah are fulfilled in the proclamation of the gospel.
- Therefore, new covenant believers are in a privileged position in redemptive history.

#2: Remove the Sins that Destroy Community (2:1)

- After teasing connecting conversion to love, Peter goes on to tell the church that certain relational sins must be put away for love to flourish.
- It's an unfortunate chapter division. (Gk did not have chapter and verse numbers; sometimes they're helpful but sometimes not – as is here).
- “So” shows the connection with 1:22-25 and 2:1-3.

The phrase “**rid yourself**” or “put away” was used to refer to taking off a garment.

- So we are to put away the grave clothes so to speak; those character traits that were so evident in our life before new birth.
- (Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22, 25; Col 3:8; Heb 12:1; Jas 1:21).

We are to put away five sins that damage unity and harmony.

1. **Malice** – Ill-will toward one another brother or sister must be put away.
 - speaks of a malignant attitude, which usually **involves planning to do evil**.
 - It also involves **rejoicing when misery falls on the one he or she hates**.

Since Christ gives us a new **calmness**, let us put aside this anger and malice...

- **This is one of the primary ways a person may show that Christ has changed them – in their attitude and speech.**

2-3. Deceit and hypocrisy are closely related; both signify a falseness and fakeness.

“Do not lie to one another” (Col 3:9)

- “Sincere love” (1:22) is our goal.

o We may have to wear a mask for Covid, but we don't wear masks in our hearts.. we are to sincerely love..

- To love one another earnestly there needs to be trust; and trust is eroded when there's a fakeness and falseness.
- This is something we must always check our hearts on.
 - o Recall Paul rebuked Peter over his hypocrisy because he refused to eat with Gentiles (Gal 2).

4. **Envy** must also be put away.

- Envy points to the a desire for or a resentment of some privilege of benefit that belongs to someone else (Storms)
- Love involves desiring the best in others.
- Envy hopes for the downfall of others, or is self-centered, rather than others oriented.

5. **Slander** must be put away.

- This is hurtful and harmful speech, which dishonors a person's character.
- Sadly this happens all the time in the Christian community.
- Gossip and slander are perhaps the most acceptable sins in the church.
- This involves spreading false stories about brothers and sisters

Take a look at this list, and take a look at your heart. Our these sins present in your life. If so, take action to put them away, so that love may abound more and more.

Many of these sins are expressed in speech, which is in great contrast to Gods' pure word.

A Practical Implication of This Way of Life: Harmony (Col 3:11)

Colossians 3:⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

¹¹ "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."

- If we put away these sins then it will change our human relationships.
- We can experience the blessing of harmony.
- Barriers to relationships will be removed, and a sweet unity will be enjoyed.
- Christ changes our relationships!
 - o *Racial* barriers ("Greek or Jew") are broken down ("circumcised or uncircumcised") are broken down.
 - o *Cultural* barriers ("barbarian [non-Greek], Scythian) are broken down.
 - o *Social* barriers ("slave or free") are broken down.

This bears similarity to Galatians 3:28.

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The gospel transcends these barriers!

- This made a powerful impact on the pagan world! And it will today!

How? Notice the Christological climax, **“Christ is all, and in all.”**

Because Christ lives in each believer, Christ unites us together.

Paul is not saying that these distinct characteristics are gone (race, ethnicity, background), but that **being in Christ takes precedence over all differences.**

Oneness in Christ does not mean external sameness.

No, it is when unity exists amid diversity that the glory of Christ is magnified.

#3: Crave Spiritual Nourishment (2:2-3)

When we long for spiritual nourishment, we will not be marked by division or bitter disputes.

2: The central admonition is communicated in verse 2.

- Believers are to long for pure spiritual milk so as to mature and to experience final salvation.

“Salvation” viewed here as eschatological

- We are saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.
- And the way we are being saved and will experience final salvation is through the same word that brought us life initially.
- James 1:18ff.

“New Born Infants”

- This corresponds to the new birth.
- Some read this to mean that these believers were new believers, infants in the faith, but that’s not Peter’s point.
- It’s analogy to describe how we grow.
- All Christians (regardless of how long we’ve been in the faith) are like babies who need milk for nourishment.
- The metaphor is showing how dependent we are upon God and his word for growth.
- **There’s a cumulative effect of being nourished: Kids: Breakfast**

“Milk” is not being used like Hebrews uses it (5:13; 1 Cor 3:1-2) where it’s used in a negative sense, describing the need to go from elementary teaching to strong meat.

- Here it’s simply used as an analogy for nourishment; there’s no comparison to meat.
- We need this milk our entire lives.
- **“Milk, it does a body good”**
- **1917 Movie - finds a cow...**
- So it is with the body of Christ – we need this nourishment.

“Pure, Spiritual”

- This is a reference to God's Word.
- It's "pure" – uncontaminated.
 - Contaminated milk makes you sick.
 - And if you feed your soul on something else, it will lead to sickness.
 - Good milk makes you healthy and strong.
- It's "spiritual" – this word is only found in Romans 12 (*logikos*) and is translated as reasonable or rational (logical). Peter probably used this because it's God's Word that brought them to life in the first places, therefore, it's logical, reasonable, to feed one's soul with this same word, as it is living and active.
- Spiritual growth is rational; it's informed and empowered through the Word.

"Long" ("Crave") speaks of hunger and desire.

- It's the kind of desire we see throughout Scripture, like in particular Psalms (Ps 42:1; Ps 84)
- **College Experience – "Crave"**
- Drinking milk for a baby is not a burden but a blessing!
- If you don't give them milk, it will be a burden to you!

3: You crave it because you've tasted it.

- If you have tasted the goodness of God, then you want more of this word!
- Interesting play on words *Chrēstos* (kind/good); and *Christos* (Christ).

3 Benefits

A. We derive strength from our enjoyment of the Lord as we meet him in the word:

- "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction"
- "My soul melts away from sorrow, strengthen me according to your word."

B. Our witness flows from our enjoyment of it.

- This is evangelism also: like good cook – here, taste this.

C. Our relationships are different when we enjoy him.

- It is when the goodness and kindness of the Lord satisfies our souls, then we are change into people who love one another better.
- His kindness and goodness makes us kind and good to others.
- Sinful Cravings lead to relational conflicts.
 - When are soul is not in a good place, it leads to relational problems.
 - But when we crave God's presence, God's goodness, and taste of his grace, it transforms our hearts, making us gentle, gracious, peaceable.
 - Christ-centered cravings lead to relational peace.

Psalm 34

The final thing I want to point out is how much Peter is echoing Psalm 34.

- Verse 3 is a citation of it (34:8);
- He cites it again in 3:10-12 (Ps 34:12-16)

There are three connections I want to point out with that Psalm and these scattered believers.

- Three themes that give additional reasons to mediate on the Scriptures.
- These themes magnify the Lord's goodness.

1. Comfort (Assurance of Deliverance).

- Psalm 34 teaches that When the righteous are suffering they can be assured that God will deliver them.
- David wrote the psalm when he fled from Abimelech who had lost his mind (exile).
 - David praised God for rescuing him from all "his sojournings" (*paroikōn*).
 - Likewise Peter's audience is also called "sojourners" (*paroikoi*, 1:17; 2:11; cf. 1:1); and Peter praises God with a beautiful doxology to open the book. (Ps 34:1 matches 1 Pet 1:3)
- Peter's readers would derive great **comfort** from this Psalm, as every Christian who is suffering today can also.
- The Lord Jesus is in control! He is Lord, not Caesar!
- Why get in the word for nourishment?
- You need comfort in your exile.

2. Hope.

- Psalm 34 urges God's people to **hope** in God in trials.
- This too is dominant emphasis in the letter ("living hope" "set your hope fully...")
- Why get in the word for nourishment? You need hope in your trials.
 - Romans 15:4: For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

3. Honor.

- Both Peter and David say that those who trust and hope in the Lord will not be put to shame. (1 Pet 2:6; 3:16; 4:16 cf. Ps 34:5)
- Peter's audience was being shamed, marginalized.
- But Peter reminds them by echoing Psalm 34 that the Lord will honor his people.
- We can endure dishonor when we know this.
- Why get in the word for spiritual nourishment? You need to know how much the Lord values your faith.
- You need to be reminded of the glorious future that awaits you.
 - Your faith will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:7).

Feast on the Word of God, Christian. How so?

- Mueller (1800s): My first business of every day is to get my heart happy in the Lord!
- That's just another way of sayings, tasting and seeing that the Lord is good.
- That kind of happiness, will dramatically change our lives.
- Start! "Are you Peter?"
- James Stalker: *Large, Varied, Original Communion with God.*

**The Lord is good! How many of you know that's true?!
I wish I could here you guys say, "Amen!"
Come on Somebody!**

- **He's better than fine wine and dine;**
- **He's better than avacodo toast and pot roast;**
- **He's better than a loaded baked potato, and fettuccine Alfredo;**
- **He's better than crab cakes and strawberry milks shakes;**
- **He's better than sunsets, and snuggly pets.**
- **He's better than romance and slow dance.**
- **He's better than shopping malls and baseball.**
- **His steadfast love is better than life.**

**Crave the Lord's presence and goodness above all other cravings.
Long for his return. As we dwell in Immanual's land.**

5. Oh! Christ He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of Love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above:
There, to an ocean fullness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.