

1 Peter 2:1-3

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[0 : 00] It's time to grow up. I think we all know that growing up is not just for children.

There are plenty of grown-ups who need to grow up. This morning we were discovering the importance of growing in our love one for another. We noticed how sincere brotherly love is to grow into loving one another deeply from the heart. As we now move on to consider the first three verses of chapter 2 of 1 Peter, we find that Peter is continuing in his call to deep Christian love.

And the therefore that begins the chapter there in verse 1, I think in all probability, refers back to love one another deeply in verse 22. It may refer more broadly than that, but certainly would include that exhortation. And Peter will now explain something of what loving one another deeply involves. And it would be good if you bear this in mind as we proceed. During the sermon, we're not going to be making reference in any significant way to that exhortation that we were looking at this morning. But it's good to bear it in mind that Peter is continuing to deal with this matter of loving one another and what loving one another involves and looks like. But the manner in which we want to tackle these three verses, the first three verses of chapter 2, is to focus on this objective of Peter that believers would grow up, that we would grow up, in the language that Peter uses, that we would grow up in our salvation. Notice that in verse 2, like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. This is the focus of what we want to say this evening, the challenge, the need to grow up in our salvation. And as we think of these verses around this central theme, we'll do so by identifying the following aspects of growing up that Peter presents in these verses. I would suggest there are three aspects of growing up that we find in these verses. First of all, we have what we might call the ultimate goal in view, to grow up, what we've already said. So, we want to just briefly consider that. What is this ultimate goal that Peter has in view, to grow up in our salvation? But another aspect of this is what we might call the means to be employed.

Peter very clearly identifies two means that God has provided that enable us to grow up in our salvation. One is negative and one is positive. Both are important, and you could say both are positive in that sense, but in the manner in which they're expressed, one is negative and one is positive.

[3 : 28] Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy. One negative, if you wish, means God provides that we would grow up in our salvation. But the other is positive. Crave pure spiritual milk. So, two means provided by God that will help us, that will enable us to grow up in our salvation. But there's one final aspect that we want to look at this evening, and that is what we might call the motivation that spurs us on.

And that we find there at the end of our text in verse 3. Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. It's clear that Peter is presenting this reality in their Christian experience as a spiritual experience as a spiritual experience.

Do these things. Rid yourselves. Crave. Grow up in your salvation. Why? What would spur you on? Why would you want to do that? Because you have tasted that the Lord is good. So, we have an ultimate goal in view to grow up, to grow up in our salvation, the means to be employed, and the motivation that spurs us on.

Let's think first of all then of the ultimate goal in view. Grow up in your salvation. Now, what does this mean? What does it mean to grow up in our salvation? Is it not the case that the question, are you saved, allows for only one of two answers? Yes or no? Is it not the case that that question can be answered in those two ways? No other way. Either we are saved or we're not saved.

I remember on one occasion when I was a wee lad at a Scripture Union camp in Peru, this is a long time ago, one very zealous, possibly overzealous leader, challenging me on this and asking me, are you saved? I had no idea how to answer him and was desperately trying to find ways of wriggling

out of this very uncomfortable situation that I found myself in. But anyway, that's by the by. [5 : 45] But is it not the case that in this matter of salvation, we are saved or we're not saved? And if that is so, how can we speak of growing up in our salvation? Or in any case, how are we to understand this language of growing up in our salvation? Well, what we need to recognize, and I'm sure we do recognize, is that salvation is a wonderfully expansive concept in the Bible, wonderfully expansive at many levels beyond our own personal experience. Our focus this evening is on the believers' personal experience. But of course, in speaking of salvation as an expansive concept, of course, it goes beyond our own individual experience. But even in our own experience as believers, it is a very expansive matter. It has a distinct and supernatural beginning. We were thinking of that this morning, we are born again.

But that is a beginning. It's a beginning. And to use the language and to use the pictures of Scripture, it is the beginning of what is variously described as a pilgrimage, as a race, as a life. And no doubt there are other pictures that we could point to in the Bible. And in all of these pictures, growth and progress are necessary for a healthy and biblical experience of salvation. We are to grow up to Christian maturity.

Indeed, Peter, as he closes his second letter, recognizes this salvation imperative, if we can call it that.

How does he end his two letters? Well, he ends with these words of challenge, but grow, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, growing up in our salvation involves growth in knowledge and understanding, growth in grace and maturity, growth in Christian character, all converging on God's great purpose for us to become like Jesus. We think of the language of Paul as he wrote to the Ephesians in chapter 4 and verse 15, instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head that is Christ. Growing up into him who is the head that is Christ.

It's interesting there, it's not our text for this evening, but interesting there how speaking the truth in love is what is involved in or contributes to growing up into him. We've been thinking this morning of how, as we grow, we arrive at this destination of loving one another deeply. And yet here in Paul's teaching to the Ephesians, he sees love not only as a destination, but as that which contributes to growth. But leave that to one side for the moment. The ultimate goal and view that Peter has here is that we would grow up in our salvation. And as we understand, even in a small measure, the Bible's picture of what salvation involves for us as Christians, we can see that this is entirely reasonable language and consistent with the picture that the Bible presents of what it is to be saved.

[9 : 29] So that's the ultimate goal in view, to grow up in our salvation. But let's move on to notice what Peter says about the means to be employed. How are we to grow up? Why do many Christians not grow up?

Why are we sometimes stunted saints? God has provided means to grow, and we must use the means he has provided.

At many levels, at one level, it's really very simple. A child could understand. If God has given you the means that you need to employ and make use of in order to grow, and you don't employ them, you don't make use of them, then it ought not to be a great surprise that you don't grow, that we don't grow. As Peter would have us grow, and more importantly, God would have us grow, grow up in your salvation. Well, what are these means?

Well, we've already identified them even at the very beginning. Peter identifies two, one negative and one positive. The first one, negative, rid yourselves. Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. In order to grow, we must rid ourselves of sin. The verb that Peter uses, translated in our Bibles, rid yourselves, is a verb that we find used in Acts chapter 7 and verse 58, where it speaks of removing clothing. The context, we're not going to look up the verse and read it, but the context is familiar to us, the stoning of Stephen. You remember how Saul received the clothing of those who removed their clothing and entrusted it to Saul. And that's the same verb that is used here. Now, it's sometimes dangerous, perhaps dangerous isn't the right word, but sometimes we can read too much into how words are used in other places or in other occasions. But I think on this occasion, that is a helpful insight. Peter, in presenting to the believers this important means whereby they would grow up in their salvation, that they would rid themselves of sin, he doesn't tell them to resist these sins that he speaks of. He doesn't tell them to fight against them. Rather, he tells them, and he tells us to remove them, as it were. And the implication is that there is a sense in which we are clothed with these sins, or often we are clothed with these sins,

and we must deliberately and consciously and carefully take them off or rid ourselves of them. And I ask you whether you agree with me, that is that not so true to life? Is it not true to our own experience? That we are often clothed, as it were, with these sins, with malice, with deceit, with twisting the truth, with just not being altogether honest, with hypocrisy, with trying to look good in front of others, and maybe just by very subtle ways making others look bad, while we shine in the reflected glory. We are clothed with envy.

We are clothed with slander of every kind, maybe not brutal, vicious slander, but just little comments, little asides, words we say or leave unsaid, that come under this umbrella of slander of every kind.

[13:18] And clothed with these things. And why does Peter focus on these particular sins? There's so many sins he could have mentioned, and yet he speaks of these sins. We're not going to go through each one and speak about each of these sins this evening, but why this group of sins? Why does Peter focus on them in particular? Well, I suspect it goes back to his great call to believers to love one another deeply from the heart. You see, these sins, these sins that he highlights, these sins very particularly harm and hurt others. If we were to go through them one by one, you'd be able to see that, how these are sins that that when we are guilty of them, we harm others, we hurt others, we destroy relationships, or we hurt or undermine our relationships with others. They're very damaging to relationships and to a fellowship of believers. All sin, of course, is damaging, but these sins in particular threaten relationships and fellowship one with another. They are sins that cannot coexist with loving deeply from the heart.

You can't love somebody deeply from the heart and slander them or be envious of them or lie to them or deceive them. These are sins that threaten and attack this great imperative to love one another deeply. They're the kind of sins that stubbornly and dangerously can fester within a fellowship of believers where superficially all may appear to be well. Others may come and maybe look on and say, well, what a lovely church, what a wonderful fellowship. And yet these sins are there under the surface, as it were, difficult to see, difficult to maybe pinpoint with security, and yet there they are, damaging, undermining. And Peter says, if you're going to grow up in your salvation, if you're going to love one another deeply from the heart, then you must rid yourselves of these things.

It's the first means that God gives us, that Peter identifies for us that we would grow up in our salvation. But there's another means, a second one, one we've called a positive one, and that is that we are to crave pure spiritual milk. In verse 2, like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk. Now, let's just pause and consider what Peter is saying. And we can do so by posing and answering a couple of questions. First of all, what is this spiritual milk that Peter is speaking of? The word spiritual, spiritual, it probably just means, as it's used here on this occasion, not literal. It doesn't have any deeper meaning than that, I don't think. Peter is simply saying, I'm speaking metaphorically.

And so, I speak of spiritual milk, not literal milk, but spiritual milk. Well, what is this metaphorical milk that nourishes the believer and helps us grow up in our salvation? Well, I think it's very clear. In the context of this passage and what has gone before, and in the context of the broader teaching of Scripture, I think we can very confidently assert that this milk is the Word of God, the very Word of God that Peter has just described as living and enduring. The living Word is life-giving and life-growing. And notice also, because we're familiar with the use of milk as an illustration, Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians. But with that in mind, there is something we need to clear up, that on this occasion, the picture of milk is not intended to convey the idea of elementary doctrine, as it is intended to convey in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where milk is contrasted with solid food. Here, Peter uses the illustration of milk as representing that which nourishes us throughout our Christian life. Not just as babes in Christ, not just as we begin our Christian walk, but throughout our Christian life, we are to crave this pure spiritual milk as we grow up in our salvation. We know that in this life, we will never arrive, we will never be able to say, well,

[18:08] I've made it, I've grown up, there's no more growing for me to do. And as long as there is growing to do, then there will be a need to be nourished by this pure spiritual milk. So, this spiritual milk is the Word of God. What's it like? Well, Peter describes it. It's pure, it's undefiled, it's perfect. The Word of God, as pure is a concept or a truth that is very familiar from the language of the Old Testament.

We could point to so many occasions when the Word of God is described as pure. We think only of one occasion where the psalmist in Psalm 12 speaks in these terms, and the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. What's this pure spiritual milk like?

Or what's the Word of God that is this milk? What's it like? It's pure, it's undefiled. What are we to do with it? What are we to do with it? Well, Peter says we are to crave this pure spiritual milk. We are to long for this spiritual milk as that which alone can nourish us and satisfy us, that which will help us to grow up in our salvation. If we want to be grown-up Christians, then we must be nourished by this milk. There's nothing else that will nourish us, nothing else that will do the job. We are to crave for this milk. As Peter makes it very clear, very vividly, we are to crave for it with the insistence of a newborn babe. Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk. And mothers here, and fathers as well, to a lesser extent, can picture the reality of this, of the insistence with which a newborn child craves their mother's milk. And they will not be quiet until they have been satisfied, until they've been able to have this milk that they so crave. And Peter says that is how it ought to be, with us as Christians. If we are to grow up in our salvation, this is the means that God has provided, pure spiritual milk that we are to crave. But of course, not only crave for it, but also, and it's an obvious implication, to drink it. And so, as we draw this part of the message to a close and move on to the final point, I would simply ask this question of you, do you crave for God's Word?

If you don't crave for God's Word, and it's best to be honest with yourself, there's nothing to be gained in not being honest with yourself. If you don't crave for God's Word, then you have a real problem as a Christian. You have a very serious spiritual problem. You must grow up in your salvation, and yet you will be unable to do so in the absence of the spiritual nourishment that is the Word of God.

And so, it's important to crave this nourishment. It's much more difficult to be nourished by it if we have no appetite for it. How does this craving manifest itself? Well, in a desire to hear God's Word preached, a desire to read and study God's Word for ourselves, a desire to speak about God's Word and discuss God's Word with other like-minded believers, a growing sense of expectation and excitement as we delve into the riches of God's Word. All of this eloquently expressed by the psalmist in Psalm 119 and verse 97, Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.

[22 : 21] So, we have the ultimate objective in view to grow up in our salvation. We have these means that God has graciously given us, that we would rid ourselves of sin and that we would crave the pure spiritual milk that is the Word of God. But finally, we also have the motivation that spurs us on.

Verse 3, Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. The language Peter uses is the language of Scripture. We hear surely echoes of Psalm 34 that we've read this evening, taste and see that the Lord is good. It's the language of Scripture, but it is also crucially in Paul's or in Peter's argument, the language of personal experience. The believers he writes to have tasted in their own lives, in their own experience, they have tasted the goodness of God. They have experienced His forgiving and sustaining love in Jesus Christ. And this experience, this appetite for God is their motivation to grow, to rid themselves of sin, to crave pure spiritual milk. Now, before we go on to say just a little more about this matter of motivation and how tasting that the Lord is good serves as motivation for growing, and for craving, and for ridding ourselves, we'll come back to that in a very brief moment. But before we do, allow me to go off on one tangent, but I think, and I hope a helpful tangent. And what I refer to is a very significant theological assumption that Peter makes concerning the identity of Jesus in verse 3, and especially as he moves on to verse 4 that we haven't read. But I didn't want to leave uncommented on this very interesting observation. In verse 3, Peter uses the language of Psalm 34. We've made reference to that already. Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. Of course, we know in Psalm 34 where the psalmist speaks of tasting the goodness of the Lord, he is speaking of tasting the goodness of Yahweh, of God Himself. And Peter uses that language. He uses the language of the psalmist where the psalmist speaks of the Lord, where he speaks of God by His personal name, the name revealed to us by Himself. But then what does he do? Well, what does Peter then do? What he does is, in the same breath as it were, he points to Jesus as that same Lord that the believers have tasted.

Notice in verse 4, he goes on to say, as you come to Him. Who? Well, the Lord that He has just spoken of. As you come to Him, the living stone rejected by men, but chosen by God. So, then in verse 4 very explicitly and very clearly speaking of Jesus, and this Jesus of whom He speaks, as

you come to Him, the Him of verse 4, clearly a reference to the Lord of verse 3 that the believers had tasted of and discovered to be good. And so, Peter here identifies Jesus as the Lord. The Lord the psalmist spoke of in Psalm 34. Well, that's a tangent, as it were, but I hope a helpful one for us. But back very briefly to the matter of motivation and how having tasted that the Lord is good serves as their motivation. Well, let's look at it this way, or let's explore this this way. How did the believers, Peter writes to come to taste the goodness of Jesus? They've done so. Peter states that, you have tasted that the Lord is good. But how did that happen? Well, unlike Peter, they had never seen Jesus. Peter explicitly highlights that in verse 8. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him. And He goes on.

So, if they had not met Jesus, if they had not walked with Jesus, as Peter had, if they had not seen Jesus, how had they tasted of Jesus? Well, they tasted of Jesus through the Word of God, as it was declared by the mouth and pen of the apostles. That is how they had tasted that the Lord is good. And that which they had tasted serves to provoke in them a greater desire to taste of God. And this is their motivation. And how can they satisfy this hunger and thirst for Jesus? Well, they will find further and deeper satisfaction as they grow up in their salvation into Him that is the Head, that is Christ.

[27 : 32] Christ. And they will so grow as they rid themselves of sin and crave for and drink the pure spiritual milk that is the Word of God. Do you need to grow up? Are you a stunted saint? God's purpose for you is that you grow up in your salvation. And He has provided the means, rid yourself of sin and crave pure spiritual milk.

But are you sufficiently motivated to do so? We know how crucial motivation is in doing anything. Are you motivated? Well, taste the goodness of God. There is here, I think, what we might call a gospel dynamic at work that we need to experience. The more we taste of God in His Word, the more we crave and the more we drink.

And the more we drink, the more we taste. And in turn, the more we crave and so it goes on. And may that be our experience. May we taste that the Lord is good. And having tasted, so might we be motivated and spurred on to grow up in our salvation, employing the means that God has provided, ridding ourselves of sin and craving pure spiritual milk. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come before you and we confess that while you have so generously and helpfully and clearly provided us with the means whereby we can grow up in our salvation, so often we fail to grow. And for this, there is no excuse. And all we can do is ask you to forgive us. But as we ask for your forgiveness, so we also ask that by your Spirit, you would cultivate in us that hunger for you, that we would taste anew that the Lord is good. And as we taste, so that would serve as a powerful motivation, that it would be our great desire to grow up in our salvation. And as we would seek to grow up in our salvation, we would rid ourselves of sin. We would examine ourselves and see where we fall short, and very especially in these sins that

Peter highlights and that so threaten our fellowship one with another. Help us to seriously look at these things, but help us also to crave that pure spiritual milk that is the Word of God. And these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's close by singing the psalm that we've referred to and that Peter, I think we can reasonably say, is referring to even if he doesn't quote it directly, or at least doesn't identify it in that explicit way. Psalm 34, and we'll sing verses 1 to 9 of Psalm 34. It's on page 40. Verses 1 to 9 of Psalm 34, and we'll sing to the tune Jackson. And of course, very especially noticing and focusing on the words that we will sing at the end of this section of the Psalm, come, taste and see, the Lord is good, who trusts in Him is blessed. Psalm 34, verses 1 to 9, we'll stand to sing.

[31 : 31] At all times I will bless the Lord, I'll praise Him with my voice, because I glory in the Lord, let troubled souls rejoice. Together let us praise the Lord, exalt His name with me. I sought the Lord, His answer came from fears He set me free. They look to Him and shine with joy. They are not good to shame.

this suffering man cry to the Lord, from Him deliverance came. The angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually.

all those who fear and honor Him, He sets His people free. Come, taste and see, the Lord is good, who trusts in Him is blessed.

O fear the Lord is blessed. O fear the Lord is saved. With need you will not be oppressed.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always. Amen. So that we are now that we did You Hext did All teams

fell back in the Lord from His Father, and we have to pray for you, friends andoz in the Lord from His Father. We defin premiers to close the Lord, making them twice, et cetera, let us know that you see the Lord from His Father, and by their who have to pray, in their owninya, in His Father, the Lord have to pray.