

**1 Peter 2:1-3**  
**(Isaiah 55:1-3; John 6:26,27&35)**  
**“Growing Up to Salvation”**

**Introduction**

The new life that we have through faith in Jesus Christ is completely relational. It is about loving the God who made us and loving one another, as those created in the image and likeness of our Creator God. Therefore, it can no more be reduced to a set of rules and regulations than can any loving relationship, whether between parent and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, or friend and friend. So we should not be surprised at what a premium the Scriptures place on the affections of the heart.

The last of the Ten Commandments – You shall not covet – is not so much a separate commandment as a reminder that the other nine are not merely about external behavior, but concern the deepest matters of the heart. In fact, what we call character is simply the complex interplay of the habits of the heart that define a particular person’s life. Those habits can be changed – character can be changed for better or for worse – by establishing patterns of behavior based on new heart affections, new longings and desires.

Peter presses this thought home in the first three verses of chapter two. It is easy to miss his point and to read one’s way quickly into the wonderful descriptions begun in verse four that depict the Christian living in community. But if we rush past the first three verses, we will miss important words of encouragement and instruction. For in these first three verses, Peter calls us to grow up into the salvation that he has been describing: a salvation given by God’s Spirit “through the living and abiding word of God” (1:23), but needing to be tended and nurtured toward maturity.

So, he addresses our desires and our tastes. He looks behind our religious facades, our theological competencies, our Christian talk, and makes us ask ourselves just exactly what we are longing for, what it is that we desire above all. Are we longing for the same things as everyone around us, “the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions” (1 John 1:15), or are we being transformed from the inside out by what the great Scottish preacher, Thomas Chalmers, called “the expulsive power of a new affection”?

That, in fact, is precisely what Peter has in mind in these verses: the expulsive power of this new life given to us by the Spirit through the Word to cleanse us of the passions and desires that once shaped the habits of our hearts, and to prepare the soil of our hearts and minds to receive the “imperishable seed,” that new life from God that will change our affections and longings, conforming us increasingly to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Look with me this morning at three challenges derived from these three verses.

## Body

### 1. Grow up into salvation by what you refuse to embrace (2:1).

What Peter warns us to “put away” are not so much sinful behaviors as the attitudes and affections of the heart that move us to act in ways that are selfish and unloving. Malice and deceit, the desire to trick and wound, lead to hypocritical behavior, while envy most often is at the root of slander. Guarding your heart is the theme of these warnings. If you give yourself over to the passions of the age, to an unbridled competitive spirit that must win at all costs, or when you seek pleasure with no eye toward consequences, when you seek to take down someone whom you see as a rival or an enemy, your heart affections and desires lead you into patterns that are at odds with the life of salvation.

Peter’s friend and fellow disciple, John, makes the same point in one of his letters:

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother (1 John 3:8-10).

Too often we focus all of our attention on behavior, and think that we can desire whatever we wish as long as we do not act on our desires. The problem is that we will always, finally, act on our desires. However long we keep them hidden, they will come out at last, and if they are wicked and destructive, they will issue in wicked and destructive words and behaviors. So, the first point is simply this: guard your heart. Refuse to embrace the passions and desires that mark the old life you once lived before you received God’s grace.

*But here is the problem: We cannot live in a vacuum, a passionless life lived on the surface. However respectable our behavior, the most important thing about us is what we love most, what we desire most, what we most long for. So merely putting away untoward, unhealthy affections solves nothing if we do not begin to replace them with healthy affections.*

### 2. Grow up into salvation by what you choose to embrace (2:2).

Peter calls us to replace those affections we have put away with healthy, godly affections of the heart. He describes healthy affections in the phrase, “long for the pure spiritual milk.” But what does that mean? It means, long for all that will guard your heart and keep you set on the path toward maturity in the life of salvation. These things include everything that Peter has been describing in chapter one: it is giving room in our hearts to the “living and abiding word of

God,” loving one another “earnestly from a pure heart,” conducting ourselves with a reverent fear of God, seeking the holiness to which we have been called, and setting our hope on the glory yet to be revealed at the coming of Christ. Everything that contributes to that is to be embraced. All that detracts and distracts from that is to be put away.

*But the question remains, how do we come to desire what we do not yet desire? How do we long for that for which we have as yet developed no longing?*

### **3. Grow up into salvation by what you allow your soul to taste (2:3).**

The final verse is crucial to the instruction: “if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Peter realizes that, for those who have not yet tasted the Lord’s goodness, his words may sound hollow. Most of us know how sweet stolen water tastes, how good the pleasures of sin feel, at least for a season – usually a very short season that ends in pain. But if one has not yet tasted the lasting and steady pleasures of right living, it has little appeal, just as if one does not yet know the great joy of rising before the sun and greeting the day when it is fresh and new and filled with promise, then the warmth of the bed and the prospect of more sleep may have greater appeal.

So, what are we to do? “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Psalm 34:8). The great invitation of Scripture is not merely to know *about* God, but to *know* him. We are invited to know the God who created us for a loving relationship with him and with one another, and he wants us to stop messing around wasting what little time we are given here in pursuit of things that are passing away when he offers us what alone is eternal.

*So, I repeat, what are we to do? How can we begin to taste the Lord’s goodness so that we can increasingly long for this “pure spiritual milk”?*

## **Conclusion**

Here are three ways to begin tasting the goodness of the Lord so that we may grow in our desire for more of him:

*First, taste the forgiveness of the Lord.* Every one of us who has any self-awareness and any understanding of righteousness carries a sense of guilt and shame. We handle it in different ways, some healthy – such as confessing to those we have wronged and trying to make amends, others unhealthy – such as denying our guilt or blaming others for our mistakes or acting arrogantly. But we all suffer the guilt and shame of the knowledge that we may suppress but that is always there, even for those who profess not to believe in God or in any objective moral code. I am speaking of the knowledge that there is indeed a God to whom we must finally give account. It is the reason that even atheists so often cry out to

God in crises, asking for forgiveness and trying to make a deal with the Almighty whose existence they both deny and fear at once.

Here is the good news of the gospel: God stands ready to forgive guilty sinners like you and me, not because of any goodness of our own, but because of his love and tender mercy, made possible through the sacrifice of his Son on our behalf. Now, if you have never known what it is to be completely and thoroughly forgiven by the only One whose forgiveness ultimately matters, I invite you today to ask him to forgive you, to send you his Spirit, to give you a new beginning to life, and to make all things new. Then, over the next few days, begin to savor the forgiveness that God promises those who have entrusted themselves to his Son, Jesus Christ. Realize the joy of having all your sin and shame put on him and nailed to his cross, so that you need never have to face them again.

*Second, taste the pleasure of the Lord.* If you have tasted the forgiveness of the Lord, realize that he created you for fellowship with him, that he loves you more than even the best of us are capable of loving our own children, and that he wants to delight in fellowship with you. Spend time in prayer, in meditating on his Word, in fellowship with other believers, in worship, all the while thinking about the pleasure that it brings him when you turn to him in repentance and faith and seek a living, loving relationship with him. Jesus said that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine religious who need, so they think, no repenting.

*Third, taste the promise of the Lord.* Peter has already encouraged us to think about what is in store for us, an imperishable treasure kept for us in the presence of the Lord. However your 401K may or may not be doing, realize that – if you belong to the Lord – you are a child of the King and all of the treasures of glory are yours in Christ Jesus. Begin to learn to think of what awaits us when at last all our tears are wiped away and God makes everything new.

This is just a start, but if we will set our hearts and minds on the things that are above, God will begin to transform the affections of our hearts and to give us a growing desire for the things of the Kingdom, the things that cannot pass away, the things that are promised to those who “have tasted that the Lord is good.”

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