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Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

(Part 15 – Growing Up Into Salvation)

October 16, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:1-3

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2

As we heard Martin Luther say last time:

“This [the righteousness of Christ] is a righteousness hidden in a mystery that the world does not know. *Even Christians themselves do not thoroughly understand it and can hardly grasp it in their temptations.* Therefore it must be diligently taught and continually practiced.

AND WHOEVER DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WHEN AFFLICTED AND FRIGHTENED IN

CONSCIENCE MUST BE OVERTHROWN, FOR NOTHING COMFORTS OUR CONSCIENCE SO FIRMLY AND SECURELY AS THIS PASSIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS.

GRACE in Christ is the armor with which to meet all of these things. Grace. The fact that our acceptance with God, our salvation, our adoption as His children, is NOT based at all on OUR performance, but upon the performance already completed by Christ. It's covered. All of it. Paid for. Now we relate to God as our Father. We obey Him because we love Him and when we sin we grieve over it and repent because we love Him and want to please Him, not because His wrath is on us based upon how well we do each day.

The righteousness of Christ then concerns our *justification*. It is the means by which God makes us right with Him. This righteousness is passive, as Luther said. Passive in that it is not something produced by *our activity*, but by Christ's doing for us.

But What About.....?

Now, however, listen to Peter once more as we begin the second chapter:

1Pe 2:1-3 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (2) Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— (3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Does that sound like *passivity*? Of course not. Peter is calling upon *us* to DO something. *Put away. Long for. Grow up.* This is what, of course, we call *sanctification* and it is anything but passive on our part. Sanctification is active, requiring action by us in conjunction with the leading and sanctifying work of the Spirit of Christ in us.

Because we have *tasted that the Lord is good* – that to say, because we have tasted His grace shown us in Christ by which we have been born again – we must turn away from our old futile ignorant life in sin and get what Peter calls “the pure spiritual milk” which enables us to grow *into salvation*. Any infant longs for his mother’s milk – a baby that doesn’t eat will die. These images are what Peter is using to tell us about our new life in Christ. A newborn Christian must have this

“pure spiritual milk.” And this requires US to long for it and take it in.

And so Peter leads us here to ask two questions:

- What is this pure spiritual milk?
- How is it that we must grow up into salvation? Aren’t we already saved?

Question 1 – What is this pure spiritual milk?

There are other Scriptures that refer to this milk and show us what it is. For example:

Heb 5:11-14 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (12) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, (13) for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. (14) But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

The basic principles of the oracles of God. Milk. That is what it is. We need it but we must not remain on it as our diet. We must press on, as growing

infants do, to *solid food* as the Apostle says.

Here is another:

1Co 3:1-3 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. (2) I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, (3) for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

Same imagery once again. When Paul led the Corinthians to Christ, he gave them what he calls “milk.” The diet of an “infant in Christ.” The basics of the gospel you see.

This milk is, I conclude, what Hebrews 6 is referring to-

Heb 6:1-3 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (2) and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (3) And this we will do if God permits.

Now, here is a vital point:

In all of these Scriptures, not only are we urged to press on to maturity, to solid food, but NOTE that the MILK is basic doctrine while the solid food that is the diet of those pressing on in maturity in Christ is PRACTICE and APPLICATION of that truth.

In all of these Scriptures then, notice what is the real mark of maturity in Christ – Putting away the old ways of sin, putting to death the deeds of the flesh, loving one another, and being trained to distinguish good from evil.

Because THIS is where the milk is supposed to lead us! To the real food. To Christian adulthood.

Consider the implications of this –

This means then that the Christian who is all caught up in minutiae of doctrine and nuances of theology, or the preacher whose every sermon is an evangelistic altar call, or who preaches primarily on hair-splitting doctrinal issues that sound Christians are uncertain of (regulatory principle, the impassivity of God, the continental theology of the Puritans, etc) is feeding on and dishing out spiritual baby food. And so often these kinds of people are characterized by jealousy, strife, ignorance of good and evil, because they are still a baby Christian at best! It means that the “diet” served up at

most seminaries and in many, many Christian books, is mere milk.

And this is why most church leaders and even big name Christian figures gag when we point out the evil that is lurking in the churches. It is like serving a thick steak to a 6 month old child.

Obviously the pure spiritual milk Peter is speaking of, telling us to long for, is the Word of God. But even Peter notes that the purpose of all of this diet is that we “grow up into salvation.” Maturity. Wisdom.

Growing Up into Salvation

Now to the second question then. What does Peter mean when he speaks of the Christian “*growing up into salvation*”?

Well, the idea of salvation in Scripture is far more than justification and forgiveness of sins. Salvation entails sanctification and glorification. We are not only saved “from” but we are saved “to.”

And here is the vital point that Scripture makes over and over and over again.

Spiritual infancy, like literal infancy, is a very dangerous place to remain. In fact, many who appear to have come to life (ie, the seed that lands on

rocky ground and sprouts quickly), soon wither and die. They had no root. It is vital that everyone who professes Christ give all diligence to growing up in Christ!

Our calling and election is sure. But we must “make it sure” as we will hear Peter say, by diligent use of the means of grace that God has provided for our growth:

- The Scriptures
- Prayer
- Practical holiness
- Fellowship with other believers, benefitting from and exercising our own spiritual gifts
- The ordinances (Lord’s table and baptism)

Listen to these Scriptures that instruct us to press on to maturity in Christ and warn us of the danger of not doing so:

2Pe 1:10-11 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (11) For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2Pe 2:20-22 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again

entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. (21) For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. (22) What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

See it? There ARE people who come to "know" Christ as Lord and Savior, and they even, for a time, "escape the defilements of the world," but in the end they return as a dog to its vomit and end in hell. Of course we would maintain that such a person was never truly regenerate, but they sure looked like it for a time!

Also notice from this text that to KNOW the truth and then knowingly reject it is to incur a worse condemnation.

Php 3:12-16 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (13) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in

Christ Jesus. (15) Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. (16) Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul, you see, is not speaking here of not having obtained justification. No, he means that he has not yet attained to completion/perfection in regard to "growing up into salvation". And no Christian will in this present life on earth. But we must press on toward it, growing in Christ.

Heb 6:4-6 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Here is another one then that is very similar to what Peter said about those who like dogs return to their vomit. Here are people who have incredibly actually been enlightened, have tasted, have shared in the blessings of the gospel of Christ, and yet they fell away. They had no root. And now, once more, notice that their final state

is worse than their former. Repentance is impossible for them.

There are, you see, what we call *apostates* –

Php 3:17-19 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (18) For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. (19) Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

Paul is not talking about pagans here who have never made any profession of Christ. He is speaking of people who once professed Christ but have since “moved away from” (apostasized) Him. They have become actual enemies of the gospel. They are mere earthlings.

This has to be the case because otherwise Paul would not have to warn the Philippians believers (by implication of verse 17) to NOT imitate the apostates. Nor would he have been so grieved about them being enemies of the cross because if they were mere unregenerate pagans who never professed Christ, that would be normal for them. No, Paul is speaking here of people who, like that seed that

quickly sprouted but had no root, seemed to make a genuine profession of faith in Christ, but ended as enemies of Christ.

And once more notice that Paul, Peter, and the Apostle to the Hebrews are all of one mind in saying of such people, “*their end is destruction.*”

1Pe 2:1-3 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (2) Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— (3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

There it is. Have you come to know Christ and “tasted” of His goodness to you and His grace shown you in saving you and making you right with God? Then rest in that grace when Satan accuses. Remember Luther’s words again:

“AND WHOEVER DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WHEN AFFLICTED AND FRIGHTENED IN CONSCIENCE MUST BE OVERTHROWN, FOR NOTHING COMFORTS OUR CONSCIENCE SO FIRMLY AND SECURELY AS THIS PASSIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS”

At the same time, GROW! Be diligent to get fed the Word of God, reject the

insistence of those still dead in sin that you participate with them, and keep pressing ahead into a deeper and deeper knowledge of Christ until you see Him face to face.