



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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### **Feasting Becomes Fellowship, Part 2**

The Bible contains multiple verses which speak of “eating” God’s word. For example, speaking of His prophetic word, the Lord told Ezekiel this:

Ezekiel 3:1b-2: “‘Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.”

We read of the apostle John:

Revelation 10:9a, “And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, ‘Take it, and eat it...’”

in His response to one of Satan’s temptations, Christ quoted Deuteronomy 8:3.

Matthew 4:4, “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.””

Truly, God intended His people to do far more than intellectualize His word; He wants us to consume it spiritually! He wants us to feast on the Word of God!

Now for most here this is not be shocking. We understand that God wants us both to study and to apply the word of God to our lives. Our struggle is the testimony of Scripture which speaks of this process as being a delight. Listen to Ezekiel’s testimony.

Ezekiel 3:3b, “...Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.”

David testified to the same when he described the word of God.

Psalms 19:10b, “...Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.”

There is Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 15:16a, “Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart...”

This language is foreign to most of us. In talking with many over the years, one of the main reasons we don’t spend time daily in God’s word is because of boredom and a perception that the time spent is unprofitable. So how is it that Bible reading, and study can become “a joy and the delight of [our] heart”? That question is answered in 1 Peter 2.

In one of Peter’s first exhortations to his persecuted brethren, he instructs them in 1 Peter 2:1-3 to feast on the Word of God. Now in vv. 4-8a, Peter continues this exhortation by giving a description of what CAN occur when we “long for the pure milk of the word.”

1 Peter 2:4a, “And coming to Him as to a living stone...”

This is incredible language! When we approach the word of God, it can be a glorious entrance into the presence of Christ wherein we enjoy rich and abiding fellowship! We are talking about unction which simply means “anointing.” Christ’s teaching and ministry was “anointed by the Spirit of God” which explains why it was so powerful (cf. Acts 10:38). And if you are in Christ, you too have been anointed to understand God’s word (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27). That being said, we recognize that just because we are saved, we don’t automatically enter into the presence of

Christ and enjoy fellowship with him every time we read God's word. Think of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:16). Or, speaking of many of God's people and their experience with God's word, Paul wrote this:

2 Corinthians 3:14, "But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ."

Ultimately this is speaking of conversion. But it isn't confined to conversion. Only when our Bible study and reading is fellowshiping with Christ will we benefit from the word!

That is Peter's point in 1 Peter 2. His exhortation to his persecuted brethren was that as you read the word, go to Christ! Don't merely read and study to learn theology, get a quick pick-me-up, or receive a blessing. Rather, go to the word as a means to fellowship with the Lord!

## The Purpose of our Fellowship, v. 5b.

Why approach Christ daily through His word?

1 Peter 2:5b, "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood [to what end?], to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

This is a rather significant passage which gives support to the suggestion John Piper made years ago as it pertains to the Westminster Shorter Catechism explaining Man's Chief End.

WSC #1: What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Piper suggested a small change to the wording that if implemented would have a significant change in our living. Instead of reading "and to enjoy him forever" he suggested changing it to, "...by enjoying him forever." "Man's chief end is to glorify God BY enjoying him forever."

Essentially this is Peter's progression in the text. When we endeavor to approach Christ in the study of God's word — doing more than learning theology, BUT actually enjoying the Lord — what will be the result? The result ultimately is glorifying God- "...offering up of spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"!

This is the language of worship. It is the language of making much of the Lord in our lives! Consider the wording — all of which is derived from the Old Testament describing the worship associated with the Burnt Offering.

- Offer up, This was used of the animal lifted up and placed on the Altar of Burnt Offerings- which in this context lays stress on the Burnt Offering (cf. Hebrews 4:12-13 and its role in our being offered as a burnt offering to the Lord). In the Old Testament

that of course was the body of a sacrificed animal. In the New Testament, no longer is it an animal that we offer the Lord, but ourselves as — which is why Peter identified our offering as...

- Spiritual sacrifices. The word used for “spiritual” is the Greek word πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*) which you know from Galatians 6:1 references the one qualified to “restore another brother or sister caught in a trespass.” In this context we saw it does NOT reference a mature Christian, BUT one who at that moment is driven and guided by the Spirit of God. That is the word used here. A “spiritual sacrifice” then speaks of the offering of a life that is driven, influenced, so governed NOT by
  - Fear.
  - Material possessions.
  - Worldly honor or respect.
  - The passion to preserve one’s life.

All of which Peter’s persecuted brethren no doubt were tempted to be driven by. No! That which must drive them is the Spirit of God working by and with His word that they might live a life of praise and honor.

- Acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Once again we have here the language of worship in which an offering was received by God and so well-pleasing to the Lord- that is the idea behind “acceptable.”

Exodus 29:18, “And you shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the Lord: it is a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the Lord.”

The language here is the language used by Paul when he wrote Romans 12.

Romans 12:1, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.”

Christian, do you understand what all of this means? In our study of the word of God it doesn’t take a brain surgeon to hear and understand the many passages in Scripture calling for our complete and total dedication to the Lord and so a life of obedience, reverence, and honor. Yet what we so frequently miss is the God-ordained process that brings this type of living about. It is NOT...

- Working harder.
- Learning more.
- Memorizing this passage or that.
- More discipleship.
- More accountability.

None of these are bad things (in fact they are great things). BUT they are NOT that which secures the life of obedience. What does secure it? Peter's point is that we fellowship with Christ via His word!

When our feasting on the word of God becomes fellowship, the result is a life consciously lived before the face of God where we know and understand that in and through all things, God is our witness and so the one who cheers us on! As such, we long to do our work "heartily as for the Lord rather than man" (Colossians 3:23)!

Now Christian, you may NOT have the easiest life, or wealth, honor, privilege, or money but if you enter into the presence of Christ via His word and fellowship with Him, you will have discovered and enjoyed the BEST that this life has to offer.

### The Privilege of our Fellowship, vv. 6-7a.

1 Peter 2: 6-7a, "For *this* is contained in Scripture [lit., this stands so firm that it will never be shaken or removed, quoting from Isaiah 28:16<sup>1</sup>]: 'Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner *stone*, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.' This precious value, then, is for you who believe..."

The words used here are taken from language used to describe the most valued things of life, a choice stone. Once again this was taken from the realm of building and speaks of that rare stone — 1 in 10,000 — which is selected by the builder to be the cornerstone on which the rest of the temple would be built. From this we conclude that of all things that can be found and enjoyed in this world, NO THING is more important than Christ. He is God's choice which speaks of Christ's inestimable value!

- A precious corner stone. The Greek word translated "precious"<sup>2</sup> means "unequaled in value," "costly," or "irreplaceable." Because of God's choice of Christ as that which is most important — not simply in our world, but the entire universe — there is nothing more valuable!
- He who believes in Him shall not be disappointed. The word for "disappointed"<sup>3</sup> denotes being deceived in some confidence or placing hope in something and having that hope dashed. Here it is negated which means if you place fellowshiping with Christ as your most valued privilege and possession on this earth, guess what? You will never be let down; your hopes will never be dashed!

Isaiah exhorted the exiles who, much like those to whom Peter is writing, lost everything and were indeed the scourge of this world this way:

Isaiah 54:4-5, 10, "Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; and do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach

of your widowhood you will remember no more. [Why is that?] For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth.... For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness [which ultimately is enjoyed when we fellowship with the Lord] will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,' says the Lord who has compassion on you."

That is point that Peter is making as to the value/privilege of fellowshiping with Christ! Everything in your world may be lost, but if you have and enjoy the Lord, you have everything! Paul expressed the same assurance to the Romans when he wrote this:

Romans 8:37-39, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God [and how is this ultimately enjoyed?], which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In both passages the believer's confidence and hope is NOT simply the Lord, BUT His love enjoyed! Again, we are talking about the privilege of our fellowship which is where Peter brings us in v. 7.

- This precious value, then, is for you who believe. The key to enjoying such strength, comfort, hope, and courage in life is "believing" in Christ — which speaks of a life of trust, reliance, and so placing ones hope on and in.

Peter wanted his persecuted brethren to understand that no matter how much they suffered or lost in this life, they could never be bereft of THE most important blessing granted by God to a man fellowshiping with Christ (~Pearl of Great Price)!

### The Vindication of our Fellowship, vv. 7b-8a.

1 Peter 2:7b-8a, "This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve [here he quotes from Psalm 118:22<sup>4</sup>], 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner *stone*,' and [quoting from Isaiah 8:14b-15<sup>5</sup>], 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense'..."

The world has rejected Christ as the "cornerstone" of their religion. Because of their love of sinning and so their love of self, they want a god who:

- Is able to be placated.
- Can be impressed with their actions.
- Is able to be manipulated.
- Is exciting and pleasurable.

Christ is none of these AND SO THEY REJECT HIM.

Yet what a shock it will be on the Last Day! For NOT ONLY is Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords, BUT in the end, all mankind outside of Christ will be destroyed by Him. That is the idea behind the quote from Isaiah 8:14b-15, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." See it is one thing to "trip over" a large stone (which is what "a stone of stumbling" references). In a rocky land, no doubt many at times stumbled; BUT it wouldn't be fatal provided the earth on which they fell was soft. But what if when they tripped and fell headlong into the earth, they bashed their head into solid bedrock (which is the idea of "a rock of offense")? We don't need to wonder, think of Judas. After he went out and hanged himself, the limb broke and:

Acts 1:18b: "...falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out."

What a graphic picture of what is prophesied in Scripture with regard to every non-believer! On the Last Day their rejection of Christ will result in their complete and total destruction! In tripping over Jesus in life, they will be bashed to pieces in their death and so suffer eternity separated from Christ in hell, "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48)!

Now according to God's redemptive program, right before that time we shall be vindicated and the fool we were thought to be- the mockings, loss, difficulty, and in some cases the martyrdom- will give way to the public announcement that we are the bride of Christ, precious in the sight of God! Paul describes it this way:

Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

The last phrase, "in glory" speaks NOT of the location, BUT the celebration/honor that will be ours in that day. We see it in Matthew before the world of condemned individuals is cast into the Lake of Fire (v. 41) this is what will occur"

Matthew 25:34, "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

It is this glorious event that Peter has in mind. Do you understand what this means? Will this change the way you view the best this fallen world has to offer?

Most if not all of us are familiar with the Beatitudes in which Christ begins His teaching with the eight-fold, "Blessed are the poor in spirit... blessed those who mourn... blessed are the gentle... etc." When one studies this passage, you will discover that in the Greek the word means "blessed" or "happy". Yet Christ was NOT Greek; He was Jewish and so would have spoken these words either in Hebrew or Aramaic. So just what does "blessed" mean in Aramaic or Hebrew? It means to be envied!<sup>6</sup>

This is quite the shocking statement in light of the fact that as Christians in this world, we are most to be pitied.<sup>7</sup> Speaking primarily of himself (yet applicable to all in Christ), Paul declared:

1 Corinthians 4:11-13, “To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, *even* until now.”

Insofar as this is true of you, realize that from the perspective of God’s Kingdom and so reality, we are most to be envied! And that will become open and evident to all when on the last day the world “stumbles over Christ” and so are dashed to pieces on “the rock of offense.”

Our glory is NOT their death, BUT their death is a reality! And it was this reality Peter wanted his persecuted brethren to understand — for truly, to give up the world for Christ is to lose nothing, but to gain everything! Now if you want to understand this more fully and to live in light of this in your life? Daily draw near to Christ in fellowship- seek His face in His word! That is the passion Peter had for His persecuted brethren!

## References

- R. Laird Harris, G. L. (1999). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
- Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1 & 2 Peter & Jude: New American Commentary [NAC]*. Nashville: B & H Books.

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> “In context Isaiah 28 is a message of judgment on Ephraim for their disobedience and unbelief. What Isaiah emphasized throughout the book comes to the forefront here. Those who trust in the Lord will escape judgment. Isaiah encouraged the people not to put their trust in foreign alliances or military strength (cf. Isaiah 30–31), but only the Lord. Those who do not trust in him will perish, but those who put their faith in him will triumph.” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 108)

<sup>2</sup> ἔντιμος (*entimos*)

<sup>3</sup> κατασχύνω (*kataischunō*)

<sup>4</sup> The psalm in its original context describes the return of the king to the temple to give thanks after his victory over his enemies. The stone rejected in the historical context of the psalm was the Davidic king, and the builders were the foreign nations that rejected the rule of the anointed king of Israel. The enemies of Israel thereby assured their own destruction, for the Davidic king was the stone by which Yahweh would carry out his plan in the world. Hence, the king cuts off God’s enemies with confidence (Psalm 118:10–14).” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 111)

<sup>5</sup> In the context of Isaiah 8, Israel and Judah are called upon to fear and trust the Lord rather than fear other nations.” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 111)

<sup>6</sup> “There are two verbs in Hebrew meaning ‘to bless.’ One is *bārak* and the other *’āšar*. Can any differences between them be tabulated? For one thing *bārak* is used by God when he ‘blesses’ somebody. But there is no instance where *’āšar* is ever on God’s lips. When one ‘blesses’ God the verb is



bārak, never ʾāšar. One suggestion to explain this sharp distinction, i.e, that ʾāšar is reserved for man, is that ʾāšar is a word of envious desire, ‘to be envied with desire is the man who trusts in the Lord.’ God is not man and therefore there are no grounds for aspiring to his state even in a wishful way. Similarly God does not envy man, never desires something man is or has, which he does not have, but would like to have. Therefore God never pronounces man ‘blessed’ (ʾašrê) (Janzen). It should also be pointed out that when bārak is used the initiative comes from God. God can bestow his blessing even when man doesn’t deserve it. On the other hand, to be blessed (ʾašrê), man has to do something. Finally, bārak is a benediction, ʾāšar more of a congratulation. The former is rendered by eulogētos in the LXX and the latter by makarios.” (R. Laird Harris, 1999, p. 183) (Victor P. Hamilton, “אֲשַׁר 183,”)

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:19