

GROW UP!

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

INTRODUCTION

Experiences change us. After going to school in Germany for 6 months, I came back different. After I was exposed to the poverty of kids and families in Mexico, and to the destitution of families living in the slums of Nairobi, I came back different. There was a change in my heart and in my perspectives on other people and the world.

But the greatest change I have experienced has been the change that Jesus has made in my heart. It has been such a great change that the Bible says, I have had a new birth. I have been born again spiritually. And now, with this new birth and new changes that it brought, things are different. That is true of everyone who has accepted Jesus into their life.

How have you changed if you have experienced a spiritual, new birth?

This new birth should bring changes that manifest themselves in a number of different ways in which we live and conduct ourselves. In the last message we looked at two primary changes that everyone should see in their life: Instead of getting caught up in life on earth right now, we are to be expectantly and continually looking toward the time when Jesus comes back. Each day, we are to live in light of Jesus' return. Then secondly, we are to live holy lives. We should be sinning less and less frequently and living more and more the way God wants us to live.

I want to follow on our previous message as Peter is talking about differences in how we should live if we have been born again. Peter adds two more expressions that I want us to look at this morning.

First:

I. WE ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER DEEPLY

Being a Christian should make a difference, not only in our personal lives, but also in our relationships. One of the greatest ways people can see a difference in our lives is by the way we treat one another.

Jesus said it this way:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 ^{NIV}

This reflects the second greatest command in the Bible: Love one another. Jesus says that people will know that we are Christians by our love for one another. Peter echoes Jesus' words when he says:

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22 ^{NIV}

Peter is saying that loving others is to begin with loving fellow Christians. The frequent word for the type of love that we are to love one another with is the word

agape. But here, Peter first uses a different word for love, *philadelphia*.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere philadelphia love for each other, agape love one another deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22 ^{NIV}

Philadelphia love means brotherly love, like the city's motto: City of Brotherly Love.

Agape love is most often used of God's love for people. God meets our need unconditionally. We don't deserve it, but he helps us. When we love with Agape love, we give to people unconditionally and simply because the person has a need, regardless of how we feel toward them. It is an unconditional love in that we don't expect anything back. We are loving simply because we want to help a person.

Let me note a couple of subtle differences. One is that *Philadelphia* love is love that reflects the kind of love a family has toward each other. One of the motivations of *philadelphia* love is that the person is part of our family. In addition, there is a caring aspect to *philadelphia* love, a tenderness. That doesn't mean that when God loves us with *agape* love he isn't caring. It doesn't mean that when we love others we don't know with agape love that we don't care for them. God certainly loves people with feeling.

Remember the story of the rich young ruler? He asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life.

In responding, it says:

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Mark 10:21 ^{ESV}

Jesus loved him with agape love, and certainly included feelings toward the young man.

When you love with agape love, you are meeting a need because the person has a need and meeting the need is the right thing to do. In *philadelphia* love, you still act to meet the person's need, but now the motivation includes a relational aspect, a caring for them, as if that person were your mother or your brother or sister.

Peter says we are to initially have this *philadelphia* love for each other. That is one result from having our hearts cleansed and purified. Instead of being self-centered and only caring about our needs, when we experience a change of heart, we start looking out for one another and caring for them as if they were literally our brother or sister.

E.g. Nancy, my wife, going to San Diego to watch Dries. Our daughter, Holly, had to go back to work two weeks earlier than she had planned, and needed childcare for Dries. She called Nancy and asked if she could come out to watch Dries. And, since Nancy has just retired, she had the time, but even more so, she had the heartfelt motivation because she got to watch her grandson.

Let's say that one of our neighbors had a similar need for childcare and asked Nancy to watch her child for a week. Nancy may watch that child, but it would not be because

she felt the motivation of the person being a family member. She would show agape love, but not necessarily phileo love.

Now, what does this look like in the church? One is our attitude toward each other. Turn to the people on either side of you and look at them; now turn to the people in front of you and behind you. Do you know them by name? Do you care if you know them by name? This is one reason we wear nametags. How can you care for someone if you don't know their name?

Another way to show this *philadelphia* love is that when you hear or read about a need of someone in the church, you respond by caring enough to ask yourself, what can I do to meet that need? People in the church should take a priority for us to meet their needs.

This is what it means to be a church family.

But then Peter takes this a step further. He goes on to say:

...love one another deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22 NIV

Now he switches to using *agape* love. And he says to love each other deeply with all your heart. I think what Peter is emphasizing is that loving one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ, more easily starts with the understanding that we are family, having a *philadelphia* love. We should love one another because we are part of God's family together.

It is with this beginning point of loving one another as family, that Peter then stretches us to love in greater ways. The word *deeply*, is also translated as *earnestly* or *fervently*. In fact, Luke uses this same word that describes how Jesus prayed in the Garden:

Luke 22:44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

This is how deeply we are to love one other, with the earnestness and fervency that Jesus prayed with on the night before he was crucified. I imagine that for most of us, we have a lot of room to grow in expressing this kind of love for one another.

One of the first things that being born again should do for us to change our relationships. Peter moves from the exhortation to love one another deeply to express the importance of growing in our spiritual life:

II. WE ARE TO DEEPLY DESIRE TO GROW IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:1-3 NIV

Peter now focuses on our relationship with God. we are to crave the Word so we can grow up in our salvation. In v. 1, he lists a number of sins that show us how we are not to live if we want to live holy lives. But these sins he lists also highlight sins that destroy relationships between people. Since we are born again, and since we are to love

one another and live holy lives, such sins like malice toward others, being deceitful and hypocritical, having envy and speaking evil of others—these are sins that destroy relationships. And we need to put them off, to not practice them because, again, we are born again.

One way to rid ourselves of these sins is to grow in our spiritual life.

Peter goes on to say,

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

He uses the analogy of a newborn baby craving its mother's milk. A baby naturally wants to nurse and feed. It's engrained in them. Peter says, with our new nature of being born again, we are spiritually like a baby. He is not just talking about a new Christian, he is talking about every Christian. Every one of us should continually have a craving for the spiritual milk of God. This is referring to God's truth and the Word of God. Our milk, that which enables us to grow, is the Bible.

What should help us want to grow? One reason is that we are to grow up in our salvation. We should want to experience the Christian life in the greatest way.

Paul outlines what it means to grow in our salvation. See what he says growing looks like:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13^{NIV}

To grow is to be built up in our faith. When we grow in our salvation, we will reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. That pertains to our understanding of the faith, including the teachings and doctrines about God, about God's plans, and about how to live as Christians.

We will also become mature. That refers to having wisdom and spiritual maturity. And then it means to attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. That refers to experiencing the full life of Christ within us, becoming like Christ in all areas of our life.

That picture of what growing up in our salvation means should drive us to the Bible—to read and study it constantly.

Another reason why we should want to grow is because we have tasted that the Lord is good.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:2-3^{NIV}

Peter quotes:

Taste and see that the LORD is good;

blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Psalms 34:8^{NIV}

To taste means to experience God. King David wrote this psalm and, in his life, he had experienced God in many ways—from the forgiveness for his sins to deliverance from his enemies. Most people’s first taste of God is when they become a Christian. They taste God’s forgiveness of their sins, the release from guilt and the feeling of joy. That initial taste of God’s grace and love should draw us into a desire to experience God more and more, in deeper and deeper ways.

Peter uses the word, crave. That word means to have a strong desire for something, with the implication of need. I think this second aspect of craving is essential for most of us who have been a Christian for a while. We crave what we need. If we don’t have a sense of need, we won’t crave it.

E.g. some of you have experienced being addicted to opioids. Opioids create a deep, chemical craving for more. It drives you to get more of it. That’s the same degree of craving that we should develop for God’s word.

Often, when I go through a difficult time, I have a deep sense of my need for God and his grace. And when I have this deeper sense of need, I seek God in a deeper way. I crave him more. But when things are going well, or I get busy, I may not feel my need for God as much as I should, and I don’t crave him as much.

How do we grow? One of the primary ways, as Peter states, is through the Bible, our spiritual milk. That’s why we keep encouraging you to read the Bible daily as part of your spiritual habits. It is also why we encourage you to be in some kind of Bible study—an Adult Bible Fellowship and/or a Life Group. What Peter is saying is that you cannot grow without taking in the word of God, our spiritual milk.

Next Steps:

1. How can you show *philadelphia* love to our church family?
2. How are you satisfying your craving for God’s word?