

1 Peter 2:1-3

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[0 : 00] Well, I'll turn again, if you will, back to 1 Peter chapter 2. The sermon this night will be through verses 1-3, the first three verses.

Just a reminder, next Sunday begins our new series in Adult Sunday School on the means of grace, on the preaching and reading of scripture, on baptism, on the Lord's Supper and prayer.

So each week we'll go through each one of those, and if you can, it'd be very edifying for all of you to come. And this evening we look at those very topics here in 1 Peter chapter 2.

Peter addresses those for us. Well, last Thursday, of course, was Halloween, but it was also another very special day.

Does anybody know what we celebrate on October 31st? Reformation Day. Reformation Day, all right, good. So Reformation Day is the day we remember on October 31st, 1517, that Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg and started the Protestant Reformation.

[1 : 14] And the theology of the Reformers swept across Europe, and thousands and thousands of people were converted to the true gospel.

But things didn't always go so well. So in 1546, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V sent his imperial troops into Germany to destroy the Protestant delegation there.

The Roman Catholic Emperor had decided that the Protestant princes had given him enough trouble, and it was time to take them out. And thousands of Christians were killed in Germany. Many more fled for their lives, and fear swept across Europe. All the Protestants were in fear that this was it. This was the end for them. They would be exterminated.

The Reformed churches in Geneva also grew worried with this act of Charles V. There were rumors that the Pope himself was leading an army of 25,000 men into Geneva to slaughter the Reformed church there.

[2 : 20] Well, the entire population of Geneva was about 12,000 people at the time, so it wouldn't have been much of a fair fight. The political and religious leaders in Geneva knew that the internal squabbles that they were having in that day would only weaken the defenses of their city against this external threat.

And so in March of 1547, the pastors of that city summoned all the people together, and they encouraged them to reconcile with one another. They knew that internal unity was absolutely essential for them to survive these potential attacks.

The pastors called for a day of prayer for their brothers and sisters in Germany, and also for their own unification. Now, as it turns out, the rumors were not true. The Pope, indeed, did not lead an army into Geneva.

The city was spared. But this unity that had developed over this time, it served to strengthen the city, and it continued to unite them in years to come. And Geneva was enabled to endure future threats that came from Roman Catholics, and it became a haven of refuge for exiled Protestants from across Europe to come there fleeing the persecution from Roman Catholics.

Many in this country, indeed, fled to Geneva and were strengthened there. And they were strengthened in part because of this internal unity that had developed in the city. Now, although we in this country do not often face the threat of physical persecution, we do have to remember our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who do face it every day.

[3 : 52] Those who are persecuted for the cause of Christ. We must remember them. We must pray for them. We must seek to help them, not only as individuals, but as the corporate body of Christ. And even if we here are not in threat of physical danger for our faith, we have to remember that all Christians live as pilgrims.

We are exiled from our ultimate home in heaven. And as we suffer the travails of life lived under the sun, we must seek unity within the body of Christ, as we are assaulted from without and from within, while we journey to the promised land.

And Peter instructs us here in these matters in 1 Peter 2. He urges exiled pilgrims to discard the sinful encumbrances and to nourish their souls on their journey to heaven.

In our passage, we see Peter's instructions for exiled Christians. These instructions come in three parts. First, Peter's instructions for exiles are based on their redemptive relationship with Christ. Secondly, Peter instructs exiles to long for Christ. And finally, Peter instructs exiles to reconcile with one another. So first we see Peter's instructions for exiles are based upon their redemptive relationship with Christ.

[5 : 12] Now, if you look at verse 1 of chapter 1, Peter addresses his letter to the exiles, the elect exiles of dispersion. Again, in verse 17 of chapter 1, he references the exiles.

This idea of Christians as exiles or pilgrims, it goes all the way back to the time of Abraham. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the same word is used of Abraham when he's speaking to the Hittites.

He says, I am a stranger and an exile among you. The other time in the New Testament that this word is used is in the book of Hebrews, where again it refers to Abraham, but also Christians before and after him as exiles on the earth.

So Peter, in one sense, is addressing all Christians in his letter, and he's addressing them as exiles, as those sojourners without their home. Peter later encourages these exiles in chapter 5 to stand firm in the grace of God as they journey throughout the world.

In chapters 3 and 4, he instructs these pilgrims on the path to salvation that they will indeed face persecution. In chapter 5, he sums it up and he says, he instructs us here to remain faithful under pressure, living as exiles in this world as they progress towards God's ultimate rest.

[6 : 28] Interestingly here, in verse 3 of chapter 2, Peter quotes Psalm 34, If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. We saw in the version of that psalm earlier in the service.

Now the heading of that psalm reads, You recall that David was a fugitive from King Saul, and for many years he sojourned throughout southern Israel.

He was forced to leave his homeland, and Saul is on the run. He's after David, seeking to kill him. And Saul eventually drives him out of the land of promise, and David is forced to seek refuge in the hand of Israel's greatest enemy, the Philistines.

And he goes to King Abimelech, seeking refuge from Saul. David never is able to settle in peace. He's never able to rest in the land of promise that God had given his people.

And so he's driven into the hands of the Philistines. Thankfully, David was able to escape, using his cunning, using his trust in the Lord. And Psalm 34 references this. Psalm 34 tells us of God's faithfulness to his servant, and deliverance from suffering.

[7 : 44] Even though the psalmist is deceived on all sides by his enemies, he knows that he can trust in God, that God indeed will deliver him. The hearers of 1 Peter immediately would have recognized this quotation from this psalm.

They would know Psalm 34. They would know that he's speaking of David, and especially that context of exile, of dispersion and his activity as a fugitive.

Peter here is associating his hearers with David in exile. They too long for deliverance from the persecution that they face from the hands of the Romans.

They too long for rest in their homeland that God has promised them. Like David, they must sojourn outside of the land of promise, as they await God's ultimate rescue.

These pilgrims are compelled by Peter to remain faithful to God, and to anticipate that ultimate Sabbath rest that one day they will enter as their reward. Just as God rewarded David with the kingdom of Israel, although it too was a mere type and shadow of the heavenly kingdom that is to come.

[8 : 51] Now these instructions that Peter gives these exiles here are based on their redemptive relationship with Christ. He tells them, If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Now this phrase here, it's kind of like a rhetorical question. The answer, of course, is yes. Now children, imagine if your parents said, We can get ice cream if indeed you really want some. Well, of course you want some. Who doesn't want ice cream? That's what Peter is basically saying here. If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. And of course you have. You know what it

means to taste that the Lord is good.

He writes to those who intimately know Christ. They know what it means in verse 3 of chapter 1 when he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

They know this. And they know it intimately. They know what it means to taste that the Lord is good. They recognize the Christ as the living stone, as we read in verse 4.

[9 : 57] In the sight of God, he is chosen and precious. Just as Peter's hearers were exiles from their homeland and they suffered persecution in this present evil age, more so our Savior Jesus Christ was the ultimate exile.

He left his home in heaven and came to earth to suffer as a man for our disobedience and to earn the righteousness that we need to stand before God as holy and justified in his sight.

He came to his own and his own received him not. Just as David was persecuted by Saul, even more so. Christ was despised and rejected by men.

He was exiled outside of the city of Jerusalem and crucified by his own people. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus suffered outside the gates in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

He was sent outside the city to suffer and die as a common criminal so that he could bring us one day into God's heavenly city as citizens, as heirs of Christ.

[11 : 02] Christ was exiled as a man of no esteem so that we could be adopted as God's own children. Now when David was exiled by the hand of Saul, in Psalm 34 you recall that he had already been anointed king by the prophet Samuel.

He was the true king. But his own subjects rejected him as they followed the former king, the false king Saul. Well, the Lord Jesus, the king of kings, came to earth and he inaugurated his kingdom but his own subjects rejected him.

The exiled king died on behalf of his people so that he might make them citizens of his eternal kingdom. And one day he will return as conferring king, no longer the humble suffering servant but as the victorious monarch.

And he will vanquish his enemies and establish his kingdom which will last forever. And he will bring us into that kingdom and we will be his loyal subjects, no longer his enemies but his faithful servants ruling alongside him.

Reconcile to God and we will remain forever as obedient servants in Christ and testimonies to his great rule. We long for that day.

[12 : 15] But even now, even today, we have tasted that the Lord is good. We know what it is to go from darkness to light.

We know what it means to be forgiven and to be reconciled with God. And we long for that day when Christ will consummate his kingdom and establish his throne forever. But even today, we know that God has declared us righteous in Christ and we have experienced that he is good. We have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, as Hebrews tells us. We taste that goodness every time we feed upon the body and blood of Christ in the supper of the Lord.

This is where we taste that the Lord is good. We receive Christ and all his benefits through the means of grace that he has ordained for us. You see, early on in the history of the church, the early Christians recognized that this passage was referencing the Lord's supper.

And the only two uses of this word in the New Testament are in clear Lord's supper passages. So the early church actually incorporated this verse into the form that they would read before they celebrated the supper.

[13 : 32] They knew they received Christ and all his benefits when they came to the table of the Lord. Nothing unites Christians together more than when we partake of the Lord's supper.

When we are assaulted from without, we come together as the body of Christ and we eat from the same loaf and we drink from the same cup.

We are one as we assemble around this table and we experience a supernatural unity as we feed on the body and blood of Christ. Now when we come to the table, we are brought back to the cross of Christ as we partake of the same body that was crucified for us and we drink the same blood that was shed for us.

Christ is the sacrificial meal. But he not only takes us back to the cross, he takes us forward. The supper foreshadows the eternal Sabbath rest when we will eat and drink together in the presence of the Lord.

Our King is no longer exiled from his homeland. He has completed his redemptive work and he has entered into the age to come. Christ is the first fruit of the final resurrection and we will follow him in that resurrection.

[14 : 46] He has already been rewarded with the blessings of that consummated kingdom. And every time we partake of his body and blood here in the supper, we taste the powers of the age to come.

We experience a foretaste of that eternal Sabbath rest where we will again partake of the supper with Christ in the marriage feast of the Lamb. Peter's hearers knew what it meant to go from darkness to light.

They knew that formerly they had not known God but now they had come to be known by God in an intimate way. And not only known by God, but by Christ. You see, in Psalm 34, it says, Taste and see that Yahweh is good.

But when Peter translates it here, he says, Taste and see that the Lord Jesus Christ is good. It's not enough to know the Father. You must know the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ.

He is the Lord. We have to come into a relationship with Him. We have to be known by Him. This is a thoroughly Trinitarian passage. God the Father feeds us with the true and proper body and blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 58] It is through the Spirit that we taste that the Lord is good. This is why we confess in Westminster Confession 29.7, speaking of the supper, Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of visible elements in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporately, but spiritually.

And this spiritually should be capital. It's speaking of the Holy Spirit. We spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all benefits of His death. We feed on Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. So our redemptive relationship with Christ serves as the foundation for Peter's edifying instructions for his fellow exiles. We pilgrims are sustained on our journey to our heavenly home, for we indeed have tasted that the Lord is good.

Now secondly, we see that based on this redemptive relationship, Peter instructs exiles to long for Christ. Look down at verse 2. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk.

Now this analogy of infants stresses the desperate need that we have for spiritual nourishment.

[17 : 19] Now unlike those whom Paul scolds in Corinthians when he tells them you haven't grown up to solid food, you're still stuck on milk, or those in the book of Hebrews who were equally stunted, Peter here is not rebuking them for their need for this milk.

Indeed, he's commending them. Long for this pure spiritual milk. This is a perpetual need. This is a need that we will have throughout our entire life. Now this infant metaphor is entirely appropriate. Children, those of you who have younger brothers and sisters, do you remember when your little brother or little sister came home from the hospital and your parents brought them into the house? What could they do?

Did they make dinner for you? Did they help you clean up your room? No, they didn't do anything. They're helpless. They just kind of sit there. They can't help you. They can't do anything. They have nothing.

They have no way to defend for themselves. They can't even feed themselves. And so are we. We are weak. We are vulnerable. We are highly susceptible to harm.

[18 : 22] We can't defend ourselves. We are completely dependent upon another for sustenance. We need this life-giving milk above all else. We cannot survive unless we are fed.

Also, like infants, not only are we helpless, but as infants, we must be free from the corruption of living in a sinful world. Now, although infants aren't free from original sin, they bear the guilt of Adam's sin.

Yet they are free from the guile and the deceit that we develop as we grow into adulthood. Infants don't willfully harm their neighbor. They don't have this hardness of sin that we experience as we grow older.

They're naive. They're in a good sense. They're as gentle as doves. And so we exiles are instructed to long for milk as infants. Now, even though this longing here is not a command by Peter, it's really

more of a reminder of the benefits that we receive.

Infants don't have to be told to eat. They don't have to be commanded now is the time to eat. They have this longing. They instinctually know they need this milk to survive. And so, too, we need the spiritual milk to survive on our pilgrim journey.

[19 : 37] Now, there is much debate as to the identity of this milk. You may have seen translations that say the pure milk of the Word. Certainly, this milk is related to the inscripturated Word of God.

At the end of chapter 1, Peter reminds us of the greatness of the Word of God. Verse 22, Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God. For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.

So this milk, of course, includes the written Word of God, but it's much more than that. Based on our redemptive relationship with Christ, we are commanded to long for this pure spiritual milk, which is the sustenance of the Christian life.

And the sustenance is Christ Himself. We long for Him. We are nourished by Him. We grow as we are fed by Him. Just as infants need milk all day, every day, so too we exiled Christians need Christ to survive.

[20 : 55] We need Him and all His benefits to sustain us on our Christian journey. He is the fine that sustains us as we sojourn in this world.

Well, how do we receive Christ? How are we nourished by this milk? Of course, it's through the Word of God, but more specifically, it's through the preaching of the Gospel. Peter mentions this at the end of verse 25, chapter 1.

And this Word is the good news that was preached to you. We receive Christ and all His benefits every Lord's Day when the minister preaches the Gospel to us.

This is why we confess in the Second Helvetic Confession. Wherefore, when this Word of God is now preached in every church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed and received by the faithful.

Christ Himself speaks to us through the mouth of the minister as He faithfully proclaims His Word. We also confess in the Westminster Larger Catechism, 155, the Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves and drawing them unto Christ.

[22 : 15] This is primarily how we long for that pure spiritual milk. We attend to the means of grace. We attend to the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

This is how we are granted faith and this is how our faith is nourished and strengthened. That great passage from the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 10. How are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe on Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. It is through the preaching of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts to believe and we are adopted into God's family and then He works through the administration of the sacraments to strengthen and nourish our faith in Christ.

The preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments are the life force for exiled Christians. And as we journey on our pilgrim way when we suffer persecution or when Christians around the world suffer we must cling to Christ and we must cling to Him as we have received Him in the means of grace.

[23 : 32] This is what is really real. When we face moments of doubt or when we stare death in the face we will not cling to our experiences. We will not trust our feelings and emotions to tell us that we are safe in Christ.

When we face that final hour we will cling to Christ and we will cling to Him as we have received Him in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. When we receive Christ and all His benefits we will know that the Gospel that has been proclaimed to us is true and it's true for us.

Martin Luther said it's not enough to know that Christ died for my sins. We must know that Christ died for my sins. And when we take that last breath we will trust those promises for us are true as we have received them through the means of grace.

Just as sure as we eat this bread and we drink this cup so too we are sure that we have eaten His body and we have drunk His blood and that we have eternal life and that He will raise us up on the last day as He promised us in John chapter 6.

Just as sure as we've been baptized whether you remember it or not just as sure as you've been a witness to others who've been baptized we know that Christ has taken us through those waters of death and He has brought us out safely on the other side.

[25 : 00] And just as sure as we've heard the minister proclaim the Gospel to us we know that Christ has delivered to us the good news that He has died for us that He has reconciled us to God.

When we're confronted with the difficulty that comes with the life of exile we must look to the means that God has given us to receive Christ and all His benefits. It is true we have tasted that the Lord is good.

Peter's exile here is new what it was to trust in Christ. They have tasted that the Lord is good and based on their redemptive relationship with Christ God instructs them to long for Christ to desire this pure spiritual milk with the result that they could grow together in unity.

This is our third point. Peter instructs exiled Christians to be edifying to build up one another as they reconcile with one another. It's only because we have received Christ and all His benefits through the Word and the Sacraments that now we can grow in Christ and love our neighbor.

So, verse 1 of chapter 2 we must put away all these sinful encumbrances that weigh us down as we journey to our final homeland.

[26 : 15] Peter instructs us here that this isn't all going to happen at once. We can't snap our fingers and instantly be sanctified as much as we would like to. We know that we will deal with the presence of sin as long as we journey on earth.

We will never be perfectly sanctified while we are still in these sinful bodies but we must begin to put away these sinful behaviors. This is a lifelong process but we can begin to set aside these encumbrances that weigh us down.

Now, Peter writes and, you see, in between each of these lists of bad things and he wants the reader to stop and focus on each one and so we'll do that now. We must put away all malice.

This is a mean-spirited disposition. Peter places all before there to signal every kind of malice, every kind of mal-intention. These exiles must shed every evil disposition which is the opposite of love, whatever form that manifests itself.

Peter then instructs his hearers to be free from all deceit. This is the taking advantage of another person through underhanded means or crackiness. Isaiah speaks of Christ that no deceit was found in his mouth.

[27 : 37] We sojourners on the road to salvation must be truth to one another and avoid this deceitful speech that is so harmful. Put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy, the opposite of truth.

In ancient Greek, this word was used for actors who played a role on the stage. You recall that Jesus repeatedly rebukes the scribes and the Pharisees for playing the role of the truly righteous. This sin is devastating to the church. We have to be open and honest with one another, warts and all. And as we journey on our way, this sin of hypocrisy is especially dangerous in times of hardship and suffering.

We have to know who we can count on when we are assaulted from without. We must put aside this hypocrisy. Put aside all envy.

This inhibits the love and affection within the body of Christ. In the ancient world, many people believed that the success of one person inhibited the success of another.

[28 : 42] The cake was only so big, so if my neighbor got a big slice, well, that means that my slice will be much smaller. And so they were very envious of one another, wished ill on their neighbor.

These exiles are victims of the slander from the Gentiles in chapter 2, verse 12, who speak evil of them as wrongdoers. But the only other time that this word is used in the New Testament is of slander of fellow Christians.

Why do we turn on one another in times of trial? How much more in times of hardship do we need to be edifying instead of tearing down?

Pilgrims traveling to ultimate salvation must cast away these sinful impediments that block our path. And this improper behavior remains a constant temptation, but it is a great distraction from our journey, and we must avoid these restrictive encumbrances and embrace the nourishing benefits that come from Christ and the gospel.

our survival as the church depends on us. And we have to be reconciled to one another so that we can all grow up into salvation as we are fed by the pure spiritual milk.

[29 : 55] Look again at verse 2. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation. This word you hear is plural.

In fact, all the verbs in this passage are plural. Peter is addressing us as one. We are united in the body of Christ. We're in this together. We journey together on our way to the heavenly home. We are knit together in the body of Christ, and we have tasted that the Lord is good. And it is based on these promises that we must long for Christ and be reconciled to one another so that we can all grow up together into salvation.

This salvation starts when we are regenerated, when we're born again, as Peter referenced in chapter 1. And it comes to completion when our exile is finally over, and we enter that heavenly rest.

But until that day, we must cling to Christ, who more importantly clings to us, as we hold on to one another, united in love for our Savior. Well, I'm sure that many of you have read the book, Pilgrim's Progress.

[31 : 05] At one point, it was the second best-selling book in the English language behind the Bible. Now, it's probably been passed by Da Vinci Code or Harry Potter or something. But if you haven't read Pilgrim's Progress, please do so.

It is very rewarding. And you recall the main character, Christian, journeys on the Pilgrim pathway toward his final home in the celestial city. Along the way, he's attacked by doubt and temptation, and he trusts in the Lord, and he remains faithful to the end.

And as great as that book is, one of the main petitions of part one of that book is that Christian basically travels alone. He does have his two friends, faithful and hopeful, who travel with him at different points in the journey.

But where's the church? Where's the body of Christ for Christian as he travels on his Pilgrim way? If the story were a little more accurate, Bunyan would have told us of a countless throng of believers, as far as the eye could see, journeying together on the Pilgrim path as we make our way to the heavenly home.

Christians, innumerable, would be walking together, carrying one another, reminding one another of the benefits that are theirs in Christ and promised by the Holy Spirit, helping one another along the way.

[32 : 34] The body of Christ journeys together on the Pilgrim way toward the heavenly city, and we remind one another of the promises that are ours in Christ and the wonderful benefits that he has given to us through the means of grace.

As we are led by the Holy Spirit to the eternal kingdom, where one day we will be greeted by our Savior, the crucified King, who will welcome us to his table, and forever we will sit and eat and drink with the Lord.

Let's bow together in prayer. Let's bow together in prayer. Let's bow together in prayer.