

Hungry Souls: And Living Stones!

Two weeks ago we looked at 1 Peter 2:1 in a sermon I called 'The Wearing Of Masks, And The Tongue'. V1 "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind." And I explained that though Peter may not have placed those things in opposition to chapter 1:22-25, (those verses about brotherly love,) certainly this list is opposed to everything that Jesus, and Peter himself had taught about true love! As Jesus said in John 13:34-35 "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." And I began with "hypocrisy." Not being that which we claim to be. Or in other words, wearing different kinds of masks: One when we're church and one when we're at home. One when we are among believers, and one when we are amongst this world of pagans! And I said that "hypocrisy," is at the heart of all of those other hypocritical characteristics, if we call ourselves Christian! And I also suggested that we are all in constant danger of those things continuing to be part of who we are. Because they are opposed to our profession of Christ and His Word!

And we looked at James' teaching on the tongue. James 1:26 "If anyone considers himself religious and does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." We saw also those three powerful metaphors of the tongue. That seemingly insignificant instrument, which can control and govern the course of vast things! The bit in a horse's mouth. The rudder of a ship. And a single spark to a raging forest fire. And with me adding that example of a virus, which in the hands of God and the pride and vanity of men, can bring the whole world to its knees! James 3:6 "The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, setting the course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." Yes the tongue is, (as with all of God's gifts,) used for both good and evil. "Out of the same mouth come both praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

Yes all of these things spell "hypocrisy." The wearing of masks. Pretending to be that which we are not. So Peter warns us to "rid ourselves of all such things."

And so we pick up the text this morning, 1 Peter 2:2-5 'Hungry Souls: And Living Stones!' Again v1, "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind." And v2-3 "like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it, you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." So as we saw last week, Peter begins this chapter with a list of loveless, self-obsessed characteristics. And now, he goes on to use this image of a newborn child, feeding from its mother's breast!

So surely, part of his warning to us, is that those five things, (and others of the same ilk which are mentioned throughout the scriptures, which basically speak of a loveless self-centeredness, with no thought for others but only self,) yes such things, can even be fed upon by us! They can fill us up from within. They can fuel who we are. How we act, and what may determine the course of our lives!

So friends, what we feed upon spiritually, is crucial in the determining of our outcome. Because what we feed upon spiritually in this life, ultimately, will determine our eternal destination! So if we sup, if we feed upon "malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander" yes if these things and others of the same ilk are the foods of our souls, then like Satan, (the father of all such things,) ultimately our destiny, we will be with him in the fires of hell! Because like our physical bodies, (which if we always feed with take away junk food, will receive the consequences of that neglect of a good diet,) our

spiritual lives too, if given over to a diet of hate filled self-obsession, will receive the consequences of that spiritual neglect, in the life to come.

So what we feed upon spiritually in this life, is far more important than that which we feed upon physically. Because the one has consequences that last for but a moment, in the scheme of things. But the other, for all of eternity. 1 Timothy 4:7-8: "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales, rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." Yes we have before us the picture of a newborn child. Completely helpless in every way. It's only desire, (indeed its a God given desire,) is to be near, to be intimate with and to feed from its mother!

Friends, as we are all aware, even today, given that a mother is able, we are all aware that the best start to life a child may receive physically, comes from its mother's breast milk. Through breast milk, come all of those good things which shore up and sustain a child. Such as antibodies etc, which I'm sure that you are all more aware of than I am. Yes through breast milk, God has chosen to sustain a child in the early stages of life. Well Peter says, "like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk." So not only "rid yourselves" of those self-obsessed destructive attributes of the old nature. But "crave," have an increasing hunger that cannot be satisfied, like an infant that needs to be fed constantly every few hours, yes "crave pure spiritual milk."

This comes to us, as Les Stewart explained to me many years ago, through the saturation of the hearing and the study of the Word of God! Again notice what he says, "crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up." Not be stunted in your growth, but "grow up in your salvation." So Peter's goal here, is to inspire his readers to "crave" more and more and more of the things of the King and His Kingdom. Which again comes to us only, in the "pure" unadulterated study of God's Word!

Beloved, simply put, the life of the Christian is not stunted or stagnant like that of a malnourished child. It should be ever growing in the desire to know, to understand, to love and to serve God and His people through the knowing of Jesus His Son. And the purity of the scriptures alone, (through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,) will give us just such a heart. But Beloved, the milk of the scriptures which we feed upon must be pure, unadulterated!

Sadly, more and more today there are increasing pressures from both inside and outside of Christianity, to compromise and amend what the Bible teaches on so many areas of life. Because this part, and that part, are not in step, we are told, with modern thinking and society. We have moved on from there. So we need to tailor, we need to amend, (even water down,) our message of Jesus to suit. Well no! As Dr Michael Youssef puts it, 'No, No, and 1000 times No!' In his book 'Saving Christianity?', (and the title actually has a question mark at the end, with the bottom part of that question mark made up of the cross. Yes in his book he explains, that people are saying today that we need to change Christianity in order to save it. Or otherwise, it is going to perish. Yes it will just disappear. But of course what these people espouse is an out and out lie. Beloved we need to remember that the Word of God is the only thing which when added to, ends up with less. If we add to the Word of God, we end up with something that is not, the Word of God! What they want to call Christianity is not Christianity at all. It is a lie. Literally an idol. Because they want to do away with everything that the Bible calls Christianity. The Genesis account of creation. The universal flood during the days of Noah. The virgin birth. The Blood of Jesus being necessary to atone for sin. Even the life, the death, the resurrection and the ascension of the Saviour of the world Himself!

But as Dr Youseff explains, Christianity doesn't need saving. We need only to adhere, yes to trust and to abide in the unchanging, Living Word of God, which is expressed and fulfilled ultimately, in His Son Jesus Christ. No we don't need to change what the Bible teaches of Christianity, Peter is telling us, on the contrary, we need to "crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it we may grow up in our salvation." That's what he's telling us.

As I have said many times over the years, we must put the future of our salvation into the hands of Christ alone. Not in the words of men, or their twisting's and compromising's of God's infallible Word! And he continues with this metaphor of feeding upon Jesus. Ch.2:2-3 "like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." In John 6, after explaining that the forefathers all ate the manna, (that bread which God sent every morning in the form of frost on the ground, and they picked up as wafers around the camp,) yes the forefathers all ate that heaven-sent bread for 40 years during the exodus in the wilderness, and yet they all still died.

And he says in John 6:50-51 "but here is the bread from heaven which a man may eat but not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." V58b: "your father's ate the manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever!" Well a big dispute broke out and most of them, deserted Jesus. And then he asked the apostles in v67-68 "You do not want to leave to do you? Simon Peter answered him, "Lord to whom shall we go? For you alone have words of eternal life."

You see, Peter and the other apostles had indeed "tasted and seen that the Lord is good." Yes they had tasted, they had experienced first-hand, what it meant to have Jesus in their lives. And also what it meant to not have Him in their lives. They had fed upon the purity of what He had to say of God. And the example of how He lived, and the teaching of the coming of His Own Kingdom! They knew what it was to sit at Jesus` feet, feeding upon His teaching but also, (with the rest of the Jewish nation,) they knew what it was to be longing for Him to come. So when Jesus cut the crowd to the heart with His teaching, resulting in them leaving, and the Lord asks the 12, 'are you guys going to leave me two?', all Peter could basically say was, 'Lord, we've got nowhere else to go! You are the real deal. You are the One who we have been waiting for. Only "you have words of eternal life." Everyone else are just pretenders!'

Brothers and sisters, have you ever been there? Have you ever been to that place where Peter was when he spoke these words? We've got nowhere else to go? Only you Jesus truly speak with God breathed truth. Only you speak from God. I've been in that place where I had to decide if I was going to continue to live for myself, or for the Lord God. And you know, I really do believe that we must all come to that place at some stage in our lives. And I also believe, that more and more today are we being, and will continue to be confronted with this same question. Who are we truly? Yes more and more are we confronted with the reality that our nation and the whole world is going one way and Jesus is calling us to go another!

Well as Peter puts it in v3 before us, so also did King David write these same things, over 1000 years before. Psalm34:6-8: "This poor man called, and the Lord heard him, he saved him out of all his troubles. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good." He wrote these things after he had pretended to be insane, so the philistine King Achish of Gath, wouldn't put him to death, when he was on the run from King Saul, who wanted to take David's life! He had taken things into his own hands, believing that faking insanity was his only way out of the devils snare. He let saliva run down on his beard, threw dust on

his head, scratched marks in the town gates, basically doing just a lot of lunatic things. Yes he took things into his own hands. Trusting not in God, but himself. And yet even so, God preserved David's life and delivered him!

So King David also, could write from his own life's experiences, "taste and see that the Lord is good." I have done so, I can testify to these things, David is saying. Yes "God is good to us." Though we in our sin and weakness betray him. And similarly, Peter writes before us, "Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." Yes rid yourselves of all of those other things: "malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander" and with insatiable hearts "like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." It's that casting aside of the old nature with its ways, with an insatiable hunger for the new. Because we have indeed "tasted" that "Christ our Lord is good." Yes we must cast aside the old and embrace and pursue the new. Hungering and thirsting after that "pure spiritual milk" of the scriptures!

Dear friends, can we not also testify that we have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good?" He has carried each of us throughout the whole of our lives. Through every trial and hardship. Through every tear of joy, and heartache. He has laid His Hand upon each one of us and called us to Himself. Even giving His Own Son, that He would bring us home! And as fear grips the whole world like no other time in history, He says to us through His Son, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."

Beloved, is everyday easy? No. Jesus doesn't promise us an easy ride. On the contrary, He warns us that to follow Him comes at great cost and trouble at the hands of the world. But He also comforts us by saying "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and take heed, I have overcome the world." And finally, "In my Father's house are many rooms. I'm going there to prepare a place for you." Yes Brethren, we have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good." And we can see this every week as He brings us together and we support and encourage and challenge one another in the things and service of His Kingdom. Yes we must "crave pure spiritual milk." Casting the old life away and trusting only in Jesus.

And why? V 4 Because He is "the living stone." As we have seen before, Jesus is the substance upon which our faith is built. He is the foundation. He is the Rock. The Redeemer. But Jesus is not some dead lifeless Rock, He is "the living stone." Yes the foundation of our faith and He is alive and full of hope. Because Jesus lives! V3 of chapter 1: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who in his great mercy has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

We don't believe in some statue. No we don't bow down to some icon, or some dead so called saint, or some Pope, or priest or swami or some cult leader, no. Because these things are not God and nor do they represent Him. They are either dead, (like those who ate the manna in the wilderness,) or they will soon be. But not Jesus. Because he is living! He is "the Living bread." He is "the Living Word." "Living waters of rivers of life" flow through Him at the preaching of God's Word and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. And He is "the Living Stone." That holy and pure foundation upon everything which we believe in is built. And not only all of this, but upon Him, we too, are being built into a "spiritual house to be a holy priesthood." V4 "as you come to him, the Livingstone rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him."

Look at what it says as we again see our natural inclination. Because of sin, we are not naturally inclined toward God. You've heard me say it many times, we don't go looking for God. He drags us

by the hair as it were, kicking and screaming into His grace! Yes He is the Living Stone rejected by men." But not only by just some men, by all mankind!

Since the garden of Eden, (of themselves,) humanity is opposed to God. The scriptures are very clear on this. Romans 5:8 which we saw last week in Ruth, "for God demonstrates his love for us in this. For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How much more then should we be moved at the wonder of God's mercy and forgiveness. That's why it is called Grace. God's free gift to us through His Son.

Again, why are verses 1,2 and 3 so important? V5 "you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." So Jesus is "the living Stone." The foundation of our faith. And we are "like living stones," laid upon Him, made in His image, being built, into being Christ's spiritual house! Yet not only is He the foundation of His church, but also everything which we do, which are in a sense, an offering to God. Because they are made acceptable to God, only through Jesus!

Friends, we need to remember, that the Jewish tradition and religion, (for want of a better description,) was all about sacrifices, and the temple. And it had to be, that's what God had prescribed which pointed to Jesus. So their ancestry and their heritage was everything to them. The danger for the New Testament Jew, was always about casting aside the things of Christ and going back to Judaism! Clearly, Peter had these things in mind, as he will go on to refer to the Old Testament prophets. Yes he does seem to be addressing here, (while warning us against,) that tendency to which many people are drawn. The valuing of buildings, rituals and customs, while forgetting what the true church is. The people! Those "stones" who are founded and built upon that "Livingstone" the Lord Jesus Christ!

My own personal opinion of the amazing structures around the world, is that though they are a testimony to the ingenuity of man, nothing to do with God. And they mean nothing to Him! When marvelled at by some of the disciples, when Speaking of the temple of Herod the great, Jesus said, 'tear it down and I will rebuild it in three days'. Now of course, He was referring to what He would on the cross through His Body. Because of course, the true temple through which we come to God is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ! So buildings are not what impress God. No. They are just towers of Babel, spread throughout the world. No there is but one building which matters to God. V5 "you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God." And what does he mean by this. Romans 12:1 "Therefore, offer yourselves as living sacrifices, for this is your spiritual act of worship."

So friends how do we tie these things together this morning? Simply by understanding that what we feed upon for our souls matters. Far more so than what we feed our bodies with. Because in the scheme of things, one has consequences for only a moment. While the other has repercussions for all eternity! And also, that like the "Living stone" Jesus, we too, His People, His Church, are "living stones being built into his spiritual house." But as Christ is not dead but living, we too are called to be living for Him. To testify to Him. And for Him. Yes even as Christ died that we might live, now that we do live, we are to live for Him. And we offer our whole lives as "living sacrifices." As he builds His church, His "spiritual house" through us! And we need to be praying, Lord, use me!

Let's pray!