

“Grow Up” / 1 Peter 2:1–10

Together We Endure: The Letter of 1 Peter, #3

We're in a series called *Together We Endure*, a study through Peter's first letter to the church, so if you have your Bible, grab it and turn there. If you don't, run to the other room and get it. I'll make meaningless small talk until you get back.

Peter's first letter in the NT is written to a church in distress, and Peter encourages them by pointing to a common hope and a common power at work among them that binds them together.

Last week, to illustrate the theme of 1 Peter, I borrowed an illustration from my gym coach, who explained that when cows encounter a storm... So, we're going to try to be like the bison and not like the cows.

In the first 10 verses of chapter 2, we find **a command** and then **an explanation for how to accomplish the command**.

The command? Very simple: Grow up.

1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation,

- Peter doesn't phrase this as an imperative here, but this is clearly his desire for these believers. He is concerned because some of these believers don't appear to have gotten past the baby stage in Jesus, and he fears that if they remain as spiritual toddlers they are not going to be able to endure the persecution or ups and downs that are coming their way.
- **Can I ask: Are you a little like that?** Are you the kind of person who is spiritually hot one day, but cold the next? You go to camp or a Christian event; or spend some time with a spiritual friend; hear a sermon, and things are spiritually hot in you, but then it just fades? One minute you are really confident in your faith; the next, filled with questions and doubts? One minute, praying fervently. The next, unsure if any of this is true?

Peter says it is because you haven't grown up yet. I've always thought Peter's analogy with young children here is really helpful. Think about kids. Kids can be:

- **Unstable in their emotions: Right?** They can go from the heights of exaltation to the depths of despair in a matter of seconds. When my kids were young, if someone took a toy from them, or mom left the room—they would go into travail of soul. But if you give them a lollipop or poked them in the tummy they'd start giggling. They go from one extreme to the other, really fast. Sometimes the emotions are even mixed together (they are laughing and crying at the same time--you parents remember that?). Many Christians are like that. They can be on top of the world spiritually, overflowing with the love of God, and the slightest thing--a little financial trouble, a relational breakdown, a spiritual setback--upsets them and makes them question everything. **Adults aren't like that. Adults are more steady in their emotional stamina.**
- **Kids can be insecure:** Kids need constant reassurance that their parents care about them and aren't going anywhere. When my son Adon was young, he always had a real attachment to his mom, to the point that if she wasn't around, he'd constantly ask, "Where's mom?" Like every 2–3 minutes. Dad was trash. Mom

was where it was at. Once when he was about 3, she left to go to the grocery store, and after about 5 minutes, he asked where she was, really worried, and I was kind of annoyed, so I said, “She left forever.” He seemed to know I was kidding, but my 5-year old, who was also in the room, overhears, and says, “What? She left FOREVER?” Baby Christians are like that. They are insecure about the goodness and promises of God--something bad happens and they’re like, ‘Why God! Where are you?’”

- Or we’re on a trip and if I tell my kids we’re going to stop and get ice cream on the way home, they’ll ask me 100 times, “Dad, are we going to get ice cream at this stop?” Baby Christians are like that: “God, if you don’t fulfill this promise now; do this miracle now, I assume you’re not real or don’t love me.” Baby Christians need constant miracles and miraculous manifestations to feel like God is real, which is why many flock to churches where they promise that.
- How about this one? **Kids can be gullible:** Kids will believe anything. **Illus.** My dad and the green light. The Apostle Paul says that a lot of Christians are like this. In **Ephesians 4:14**, Paul says to the Ephesians, “*You’re like children, you get blown about by every wind of doctrine.*” A lot of Christians are suckers for a powerful speaker; a miracle story; the latest bestselling book. You’ll believe any teacher with slick production and a good worship band. I used to get really depressed when I’d hear of someone who had been a part of our church move to another city and start going to a church that was really different--they didn’t really preach the gospel and were about this deep, but they had good music and fancy camera equipment and they’d tell me, “Oh, I found a church just like the Summit.” I learned that what they meant was, “I found a church with good music; young, good looking people and a preacher who tells funny stories...” and because they are still immature spiritually that’s about all they can discern. They are still infants.
- **One more. Kids can be possessive:** Every parent knows that one word declaration that defines arguments between young siblings, intending to settle disagreements by fiat. What is it? “Mine.” I hold tightly to what I want because my happiness depends on it. If my kids, especially when they were younger, wanted something the other one had, they felt like the quality of their lives from that point forward depended on whether they had THAT doll or THAT Lego piece, right now. “I know there are 217 others right here. But I need that one.” When Christians are like that, that leads to that list in vs. 1 Peter is telling to rid ourselves of: **malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander.** Those come from a childish, insecure, possessive way of looking at the world!
- A few years ago, I was flying back from Dallas with one of our church planters, Andrew Hopper, and the two guys in front of us get in an elbow-wrestling match for the armrest. Andrew and I were looking at each other like, “Is this happening?” The flight attendant asked one of the guys to switch with Andrew. Point is, they were acting like children.

Many Christians are unstable in their emotions, insecure, gullible, and really possessive with their stuff.

Peter tells them, you need to grow up! Why is that so important? Because living in a harsh world requires a grown-up hope, not warm fuzzies or constant stream of signs and wonders. Needing warm fuzzies and constant miracles is not a sign of spiritual hunger, but a sign of spiritual immaturity. You need a grown-up, unwavering faith built on the rock-solid hope of the empty tomb.

That’s the command. Next, he tells you how. One thing I love about Peter--he doesn’t just smack you upside the head. He gives you 4 practical ways to grow up. They are: *Imbibe the word; establish your foundation; embrace your identity; excel at your purpose.*

I. Imbibe the word (vs. 2)

2 Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that *by it* you may grow up into your salvation, (and in that word) **3** if “you have tasted that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).

Babies grow by drinking milk. Lots of it. Several times a day. Not one glass in on Sunday and another next Sunday. All day, every day, several times a day.

That's what Christians need to do with the word, Peter says. Imagine if a mother only fed her baby one day a week. What would happen to that baby? If it even survived, it would likely grow up malnourished, with serious growth defects.

Peter in these verses gives 3 qualities of the Word that explain why the Word is so necessary to our lives.

- **First, the word is imperishable.** This was the end of the last chapter. Peter said, vs. 23, "...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable... "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."
 - Everything else in the world is temporary, but God's word is forever. If you build your life on anything else--the approval of people; the strength of your family ties, the love of your spouse, your financial security, you'll feel insecure and constantly anxious. Whatever it is, eventually it will fade. And if your life is built on it, so will you, along with it.
 - I remember a poem we read in literature class in high school. There were two things I loved about this poem. 1. It was really short. You could read it in less than 30 seconds. 2. The imagery was really striking. The poem was by Percy Bysshe Shelley and it was called **Ozymandias**. Shelley talks about the discovery of a buried monument, corroded and covered by sand, forgotten by history, with the really faint words etched on it, "My name is Ozymandias, the king of kings; look on my works, all you mighty, and despair." Shelley's point was that what seems humongous and permanent in one generation is forgotten or mocked in the next. There are Jerseys hanging in the Dean Smith Center who were larger than life in their day--giants, almost like gods walking around--that today's students don't even know. As much as it pains me to say, there is a group of high school students growing up right now that knows not Michael Jordan. What seems rock solid and permanent in one generation is gone and forgotten by the next.
 - The only way to find permanence in your life is to build it on the word of God.
- **Second, he says, the word is living.** The Bible is not just a book of theological doctrine and premises, it is the living, breathing, word of God. In this book you encounter the very voice of God; the same voice that created the stars, healed lepers, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead. The Scripture is not just about learning ancient truths, it is about God speaking to you, in real time, with real direction and putting that kind of life in your soul. Without that, your soul will shrivel and die.
- **Third, the word gives you confidence.** Go back to vs. 3 in chapter 2 (2:3). You see where he says, in the word you have tasted that the Lord is good? Let me give you a little interpretative tip to help you read 1 Peter. Throughout the book, Peter interchanges "word of God" and the person of Jesus seamlessly. For example, at the end of chapter 1 Peter is talking about building our lives on the word; and then in chapter 2 he shifts to the rock we build on being Jesus. For Peter, "the word" and "Jesus" are the same. In the word of the gospel you meet Jesus, who gives you a taste of the goodness of God and teaches you that in all things you can trust him. In Jesus you see that at your worst moment Jesus still loved you, and you know that if he loved you then he will never leave you now.

So, Peter says, nourish yourself constantly on that good gospel word! Drink it like the milk a baby drinks to survive and without which he'll remain severely undernourished. For some of you, the only Bible you get is from me.

Let me ask: Do you do a quiet time? Do you have a daily time you pour the Word into you? If not, I can guarantee you you are shriveling up spiritually. I don't care how long you've been a Christian or how many facts you know, if you are not hearing the voice of God on a regular basis, your soul is shriveling. You need the constant intake of the imperishable, life-giving, word of God.

Listen: 10% of everything Jesus is recorded as saying was a quotation of previous Scripture. 10%! He was saturated in it. Are you?

Are you looking for something to celebrate these days? You have it! It's right on your nightstand! This good news is even better than anything John Krasinski from The Office can bring to you!

So, imbibe the word. Before we go on to #2, real talk for a minute. What if you just don't feel it? What if you don't find yourself craving the word like a newborn infant.

Here's a little prayer I learned from John Piper I've found helpful. He calls it "**Praying the IOU's.**" These phrases are all taken directly from the Psalms, and are great things to pray when you feel dry spiritually.

- Incline my heart to your understanding
- Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your word
- Unite my heart to fear your name
- Satisfy me this morning with your unfailing love

What if we stopped and did that right now? Pray these 4 things

II. Establish your foundation: Jesus (vv. 5–6)

5 you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame" (Isaiah 28:16).

Part of imbibing the word is establishing your foundation. A foundation is what you build your life on. A key word to underline in these verses is "**cornerstone.**" I'm not a builder, but do know this: the cornerstone is the most important stone, the foundation stone. The cornerstone holds together all the other stones--all of them eventually tie back into it. If the cornerstone is stable, the rest of the building will be OK.

Martin Luther, commenting on this passage, said that for each of us, our lives have a cornerstone. Your cornerstone is whatever you build the rest of your life on. It's your anchor. Your foundation. it's what you turn back to when other parts of your life crumble. IOW, when life falls apart for you, what do you retreat into to tell yourself that it's going to be ok? That there's hope? That things will be ok in the future? Do you find yourself thinking, "Well, I've still got plenty of money so I'll probably be ok.." If so, money is your cornerstone. Is it, "At least I have a strong family." If so, marriage and family are your cornerstone. Is it, "I'm talented and people like me and I can always rebuild," or maybe, "I'm a good person and good guys eventually win," then your goodness is your cornerstone.

Peter tells us that if your cornerstone is anything else but Jesus, your life will be characterized by instability, manifested in all those things Peter listed out in vs. 1: malice; hatred; envy (jealousy of others); deceit—lying to make yourself look better--hypocrisy; slander; codependency; many other things.

Look at what he says in vs. 7: 7 So honor (longevity, legacy, success) will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, "The stone that the builders rejected—this one has become the cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22), Jesus will be, vs, 8, a stone you either build your life one, or one that you "A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over" (Isaiah 8:14).

Either you build your life on Jesus, or the Kingship of Jesus will ultimately crush you.

We'll come back to that, but could we just take a minute and celebrate the confidence we have in Jesus?
Let's sing: *Cornerstone*

III. Embrace your identity (v. 9a)

9 But **you are** (this is who you are now) **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession,**

Establishing your foundation will lead you to embracing your new identity. I want to talk for just a moment about this massively important concept of identity.

Identity, simply defined, is your self-definition of who you are, your value, the role you are here to play. I've always found **Clayton King's** definition of identity helpful: **Identity is what the most important person** (or people) **in your life thinks about you.** REPEAT.

Who is that for you?

Most of us live our whole lives plagued with the question, "Am I enough?" and trying to prove to ourselves and others that we are enough. Am I man enough? Am I strong enough? Smart enough? Pretty enough? Skinny enough? Good enough?

- And the point of just about every advertisement we see on TV is that we're NOT enough: You're not a good enough mom unless you use this brand. You're not a good enough husband unless you buy this jewelry. You're not a good enough person unless you take this cruise. You're not good enough unless (whatever they convince you that you need so that you can buy their product line their pockets with your money so they'll have enough). We hear it all day every day: You're not yet BLANK enough...
- When she cheats, it's because you weren't a good enough man or husband. When he looks at porn it's because you're good enough. When the kids ruin their lives, it's because you didn't do well enough.
- And even if you are enough right now, you live with the fear that one day you won't. Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player of his generation--but one day he'll be surpassed and forgotten. Michael Phelps was the greatest swimmer. But that won't last forever.
- My family loves the movie *The Greatest Showman*. It's the fictional account of PT Barnum's rise to success. There's a moving scene where his prospective father-in-law tells him he'll never be good enough for his daughter. He says, "She'll see that and one day come back; she'll grow tired of the poor life you are able to give her." That played to a deep insecurity he had, one that we all have. So no matter how successful Barnum was, he was never satisfied. His wife begged him to realize he was good enough, but he just couldn't shake it.
- Instagram and FB are built on showing that you are not enough. Everybody puts up a fake life designed to scream, "You're ok, but I'm more" and you wonder "Am I really enough?" She puts up that picture of her perfect little kids but you aren't even looking at her kids, you're looking past them at that new kitchen she has and wondering, "Why is her life so much better than mine?"
- The American College Health Association has noted the rising anxiety in this generation of students entering college, and they say it's because the primary message children receive is that they better be the best at everything or they won't make it. It's made exponentially worse by social media, Instagram, because everyone is creating a fake "best" version of themselves to compete with everyone else's fake version. They're afraid to reveal their inadequacies and insecurities.

Peter tells us we can stop this frantic race to the top. Because Jesus is our foundation, we have a new identity. You are (vs. 9) a **chosen race**, he says. God chose you to be in his family. What's more: You are "**a royal priesthood.**" In Israel, the chosen people, there was a specially chosen line of royalty--the line of Judah, and a separate specially chosen line of priesthood--the line of Levi. Peter says in Jesus, you are all of these. You are the chosen of the chosen of the chosen! He continues, a **people for his possession.** You are a valued

possession Jesus purchased with his blood! The King of Kings set his affection on you and he has a plan for you.

Friend, what more do you need to be “enough?” You are not enough because you are more remarkable than someone else, or because you got to the top, or you are better, but because of who loves you, stands behind you, and has put you into service.

Listen, especially you kids and high school students: You will never win enough to feel like you are enough. And the good news is that you don’t need to. Jesus won for you. He values you and promises he has a plan to use you for good. That is enough.



Let me show you this: You have to choose where you will build your identity.

Smart/pretty/strong/athletic/popular/rich/righteous enough.¹ Or because of who you are in Christ. If you build your identity out here, you’ll always be insecure. In here, you’ll be a rock that can weather any storm and makes a positive contribution to the world, like living stones built up in his temple.

Listen, let me say this before we move on to our last point because some if you desperately need to hear this: You need to release yourself from the self-imposed obligation to be enough for others. You're never going to be wife enough to save him, ladies. Men, you can't be husband enough to keep her at home at night. Sons, you can't be son enough to make your insecure daddy proud. Ladies, you won't ever be daughter enough to please your pride-filled parents. You can't be their Savior. They need Jesus to fill that insecurity in their lives. You just need to be who God made you to be and fulfill his purpose in your life and let his affirmation and approval be your identity.²

Before we move on to our last point, could we just celebrate this with a song? Let’s sing, **“I am who you say I am!”**

¹ Henderson, Chip, “Am I Enough,” preached at Pinelake, on January 20, 2019.

² Adapted from Henderson, Chip, “Am I Enough,” preached at Pinelake, on January 20, 2019.

IV. Excel at your purpose (v. 9b)

vs. 9: "...so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (vs. 9)

Once you imbibe the word, establish your foundation, and embrace your identity, you are ready to live out your purpose.

Our job is to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us from darkness to light. I love Peter's imagery here. In Genesis, God created the world ex nihilo. There was nothing, and then God created everything. That's you. You were completely unrighteous. Spiritually dead. And then God spoke and made you righteous and alive. Proclaim that.

Whenever you sing, "I am who you say I am," you are declaring that.

You're here to declare his excellencies, not your own. As he reminds in vs. 11, we are sojourners, exiles--you're passing through. We don't care how many people know our name; we only care how many people know his name.

Many of you know that last week a beloved saint and brother here ended a long battle with cancer and went to be with Jesus. He was one of the original 300. A man whose faith and sacrifice helped create this place, and after serving in a lay capacity for a long time, joined our staff a few years ago to help administer benevolence.

David was wholly focused on pointing people to Jesus. Until his dying breath. One of our pastors, Josh Navey, was with him a few days before he died, and David told him, "My nurse here is named (and he said the name) I asked (him) if he was a believer when I arrived, and he said no. He believed there was a higher power, but nothing more. So I've still got a few days left." I've got a few days left to let people know the excellencies of him who called me from darkness to light.

That's the role for all of us in whatever days we have left. David shows us that the measure of our lives is not how many people knew your name, but how many people you caused to know *his* name.

That's what Peter says. Let me close with Peter's warning. Peter says that this word, this hope, this new identity is offered to you in Jesus the cornerstone. He's ready for all you who would receive him. But if you don't receive him, that cornerstone turns into the rock that crushes you.

It's like C.S. Lewis said: there are only two categories of people. Those who become insanely happy in Jesus and those who find Jesus to be their worst enemy.

Here's how Charles Spurgeon said that to his congregation in 1856, and with this I close: "He who would place himself in front of a fast moving railway car will be crushed and would be just as foolish as you who are opposing the gospel. If the gospel is true, remember that truth is mighty and must prevail. Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed. But let me tell you, when the railway car runs over you the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size. For what are you? A tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing and not leave you even a name as having ever been an opponent of the gospel. Let all the infidels in the world know assuredly that the gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures...their efforts to oppose the gospel are not even worthy of our notice. And we need not fear that they can stop the truth. They are like a gnat who thinks he can quench the sun. Go tiny insect and do it if

you can. You will only burn your wings and die. Likewise there may be a fly who thinks it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean if you can, O fly. More likely you will sink in it and it will drink you.”

Which category are you in? Are you in the category of those who have found security and identity in him and are learning to be insanely happy in him, or have you made yourself his enemy?

Have you surrendered your life to Christ and his purposes? If not, do so right now! Pray with me...

And then let's sing!

