

INTRODUCE

So, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to 1 Peter chapter 1.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to 1 Peter 1,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find 1 Peter 1 on page **1014**.

CONTEXT

So, the letter of 1 Peter has gone like this so far:

- Peter, writing to scattered and persecuted churches,
- reminds those Christians that they are EXILES,
 - this world is not their home...
 - **but they have been born again to a living hope.**
 - Their hope is in their their salvation...
 - and the future hope for them
 - in heaven.
- And last week Peter gave instructions on HOW to be EXILES
 - by commanding them to BE DIFFERENT.

And today, he picks up on the same metaphor as he did back in verse 3.

that is, being BORN AGAIN.

This is a common metaphor in the New Testament,

- but today, Peter lays out...
- the RESULTS of the new birth.

It shows you HOW TO KNOW if you've actually been BORN AGAIN...

and WHAT TO DO once you have been BORN AGAIN.

ILLUSTRATION: MY STORY

Now, there are so many new people in the last few months here, that I want to tell you a little bit about me.

- I wasn't really raised in the church,
- so, I want to ask the question,
 - *"When was I born again?"*

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Now, when I was a kid.

- It seemed like every once-in-a-while
- my mom had a guilty conscience...
 - Maybe it was from her Catholic upbringing...
 - or she just needed a morning off from us kids...
 - or maybe she just didn't want us to grow up...
 - to deal drugs
 - or to murder her while she slept.
 - I'm not sure!
- But for whatever reason, every once-in-a-while...
 - she would drag me, reluctantly...
 - and drop me off in Sunday School.

And listen, I hated going to Sunday School. Why?

Because it didn't make sense to me!

- I didn't know any of the kids there...
- And I didn't know any of the stories...
 - I didn't know songs about wee little men...
 - And everything had hand motions...

And they'd be doing what they called "sword drills"

- which was a race to see who could find...
- a book of the Bible fastest!
 - Nothing like a bunch of 2nd graders
 - having little anxiety attacks in Sunday School.
 - "Ahh!!! How do you spell...Habakkuk!!!"
- And I'm the one kid...
- who had to use the Table of Contents.
 - I felt like an idiot!

But I'm sure that at some point...

- in one of those Sunday School classes...
- I "prayed the prayer" to ask Jesus into my heart.

So, was that when I was BORN AGAIN?

AWANAS

And then, on the block that I grew up on,

- there was one Christian family I knew,
- and they invited me to Awanas.

Now, Awanas is like a Christian-Cub-Scouts that churches put on.

- They had vests
 - with little crown pins
 - with jewels that you earn.
- Ok, little militant Christian kids all decked out like Patton.

Now, this is not a judgment on Awana, because they're a great ministry.

But I remember going a couple of times,

- and all the other kids there
- had their vests all decked out
- with jewels and badges.

And I had nothing!

- A red vest with nothing on it.
- I looked like a bizarro Wal-Mart worker...
 - I couldn't memorize scripture.
 - I couldn't win in the sword drills.
- But I wanted a little something!
- I wanted some vest bling.
 - So, there was one pin I could get...
 - it was the salvation pin.

So, to get this pin you had to be BORN AGAIN...

- which meant all I had to do
 - was pray the sinner's prayer
 - with an Awana leader,
- and I got the salvation pin!
 - It was the only pin I got,
 - and after a couple of Awana visits I was out.

But, was that when I was BORN AGAIN?

YOUTH GROUP

And then, when I was in 8th grade,

- I was invited to a youth group by a friend of mine...
- and I liked it and started going regularly.

Now, with this group, I went on retreats and to camps and trips.

- And I prayed the prayer...
- to give my life to Christ...
- more times that I can count.
 - Right?

Like at every youth camp...

- all hopped up on pixie sticks and mountain dew...
- running on 3 cumulative hours of sleep...
 - like, they could've asked me to dedicate my life...
 - to a Christmas tree and I would have!

But I probably gave my life to Jesus a dozen times or more...
just to make sure it stuck.

TRANSITION

So, the question is, when was I BORN AGAIN?

- Was it the first time I prayed the prayer in Sunday School?
- Was it when I earned that pin at Awanas?
- Was it at one of my many times at camp?

It must have been at some point...

- because at age 16, I knew I was saved...
- I just can't pin-point exactly when it happened.

GROW UP

You see, it's sometimes tough to pin-point when you were born again.

But Peter makes it clear today:

- IF you truly are born again, there will be RESULTS...
- and the results are that you will **SLIDE GROW UP**

So, just to be clear:

- The result of being born again...is...a baby.
- And babies...GROW UP.

Therefore, once you get saved...once you are born again...
you should expect enormous spiritual growth.

And that's not hyperbole.

- I think the kind of spiritual growth
- a Christian should expect
 - is at least, if not more than,
- the difference between a new-born baby
- and a fully mature adult.

When you are born again,

- you are starting a journey
- that will grow you spiritually
- far beyond what you can even comprehend!

TRANSITION

So, how do you know if you've been born again? You GROW UP!

Now note: you don't need to GROW UP in order to be BORN AGAIN!

- No you are BORN AGAIN...
- and then you GROW UP.

We'll see this in our text today,

and I've got 3 marks of spiritual growth for us.

Let's look at the text. 1 Peter 1 starting in verse 22:

1 PETER 1:22-23

[22] Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, [23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

MARK 1: INTERNAL

Notice the relationship between 22 and 23.

- What is true of us in verse 22 is BECAUSE of 23...
 - 23 says “since you have been born again.”
- So, what’s true about us in 22 is BECAUSE of the new birth.

And what did 22 say was true about you?

Having purified your souls.

The first mark of GROWING UP: spiritual growth is **SLIDE INTERNAL**

It’s INTERNAL.

You have purified your souls.

- Now, the Greek word for *souls* there is *psychē*...
 - where we get our word *psychology*.
- Peter means your spiritual center...your spiritual core.

So, what Peter is saying is:

- Being BORN AGAIN transforms you...
 - at your center,
 - at your core,
 - at your soul.
- It’s INTERNAL

And it’s critical to understanding Christianity, that you see that being born again is INTERNAL.

ILLUSTRATION: BRICKS & FLOWERS

You see, there are really two ways to see things grow.

- There is a mechanically external way to grow things.
- And there is an organically internal way to grow things.

Tim Keller uses this illustration:

If you have a pile of bricks,

- you can grow that pile of bricks...
- by throwing more bricks on the pile.
 - It's increasing!
 - It's growing!

On the other hand, if you plant a tulip bulb in the ground,

- over the days and weeks,
- out will grow a flower.
 - And we call that growing, too.

But they are two wildly different ways of growing.

- One is an EXTERNAL...MECHANICAL...heaping up...
- while the other is an INTERNAL...ORGANIC...growth.

APPLICATION

See, the difference between external and internal,

- is that you can do EXTERNAL...
- without ever changing your insides.
 - You can come to church,
 - and you can read your bible,
 - and you can sing the songs,
 - and you can do good deeds.
- And that's like heaping bricks.

But have you **purified your soul**?

- Have you actually become a new person?
- Has there been an INTERNAL core transformation?

Gosh, we say this all the time at Fathom:

Belief always precedes behavior!

The bible is constantly trying to show the difference between:

- external behavior modification...
- and internal spiritual growth.

APPLICATION: SLOW

And I don't want us to forget the metaphor of being born again...

- when you become a Christian,
- you're a baby!

When you are born again, you start out as a spiritual baby.

And that means this growth will be gradual...it's SLOW!

It doesn't happen all at once!

ILLUSTRATION: SLOW

So, I've been a Christian for more than 20 years now,

- and MOST of my growth has been SLOW...
 - **there are seasons that feel like growth spurts...**
- but most of the time it feels excruciatingly SLOW!
- Anyone else?

You look back and think, *"Gosh, I thought I'd be further along by now!"*

Internal spiritual growth is SLOW.

And this can be hard, especially for newer, less mature believers, to get.

GROWING UP is INTERNAL.

MARK 2: OBEDIENT

The next mark of spiritual growth is that it's **SLIDE OBEDIENT**

Peter says:

- Having purified your souls
- BY YOUR OBEDIENCE to the truth

So, now, what is going on here?

- Because you said in point 1
 - that it's INTERNAL...
- Like, you said external behavior
- is not a sign of being born again.

So, what do you mean by **obedience to the truth**?

Cause that sounds external!

Listen,

- part of HOW we are transformed internally,
- is by growing in our transformation externally.

And the only reason why Peter would have to command us to obedience,

- was if there was a chance,
 - or a possibility,
 - or a temptation,
- towards being disobedient.

Now, follow me here:

- Did you know that obeying the truth...
- comes with a temptation to stray from it?

This is why God commands us to be OBEDIENT.

ILLUSTRATION: FIRST TIME

Now, did you know that humans...

- are the only part of creation...
- that don't do exactly what God tells them...
- the first time?

I'd never had that thought before until this week!

- God says, "*let there be light*"...
 - immediate obedience!
- He tells the wind and waves to be still...
 - they obey first time.
- Even the demons obey his word...
 - Ain't no demon arguing about being cast out!
 - Just BAM!

You see, some of us didn't realize this when we signed on with Jesus...
but spiritual growth isn't just a straight line.

It's more like trying to hit a curveball.

GROWING UP is full of curves, and speed changes, and misses.

- This is why OBEDIENCE is a part of spiritual growth.

So, in GROWING UP...

- there IS behavioral modification...
- just not ONLY behavior modification.

The external follows the internal.

ILLUSTRATION: ESCALATOR

But I meet people often,

- who freak out at the first sign of trouble,
- sometimes even walking away from God.

See, sometimes we expect our faith life to be just like an escalator.

Let me ask you,

- when you ride on an escalator,
 - do you just stand there
 - or do you walk up it?
- Write this down!
 - Stand right.
 - Walk left!

Just like when you're driving!

Like, at DIA, there are those moving walkways.

- Have you ever noticed...
- the people...
- who just stand there...
 - on the left!?!?

It's not a ride!

- You don't notice...
- this traffic jam of people...
- with their roly suitcases...
- standing behind you!
 - WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?!?

You watch next time...

those are the people who trip at the end of the walkway!

APPLICATION

But that's how so many of us think faith works.

- That we start following Jesus and it just smoothly...escalates.
- No effort needed!
 - *"Look at me...*
 - *just riding...*
 - *I'm born again...*
 - *you can know that...*
 - *because I'm not doing anything...*
 - *that's the proof of my faith...*
 - *it's only internal...*
 - *it doesn't take any energy,*
 - *any work,*
 - *any activity..."*

But then you find out...

- *in actuality...you're just standing still,*
- *pretending you're going somewhere.*

APPLICATION: GRACE VS. WORKS

Man, we've talked about this...

- in every New Testament book...
- we've preached here at Fathom,
 - and really, in the whole Bible...

But we've said: you are saved by grace alone...not by works.

- You aren't saved by earning.
- You aren't saved by your works.

AND THAT'S TRUE! You are saved that way!

- But I fear that many of us hear that...
- and we just end up standing on an escalator.

You aren't saved BY your obedience...

BUT you are saved TO obedience!

Peter says

- Listen, this is INTERNAL...
 - but don't misunderstand.
- You've got to stay obedient to the truth!
 - Because this journey is full of curves.
- So, you've gotta work....you've gotta OBEY!
 - It's not to earn...
 - but it definitely requires effort.

Grace is against EARNING...it's not against EFFORT.

TRANSITION

And, if you want God to take you deeper,

- If you want to GROW UP!
 - It's actually in the curves that you grow.
 - It's not in the straightaways.

In fact, in the straightaways, you might forget that you need God.

Just cruising on a walking sidewalk.

Just looking around as the world passes you by...

- But spiritual growth,
 - really being BORN AGAIN,
- is always accompanied with OBEDIENCE.

MARK 3: RELATIONAL

Now notice in verse 22 where it says

- having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth
- FOR a sincere brotherly love.

That word FOR actually means INTO.

And it's the third mark of GROWING UP.

Spiritual growth is **SLIDE RELATIONAL**

- Spiritual growth includes a deep love for...
 - INTO...
- the brothers...
- other Christians.

Listen, if you are truly born again,

- you will have a sincere brotherly love...
- you will love one another earnestly.

ILLUSTRATION: FAMILIES

Hey, you wanna know something about babies?

Babies live in families!

- They have to!
- They can't survive on their own.
 - You don't have a 18-month-old
 - living in an apartment by themselves.
- Babies can't survive without families.

And neither can born again Christians!

But we live in the most highly individualized time in all of human history.

And it leads us astray.

- Because we believe that it's just you and Jesus!
- And you don't need to go to church to be a Christian.
 - You can just listen to your favorite preacher...
 - and stream your favorite worship album...
 - and go to church whenever you feel like it...
 - and check out different places.
- But you don't belong to a place.
- And you aren't committed to a people.

But listen to me:

- Church isn't an event you just attend...
 - or what's far more accurate to say today...
- church isn't just CONTENT you consume.

No, it's a community you belong to.

It's your family!

If you're truly born again it will lead to RELATIONSHIPS.

- A genuine love for your brothers and sisters.

ILLUSTRATION: SCREWTAPE

Now, C.S. Lewis wrote a book called The Screwtape Letters,

- which are theologically fictional letters
- from a senior demon to a junior demon
- about how to tempt "their patient"...
 - a human being.

And in Chapter 2 of The Screwtape Letters we read this:

SLIDE *I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed...One of our great allies at present is the Church itself. When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided. You want to lean pretty heavily on those neighbours. Provided that any of those neighbours sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous. Never let it come to the surface; never let him ask what he expected them to look like. Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman.*

Now, I know that's fiction...but don't you see the **SLIDE RELATIONAL** attack that Lewis presents to the newly BORN AGAIN person?

Spiritual growth ALWAYS produces sincere love for other Christians.

CONCLUSION

So, that's what I see in these verses.

- How do you know if you're really born again?
- Well, you will **SLIDE W/PADS GROW UP...**
 - just like a baby does!

And the three marks of that kind of spiritual growth are that it's

- INTERNAL,
- OBEDIENT,
- and RELATIONAL.

And then to close, verses 24-25, Peter quotes the prophet Isaiah:

1 PETER 1:24-25

[24] for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

[25] but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

What he’s saying is the old life...

- before being BORN AGAIN...
 - is like grass!
 - It’s short lived.
 - It dries up.
 - It is wilting.

But the NEW BIRTH...based on God’s Word...

goes on forever!

ILLUSTRATION: HARPER GROWING UP

So, I’ll end like this: when a child is born...you think they’re perfect!

- And you wouldn’t change a thing about them!
- BUT you still want them to grow up.

For me, one of the happiest days of my life...

- was when we were in the ultrasound room,
 - and you know they put that jelly on Maryse’s belly.
- And the tech said, “*congratulations, it’s a girl.*”

And I didn't have sisters growing up,

- so, I didn't know anything about what to expect,
- but instantly I thought of my little girl...
- and I knew she was precious.
 - She was my little girl!

And the scan went on,

- and the tech's like,
 - *"Look, she's got hair!"*
- Which...look at me...no big surprise...
 - the Martin's are hairy people!

But on the screen...

- it looks like she's got hair all around the back of her head,
 - but the top's bald.
- And I'm like,
 - "Oh no!"
 - *My little girl's got a skullet!"*

You know what a skullet is?

- It's a mullet...with bald on top.
 - If you've got a skullet...
 - I pray someone loves you enough...
 - to rebuke you.

But I prayed,

- *"Lord Jesus, heal her of this malady...*
- *cause Middle School's gonna be rough...*
- *for the girl with a skullet!"*

But on the day when she was born,

- I saw that she had out-grown the skullet...Phew!

But I looked at her, and she was perfect!

- And I was her daddy.
- And she was my little girl.

But...listen, it would not be good if she would stay that way forever!

It wouldn't...

- And gosh there are days when I miss that little skullet freak...

But all good parents want their children to GROW UP.

You see, over time,

- as Harper grows into the woman that God has her to be,
- we celebrate that growth.

It's actually a sad and tragic thing...

- to see a child,
 - or especially an adult,
- who doesn't grow up.

It's a sign that something's wrong!

ENDING

And it's a sad thing we see all-too-often in American Christianity.

- Someone gets saved!
 - They are BORN AGAIN...
- but then they never really GROW UP.

And listen, it is a good thing that we celebrate conversions and baptisms!

Listen, just last week we had another person at Fathom get saved!

There have been a number of new salvation this year at our church!

- And praise God for that!
- Praise God for the NEW BIRTH!

And we're gonna get the baptismal out...

- and do some dunking!
 - And if you haven't been baptized as a believer...
 - man, please talk to me about it...
 - we'd love to get you baptized!
- It's gonna be awesome!

But here at Fathom we want to be a place that's serious about BOTH...

- people DISCOVERING Jesus for the first time!
- AND people GOING DEEPER as we mature as disciples.

We want you to change.

We want you to mature.

We want you to GROW UP.

So, are you?

Have you?

Do you continue to?

Do you even want to?

You want to know if you've really been BORN AGAIN...

Ask yourself: am I GROWING UP?

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

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- Keller, Tim. *Born to Grow*.
- Lewis, C.S. The Screwtape Letters.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. The New American Commentary. 1, 2 Peter, Jude.