

Series: **Living Under Pressure** – week 7

CDOBC – beginning on 2/7/16

Today's Title: **"Spiritual Fitness"**

*April 3, 2016 ~ 1 Peter 2:1-3*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To remind believers of their new life and to help them be spiritually healthy and strong.

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The beginning of a new semester in school.

A New Year.

Your first day on the job.

The first date.

Opening Day of baseball season - where every team is in 1<sup>st</sup> place.

There is something about a clean slate - a new beginning which really appeals to us.

The chance to start fresh and 'do it the right way from day 1' is very motivating and it's easier to get out of bed on those days.

For the Christian, when you put your faith in Christ - you have a brand new beginning.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

The old way of living is replaced with a new way.

The sin nature is no longer the only choice - your new nature in Christ is now present to guide you and the power of the

Holy Spirit is with you to help you make the right choices in life.

For some of you, your new beginning in Christ was many years ago - decades ago.

For others, it's more recent. Maybe you put your faith in Christ last year - or maybe in the last few months - or maybe last week on Easter Sunday.

How is your new life going?

Is there a marked difference between your old life before Christ - and your new life with Christ?

Or...like so many New Years resolutions...has the excitement for change drifted away into a bag of potato chips?

Are you spiritually fit...or have you lapsed back into the unhealthy ways of living?

Turn to **1 Peter 2:1-3**

*Opening prayer*

Peter writes:

“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 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.”

This morning I'm going to begin with vs. 3 which will help us understand the text and how the text fits into the context - especially chapter 1 which we finished before our Easter services.

**You have a new life in Christ vs. 3**

“now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

This verse has its roots in:

**Psalm 34:8**

“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.”

And it points back to what Peter wrote in chapter 1.

**1:3**

“In His great mercy He has given us new birth...”

**1:6**

“In all this you greatly rejoice...”

**1:8**

“...you love Him...you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy...”

**1:22**

“...you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth...”

**1:23**

“For you have been born again...”

If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins, then you have new life in Jesus Christ.

Peter is reminding you of your faith - and you have already “tasted that the Lord is good.”

Why does the Apostle need to restate this?

I love a good steak...

I love good BBQ...

And I don't need anyone to remind me!

If God is so 'tasty' - then why the reminder?

Remember who he's writing to. He's writing to:

“to God's elect, exiles scattered...” (1:1)

He's writing to Christians who have been suffering under persecution for a long time - and the persecution is only going to increase and get more brutal.

They either have lost loved ones because of their faith - or they soon will lose loved ones because of their faith. He's reminding them because as the years go by - you can lose your first love.

Because as the years go by the excitement of your new life can be erased by the constant battle against sin and if you've lost many of those battles you've lost the sight, smell and taste of what was once so familiar.

So Peter reminds his readers that they:

"have tasted that the Lord is good."

The Psalmist writes:

**Psalm 119:140-142**

"Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and Your servant loves them. Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget Your precepts. Your righteousness is everlasting and Your law is true."

But this is not everyone's testimony. It's the ideal...but it's not everyone's experience.

Often, when we are "lowly and despised", we do forget the precepts of God (principles, teachings). When we are "lowly and despised" because of our faith in Christ - we often turn away from our faith thinking it will stop the pain and rejection.

But Peter is reminding the scattered exiles to remember the beauty of their new life in Jesus.

So...when we remember our new life in Christ....

When we remember who we are in Christ - our identity in Him, how does that make a difference in life?

How does your faith transform you and conform you to the image of Christ?

**Christians get rid of sinful habits in life** vs. 1

“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”

Physical fitness is a huge business in America.

One reason this is big business is because America’s waistline has been getting bigger!

There is a real need for people to be healthier.

Unhealthy people have more problems in life.

Unhealthy people can’t enjoy life to the fullest degree, and they are often limited to what they can do.

We see a parallel in the spiritual life of Christians.

Christians in America seem to be very unhealthy.

There is a great disconnect between what many self-identified Christians believe and how they live their life.

They say they agree with biblical morality, but they live together before marriage.

They say church is important, but their church attendance is irregular.

As a result, their testimony is not compelling.

As a result, the church cannot operate to it's full potential - because the Body is unhealthy!

As a result, many believes never experience the joy, power and vibrant life Jesus promised (John 10:10).

In these verses, Peter tells us 2 things which will result in good spiritual health - spiritual fitness.

The first is to get rid of sinful habits in your life.

Think of this in terms of spiritual nutrition.

If you stop eating junk food - and eat what's good for you, you will improve your health. What's true physically is true spiritually.

So Peter tells us to empty out the pantry of some nasty stuff!

“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”

“rid yourselves” (*apothemenoi* - aorist participle) In the Greek, this is the first word in the sentence which means it's in emphatic position. This is the action necessary for a Christian to do.

This word has the idea of taking off a piece of clothing - or to lay something aside - or to renounce it altogether. This is the picture Peter wants us to see.

We must renounce these things - we must take them off and never put them back on.

**Colossians 3:8-10**

“But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

**James 1:21**

“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil (*kakia*) that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

The first unhealthy thing we must get rid of is Malice.

**Malice** (*kakia*) is a word which has the idea of wanting to harm someone else. It's general wickedness - and is also translated “evil” (James 1:21), “spite”, or “trouble” in other passages.

The second unhealthy thing is deceit.

**Deceit** (*dolos*) literally means ‘bait’ which you put on a fishhook. Figuratively (as it is used here) it refers to tricking someone into a bad or painful situation. It often refers to taking advantage of someone who is already struggling and deceiving them to fall deeper into their troubles.

*Kick them when they're already down* is the idea here.

Number 3 is hypocrisy.

**Hypocrisy** (*hupokrisis*) refers to playing a part - insincere words and intentions. Spiritually fake - pretending to

care when you don't. Pretending to agree when you believe the opposite.

**Envy** (*phthonos*) is anger at someone else's joy or success. It's being happy when they experience sorrow or pain. The envious person cannot "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rom. 12:15), but they rejoice when others weep.

Last in the list is **slander**. (*katalalia*)

Peter says "slander of every kind" - no exceptions! This is gossip and backbiting - spreading rumors which defame someone's character. Saying things which may/may not be true - but the intent is to discredit someone - to speak negatively about them to someone else.

This list is certainly not exhaustive - there are many other sins which could have been included, but each of these sins will destroy love for one another.

**1:22**

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart."

When you are persecuted for your faith - when your faith is costing you - you need your fellow-believers in the church to support you - encourage you - to love you.

If you are going to live according to your new nature - your new life in Christ, if you are going to be healthy in your faith - then you must get rid of the junk food - get rid of the harmful/sinful things which will destroy the



love and unity in the church - and it will also destroy your appetite for healthy food...which brings us to vs. 2. Vs. 1 tells us what to get rid of - vs. 2 tells us what to add - what to pursue.

**Christians crave the Word of God** vs. 2

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

Peter’s talking about craving the Word of God - the Bible.

KJV - “the sincere milk of the word”

NASB - “long for the pure milk of the word”

Do you ever get grouchy and cranky when you’re hungry?

Does your kindness drop at the same pace as your blood sugar?

Babies have a way of letting us know they want/need something.

Sometimes it’s really tough to know what they want.

Do they need their diaper changed?

Do they need a nap?

Do they have a stomach ache or headache?

Normally, it was pretty easy to know when they were hungry - because it was time!

And as the dad - in the first year of their life - I wasn’t that much help for them!

They needed their mom!

Here is the humbling part of our passage today.

Do you crave the word of God - like a baby craves their mother's milk?

How important is God's Word to you?

Is it vital for your life?

Do you feel weak and malnourished if you don't read it?

**Rom. 7:22**

"For in my inner being I delight in God's law..."

**Psalm 1:2**

"...whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on His law day and night."

**Jeremiah 15:16**

"When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your name, LORD God Almighty."

Notice the qualifier Peter puts on this "spiritual milk" - it must be "pure".

Don't water it down - don't mix it with something else - it doesn't need any additives to make it easier to swallow.

Fill your spiritual stomach with the pure Word of God.

"so that by it you may grow up in your salvation..."

It's amazing what science has taught us regarding the nutritional qualities of breast milk. The health benefits of breast feeding are amazing - and it's almost as if a baby knows how important this is for them!

In 1965 Gatorade was invented to help the University of Florida football team stay hydrated in the heat and humidity of south Florida.

Since then, dozens of nutrition or sport drinks have hit the marketplace with promises of improving performance and giving your body everything it needs.

A few years ago a new product started showing up in the fitness drink market - Muscle Milk.

Milk loaded up with protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.

In other words - it does more than quench your thirst.

These products provide things your body needs - especially if you're extremely active.

This is what the bible does for the Christian. It supplies us with the spiritual proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals we need to fight sin and pursue holiness!

We need God's Word...do you crave it?

"so that by it you may grow up in your salvation..." In the Greek this is a passive verb, which tells us this is something which will be done to us - not something we do for ourselves. We don't make ourselves grow...the pure Word of God will grow us!

We must submit ourselves to it - we must drink it in...but the results are from the power of God's Word - not our own power or goodness.

This is what good, healthy food does...it works in us.  
It has the vitamins and minerals our body needs.

**Hebrews 4:12**

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

This is how your life is transformed - how you are conformed to the image of Christ. The Word of God judges your thoughts and attitudes - and the Holy Spirit in you gives you the power to obey the Word of God - the power to choose the Word of God instead of the flesh.

**Apply it...**

Make sure you have tasted salvation.

**A**dmit your sins

**B**elieve in Jesus as your Savior

**C**ommit each day to Christ

Get rid of sin

Consume God's Word

Crave it...

Consume it...

It will grow you up in the faith!

Close in prayer