

Title: It's Good to Grow
Date: September 16, 2018
Subject: How to live as possessors of salvation
Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13 – 2:3

People employ motivational statements to, well, motivate themselves and others as they tackle life and conquer the world. Here are a few: “If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito” (Dalai Lama). “Listen, smile, agree and then do whatever you were going to do anyway.” “Never let anyone treat you like a yellow Starburst. You are a pink Starburst.” “Remember you are unique – just like everybody else” (Margaret Meade). “Life is too short to be serious all the time. So, if you can't laugh at yourself, call me...I'll laugh at you.” “Cupcakes are muffins that believed in miracles.” “If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you” (Steven Wright).

The Lord provides motivations for his children. READ 1:13 – 2:3

I. Motivations for living

The passage begins with *therefore*. So what should we do when there's a *therefore*? Absolutely nothing. Isn't that what most people seem to do to this traffic sign? Just ignore it. Nothing to see here.

We need to ask, “What's the “therefore” there for?” It's a huge traffic signal. “Pay close attention.” *Therefore* connects the doctrinal section of the book, only a few paragraphs long, to the rest of the book which is the practical outworking of the teaching. What comes before *therefore* is the foundation. The first motivation.

A. God's salvation provision. *Therefore* points back to God's salvation provision as summarized in the opening verses. Here's an even briefer summary. The God of the universe in his boundless mercy has generously grants a salvation more valuable than anything this world has to offer, offers a staggering inheritance and allows anyone to be rightly connected to him as his children when they truly believe in him.

More motivations are scattered through the verses that were read. They're introduced by words such as “as,” “but just as,” “since,” “now that,” “for you know.”

B. Christ's second coming (v. 13). His return includes the rewarding of his followers.

C. Obedient children of the Father (v. 14, 17). Children want to please good fathers. That should be how we regard God. We often address him as Father. We want to be praised by him.

D. God's holiness (v. 15). There's no mistaking the Lord's spiritual condition. He is holy, without defect, without sin. He is perfectly holy and wholly perfect.

E. God is our judge (v. 17). He's going to judge. He'll do so in an impartial manner. He can't be bribed with riches as he owns it all. We don't want to be punished by him. This is future for the most part. There can be present judgment in the form of discipline as the Lord disciplines his children. Some discipline is training and some is for correction.

F. The staggering cost of redemption paid by Christ (vv. 18 – 21). Our salvation wasn't brought about by something as measly as money. It wasn't by something as wimpy as our goodness. Salvation could only be achieved by the complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ. One of the amazingly stupendous aspects of salvation is Jesus knew what he would have to do before the creation of the world. He knew he would become human and suffer the horrific death on the cross. He had at least 4000 years to think about it.

What would most people do if they had that much time to think about something horrible that was going to happen to them? What if they had ten years? Ten days? Ten minutes? Wouldn't we try to come up with a way to avoid it? Jesus stared down through history and steadfastly set himself on the course that would lead to the cross because he knew it was the one and only way for you and me to be redeemed from sin.

It didn't end there. He was raised from the dead and glorified in heaven. The truth of his death and resurrection are the foundation of our faith and hope.

G. Personal experience of salvation (vv. 22, 23). We've been purified, cleansed from the dirt of sin. We've been born again. This new birth has been accomplished through God's word which is alive and endures through all time and eternity. In contrast, people are, we are just a bunch of grass and flowers. We might look good for a little, some for a little while longer than others, but time and age, and death catches up with all. God's Word possesses vitality and durability forever enabling it to be the basis for gaining new life.

H. Tasted of God's goodness (2:3). It's like we've taken the first bite and found it to be good and satisfying. Ever try to get a child to try something new? Like ice cream? After the first bite, they make contorted faces but quickly reach for the spoon and open their mouth because they want more.

That's the motivation. Much of it is associated with who believers because of Christ. On the other side of *therefore* and the motivation is the response. Since all of this is true, here's how we're called to live our lives.

II. The response

There are two parts to the response. The first involves the mind.

A. The mind (v. 13). What's meant by the mind? Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology defines it as "That part of the human being in which thought takes place and perception and decisions to do good, evil, and the like come to expression." Strong's: "understanding, intellect, insight."

The mind is incredibly important. As it's been said, "The mind is a terrible thing to waste." Sadly, all too often the mind is a vast wasteland.

The mind is paired with an unusual companion -- action. Usually we think of action as being what we do, not how we think. Some translations use "girding the mind." The word picture goes back to biblical times where women and men wore long robes. If a person wanted to move fast or had some task to perform that required lots of movement, he or she would gather up the bottom of the robe and tuck it into their belt. Today we might speak of "rolling up one's sleeves" or "putting on your game face." It's a urgent call to get serious, to mean business. No longer warming up but are in the game. It's go time.

The second phrase of v. 13 in the old NIV is “be self-controlled.” Most translations link the phrase to the mind – “being sober-minded” (ESV), “minds that are alert and fully sober” (New NIV). It speaks of having a clear mind so that a person is in control of one’s mental faculties. The person is alert. In other words, the mind is to be engaged. Need it in the times in which we live. There are competitors for our attention. There are false teachings which will become more prevalent as we grow closer to Christ’s second coming. There are the siren voices of the world that seek to lead us away from closely following Christ.

To counter these attacks we need to think thoughts of what’s true. Or as the last phrase of 13 states, “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

As the mind so is the life. It’s not enough to think, we need to go ahead and live it out.

B. The conduct. The central command comes in v. 15. “Be holy in all you do.” The Greek: “show yourselves to be holy.” This is based on God’s holiness which is easily observable since the Lord’s holiness is stated prior to and after the command.

The basic meaning of holy is to *be set apart* or *other than*. God is *set apart* as being perfect, without sin. He is *other than* anything else. That is his position. It’s also descriptive of his activity. He is holy, without sin.

The moment a person places his trust in Christ, he is set apart positionally to God. His righteousness is placed on us. We are holy in God’s sight. The legal decree has been handed down. There is nothing that can make us more justified in God’s sight. That’s the beginning of sanctification. It doesn’t end there.

A newborn is fully a child of the parents. It has their name as his. There’s nothing the child can do to be more the child of the parents or less. If he walks at 6 months, if he becomes Homecoming King, if he wins the Nobel Prize or the booby prize, none of it matters as he remains in the legal position of child of the parents. Doing those things or not doing those things can enhance the relationship.

The same is true as spiritual children of God. The legal position of being his child has been established. Nothing can change it. We can’t become more his child or less his child. The status isn’t affected by how many Bible verses we read each day, how long we pray, how much money we give, how many missions trips we take. However, the relationship can be enhanced.

The nation of Israel was specially chosen by the Lord to be his people (Exodus 6:6-8; 19:3-6). The Lord told them to be holy just as he was holy (Leviticus 11:44, 45). The people didn’t live up to what the Lord asked of them. They didn’t consider it essential to maintain the quality of the relationship. They were still his chosen people even though they strained the relationship thereby hurting themselves.

A. W. Tozer, “Be holy is not a mere motto to be hung on the wall. It is a serious commandment from the Lord of the whole earth” (Closer Walk, 8/2/89).

The second aspect of sanctification is the experiential part, living a set apart life. We won’t be perfect. I don’t think that comes across as a shock to anyone. However, we aren’t to use that as an excuse for how we live. A person shouldn’t think that that it doesn’t matter that he’s going sin since God forgives sin so might as well indulge.

We're called to be holy in all we do, practical holiness to express the new life. Our conduct, behavior, manner of living is to become more like him, to grow in maturity. Jesus himself grew as he aged through childhood, youth and young adulthood "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

Jesus epitomized what it meant to be the perfect Man. We are to strive to be like him, to reproduce the family likeness.

One of the key factors in living a holy life is obedience. The word is used vv. 14 & 22. First we are obedient children of God. Second we have obeyed the truth. "The truth"--truth with the definite article--is the total of the contents of the revealed truth about God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. We've taken God at his word about how to get saved. It resulted in love for other Christ followers. Jesus said love for others in God's family would be an indication of being his disciple (John 13:35).

Obedience is shown by not continuing to live according to the pre-Christian way of live. As God's children, the old sinful things we used to do are to be things of the past. The evil desires were self-indulgent excess. They were self-righteous. They were the gratification of appetites and pursuits of the world opposed to God. We gave them free reign in our lives without concern for God. Some Christ followers used to be sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers. Emphasis on "used to be." There was a change when they were washed by Christ's saving blood and those things aren't to be part of their lives any longer (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

2:1 calls upon Christ followers to rid themselves of attitudinal and verbal sinful habits. Give the boot to malice which is mean-spiritedness and unkindness. Ditch deceit, lies and half-truths. Take off the mask of hypocrisy, of pretending to be something we aren't. Throw away envy of other people and their stuff. Chuck slander of trashing other people. Put them all aside. There's no room for that garbage in our lives.

There are times when leftovers taste better than when first served. The extra time allows the seasonings, spices and ingredients to intermingle and infuse the chili or lasagna with extra flavor. Just because that's true, it doesn't mean that we should keep leftovers for 3 – 4 months and then eat them. Maybe it's accidentally shoved to the back of the fridge and it's finally re-discovered. Some of you are gagging, at least inwardly, because you know how revoltingly disgusting the insides of that Tupperware will be if it's opened. Need I describe it? No? Just throw the stuff away, maybe the container and all.

The same is true with the leftovers of the old sinful life. Just throw it away. To frame these five positively – be kind-hearted, truthful, authentic, celebratory and build up others.

V. 17 explains our conduct as living lives as strangers in reverent fear. It's how we relate to people and to God. We are to be strangers to the world and in fear of God. Sometimes we turn them around. We're strangers to God and in fear of people.

Being strangers to the world means we're aliens. We don't belong to the world. We're just passing through. We don't seek to get our fulfillment from this place. Or our joy, our rewards.

Fear of God. NIV Study Bible describes it as a “wholesome reverence and respect for God.” It’s often equated with awe and worship. It’s also described as “holy fear - the fear of a son for a loving father, the fear of displeasing God before whom we walk, God who gave his blessed Son to die for us, God who will judge us at the last” (Pulpit Commentary on 1 Peter 1:17). As another put it, “the righteous dare do anything but offend God” (Leighton). Live as strangers here because we know this world is not our home and we’re answerable to the heavenly Father who will be our judge.

Love (v. 22). There was initial love when became a follower of Christ. There are times when that can be an exuberant emotion because found someone who gets us. They believe the same. The by-product of a relationship with Christ, of loving him has been produced in loving those who are his.

The call is to continue to love one another deeply, from the heart. This goes beyond the initial spurt of love. Some of the blinders have come off and begin to realize that the other believers aren’t perfect, that believers can be odd, quirky, even weird. They might be, but you aren’t. We all are. But they’re also folks who desire to know God, to see his program advanced. Love becomes an action, the proverbial verb that it’s called. It looks beyond, deeper. It’s to have intensity of expression. We are to seek out opportunities to love and not wait till they’re dropped in our laps.

Spiritual desire (2:3). Copy the example of babies. They cry because they need their diaper to be changed, are tired, scared by someone’s face or want to eat. The desire to eat can strike at any moment. Everything is fine and then they let loose with a cry, “I want to eat and want to eat now and I mean now, not three minutes from now, not one minute from now, but NOW, IF NOT SOONER. DO YOU HEAR ME?”

We’re to crave the nutrition from God’s Word. One of the key ways this comes is by exposure. A young woman admitted to an older woman, “I just can’t get interested in missions.” “Well dear, it’s just like getting interest in a bank. You have to put in a little something first or you’ll never have any. The more you put in, the more you’ll get out of it. Try it.”

A contributor to Our Daily Bread (Henry Bosch) applied that story to craving God’s Word. “You say you can find no pleasure in Bible study, but have you ever sat down with a concordance and looked up the Scripture references on a given subject? Have you ever read the Psalms until you came to some promise that comforted you, and then meditated on that truth until you overflowed with praise? Have you ever read a book of the Bible at one sitting so you could get the sense of its message? If not, no wonder you have no interest! You gain interest only in what you invest.”

The purpose of being in God’s Word is so that we may grow, just like the baby who grows as a result of eating. New life brings new activity. We are to turn our backs on all kinds of evil whether it is in disposition, practice, thought, attitude, word, or behavior. We aren’t to conform to that pattern of life opposed to God. We are to live appropriately. We may slip up, sin, but we are striving to put the old life behind us. “What we are is God’s gift to us. What we become is our gift to God” (Louis Nizer).