

People of the New Covenant: Heart, Grass, Milk

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[0 : 0 0] and in this section we're looking at tonight it's kind of like the beginning of a bit of a switch in that Peter's kind of thinking he's kind of outlined the big picture of salvation the big picture of God's message the big picture of what it means to have a forgiveness of sins and a salvation that is to come and one of the things he says is in the first few in verses 13 to 20 one conclusion is you just set your hope on God and be holy because God is holy and so this stuff is starting to push into the conclusions of that so where he says in verse 22 know that you have been purified yourselves by obeying the truth it's starting to like conclude that now that you're starting to live in this now that you have been purified you've been made holy that God makes you holy because he is holy be these people by obedience to the truth and Peter always seems to do this he kind of like exhorts the people but always first he tells them and holds out a vision of who Jesus is and then he says here's how you live but never forget the source of that life but here's what it looks like and if you want to live in it you have to actually go forward and obey and walk in faith and there's something about holiness that Peter understands is key that we can often miss

I don't know what you think when you either heard word holy or what it means to be holy people but I definitely know that before I was a Christian the idea of being holy was essentially a boring thing it was to remove joy from your life it was about morally perfect people who never failed and essentially looked down on the lives of others and that somehow your aim in life was to be perfect in your own strength and stay away from all the bad things and all the bad people and then the more you do that the more holy you will become yeah holiness is about being set apart it's something about the holiness of God first we don't start with our holiness we start with the holiness of God but the uniqueness of his power and like holiness and uniqueness are very attached words there's something so beautiful and so honoring and so wonderful about who God is in its purity nothing can even come close in fact in the old testament there's pictures of when people come close to the holiness of God they're utterly petrified and they fear they might get destroyed like in when Moses is told by God at the burning bush you're in holy ground don't come any closer yeah the picture we have in the new testament is in the person of Jesus God moves out into the world healing restoring and making holy a new people he makes them holy through his life through his death and through his resurrection and so holiness when Peter says be holy it's this idea that you've been made holy already so walk in this new reality you have been purified by obeying the truth God makes us holy and he gives this new identity to everybody so walk in this so holiness is an invitation to walk in what it means to be the new creations people of the new covenant because we've been given a new hope that Peter has set out in these early verses we're called to live in it and so these are some of the implications that Peter is going to head into of what it means to live to have been people who are purified and are now obeying the truth and the first one we're going to look at is heart or a new love which is the second half of verse 22 so that you have sincere love for each other love one another deeply from a new heart so the idea of being made holy is not a kind of purely individualistic idea that I've been made holy by Jesus and now I need to make my life perfect but the idea of holiness is that it's a radical ramifications for the way we see all of life first off is that you're now not by yourself you're part of a new family and you're part of God's family and therefore that is to demonstrate in the way we live by the way we show love one another might be the most basic Christian tenant tenant sorry that we're to love one another but it's a love one another as a response to this new identity it's something that God has done and Peter will mention this a lot as he goes through this letter this is a key thing it's not like you know when you get to know God as you get go about life try and love one another it's actually quite key to the idea of how this community will survive which we'll go into in a few weeks down the line but it's right at the heart of the Christian message it's when like Jesus is asked that what is the greatest commandment and he

gives you the kind of two for one response it's loving God and love your neighbor as yourself these two things are bound together and Peter is saying that simple quite simply because we've been purified made holy by the truth we're to love one another and that is not about just be nice to one another or to be pleasant to one another the language Peter is using is very powerful this is a love that essentially fights for one another he's not satisfied with tolerance or acceptance or niceties from a distance love one another earnestly from a pure heart that word earnest has got this idea of striving and fighting it's like go to depth it's fight for one another strain for love for one another and the word love or brotherly love or friendship is translated in different ways it's a it's a love that is distinct

it's not just a love that if you happen to be in the same place and like the people around you and you happen to fit enough criteria then love in this way it's got a far deeper understanding of what it means to be people who are going to sacrifice their lives for one another because they have a God behind them who sacrificed his life for them like in the I don't know how many of you've seen the multi-oscar nominated banshees of in a shirin um I think it's a brilliant film you should also say but essentially the heart of the film is these two men who've been friends for years and years and years and then one day one of them decides in a kind of 1920s version of ghosting to not be the other one's friend anymore the other one just cannot understand it um and the whole film is about the kind of fallout of these two men um who've been friends for a long long time because one essentially decides I don't need you anymore if I actually get in the way of who I'm supposed to be and it's quite crude and funny and places but it's a really interesting study on um there's been loads written about this because it's an interesting study on particularly male friendship in the 20th century about all they do is hang out with each other and go to the pub and if they have enough to talk about each day that's what they'll do as soon as that becomes boring then they don't really know what to do with each other and this kind of friendship dissipates when you take certain things out of the way but to like to the culture that Peter was written into writing into you've got like increasingly communities of people who are banded together not because they all worked in the same place and not because they happen to like the same hobbies at the weekend but because they'd found new life in Christ so like uh like Aristotle and like if you want to read more about that I recommend C.S. Lewis it's the four loves he thought there's three functions of friendship there was like uh utility so if you work together you're friends because you do the same thing together there was partying we like the same thing so we our friendship is based around that idea and they're great they're not like they're less they're nothing but he said there was a third quality of friendship that that lasted and was the one they aimed at and that was one of virtue or enduring it was the idea of true friendship true love it was the real deal and happens over a sustained period of shared activity to where the point becomes truly to identify yourself with the other people as extensions of yourself their mourning is your mourning their good is your good that you're tied together and that word portfolio of love that Peter is using here is got deep meaning of this idea it's not just like we like to hang out with each other it's a love that transcends and lasts and endures and needs to fight for and again that word as I said about fighting it's the same word when Jesus is in the garden and he is earnestly praying he's on his knees begging God about the future it's the same word it's the same strain it's the same fervently loving one another it's a love that we demonstrate and seek towards others that flows directly from Jesus enduring patient compassionate love from others we're not just told to like if you forget the first half of chapter one of Peter and you just read this bit you just be like so I've got to go out and be the most amazing person ever this is a based on that idea that God is holy he's making you holy and a demonstration of this the demonstration of this is your love for one another there's loads throughout the new testament in this like you go and listen to some of our sermons from first corinthians where you know Paul says if you do not have love you could have the most amazing teaching and skills on the planet but if you do not have love for one another then what are you like a clanging symbol Jesus himself says which Peter would have heard from the upper room discourse as we're looking at in the mornings in chapter 13 verse 35 by this everyone will know that you're my disciples if you love one another there's something about the quality of love that these new communities have in the face of adversity that will go to depth and will stand the test of time and as they do it if they're doing it from a source of being made holy it will say something to the world about who God is and what he is like so this is a new heart is at the heart of the Christian faith that Jesus transforms our hearts because of our his demonstration of love for us it's a response but something we walk in and it is not something that comes easily something we have to work at I don't know how much that's been your experience like sometimes when you come into the

the midst of Christian community for the first time it's generally quite nice it's quite pleasant it's quite positive and but to go to a different depth to go to a love that fights for one another means to know one another to be involved in each other's lives where you're actually calling out and encouraging holiness in each other's lives spur one another on to love and good deeds as it says in a reference it's now totally escaped my head and it definitely says that in the bible though I just can't remember where and that's why the next bit the verses he goes on to I think is a reaffirmation of how this is possible because if you do listen to this and think that does sound a bit impossible almost a utopian idea of how to love that way well in and of ourselves it is impossible unless you listen to what Peter goes on to say next so verse 23 is the idea of grass or a new birth you've been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God for all people are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field the grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of the Lord endures forever and this is the word that was preached to you so this powerful beautiful picture of what it means to be new people who are being told they are holy because of what God has done and who God is and as they seek to live what love one another in this way they do because they are born again they're given a new hope and called to live in there and again it's this idea of like action and identity are not separated in Peter's letter he's like here's who you are the way you find out is live like this and he kind of then returns to like and here's why you do it and so we're back in like Peter weaving these things together so it's a response this hope is a response it's a response to this kind of stuff he's talking about here that you have been given a new seed that is not going to disappear it is not perishable like the grass it's the that's the source of the hope and how to live this way this is different obviously from the way the world roundabouts us talks about hope usually when we talk about hope it is um if we we set ourselves on some sort of utopian vision and if we muster our resources together or we look externally and think how we can change we get a lot of optimism maybe we can head towards something we try to generate hope we have to like rise hope up in people to make change christian hope is nothing like that christian hope is a response to something that has been done it is not an idea of you generate it to make it happen christian hope is always a response to the good work that has already been done in the life of christ and in the gospel because otherwise you read this stuff and think right i need to be holy and i need to live a different way and i need to also love people with this radical love that involves fighting with one another fighting for not with one another it's completely the opposite of that and we have to muster this stuff within ourselves and maybe on your best days uh you might look at your context around about you and think life's going well and i feel quite good i can do this we all know um the limitedness of our internal resources and the stability of our contexts and that's not to dismiss those things as being meaningless but to put all our hope on those things to be the source of how we live a new life is impossible it's like the grass it'll pass away it cannot support this new life instead this enduring word of the lord which is the whole of scripture it's the entirety of scripture [13 : 36] it's not just the words themselves or the books it's the message of the redemptive act of god right from the beginning that he created a people for himself who had purpose and meaning and they were headed somewhere and that has gone way off track and they were they have fallen and broken and sinful but he's sent his son into the world with a new message of hope and is redeeming and calling a people to himself and puts his spirit within them and says now join me and follow me as we're headed somewhere the new creation which is to come but live like this now and i will show you i will change your hearts it will change the way you live don't look at the grass i don't know what the grass is but i think it's just our attempts as our human attempts to try and generate the things of god for ourselves and often if you're like me you will just look to the how you happen to feel on a certain day and the resources around about you and not to this new word to this new word that's actually an ancient word it's an ancient word that has spoken through time to generations to people of all places of all creeds of all colors of all types of social backgrounds and said there's hope but not hope because of what you look around and see hope in the god who says the new word the new word of resurrection so this new heart is because of a new birth that becomes from this living enduring word as it says in verse 23 and this reality frees us to love people in radical new ways if your hope is not based on how i happen to be able to love a person on a day is based on looking at the sacrificial love of god who says is working inside me he's like from that place love one another if you love not from the grass but love from the world it changes your ability to love in new ways like think of um for example where in some places in the new testament jesus says things like you know it's more important to love god than a partner or family and sometimes people hear that and they might be think right well if that's my understanding of how much i can love a person in my i

feel like my love for god is here so to make that work i need to push my love for people lower and lower just to make sure god's always at the top um that was in i would somehow be interpreting the scriptures as love people less so i don't think that's the answer or you think it's just impossible i don't actually agree so i just kind of separate my love for people my love for god out i think what these verses are getting at is in your human grass-fed ability to love your maximum is here if you pursue a love with god it will increase your capacity to love people in a whole new way how else are we to love our enemies as jesus will go on to say in different bits of the new testament and less is a response to a love that is far deeper far stronger far more enduring than our collective energy on our best days in a human way it's radical stuff holiness and it's radical because it's beautiful and good it's powerful that's why in its purest form when people came across it in the person of god they were like petrified because they could not stand in its presence and how do we live like this i think this is where peter starts to get quite practical as we move into our last point milk so chapter 2 verses 1 to 3 he says therefore rid yourself of all malice and all deceit hypocrisy envy and slander of every kind and like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation know that you have tasted and seen that the lord is good this tasted and seen the lord is good peter is peter will a lot of the time quote the old testament he does it a lot in fact he quoted that quote in about the grasses from isaiah and isaiah 40 the one of the great passages about jesus about god coming to rescue his people through exile and here he's quoting um sam 34

another great sam about written to a group of people who are feeling the pressure and he's like but god will come and rescue he has not abandoned you everything in what peter is saying is kind of melded with this idea you're part of god's story this is not something is happening to you because you're different or you're weirder or god has got less favor towards you this is the pattern of the way that god's people lives but to remember that you need to live a certain way you need to feed yourself on something good so he starts by showing you the opposite of love malice deceit hypocrisy envy isn't i don't think this is a random list of sins it is things that undermine unity these are things that undermine loving community so malice the desire to see bad come to people but they would fail deceit the idea of twisting reality and misrepresenting things hypocrisy pretending to be something you're not in order to gain applause or power envy the anger or low-level resentment that you have when you see somebody's life be a bit more successful than yours it's that stuff is the opposite of love and it will undermine community and it is prevalent i know it's prevalent in my life like i've looked at my heart and it's full of this stuff the way we can talk about our brothers and sisters can be shocking sometimes and peter's like this isn't just bad because it's bad behavior he's anti-love he's anti-holiness get rid of it and instead feed yourselves like newborn babies and crave pure spiritual milk you've been born again he's picking up this language you've been born again but you're not supposed to say stay like babies you're supposed to grow up so you need to feed yourself on something pure something good something that'll long something that'll last long for it long to be grown up so this is not like continue to act like children it is like in the way that a newborn child needs good nourishment to grow up you too need that as well and that is based on the idea of having tasted and seen it or just tasted as peter says tasted and seen is in the old testament and the lord is good so there's a posture of hunger here we're to pursue maturity again it's this idea you need to go and get this you need to hunger for it and it's the most basic source of nourishment and it's pretty basic but it's important that peter is reminding us here he's saying you know god he's rescued you remember he's good and he's given you a new identity you've tasted this to continue to use that sense of taste to pursue it and feed and dwell on this so since you've been born again crave this so you're going to finish with um three there's many many many many principles because point three could literally be read the bible because it's full of god's word it is the enduring source of life read it read it read it read it read it and that is great and i do affirm that but here's some i just a few quick principles about how we might do this and how we might do it better so first don't ruin your appetite it's a pretty age old adage isn't it like don't eat rubbish before your dinner because then you won't want to eat your dinner i mean this is hypocrisy me seeing things like this but the the science behind it is if you eat a sugary snack quickly it fills your body with like a sugar rush reduces your appetite for the short term you look at the food and you're like nah i don't want that but then your hunger will return later and then you'll just do that's how we that's when binge junk food becomes a thing in scripture i think one of the things that does that for us in terms of short-term satisfaction that is not the deeper satisfaction is sin sin ruins our appetites the classic things that take this short-term mini gods to give us a kind of little mini high to make us feel satisfied and then

when the idea that we come to like the deeper gooder stuff of working out god's word in our own lives and in community it gets in the way it ruins your appetite our appetites are so easily temporarily appeased by sin so i'd encourage you to pay attention to where you go to for satisfaction to feel better after a bad day or when you're bored or when you're angry is it to go to the nourishment of this true milk that'll change us or is it something else pay attention to where you go and talk to one another about it because it'll be given a degree of satisfaction it appeases your hunger you don't go to it for no reason if you knew it was purely evil you probably wouldn't go to it but don't ruin your appetite because it will work against the idea of the real stuff secondly feed on the attributes of god it's taste and see that god is good it's who he is it's the attributes of who god is like it's like dwelling on his character so often in my life when i think about engaging with god my instinct is like am i good enough to talk to him again today the gospel answers that one yes but not in and of myself secondly what do i want fixed in my life today and if i think my life's going okay then maybe i've not got much to say to god things are going wrong i've got a lot to say to him but to speak to god because of who he is and what he is like to dwell on that aspect of his character to think about his power to think about his love to think about his justice so you sit and you read the scriptures in the morning and you're spending time with him supposed to just jumping to right what do i need to do today or how am i supposed to shoehorn this passage into my day somehow who is god revealing himself to be as you feed on his attributes as you dwell on the character of god and as you do that just thank god for who he reveals himself to be and pray through what it looks like to live that in your life today to remember that also think about what it looks like to forget that like i know when i forget god's love it distorts my sense of security and impacts how i treat others when i forget god's power it impacts my anger as i try to then control too much of life in my own sense but to feed on the character of god to dwell on that when you do this and the more you do it i think it builds hunger it builds like oh right this is what you're like you want to get into this more and see what's it mean for god to be my father like how do you get into that and dwell on that and then lastly we hunger for a reason so the new testament writers and especially in the psalms they use like a possessive language of god like my god so peter doesn't say anywhere in here that i can think so god is out there somewhere and you need to go find him he's speaking like he has found you and he's claimed you as his own so walk in that reality you're feeding on a god who knows you already you're not trying to generate god's presence because he's made his home within each and every single one of you he has found you it's not because i seek you that you are my god i think peter would say he doesn't say this it's because the god is ours that he's claimed our lives that we are free to seek him and he has made himself known through his word through community there's many ways that god makes himself known but peter is pointing back to the enduring life givingness of the word sorry and that means i think one of the ways you know that god has touched your heart and claimed your life is that sense of hunger that sense of like i don't know what language people use that sense of like i feel distant from god and i want to get rid of it i think sometimes that's a sign that god has claimed your life that like there's something and i want i'm hungry for god if you twist that in his head i feel a distance i'm not satisfied that that is that is hunger and i want that to be gone i want to be closer i want intimacy i think the scriptures are clear you can only really have that feeling if you've somehow engaged with god in a way where he's made himself known and you want to speak and hear and see that our hunger is a signpost um for some of us that that is an engagement with god and to return to that to invest in that hunger and continue to come back to him as opposed to the way it can often happen is when sometimes we feel like that we think it's a bit of a game over scenario and we start to drift into untruth about um just things that the gospel does not affirm that i need to work my way back the gospel does never says that to anybody that you need to work your way back to god more that he is through his death and given his entire life to claim you as your own so how we feel that hunger can sometimes be very misleading so maybe remember it's a sign that jesus has claimed you as his own and that hunger is an invitation to return so pier holds out for us a transforming picture of what it means to be people of the new covenant who have god's word buried deep in their hearts deep inside them and it's restoring them it's changing them no it's just as individuals and as a community and it shapes us into people who have a love that fights for one another that has grown into maturity that is nutritious is full of taste and of the life-giving word of god like i think if you think of nothing else like you've probably all been to good restaurants where you think this was amazing i'd love to eat that again and i'd i'd actually pay a lot of money to eat this again i'd give up time to go find this stuff i think there's a bit of an analogy there of peter's been like

you've tasted and seen what god is like look at jesus look at who he is look at what he's done for you do not forget that but walk in obedience as you seek to love one another and look at this pure milk which is his word which will feed you because it's the source of who god reveals him is one of the sources where god reveals his character so holiness demonstrates itself in our love for one another through a new heart which is a gift and it's only possible because of a new birth which is also a gift and this is something that we're to continue to grow in as jesus changes our appetites to have new desires to feed on good stuff not the junk food of the world but the nutritious spiritual milk that is his word and as we do that as we do that as in humanity jesus seems to say in john 17 the world will see and know that i am real when you live like this invisibility to the world around about you i'm going to pray and then the band will come up god ask that as we go into our week your spirit would show us would you search our minds and search your hearts to know what it means to rid ourselves of all malice and deceit hypocrisy envy and slander of every kind and instead would you help us to be like newborn babies dependent that crave and hunger our spiritual milk so that by it we would grow up in our salvation the salvation you have already secured for each and every single one of us who know jesus to be our lord and savior would you help us to remember to hunger and to hold out the message to come and taste and see that the lord is good amen and so