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Feasting Becomes Fellowship

“Surprised by Fellowship”

Comedian Rodney Dangerfield is noted for saying: “Last night I went to the fights and a hockey game broke out!” It is a humorous statement that reflects the surprise that accompanies life when *what is expected* is quite different from *what is experienced*. In this regard consider the following expressions:

- Surprised by Suffering.
- Surprised by Joy.
- Surprised by Love.
- Surprised by Hope.
- Surprised by Truth.

All of these reflect the pleasant surprises which can pop up in our lives from time to time. And we see this surprising twist in the Psalms. Speaking of the bitterness of this life and the people of God trusting the Lord, the sons of Korah wrote this:

Psalm 84:6a, “Passing through the valley of [weeping], they make it a spring...”

Because of God’s work in their life, the child of God oft-times is surprised in the trials of life with encouragement, satisfaction, and joy!

1 Corinthians 2:9, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

What a glory that is ours in coming to Christ! We came for forgiveness but received so much more! And in 1 Peter 2 Peter discusses the surprise that can confront the servant of God when in their feasting on God’s Word they enjoy the riches of fellowshiping with the Lord. Recall a major theme of this epistle is the call of faithfulness in the midst of trial/difficulty.

And we see that call in 1 Peter 2:1-3 in which Peter exhorted his persecuted brethren that no matter how dark their lives might become; they must endeavor through it all to feast on God’s Word. And Peter continues with that theme describing the surprise that can await us when our feasting becomes fellowship!

The Nature of this Fellowship, v. 4a.

1 Peter 2:4a, “And coming to Him...”

Though your Bibles have a break between vv. 3 and 4 (either with a new paragraph [ESV] or possibly with a heading [NASB, NKJV, NIV]), verse 4 is a continuation of the exhortation Peter gave in vv. 1-3. Notice the flow of the text. In vv. 1-3, Peter exhorted the Christian, “Feast on the Word of God”! Why should we do that? Because — v. 4 — while feasting on God’s word, the believer “comes to God” as “a living stone, rejected by men, etc.” Obviously, we are going to talk more about vv. 4-8. Yet at the outset, understand the point Peter is making here. When a child of God feasts on God’s Word, they may be surprised to discover that they have engaged much more than the teaching of God’s word; they have met with God Himself!

That is the idea behind “coming to Him.” There is one word behind this translation, *προσέρχομαι* (*proserchomai*), which is a present participle speaking of continuous activity (so

we are NOT talking here about conversion BUT our daily “coming to Him” via His word). Dr. MacArthur put it this way:

The preposition *pros* is a prefix to the normal verb *erchomai* and adds intensity, denoting a drawing near to Christ in intimate, abiding, personal fellowship. (MacArthur, 2004, p. 104)

And yet there is more. The expression — “coming to Him” — is used in the Old Testament as a specialized term for “drawing near” to God on the part of the priest, who “drew near to God” in order to offer sacrifice (Exodus 12:48; 16:9; Leviticus 9:7–8; 10:4–5)! Of this, Wayne Gruden wrote:

By this expression Peter hints, in a theme to be made explicit later in the sentence, that all believers now enjoy the great privilege, reserved only for priests in the Old Testament, of ‘drawing near’ to God in worship. (Grudem, 2009, p. 103)

In fact, the book of Hebrews picks up on this privilege as it exhorts us multiple times¹ of which I’m only going to quote two of them:

Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”- this ultimately is in reference to Christ and our call to “draw near” to Him as ministering priests. We see it again in...

Hebrews 10:22, “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...”

This is the language Peter utilized to describe the blessing that is ours as a child of God. Yet Peter specifies HOW it is that the believer can draw near to God in fellowship. And how is that? Through His word!

Based on this we conclude that Peter is talking about a privilege that accompanies all who approach God’s word in faith; and that privilege is “drawing near to God” just like an Old Testament priest! Do you understand what this means?

You thought that opening the Bible was simply a means to learn truth or grow in your maturity. Yet what a delight and surprise to discover the presence of the Lord as He deigns to draw near to you as you read His word! And that is the point of vv. 4-8!

And yet you say, *“But God’s word seems boring and difficult to me. When I think of reading it, I think of drudgery!”* And there you go. That should tell you that God’s word is NOT magic OR mechanical. In itself it is NOT a portal of fellowship.

Well then, how can Feasting on the Word of God become Fellowship? The answer boils down to a simple question: To whom OR to what are you drawing near when you approach God’s word? And this brings us to the object of our fellowship, v. 4b.

1 Peter 2:4b, “And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God.”

Let me begin by defining what we mean by fellowship. “Fellowship” simply means commonness. As such, non-Christians have fellowship. It can be enjoyed on a ski slope, at a concert, or in a classroom. Yet each arena of fellowship is determined by the character and bent of the one with whom you enjoy the commonness. Imagine the different experience you would have if you went shopping with a thief versus shopping with a wealthy benefactor?

The fellowship enjoyed with God via His word is determined and influenced by the One we endeavor to meet with when we come to His word. Who is the Lord with whom you are fellowshiping? Is He:

- A harsh and cruel taskmaster?
- A benign Santa Clause figure who means well but lacks power to do anything?
- A force which if utilized will inspire us?

Peter wanted his persecuted brethren to realize that when they go to the word of God, the Being with whom they are fellowshiping is set apart by four characteristics. Notice first of all, He is a Living Stone. Now without its context the expression here is bizarre. Is Peter talking about a living stone-creature? No!

Because of the language he just utilized is from the temple — “drawing near” — Peter knows that his readers now are thinking of the Temple and the glorious truth that every time they read the word, they actually can enter into THE Temple of God made without hands! In this context, therefore, referencing “a living stone” tells us that Peter is NOT talking about the literal stones as in an earthly temple, BUT a non-literal stone which, because it is living, refers to a Person!

This is what we are after when we read God’s word! So many in Christ resemble the crowds when they ran after the Lord following the Feeding of the 5,000. Recall Christ’s rebuke.

John 6:26b, “...you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.”

How many Christians approach the word of God for themselves? We can approach God for:

- A blessing?
- A pick me up?
- A word of inspiration?
- A standard to hold over other people?
- As a means of placating God?

If that is what you are after when you read God's word, then truly you will miss fellowshiping with Christ every time! Our passion when it comes to feasting on God's Word must be to fellowship with non-other than the person of Jesus Christ! That is what we are after!

And so, as you read the word of God, you enter as a priest into the presence of a Person! Yet secondly notice when you come to God's word you also are approaching "a living stone" — rejected by men. The language is rich, for Peter's readers were familiar with the building process of the ancient world. The first and most important thing in building in that day was the discovery/making of the perfect cornerstone which would serve as the basis upon which the entire structure would be built. In this regard understand that the true temple/tabernacle of God was built upon a Cornerstone that was rejected by everyone in this world except God!

Do you understand what this means? In the context of fellowshiping with Christ via His word, you are NOT going to get from Him what the world wants in their religion. Again, He was "rejected by [the world]"; He didn't give them what they wanted and so the world turned away from Him! What does the world want in their religion?

- The ability to placate their god.
- The ability to impress a deity via their sacrifice or obedience.
- The ability to manipulate a deity into doing what they want.
- A sense of pleasure, excitement, ecstasy.

Christ offers none of these things which again is why He was and is rejected. So Christian, if you are going to fellowship with Christ via His word in the hopes of gaining any of the above, you will miss Christ! But in your reading of God's word, if you approach it in order to fellowship with the person of Christ, you most certainly will find Him! And why is that? Because, thirdly, He was and is choice in the sight of God. This means that Christ was and is God's chosen means by which we fellowship with Him! Get this: God didn't choose:

- A liturgy through which to fellowship with His people.
- An earthly priesthood with which to fellowship.
- Mount Sinai — which speaks of a life of perfect obedience.
- An ecstatic experience with which to move us.
- A outing to the mountains.

None of these has God deigned as the means by which we fellowship with Him. The ONLY means — God's Choice — is Jesus Christ!²

1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus."

Recall the words Christ spoke to Thomas.

John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'"

Christ is God's choice for any all fellowship between God and man! In this regard, notice Peter's final description of Christ: "precious in the sight of God." The word means "costly, highly prized," and so "rare."³

This makes me think of The Last Battle. Recall right before Narnia was about to be destroyed, when the world had apostatized and rejected Aslan, Peter and his siblings were chased into a barn where eventually they would die. Yet there they discover that the stable is portal into the presence of God, which ironically was not the case for the dwarfs. When they endeavored to prove the glory of the place, they placed a flower before the nose of a dwarf who got made because to them the flower was as horse manure!

To the world, Christ is the object of their hatred. But to the child of God, to the one who has "tasted and seen that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:3), we recognize He truly is Precious! In this regard, do you understand what is ours in God's word? On account of God's word, it is our privilege to fellowship with the most beautiful and desirable Being we ever could lay our eyes upon!

What a privilege! And that in fact is how Peter wanted His persecuted brethren to consider themselves. Think of it. Prior to the reading of this passage, no doubt many felt like victims, possibly bereft and neglected by God in their suffering. Yet little did they know that the greatest privilege with which any man could be blessed on this side of the grave is attainable by the word each of us hold in our hands this day! Now if that wasn't enough to encourage them, consider Peter's next point: The benefit of our fellowship.

The Benefit of our Fellowship, v. 5a.

1 Peter 2:5a, "You also, as living stones [as you go to Christ in His word], are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood..."

It is NOT a surprise to us that the Holy Spirit uses God's word unto our growth in grace. I've referenced this now multiple times the past couple of weeks. What may be a surprise is the specific benefit referenced here. When we fellowship with Christ through His word one of the primary results is our being made into His Holy Temple and so a holy habitation of the Lord! Notice the text.

"As living stones." In contrast to the stones of the temple all arranged and emanating from the Cornerstone which together comprised the temple, God has deigned to utilize us — His redeemed people — to become THE temple in which He would dwell. As living stones, [we] are being built up as a spiritual house. "Being built" speaks of a process of refinement in which the stone mason chisels away the excess and so prepares us for placement in what is described

here as “a spiritual house.” Now my question is this: what is God’s tool of choice to chisel away our impurities? The word of God!

Jeremiah 23:29, “‘Is not My word like fire?’ declares the Lord, ‘and like a hammer which shatters a rock?’”

Truly, the word of God is the chisel by which God shapes and prepares us to be His Holy Habitation!!! With that, Peter changes the metaphor slightly to address the purpose that God has in mind as He refines us with His word. You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood: do you understand God’s plan in giving us His word? It is NOT simply

- To inspire us.
- To comfort us.
- To direct us.
- To teach us.
- To rebuke us.
- To restore us.

Truly, God’s word is all of this; yet it is much more than this. Ultimately you must see that God is about raising up you and I through His word to function as “a holy priesthood.” And what is the point and purpose of “a priesthood” commissioned unto the service of God? Worship! The giving of ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice to God!

And yet, tragically this is far from the expectation held by many in the church today. We are told that victory in the Christian life is to have more of God and to get more from God. And so countless thousands flock to churches, seminars, and conferences in search of spiritual and/or emotional benefit. And yet clearly in Peter’s mind the “key” to vibrant Christian living is NOT getting more of God BUT rendering yourself to God at all times as an offering for worship! That is what priests do!

What a contrast to the natural thoughts and concerns of those persecuted in Peter’s day. No doubt they thought that if God really loved them and had their best interest in mind, He would:

- Deal with their persecutors.
- End their suffering.
- Give them back their lives.
- And bless them with health and wealth with which to serve Him.

Accordingly, Peter challenged that notion essentially telling the people of God that the highest end we could ever achieve in this life is the purpose and function of a priest! Wayne Grudem, speaking of this verse, put it this way:

As priests, believers offer not the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant, but spiritual sacrifices, which the New Testament elsewhere identifies as the offering of our bodies to God for his service (Rom. 12:1), the giving of gifts to enable the spread of the gospel (Phil. 4:18), the singing of praise (Hebrews 13:15), and the doing of good and sharing our possessions (Hebrews 13:16). These varied examples encourage us to think that anything we do in service to God can be thought of as a 'spiritual sacrifice' acceptable to God, a continual sweet aroma that ascends to his throne and brings him delight. (Grudem, 2009, pp. 106-107)

The thesis of Peter's exhortation is this: Our success in this regard will be proportionate to the fellowship we enjoy with God as we Feast on His Word!

References

- Grudem, W. A. (2009). *1 Peter (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP Numbered))*. Chicago: IVP Academic.
- MacArthur, D. J. (2004). *1 Peter MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series)*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

End Note(s)

¹ cf. Hebrews 4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22.

² Deuteronomy 18:15–16; Isaiah 42:1; Jeremiah 23:5–6; Micah 5:2; John 14:6; Acts 2:23; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 3:1–2; 5:4–5; cf. Genesis 3:15; Numbers 24:17; Psalms 45:6–7.

³ cf. 1:19; Psalms 45:2.