

## The Vanity of “Happy Meal” Christianity

1 Peter 1:13-21

### Introduction

1. One of the most significant innovations of modern culture is the fast food restaurant. You can travel almost anywhere in the world and find a McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Burger King, KFC and Taco Bell. Each promises food that is 1) fast and, 2) the way you want it.
  - Get your meal in record time, and
  - Get your meal with a thrill!
  - And why don’t you just “supersize” it while you are at it.
2. Never mind that:
  - 1) It costs more than it is worth and is far less healthy than you need! The following are a few statistics from *Newsweek* (Aug. 19, 2002):
    - In 1957 a fast food hamburger was 1 oz. and 210 calories. In 2003 a fast food hamburger is 6 oz. and 618 calories!
    - In 1957 a box of movie theater popcorn was 3 cups and 170 calories. In 2003 a box of movie theater popcorn is 16 cups and 900 calories!
    - In 1990 a 2.1 oz Butterfinger was 270 calories. In 2003 a 5 oz. Butterfinger is 680 calories.
    - And today of course we have to **supersize EVERYTHING!**
    - MacDonald’s 1957 – burger, fries and coke: 590 calories. MacDonald’s 2003 – Extra Value Meal of a Quarter Pounder with cheese, supersize fries and drink: 1550 calories.
    - The results: (1) double the risk of heart failure in women, (2) 50% rise in type II diabetes, (3) children – survey of 813 overweight Louisiana school children, 58% had at least one heart disease risk factor such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, or insulin levels.
  - ★ Junk Food and Fast Food is killing us!

If you will just stop and look closely, you will see the vanity of a “happy meal” diet.

- 2) Unfortunately, many Christians are suffering from a steady diet of “fast food” or “happy meal” Christianity. Craving and even satisfied with a spiritual junk food diet, they have grown weak and anemic. They are seriously malnourished in their spiritual lives because they have not fed on “the pure milk of the word that they may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Walt Kaiser nails it and lays much of the blame rightly at the feet of preachers. He writes, “It is no secret that Christ’s Church is not at all in good health in many places in the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed “junk food,” all kinds of artificial preservatives and all sorts of unnatural substitutes have been served up to her... the Biblical text often is no more than a slogan or refrain in the message. For large segments of the Christian Church it is a truism to say that Biblical exposition has become a lost art in contemporary preaching.” (*Toward An Exegetical Theology*, 7, 19, 37). Our people are killing themselves on one hand and starving themselves on the other. What people in our churches need today is a plate of spiritual health foods and a strong and steady diet of biblical nourishment.

## **Transition**

In this text, the apostle Peter peppers us with 3 imperatives, and he puts on the table three essential components of a healthy spiritual diet certain to produce healthy Christians: hope, holiness and humility.

A healthy spiritual life is found in:

### **I. The hope of His coming. 1:13-14**

\* “Therefore” looks back to vs. 1-12, which tells us that we have a sure and secure inheritance in Christ that is incorruptible, undefiled, and reserved in heaven. This salvation was made possible by the work of our Triune God. It is a salvation that captivated the minds of the prophets (v. 10) and amazed the hearts of angels (v. 12). Because of such an awesome reward we have an appropriate responsibility. Peter says set your hope fully on God’s coming grace by (1) preparing your minds and (2) being self-controlled.

#### **1. Discipline your life. 1:13**

- \* “Gird up your loins”
- \* NEB – “be like men stripped for action, perfectly self-controlled.”
- \* Moffat – “brace up your minds, then, keep cool.”
- \* “Pull up the long flowing robe of your mind and get ready to move into action.” Today we might say, “let’s roll up our sleeves and get to work,” or “pull yourself together, it’s time to get going.” Do not become dull in your thinking, slow in your learning. Tom Schreiner, do not become “anesthetized by the attractions of this world.”

*Strenuous thinking ... can seldom have been more urgently needed than today. ... It is a pathetic feature of contemporary church life that there are still plenty in the pews who clamor for shorter and lighter sermons and bright and easy services, and not a few in the pulpits are prepared to pander to popular taste. ... Peter’s slogan is a call ... for sermons that teach, not merely entertain, and for church members who will not shirk the discipline of intellectual effort, a call to the strenuous but exhilarating adventure of trying to understand ever more and more deeply the gospel.*

CEB Cranfield

- \* “Be sober” (cont.) – self-controlled, calm in spirit, one who knows and controls what he is doing. Is “in charge of his priorities.” (MacArthur)
- \* The mind is crucial.
  - Proverbs 23:7** – “For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”
  - Romans 12:2** – “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
  - Philippians 2:5** – “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”
- \* “Hope fully” (aor. imp., 1<sup>st</sup> main verb) – lit. “perfectly hope on the being brought to you grace at the apocalypses of Jesus Christ” (cf. 1:7). This grace of hope is already being brought to us now, and it serves as a present motivation to discipline our lives.

- \* The future look will affect the present life! So, live in the future tense now and discipline your life today. Have your feet on the ground but your eyes on heaven!

## 2. Deny former lust. 1:14

- \* Verse 14 is the negative corollary to verse 13.
- \* As obedient children we anticipate 2 Peter 1:4 which says, “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” *Obedient children* is a Hebraism meaning “children of obedience,” those whose very nature it is to obey. Why? Because we have a new nature, the nature of our Father God (2 Cor. 5:17).
- \* “Not conforming” (pre. mid. part.) – not fashioning or molding yourself. Root is *schematizo* and is the same root that Paul uses in Romans 12:2. Outside pressure and influence entice us to shape or fashion ourselves to our former life, life B.C. (before Christ), a life of ignorance (*agnoia*) and lust (*epithumiais*). Before Christ you lived foolishly and in bondage to the desires and hot passions of the sin nature. Do not go back to the slums of sin. Resist the gravity of the flesh that wars to pull you back from where you came. That was the old you. You are now a new you! Don’t go around masquerading in the outfit of sin when you belong to the Savior. The hope of His coming ... it will keep you wise (mind), it will keep you pure (heart).

### Transition

A healthy spiritual life is found in the hope of His coming.

A healthy spiritual life is found in:

## II. The holiness of His conduct. 1:15-16

We are to be children of obedience (v. 14). Such a challenge implies something about our Father. Children long to be like daddy. It is their nature to do so. Our Father (v. 17) longs for us to be like Him too. What is our Father like? In a word: He is holy. Indeed the pattern for our holiness is God Himself.

### 1. Recognize that holiness is the essence of God’s character.

Called (5x in 1 Peter) you – it was God’s initiative.

Holy (4x in vs. 15-16).

Be holy (aor. imp.) – 2<sup>nd</sup> main verb → in all your conduct.

Holy means to be separated, set apart. The word occurs 830 times in the Old Testament. Neg. set apart from sin. Pos. set apart unto the Savior. Hab. 1:13a says of our God, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” Be holy is not a suggestion it is a command. It is also comprehensive: in all your conduct. It includes the mind, will and emotions; body, soul and spirit. All of you all of the time is the challenge laid before us because holiness is the essence of God’s character. No sphere of your life is outside of God’s dominion, of Christ’s Lordship.

### 2. Realize that holiness is the expectation of God’s children.

- \* The twin themes of God’s holiness and our holiness find their biblical source in verse 16, a verse recorded in Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2 & 20:7. Paul likewise develops

this theme when in 1 Thess. 4:7 he says, “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

- \* The holiness, the unfathomable glory and purity of our God cannot help but radically impact a life that comes face to face with Him. Surf the Scriptures and see what you find.

**Abraham in Genesis 18:27** – “Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord.”

**Job in Job 42:6** – “Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

**Isaiah in Isa. 6:5** – “So I said: Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

**Peter in Luke 5:8** – “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O lord!*”

**John in Rev. 1:17** – And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, *Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.*

- \* Our God is holy. He is holy in His person, His purpose, His plan. In the presence of such a God we would do well to follow the admonition of Ps. 29:2, “Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

### **Transition**

A healthy spiritual life is found in:

### **III. The humility of His character. 1:17-21**

The holiness of our great God is now given tangible expression in the context of our salvation and the sacrifice of our Savior. Because of the inheritance and salvation believers anticipate (vs. 1-12), they should (1) set their hope completely on Christ’s coming, (2) strive after holiness, and (3) live in reverent fear. We were told to conduct ourselves in holiness in vs. 15-16. Now we are told to conduct ourselves during our stay or sojourn in fear (v. 17). Three reasons for this challenge are given.

#### **1. He is an impartial Father. 1:17**

- \* We call on Him as Father because we are now His children (God’s Fatherhood is mentioned by Jesus at least 14 times).
- \* This Father is perfectly just, impartial, is no respecter of persons. He judges (cont.) according to what we do, so conduct, live (aor. imp.) [the 3<sup>rd</sup> main verb] your life as you are passing through in fear (*NIV* note says “wholesome reverence and respect for God”). There is a kind of fear, a biblical fear of the awesome and majestic God, that does not contradict fear.
- \* Without partiality takes Peter and us back to the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius. There in Acts 10:34 Peter exclaimed; “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.” Jew or Gentile, slave or free, man or woman, it makes no difference. All will find forgiveness and grace who come to God as Father.
- \* The time of your stay here – a reminder that our home is not here. It is in heaven. We are spiritually “dislocated” for a time!

## 2. **He is an incorruptible Redeemer. 1:18-19**

- These verses are in the form of a negative/positive, contrasting what did not redeem believers with what did redeem them.

Knowing (W.A.R.) – as a settled, certain conviction.

Redeemed (*lutroō*) – the word group occurs over 100 times in the LXX. It means to liberate, to buy back someone or something from slavery / bondage by paying a price, to set free by paying a ransom. It was used of a payment made to buy back property held in mortgage (Lev. 25:25-28), of a payment made for a firstborn (Num. 18:15), of a payment made to deliver Israel from Egyptian slavery, of a payment made to buy back a prisoner of war.

- \* Here it is used of the price paid to buy the freedom of those who once were slaves of sin, Satan, self, and here from the senseless/sensual life lived in lusts and ignorance (v. 14) and passed on to us by our forefathers (v. 18). Peter reminds us that sin and slavery to sin move from generation to generation, from grandparents → parents → children.
- \* Our sin was great and so the payment must be great. Our sin was great and so the Savior must be great! Slaves were set free by perishable silver and gold. Sinners are set free by the perfect Son of God and the blood of the Lamb.
- \* “Lamb without blemishes and without spot” looks back to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, perhaps specifically to the Passover of Exodus 12 (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7). The theme of God’s Lamb runs all the way from Genesis → Revelation.  
Genesis 22 – God provides the lamb.  
Exodus 12 – The Lamb is to be without spot or blemish.  
Isaiah 53 – The Lamb is to be slaughtered.  
John 1:29 – The Lamb will take away the sins of the world.  
Revelation 5 – The Warrior Lamb is now on the throne in heaven.
- \* The Lamb: it is the Christ (v. 19), the Lamb is Jesus.

## 3. **He is an indestructible Savior. 1:20-21**

- \* The cross was not a disappointing accident, it was a divine appointment even before God spoke creation into existence. In eternity past, before He made Adam and Eve and before they sinned, God had planned the redemption of sinners by the perfect sacrifice of His Son.
- \* It was planned in eternity, but revealed in time:
  - 1) In these last days (the time of Messiah from His 1<sup>st</sup> to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming).
  - 2) For you (for we sinners), on our behalf. It was because of us, it was for us that He came and died.
- \* Verse 21 addresses our response to such an awesome Savior.
  - 1) Believe, trust in this God, this impartial Father who receives all who come to Him by the perfect atonement of His Son.
  - 2) Believe, trust in this God who was faithful to His Son and raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).
  - 3) Believe, trust in this God so that both your faith and your hope (cf. v. 13, “hope” is inclusive, we’ve come full circle) is in the right place: in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3) who becomes your Father (v. 17) through the blood of His Christ, the blood of the Lamb (v. 19).

**Conclusion**

1. Blaise Pascal in *Pensées* 352 reminds us, “Wretchedness induces despair. Pride induces presumption. The Incarnation shows man the greatness of his wretchedness ... through the greatness of the remedy required.”
2. A hopeful life, a holy life, a humble life, they all go together. A hopeful life, a holy life, a humble life, will avoid the vanity of “Happy Meal” Christianity. Such a life is the proper response, the only response, to the precious, spotless Son of God who bought us out of the slave market of sin by His precious blood.
3. “What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”