

2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

As a result of all the blessedness we have discovered in the first twenty five verses of this letter, as a result of all that we have because we are the recipients of God's favor by His electing grace, and the four fundamental commands that Peter gives us for living unto the glory of God, we now come to the section of the letter that gives us practical instruction for living out all that has been made possible for us.

Notice that verse 1 begins with the word "therefore." So what he is about to say is based on what he has previously written. What was that? What just went before was the tremendous statement (v. 23) that we are born again (by God) through the word of God. The point was that this word is imperishable (v. 23) and that it is living and active (v. 23) and that it is not like grass and flowers that die but that it endures forever. So if you have been born again through this word, then you will last forever. You are secure forever in the family of God, who caused you to be born again into that family.

Therefore, since you have new life by God's working and since you have confidence about the future,

(2:1) "putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word."

Now listen closely. The word of God not only gives life but it also destroys.

Verse 1 describes the destructive side of the word of God.

"Therefore, putting aside (get rid of, destroy) all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word."

One of the ways the word of God creates desire for the milk of God's kindness is by destroying desire for other things. We must understand this because a wrong view of the powerful work of God within us can lead to a works based sanctification. In other words, we keep working for God and achieving more holiness by what we do, rather than striving to be what God says we already are, through obedience because we love Christ

There is a difference between these two understandings. Obedience proves that God is working in us according to His good pleasure to do His will. No one can nor does anyone have a genuine desire to be obedient to God according to His terms while they still have a heart that has not been regenerated, a person who has not been born again to a living hope cannot obey Christ.

However, just because God is doing this marvelous work of grace in us does not mean that we are not responsible for living in a manner that is pleasing to God.

There are many warning passages in the Scriptures that tell us that we are in peril if certain things are not evidenced in our lives when we claim to be Christians.

So Peter gives us this insight into the destructive work of the destructive work of the word of God and makes it clear that certain attitudes and behavior toward others is not consistent with living for the glory of Christ.

I find it interesting that malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy and slander are all positioned together before the mention of desiring the pure word of God. Why not lust, greed, lying, and gossip?

Perhaps it may be that malice is the opposite of love, guile is the opposite of truthfulness, hypocrisy is rooted in insincerity and is the opposite of being sincere, envy is the opposite of generosity and slander is the opposite of complimenting or speaking well of someone.

The opposites I have mentioned are all to be characteristic of a Christian's way of living.

So the things Peter mentioned are to be put off.

Malice: a desire to hurt someone with words or deeds. Guile: a desire to gain some advantage or preserve some position by deceiving others. Hypocrisy: a desire not to be known for what really is. Envy: a desire for some privilege or benefit that belongs to another with resentment that another has it and you don't. Slander: the desire for

revenge and self-enhancement, often driven by the deeper desire to deflect attention from our own failings. The worse light we can put another in by slander, the less our own darkness shows.

Malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, slander - these we must put away, destroy. This is the other side of longing for the spiritual milk of God's kindness in the word. If you want to experience desire for God's word; if you want your desires to grow; if you want to taste fully the kindness of the Lord, realize that as our satisfaction in God's kindness rises, the controlling desires of malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy and slander are destroyed. And the reverse is true: as you resist them and lay them aside, desires for God grow stronger and more intense. Each of these things is a form of unkind behavior. Each of these things were used against Christ by Christ-haters.

When these things are evidenced it is not acting like men that are made new creatures, and are partakers of the divine nature, nor like brethren, or as Christ's little ones, and who are of God, born again to be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

Since you have been born again by the word of God, now long for the word of God. Do you see the connection between the word of God in verses 23-25? Born again by the word . . . therefore long for the milk of the word. If you began your life with the word, sustain your life with the word.

A great threat to salvation and to our growth toward salvation (v. 2) the belief or feeling that you are stuck with the way you are or "this is all I will ever experience of God, the level of spiritual intensity that I now have is all I can have; others may have strong desires after God and may have deep experiences of personal pleasure in God, but I will never have those because . . . well, just because . . . I am not like that. That's not me."

These feelings that genetic forces and family forces and the forces of my past experiences and present circumstances are just too strong to allow me to ever change and become more zealous for God (Tit. 2:14), or more fervent (Rom. 12:12), or more delighted in God (Psalm 37:4), or more hungry for fellowship with Christ (John 6:35), or more at home with spiritual things (Rom. 8:5), more bold (2 Tim. 1:7), or more constant or joyful (Rom. 12:12) or hopeful (1 Pet. 1:13).

This is tragic in the church. It leaves people stuck. It takes away hopes and dreams of change and growth. It obliterates the excitement of living which is growth. It robs us of the great truths of who we are in Christ and this is pandemic in the church.

Too often in teaching or in counsel I have asked someone who are you in Christ and I get an answer like, "I am a child of God." Well what does that mean? What is your identity in Christ? Who are you as a new creature? What makes you who you are now compared to what you were? How do you know that this is true? What confirms your new identity? And usually the answer is "I just believe it" and there is no ability to go to the word of God and show me this is so because it says so right here.

So thousands of people live year after year without much passion for God or zeal for his name or joy in his presence or hope in his promises or constancy in his fellowship and just say "well, that's just the way I am."

But Peter says in verse 2:

"Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

The word for "long" here is very simply the word desire. It's a command to desire.

What this means is that if you feel stuck because you don't have the kind of spiritual desires that you should, this text says, You do not need to be stuck! It says, "Get them! Get the desires you don't have." If you don't desire the milk of the word right now, start desiring it!

Now, isn't that amazing! A command to desire! A command to feel longings we do not feel. A command to feel desires we do not have. How do I respond to that?

If I don't feel things the way the Psalmists seem to feel things when they say, "As a deer pants for the flowing streams so my soul pants for you O God" (Psalm 42:1) if I don't feel that way toward God, then that's that. I just don't. I'm not like the Psalmists. That is the excuse so many give. I just not that spiritual but I know that I am saved.

And my reply is but the scripture says you are a spiritual being and you have access to all that Christ offers you by grace so why would you want to deny Christ purpose for your

1 Peter 2:1-3 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier January 14, 2007  
life with a weak excuse like , "that just isn't me" when the Scripture says just the opposite and says it is you.

5

God says (v. 2), "Desire the pure milk of the Lord!" Now before you raise all kinds of objections, like, How can you command me to have a desire? What can I do to obey a command like that? How do I just produce a desire? My whole problem is that I don't have the strength of desire I want. And you just tell me to desire. You may as well tell a lame man to walk.

Hmmm? Can you imagine such a thing, commanding a lame man to walk. Who could do such a thing.

John Bunyan wrote a poem that contains this line about the difference between the law and the gospel.

"Run, John, run, the law commands But gives us neither feet nor hands,  
Far better news the gospel brings:\_It bids us fly and gives us wings."

In other words in the old covenant God gave commandments, but by and large did not give the divine enablement that overcomes the deadness and depravity and rebellion of the heart. But in the new covenant, which God set up at the cross of Christ, God gives even harder commands, but he also gives the power we need to fulfill them (Rom. 8:4-6), through faith (1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11).

In other words in the old covenant God gave commandments, but by and large did not give the divine enablement that overcomes the deadness and depravity and rebellion of the heart. But in the new covenant

Run, John, run, the law commands - But gives us neither feet nor hands,

We are duty-bound to run. We can't run in ourselves, and so the commands of the law condemn. And the gospel is not different in having no commands, no conditions. Flying is harder than running.

Far better news the gospel brings: It bids us fly and gives us wings.

This is powerful deliverance from foolish reasoning about who we cannot be . The Gospel says "Fly! You don't have desires for the milk of the word? Well, have them."

What this says is that just as essential as having the desires for the word that we are supposed to have is having the trust in God that he gives what he commands.

Grasp this for the sake of powerful living for Christ. Having the trust in God that He gives what He commands.

If God says to desire, when we don't desire, then we trust Him that He must know something we don't know. He must have some power we don't have. There must be a way. God commands it. So there must be a way. I will not settle for less than what God commands.

A famous quote by St. Augustine in his Confessions (X, 40) states,

“O love that ever burnest and art never quenched! O Charity, my God, enkindle me! Thou commandest continence. Grant what thou commandest and command what thou wilt.”

That is the way you are supposed to pray and believe when you read 1 Peter 2:2, "Long for the pure milk of the word." Long for it! Do you not have the longing? Get the longing! Do you not desire the word? Start desiring it. Do not say, "I'm just this way." It is not God's will for you.

But your version may not say "milk of the word" in verse 2. It may just have, "long for the spiritual milk." Well that's accurate. The NASB here is an explanation, not just a translation. But the explanation is a good one I think. Except, it's too limiting. Is "the spiritual milk" merely the word of God? Or is it something more specific in the word. Verses 2-3 say,

Like newborn babes (who were born by the word of God), long (the way babies do) for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if (that is, since!) you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Do you see the connection between the intense longing or craving for the "spiritual milk" in verse 2 and the tasting of the kindness of the Lord in verse 3? Put them together: "Long for the spiritual milk, since you've tasted the kindness of the Lord." So it seems to me that the milk is the milk of God's kindness. That is what we are commanded to long

But there doesn't have to be a contradiction. Where did the readers taste the kindness of the Lord? The answer is: in the gospel, the word of God (v. 25). They were born again by that kindness through the word of God. So the spiritual milk is the kindness of the Lord experienced through the word of God. Or you could say, the spiritual milk is the word of God revealing or transmitting the kindness of the Lord."

You were born again by that word, by the powerful kindness of God in that word, and now go on longing for that word and for the day by day experience tasting of the kindness of the Lord through his word.

If the word of God is powerful enough to create new Christians (through new birth), then the word of God is powerful enough to create desire in languishing Christian souls. Don't retreat from that truth. The power at work within you just to bring you to life is like the power that raises the dead (Eph. 1:19-20). Can it not create desire just like it created you. Trust it.

Peter's point is: don't think that they can flourish in the same heart. Desire to taste and enjoy God's kindness cannot flourish where in the same heart with guile and hypocrisy. So fight to destroy the desires of guile and hypocrisy; and fight to taste the kindness of the Lord in his word.

The result will be (v. 2b) "you will grow in respect to salvation." Literally: "you will grow into salvation." Salvation is reached by growth. To be sure, God gives the growth (1:5; 1 Cor. 3:6). But growth is necessary. Do not say, "I can't grow; I can't change; and I don't need to." Throw that idea away like a old smelly garment, and seek God with all your heart for help in desiring his word, and let us grow up together to salvation, the final salvation at the appearing of Christ.

Brethren we are to strive to continue, with a once and for all mindset to strip away from us those things that are not consistent with the person we are in Christ. This is a progression. It is a never ending and ongoing process unto the glory of God until we are with Christ. There is not one thing that God has commanded us to do that we cannot do

All of this is rooted in the hope we have in Christ and in the promises of God that are already fulfilled for us in Christ. All of who we are is in Christ and we need to look no further than to Him as He is revealed in His word. His life, His commands and the Holy Spirit's giving of His truth to those who wrote the Scriptures.

It is all there for us. There are no excuses. There is no mistaking who we are or why we are what we are. Desire the pure milk as babes. We grow in our salvation from the Word and the more of the Word we drink in the more our desire for Christ will grow. It is a guaranteed equation with guaranteed results. Growth is not an option for a true Christian. It is normal to grow as a Christian. If there is a genuine stumbling block to that growth it must be removed and replaced with the desire for more growth.

Relish what God has purposed for you in Christ.

Be like that child who desires milk.

Except you be like little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.