

I PETER

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. **I Peter 2:1-3** . . . 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.
 - B. Pray
- II. Putting off impurities in order to put on truth and Christ-likeness in order to become holy as God is holy in all our behavior.
 - A. Before moving into our study of **verse 2**, I want to remind you of one important truth and point out another.
 - 1. I want to remind you that when it comes to putting off sin and putting on godliness, or when it comes to being holy in all your behavior as God is holy, or when it comes to loving each other with God's self-giving love, you need God's empowering and transforming help.
 - 2. And let me list some of the help we need from God. We need the new birth and we need to be set free from the bondage of sin. But we also need God's divine nature within us. We need God's gracious, moment-by-moment assistance and empowerment. We need the working of the Holy Spirit in convicting us and leading us to the truth and teaching us how to apply those truths. We need access to God through prayer. We need the living and enduring Word of God. And we need the support and care of the Church.
 - 3. The fact is, no one, Christian and non-Christian alike, is born into this world, or moves about and accomplishes their desires, or is able to sustain their lives apart from God gracious assistance. As Paul said, "In Him we live and move and exist . . ." (**Acts 17:28**). And again Paul said, "What do you have that you have not been given? (**1 Corinthians 4:7**)
 - 4. The truth I am reminding you of is that we can do nothing of ourselves, whether it is doing what is right or doing what is wrong. So, let us live each day as those who **know** we are fully dependent on God for life and strength and ability in our earthly activities, for any and all spiritual growth, and for any and all service to God.

- B. The point I want to make before moving into **verse 2** is that this exhortation to long for the pure milk of the word follows four prior exhortations that add to the importance of this one.
 - 1. In **I Peter 1:15**, God exhorts us to be holy in all our behavior as He is holy, and one of the primary ways we learn about God's holiness is through a thoughtful and thorough study of God's Word.
 - 2. In **I Peter 1:17**, God reminds us that we will face the Impartial Judge who will judge us according to our deeds. God then goes on to exhort us to use **fear of God's judgment** to motivate caution in how we live the rest of our lives. Here again, we learn what God expects from us and how we Christians are to live through His Word.
 - 3. In **I Peter 1:22**, God exhorts us to fervently love our brothers and sisters in Christ with a self-giving love that comes out of a purified life. So we again turn to God's word to learn **how** to purify ourselves and **what** has to be put off and **what** has to be put in its place in order to gain the kind of purity that makes self-giving love possible.
 - 4. And finally, in **I Peter 2:1**, God exhorts us to put off those sinful practices that war against loving each other with self-giving love.
- C. **I Peter 2:2 . . . Like newborn babies, long for** the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.
 - 1. Once we are born again, we need the right kind of food in order to nourish ourselves spiritually and mentally so that we can grow up into healthy, strong, mature Christians. And as Peter makes abundantly clear, the food we need is found in God's word.
 - 2. The analogy of being "like newborn babies" is not intended to imply that we are young, immature Christians.
 - a. The purpose of this analogy is to show us the fervency and relentlessness with which we are to pursue digging into, studying, pondering, memorizing, meditating on, discussing, reading other books about, and being taught about the practical, life transforming truths contained in the word of God.
 - b. So here is the picture – just as a newborn baby frequently, repeatedly, fervently, and relentlessly longs for his mother's milk, so we ought to long for or crave the nourishing food found in God's word with that same sense of urgency and driving desire.
 - c. And the first and foremost reason to nurture such a craving for God's word comes from the remainder of **verse 2**, which says, "that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." Jesus put this

same truth this way: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (**Matthew 5:6**).

3. I do not know what your experience is regarding craving God’s word in this way. But I do know what my experience has been, which gives me cause to suspect that some of us do not naturally have this kind of fervent, compelling, and relentless longing for God’s word.
4. I am confident most of us understand the importance of reading, studying, memorizing, and pondering God’s word. But by nature, some of us are inclined to skip meals now and then – while feeding at other tables and eating other food. So what are we to do? Here is what I have done, and maybe it will help you.
 - a. **Every time** I sat down to study or read God’s word, I asked God to give me a burning desire for His word. I asked Him to speak to me through His word. And I asked Him to give me the most practical understanding possible of His word.
 - b. I **made choices** with time use, which included how much income we needed, the kind of work and hours needed to earn that income. It was choices like these that made it possible for me to spend more time than what the average Christian spends in Bible reading, study, memorization, meditation, and prayer.
 - c. I contacted two Bible scholars (one OT/Hebrew, one NT/Greek) and asked them if I could call them when I had questions. This provided both an outside and a mature source of Bible understanding to help me discern the truth of God’s word and prevent me from going astray with novel interpretations.
 - d. I used commentaries and I learned enough Greek to get the basic idea of those commentaries that put part of their information in Greek. I used Bible dictionaries, Webster’s Dictionary, and Young’s Concordance. Now I use a very good computer Bible program. I can recommend E-Sword, which is a free computer Bible program, and it is good enough for advanced students of God’s word, so you may find it helpful in your Bible study.
 - e. Finally, I made it my goal to put into practice what God was teaching me from my study of His word. This commitment was and continues to be as vital to my study of God’s word as anything else I have done. The reason for this is that only those who are doers of God’s word have the heart and mind to understand God’s word according to the meaning of God’s word. And, the first and foremost purpose of God’s word is to transform us into the kind of people God will call His own.

- D. **I Peter 2:2** . . . Like newborn babies, long for *the pure milk of the word*, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.
1. To gain the intended nourishment that God's word offers, we must dig into, study, ponder, memorize, meditate on, discuss, read about, and be taught about the word of God. Reading is good, but if we do not add studying, pondering, praying, and applying to our reading, it is like eating a few bites of food and then turning away to other activities. You cannot grow strong and healthy eating this way.
 2. Scripture itself describes the nourishing value of scripture:
 - a. **Deuteronomy 8:3** . . . He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but ***man lives by everything*** that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.
 - b. **2 Timothy 3:14-17** . . . You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, [15] and that from childhood you have known ***the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation*** through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
 - c. **Psalm 19:8** . . . The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
 3. Keeping the put off to put on principle in mind, when we entertain sinful attitudes and behavior toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, it dulls our hunger for and hinders our feeding on God's word.
 - a. For example, any participation in malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander dulls our appetite so that we are not so eager to eat.
 - b. Therefore, the more we put off known sin, the more we are able to have a healthy craving for God's word, and the more we are able to gain the nourishment needed for further spiritual growth.
 4. This brings us to the question, how is it that the Word of God is pure, and why is this important?
 - a. The word of God is pure in that, like God himself, there is no evil or anything misleading or promises that can't be kept or commands that cannot be lived up to in it. Therefore, as we say

about God, so we can say about His word – it is light, and in it there is no darkness at all.

- b. And why is this important? Because there are mysteries and seeming contradictions and hard to understand statements and difficult truths to accept sprinkled here and there in God's Holy Scriptures.
 - (1) If we are confident God's word is never misleading, we can stand with God, submit to His will, and obey His word even when we do not understand God's purpose for some command or see the outcome of obeying a command.
 - (2) In this way, faith in the purity God's motives and goals, and in the purity of God's word, frees us to obey God's word even though we do not fully understand His motives and goals.
 - (3) And given that we begin as immature believers who are at the front end of putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature, we will pass through some number of years of not understanding as much as we would like. And yet, we will still need to do what God says. When we trust God and His word to be completely true, obedience when we do not understand why still seems reasonable and best.

E. **I Peter 2:2 . . .** Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, ***so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.***

- 1. The Christian life is never intended to be static – that is, having little or no change. After being born again, God intends that we should grow into mature Christians just like parents expect their babies to grow into mature adults.
- 2. This is why God says here in **verse 2** that we are to grow in respect to our salvation. We are not growing to gain salvation any more than a baby grows to gain life. But now that we have life, growth to the fullest possible measure of being like Christ is the natural outcome.
- 3. Consider these scriptures that affirm this truth:
 - a. **Ephesians 4:15 . . .** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.
 - b. **Colossians 1:9-11 . . .** For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

[11] strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.

- c. **2 Peter 3:17-18a** . . . You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, [18] but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- 4. Let me sum up what we have been talking about here in **verse 2**.
 - a. To put on the character qualities of godliness, we must put off the character traits of ungodliness.
 - b. As we put off that which we know is sin and an offense to God, we gain a zealous hunger for God's word.
 - c. And as we repeatedly, fervently, and prayerfully feed on God's word, we move forward in further growth in holiness, greater love for others, and a more meaningful relationship with God.

F. **I Peter 2:3** . . . If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

- 1. This statement is not questioning if you have or haven't tasted the kindness of the Lord, but rather is it affirming you have and it is presenting this fact as reason enough to feed on the scriptures with a view to growing more and more toward Christian maturity.
 - a. Interestingly, in **Romans 2:4**, Paul speaks of God's kindness as the God-quality that brings us to repentance.
 - b. And here, Peter speaks of God's kindness as the God-quality that motivates us to take in as much of God's word as possible in order to grow in holiness of life.
 - c. When we put those two truths together, we see God's kindness at work on our behalf from the beginning of our Christian life to our dying breath. That should be a comforting truth to us all.
- 2. Without question, we learn about the immense kindness and undeserved grace of God toward us in the Holy Scriptures. And yet, it is in our personal relationship with God that we experience, over and over, His great kindness. And it is in our corporate relationship with God that we see His great kindness toward all His people.
- 3. What effect does God's kindness have on you? Does it motivate you to love God? Does it motivate you to willingly submit to His will and word? Does it motivate you to live each day for God? To hunger for and feed on the life-giving food in His word? Does it motivate you to keep growing in the Faith until holiness – like unto God's holiness – touches every area of your life?

III. In closing, I want to remind you of some of the great truths found in God's word.

- A. In God's word we discover who created our universe, and who gave us life – not just once, but twice. We see the entrance of sin through the first Adam, and its power to destroy us and our fellowship with God. Yet we also see the entrance of salvation through the second Adam, and its power to restore what sin stole – making us into new creations in Christ Jesus.
- B. We see the lies of Satan and the deceptiveness of sin – how sin promises the best life has to offer, yet mocks its own promises by delivering pain with its pleasures, poverty with its riches, weakness with its strength, foolishness with its wisdom, enslavement with its freedoms, and eternal loss with its temporary gains.
- C. We see God as an impartial judge and yet abundantly merciful, as a consuming fire and yet as the giver of new life in Christ Jesus, as hating sin yet showing incomprehensible grace to sinners, as demanding the death penalty for sin yet providing His own dear son to pay that penalty on our behalf, as someone not to be mocked or ignored yet patient and long-suffering, as sending or allowing hard times to come our way and yet as the One who comforts and encourages and sustains us through them all, as standing against the proud yet giving grace to the humble, as requiring us to do our part yet assisting and empowering us all along the way, as commanding us to love Him above all else and above all others yet loving us with a love that far surpasses any love we can give to Him, and we see God as the King of kings yet also as the Loving Father who understands our weakness, so much so that He does not deal with us according to our sins.
- D. In the scriptures, we see the heart and mind of God, the ways of God, the faithfulness of God, the wisdom of God, the commands of God, the expectations of God, the will of God, the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of God, and we see the complexity and mysteriousness of God.
- E. And I could go on, except it is time to stop. And so I urge you, long for God's word like a newborn baby longs for its mother's milk so that by feeding on it, you may grow to Christian maturity – which is the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (**Ephesians 4:13**).