

1 Peter 2:1-3

1Pe 2:1 (NKJV) **Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.**

Last week we saw that if our relationship with God is not right, it will always impact our relationship with other people. We saw that our relationship with other believers is actually a reflection of our relationship with God. The point that we saw was that the believer “**laying aside**” (v1), or putting off, putting aside certain negative and ungodly attributes in their life is a prerequisite for desiring the pure milk of the Word of God. I.e., there is a direct connection between how we treat other people and how much we will desire to grow spiritually. If a believer has a lot of negative qualities in their life and they simply are not willing to let God deal with removing those negative qualities from their life, then the parallel truth that has to be drawn from this passage is that they will have no hunger for the Word of God, no hunger for God’s truth and for God’s work in their life. Unabated and undealt with sin is a great hindrance to meaningful and godly desires. So, there is a twofold aspect to what Peter is addressing. He is saying that the believer has to “**lay aside**” everything that hinders their spiritual growth and to develop a strong desire for that which promotes their spiritual growth.¹ If I can add to that statement, God is not going to develop this desire for you. As we will see in just a moment, the word “**desire**” is an actual command, so the responsibility to develop a desire and hunger for God’s Word becomes the full responsibility of the believer. There are many believers who have never developed any kind of meaningful commitment to the Word of God personally. They have no personal discipline in their life to spend time in the Word, and eventually just lose all interest in the Word. They can go day after day, week after week, and month after month without ever spending any time in God’s Word. As a pastor, I am convinced that the individuals who consistently receive the most benefit from the messages that I bring are the ones who have had both meaningful and productive time in God’s Word before they ever arrive at church. What that discipline does for them is that it develops in them a supernatural appreciation for and understanding of God’s truth. Unfortunately, though, the person who never spends any time in the Word of God will rarely if ever be impacted by anything that I say in any message.

Now, in looking at [1 Peter 2:1-3](#), what is not apparent in the English language is that all four of the verbs – “**lay aside, desire, grow, tasted**” are in the aorist tense. They are all past tense verbs – which does not really seem to come out of the translations. For instance, the phrase “**lay aside**”, in the Interlinear simply says “**having put away**”. It is an aorist middle participle. Most participles end in “ing”. Only YLT translates it as a past tense verb. However, the other three verbs are in the past tense as well. So, how are the past tense verbs to be translated and understood? Well, the first thing that has to be recognized is that [1 Peter 2:1-3](#) composes one sentence, so we have to first discern what the primary verb in the sentence is. It is the verb “**desire**” because it is in the aorist imperative. What we have already seen is that the aorist imperative is actually an impossible tense because you cannot command someone to do something in the past. What we have learned, though, is that the aorist imperative becomes the governing verb in the passage. Every other verb becomes subservient to the aorist imperative. Peter uses the aorist imperative more than any other author does in the New Testament. It is his peculiar way of emphasizing. So, the word “**desire**” will become the primary focus of these three verses.

Peter has one primary focus in this passage. Peter says that every believer needs to have a strong, spiritual “**craving**” for solid spiritual food. In the NKJV, the translators have used the word “**desire**”. The analogy that Peter paints here is that of a young baby and how much they want milk. They crave it and often times literally scream to get it. It is something that they feel that they must have, and they want it frequently. The believer, in a very similar way, is to “**desire (crave) the pure milk of the word**”. The NIV and AMP actually say to “**crave**”. The NASB and ESV translate it “**long for**”. The idea of “milk” as used in this passage does not represent elementary Christian teaching. It is not contrasted with meat or solid food as in [1 Corinthians 3:2](#) or [Hebrews 5:12-13](#), but it is used to describe something that is to be eagerly desired, just in the same way that a baby craves to be fed.

The Greek word for “**desire**” is “*epipotheo*” and comes from the prefix “*epi*” which means toward and the word “*potheo*” which means to yearn for something.² The prefix “*epi*” intensifies the meaning of the actual root word toward the object, which in this case is the Word of God. So, this is a word that has a very strong connotation and undertone associated with it. “*Epipotheo*” describes a very intense yearning for something, to long for or intensely crave something with the implication that the one longing recognizes the lack or the need in their life for what they are actually longing.³ This particular word is the word that would be used to describe the strong desire that a husband or wife has for their mate, for the strong desire for food that accompanies hunger, the strong desire that someone has for a loved one that has died, or the strong desire that a parent may have for their wayward children who are lost and need to come to Christ. This word represents a very strong and consuming desire for something. In essence, the charge that Peter brings here is not that of reading the Word or studying the Word (both of which are obviously essential for a healthy Christian life), but rather that of longing for the truth that is found only in the Word of God. The world will offer a relentless output of informational junk, and unfortunately many Christians seem inclined to pay a great deal of attention to it. The only thing that it does is to dull their hunger for the things of God, for the Word of God, and for the truth of God that is so critical for their life.⁴

The message that Peter is developing here is that of what it really takes for a believer to grow spiritually. I am always grieved when I see some of the pictures of these children in war-torn countries that are literally starving. They are so malnourished and the natural and intellectual growth of their fragile little lives has already been severely stunted and retarded. Their entire body has shrunk around their little bones and their eyes are sunk back into their faces. They are literally starving and are severely undernourished. However, I think that if we could see some Christians the way that God sees them, that that picture of these emaciated little children would be the exact way that God would see some Christians – literally just starving spiritually.

No one will ever really long for the Word of God until they actually have a driving hunger to do so. In fact, every believer can probably do a self-assessment and examination of where they actually are in their Christian life based on how deeply they personally long for and crave the Word of God in their life. So, because of the aorist imperative tense of the verb “**desire**”, “**long for**”, or “**crave**” (based on what translation you use), Peter is saying that the believer has to make up their mind once and for all that they are going to develop and cultivate a hunger for God’s Word in their life. Until that decision happens, the average believer will simply remain neutral and almost indifferent to seeking after the truth. The way that Peter emphasizes this principle of how a believer actually grows in their spiritual life is that he

says in v2 **“that you may grow thereby”**. I.e., there has to be a genuine spiritual hunger for the Word of God before there can actually be genuine spiritual growth. No matter where someone may think that they are in their spiritual life, they are no further along than their hunger for God’s Word. It is impossible to grow spiritually if a believer neglects God’s Word in their life. The words **“you may grow”** are just one word in the Greek – *“auxano”*, and it is in the passive voice, which is very significant because it literally means that **“it may grow you”**. In our vernacular, the more that a believer feeds on the Word of God, the more that word will grow them, mature them, and change them. If I can say it this way, there is always a place in our life for a healthy dissatisfaction as to where we really are spiritually. In my mind, the more content I become in where I am spiritually generally means that I am not experiencing any meaningful spiritual growth at all. Jesus said it best in [Matthew 5:6](#) when He said,

Mt 5:6 (NKJV) **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**

Both of the verbal participles for **“hunger”** and **“thirst”** are in the present tense, active voice. I.e., this kind of **“hunger and thirst”** is something that should always be present in our life, and when it is not present, it just means that we have reached a point where we are no longer growing spiritually.

Now, at this point in the exposition, it is really important to understand the language that Peter has used in v2 when he says that we are to long for the **“pure milk of the word.”** The word **“pure”** (*“adolos”*) is a word that is pregnant with meaning. It comes from *“a”* which is the negative prefix and *“dolos”* which means deceitful and crafty.⁵ So, the meaning is that of not being deceitful. It means that the Word of God is literally free from any impurity or imperfections, so that when a person comes to the Word of God it will never deceive them or lead them astray in any way.⁶ Whenever anyone comes to the Word of God, they can fully trust everything that it communicates to them. There is nothing in it, not one word, not one principle that cannot be trusted. The Bible is always truthful in what it communicates to us. The theologians define this as inerrancy. Inerrancy means that **the Bible always tells the truth and that it always tells the truth concerning everything that it talks about.**

Unfortunately, one of the curses of our Christian culture is that many believers are more than satisfied with just having a minimal weekly input of God’s Word into their life by someone else, and the rest of the week they are not that inclined or motivated to even read God’s Word. They may be busy, tired, or just spiritually complacent and lazy. It is difficult to quantify what that person is actually missing in their life. If you were to think about it for just a moment, what is better than having a deep and abiding relationship with God, with the God who made the universe with just a word. Everything in life just pales in contrast to what God is like and how amazing He really is, and yet Christian after Christian after Christian seems to think that the world is what is really amazing. The world that God has created is amazing and we should enjoy it richly, but not at the expense of removing God from our busy lives. What Peter does here is that he begins to confront the reality of how we are actually living out the Christian life, and what he is saying is that our life being divorced from a strong desire of being in the Word of God is an indication of where we actually are in our Christian life. Genuine spiritual growth is always marked by a craving and a hunger for God’s Word with the same intensity with which a baby craves for milk. The opposite of longing after the pure milk of the Word is to actually fulfill [Hebrews 2:3](#) and to **“neglect so great a salvation”**.

Heb 2:3 (NKJV) **how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*,**

As just mentioned, it is a fair assumption to say that the Word of God may be the most neglected element of the Christian life. The word for “neglect” in [Hebrews 2:3](#) is the Greek word “*amelesantes*”. The “*a*” is the negative prefix and the verb “*melo*” means to care. So, when used together the word “neglect” means to **not care about something**. It has the idea of being careless with something, of actually making light of it, and not regarding it as important.⁷ The NIV translates it as “ignore” and the Amplified Bible translates it as “**refuse to pay attention to**”. I.e., the picture is that God has spoken, but the individual simply does not care and refuses to pay attention to what has been said.

In my dentist’s office there is a sign right above the patient’s chair so that when the dentist leans his patients back in the chair they see a sign on the ceiling. The sign simply says “*Ignore your teeth and they will go away*”. In like manner, if a believer just casually and indifferently ignores their spiritual life, it likewise will just go away. Often times it seems that the most difficult Christians to reach are those who have just ignored and neglected their spiritual life. Unfortunately now they have reached a point where they often seem unreachable. Being neglectful of what is spiritually important has become a way of life, a lifestyle. They have grown accustomed to just ignoring and neglecting the Word of God in their life. In reality, they have ignored and neglected God and His Word for so long that they have lost all meaningful interest in God, in Christ, in His Word, in His truth, in His church, and regrettably in His salvation.

Now, I have to stop here for just a moment and make a very important observation. Ever since sin entered into the world, people have been fleeing and hiding from God, and that includes Christians. The modern church has produced an entire marketplace of culturally fashionable ploys, devices, schemes, and tactics for evading and avoiding God. The number of excuses, reasons, justifications, rationalizations, defenses, and vindications that people have invented are very difficult to even quantify. Some are very incredibly sophisticated, clever, and what we might call state-of-the-art, cutting edge excuses.⁸ Other reasons for not having much of a hunger for God’s Word are fairly simple and unpretentious like “*I am just tired*”, or “*I do not have the time*”. Listen very carefully. We all do exactly what we want to do. We all spend our time doing exactly what we want to do. If we want to read the newspaper, we do that. If we want to watch the news, we do that. If we want to take a walk, we do that. If we have a hobby, we do that. If we want to just sit down and relax, we do that. If we want to go out and eat, we do that. We do what we want to do. Unfortunately, however, the result is always the same. In the process of avoiding time in God’s Word, we find ways to minimize ourselves both its message and demands on our life. In that scenario, we become like the foolish man in [Matthew 7:24-27](#) who built his house on sand. The message of that passage is that the storms of life will come, and when they do, that individual will not be able to stand.

No believer can grow spiritually if they do not have a strong desire and yearning to learn more of God’s Word. You can be the nicest person on the planet and as sincere as the day is long, but apart from meaningful time in the Word of God, it is impossible to grow spiritually. So, what Peter is talking about here is what we would call a passion – an intense longing, a driving and compelling craving, something that is extremely strong and intense. I know people who have an incredible passion for deer hunting, and they will go sit out in a deer stand at 5:00am on a cold, windy, winter morning in the absolute dark

for hours, but cannot find time for even several minutes in the Word of God. Just too busy I guess. It is always a matter of priority and what we deem to be important for our life. Peter says that we have to make this “**desire**” that he is addressing to be an unwavering priority for our life.

There is no Scriptural basis that allows believers to ignore this aspect of the Christian life. This one attribute of not deeply hungering for the Word of God may be the most lacking quality in Christianity today. We can become very busy and easily distracted, and eventually our longing for the Word of God becomes relegated to just listening to someone else who has done the studying for us. If we are going to be able to truly live out the Christian life, then we will find that growing spiritually is directly linked to a genuine longing for God’s Word and a longing for a deeper understanding of it.

One last reason that Peter provides for not neglecting the Word of God in our life is that we “**have tasted that the Lord is gracious**” (v3). The NASB says that we have tasted the “**kindness of the Lord**”. The ESV and NIV says that “**you have tasted that the Lord is good**”. The AMP says “**the goodness and kindness**”. The Greek word for “**gracious**” is “*chrestos*” and it means good, goodness, gracious, kind.⁹ Obviously, it is a quality that is expected of believers. For instance, [Ephesians 4:32](#) says,

Eph 4:32 (NKJV) **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**

One of the ways that God’s kindness is generated and becomes evident is in His longsuffering with men who are innately in rebellion against Him. God has delayed judgment against men in order to lead them to repentance. [Romans 2:4](#) is a remarkable verse and says this about God’s “**goodness**”,

Ro 2:4 (NKJV) **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

When Peter uses the word “**tasted**” what he is communicating is that we come to really know God by personal experience. The believer reads and meditates and studies the Word of God, and as they do they begin to learn things about God that they never knew and never experienced and they become spiritually refreshed and nourished by His Word supernaturally operating in their life.

ENDNOTES

¹ Vaughan, 42.

² Strong, 1104.

³ Precept, *1 Peter 2:2*, *epipotheo*, ep.

⁴ MacArthur, 99-100.

⁵ Strong, 916.

⁶ Grudem, 95.

⁷ Vine, 779.

⁸ Poythress, 4-5.

⁹ Strong, 1457.

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