

Hunger for God's Word

Our Identity in Christ

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2. We began the second chapter this morning, this wonderfully epistle that we've been looking at for some time now. We've seen the relevance of this epistle. When I first started this series, I shared that I saw this, Peter was writing to Christians who needed to hear the things that we need to hear in this day, the challenges that we have as followers of Jesus Christ in a time where the culture is becoming increasingly opposed to the gospel that we love and to the Lord that we serve. We live in a culture that values pluralism and sees any statement of objective truth and confidence, no matter how loving we speak the truth in love to others, and they see that as hate speech. And so we understand that the culture is becoming more resistant to the gospel and so we need to be encouraged in how we can bear up and be faithful to God, as the days grow darker, how can we shine more brightly? I mean, it is a privilege to live at anytime that God puts you, but especially at the moments in history where the darkness is encroaching and you have the light, what a privilege it is to live in this day, and if we saw things correctly, we would truly glorify God for that. And I pray that we will understand that more as we continue to work through 1 Peter, because this passage is certainly, this book equips us to be faithful to the Lord.

We've seen that that's the theme of his letter, to stand firm. He ends his letter with that statement in 1 Peter 5:12, stand firm therefore, stand firm in the grace that you've received. And so he's trying to help us stand firm and we've seen that how he begins his letter is by saying that the way you're going to stand firm amidst the trials of life, is you have a foundation of gratitude. In the first 12 verses of chapter 1, he reminds us of all that we should be grateful for in Christ, all that we have received in the glorious salvation that we have. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you have a salvation that all the Old Testament saints would have longed to have had what you have. The angels in heaven even now, long to have what you have.

And so he says that in the first 12 verses, you need to be grateful, actively thank God, treasure what you have, and then he turns the corner in chapter 1, verse 13, and he begins to say here are some things to build upon that foundation, a life that will stand up, stand the test of time, deal with the adversity and the storms that may come. And I mentioned to you, there are four pillars. I want to adopt that so there are five pillars. I made the mistake of looking too closely at the chapter divisions and so really chapter 2:1-3, I think

it's the fifth pillar. You know, the chapter divisions are not inspired. When Peter wrote this letter, he didn't write verse 1, verse 2, chapter 1, end chapter 1, chapter 2. He wrote a letter and God gave him the letter that he wrote, and then later as a means of trying to help us organize and find places in our Bibles, they came up with the helpful idea of chapter and verse divisions. But remember that the chapter divisions aren't inspired, and so sometimes you need to not pay as much attention to them as others, and I shouldn't have and we're not going to today. Chapter 2:1-3 is finishing the argument he began in chapter 1, verse 13. And to give you the big picture, what he does, I've said there are four imperatives, there's a fifth imperative in this section. There are five commands, and they're all aorist tense commands, that is, a Greek past tense. They're all in that same tense. There are only five imperatives, commands, imperative mood verbs that occur from 1:13 through chapter 2, verse 10. And these five verbs are the main things that he wants to emphasize and we've seen the first four in previous messages. Chapter 1, verse 13, he says, "If you're going to build upon a foundation of gratitude, a life that will stand up in the storms of life, you need, first of all, to fix your hope." That was the first imperative, fix your hope on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Christ, that is, fix your hope on the Second Coming. Actively do that. The second imperative he said in chapter 1, verse 15, the second pillar was to see yourself as God sees you. Be holy. Your life is to be set apart unto God, devoted to the Lord. So fix your hope, be holy, and thirdly in verse 17 of chapter 1, it was to conduct yourselves in fear, that is, to bring all of life into the presence of God. You're holy, you're to see yourself as set apart, now every part of your life live in the fear of God, that is, as your Father is looking at everything that you're doing, please him. And then last time we saw the fourth imperative in verse 22, which is to earnestly love one another, to labor to love all people, but especially believers. He's saying love one another, love the saints, serve them, lay down your life for them. And the fifth pillar we're going to see today is in chapter 2 and verse 2, or verse 2 when he says long for the pure milk of the word. It's going to be hunger for God's word. That is the title of the message, the theme of the message is "Hunger for God's Word."

So we're going to see that if we do these five pillars, it's actually beautiful what he does here, as we do these things build upon a foundation of gratitude, we fix our hope, we see ourselves as God sees us, we're holy, we conduct ourselves in fear, we earnestly love one another and we hunger for the word, what we're going to see is we become the true temple of God. That's what he's going to lead into next. We, then, are truly the temple of God as he intends us to be. The temple of God today in this period of salvation is the people of God. The church is the people of God, not the building, and today the place that God dwells in glory is when the people of God gather to worship. You and I now, those of us who belong to Christ, we are the temple. And so Peter is saying, "Listen, get these things right. Build these foundation, have the foundation of gratitude. Build these pillars and then you will be what God has called you to be." And we plan to look at that, the glory of that next Sunday, Lord willing, but today, hunger for God's word. Hunger for God's word.

So we're going to start reading it verse 22 but we're going to see that our text begins with the word, "Therefore," 2:1. Therefore, an inferential conjunction which invites us to, the

author is saying, "What I'm telling you now is based on and connected to what I just told you in a very close logical way." And so I want to read the immediate context to hear the "Therefore" correctly. So we'll begin at verse 22 of chapter 1, reading through chapter 2, verse 3.

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

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.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, as we come to You this morning, we come as needy people. Lord, Your word tells us that we are to see ourselves as newborn babies, helpless, dependent, and we come in that spirit even now knowing that to understand Your word we need Your grace, we need the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We ask, Father, that You would pour out Your grace upon us and open the eyes of our hearts. Help us to see what You want us to see, to see ourselves as we are, to see Christ as He is, and to glory in Him. Grant us repentance and faith and may You be pleased with what happens in our hearts. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

So hunger for the word of God, that is what he's telling us we need to do. This is the fifth pillar: hunger for the word of God. This, I said, the inferential conjunction "Therefore" connects what he's about to say with what he just said, and so we see that it's pretty obvious that the connection point right away that we see is that if he's going to tell us hunger for the word of God, it's because he's just been talking about the word of God in verses 23 to 25. And it's also interesting that he said we were born again in verse 22 and verse 23, you've been born again by imperishable seed. Now that you're a newborn baby, hunger for the word of God like a baby hungers for milk. You see the organic connection. And there's actually even a third connection that when he says put aside all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander, really think about those things, those are sins that are particularly relationally oriented. They're not sins that just happen merely inside. They do happen, they start on the inside, but they work their way out. I mean, we're going to see that as we look at it, but so what I think what he's saying here, he picks those five sins, therefore laying aside these things because he was just telling us in the previous section to be loving. So this section really connects closely to the previous section. Put aside all these things that are the opposite of love and hunger for the word.

I mentioned before that this is the only imperative in the section, and again the other translations don't translate it quite as clearly, and all of them actually miss it sometimes. What you have is in the original language you have one main verb and one main imperative in this section, but you have helping verbs or participles, other verbs that are helping flesh it out. And so I read in the New American Standard, "Therefore, putting aside all malice, etc. like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the word," but in the NIV you might read, "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice." You see that rid yourselves is actually an imperative in English. In the Greek it's not really an imperative. But it does have imperatival force. It's not like they're mistranslating really, it's just that I want you to see the main point is "long for," not "rid yourselves." Rid yourselves, you've got to rid yourselves to long for. So that's why it's hard to translate from one language to another. Anybody that knows anything about languages when you're trying to go from one language to another, you never can do it perfectly and so the Lord covers that over and gets us there, but I just want you to see that what you want to hammer home is that what we are being commanded to do is to hunger for the word of God. That's what you're being commanded to do.

That's really interesting if you stop and think about it. The imperative is hunger for the word of God. It's not read the word of God. It's not study the word of God. It's not memorize the word of God. It's not meditate upon the word of God. Now all of those things are commanded in other places, but here Peter says hunger for the word of God. And isn't it instructive, hunger is actually more fundamental and foundational than all of those other things. If you hunger for the word of God, you will study it, you will read it, you will memorize it, you will meditate upon it. He says actually what we need to do when we're laying aside these things is we need to cultivate the actual hunger and desire for God's word. Even more fundamental. This is what we're commanded to do.

Now how do you do that? How do you cultivate a greater longing for the word of God? Well, the text helps us. I think there are two main points in this passage of how he helps us to cultivate and understand how we can cultivate a greater longing for the word of God, and the first is we need to understand our desperate need. The way that you can cultivate a longing for the word of God is if you really understand how great your need is. Understand it's a desperate need. It's not something that just needs to, you know, I really need to do more with the Bible. No, it is a desperate need that we have, and if we will reflect on that, he's inviting us actually to meditate upon how great the need is so that we can then accomplish what he's commanding us to do.

Now let's think about this and there are three little subpoints under this first how do you understand or see your desperate need. Well, the first thing is the word picture. This first subpoint here, just see the word picture, the power of the word picture. Like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the word. Now it's interesting he uses a word for newborn that literally means born now. It doesn't mean like an infant, it means a baby that was born now, same day. The W.'s had a baby just the other day. They're almost in this category, born now, and obviously it still carries on. The idea is there's nothing, this baby, you know, when you see newborn babies, what do they do? When they're really

newborn, they do two things: they sleep and they eat. Not any time for fellowship, communion. You know, it's like you see them and their eyes open, you're like thrilled. "Hey, hey, look at me." And then, of course, they don't even look at you. I mean, they may look at you but they don't really know what's going on. There's no connection. Isn't it cool when you finally have your child and you sense, "I see you really seeing me in a different way." That's a beautiful thing. That's the development of how God has made us to develop, right?

But he's saying here a baby born just now, you need to see yourself like a baby born now. How helpless are you apart from being cared for? How needy are you? What do you need? The only thing you need, I mean, if you could ask a baby, "What's the only thing you need," and they can understand your question. "I've only got one need right now. I need milk. And I apparently need to sleep a lot too. I need the milk that my mother can give me. I need nourishment. That's all I need." He's saying, see yourself like that, that the need for the word is much greater than we realize. Now let me make a point here too. When he uses milk here, he's not using it in any way like the author of Hebrews does in Hebrews 5 or Paul does in 1 Corinthians 3, where he's chastising believers. Both those texts are, in a sense, are chiding believers for not yet going on past basic rudimentary teaching, milk, to the meat of Scripture. That's not Peter's understanding here at all. He's not saying that at all. He's not dealing with that. He's saying you need to see yourself with the same urgent need of the word that a newborn, born just now baby sees the need for milk. There's no negative light here at all. It's all positive, that the adjectives he uses makes this so clear to describe the word "milk".

There are two adjectives right there beside it. You look at, he says, the pure milk of the word. Now again in the English, it doesn't read like two adjectives, it reads one adjective, "pure" milk, and then you have a prepositional phrase, "of the word." In the original, it's really two adjectives before the word "milk," that you're the desire milk, that's the object of the desire, that's the direct object of the verb, "long for, hunger for, hunger for milk." And the milk has two adjectives, one is a word which ends being translated "of the word" and the other is an adjective which means pure. Pure here means that which is unadulterated, unmixed. We'll talk a little bit more about it in a moment. And this phrase "of the word" translates a word which literally the Greek word if I just say it is logikos, transliterated l-o-g-i-k-o-s. You hear the word logical in that, or you may be familiar with the Greek word for word "logos." And so this word used as an adjective means "pertaining to the spoken word." The logos is the word, the spoken word. So logikos can mean "pertaining to the spoken word." Or logos can also be used to mean "pertaining to logic, that which is reasonable."

And I think the reason he chooses the adjective is because he's going for a little bit of both here. We know as we're reading the text because of the "Therefore" he's telling us "long for the milk of the word." He's just been talking about you were born again by the word, and you grow up by the word, so long for the word. But he's giving us this urgency and we're going to talk about this a little bit more in a moment, the positive aspect of how the logic of God, but essentially what it means is the mind of God as found in the word of God, the logic of God as you find in Scripture, the way God thinks about things. You and

I desperately need to know how God thinks about things so that we know how to live, so we can grow up. And the word picture, this idea of a baby, just born baby. You and I need the word of God more than we need anything else. We just don't understand that. We don't realize it how much we need the word of God.

Something I mentioned before, and it is just so instructive to me, is the first thing God did when he created man was he spoke to him and he gave him direction. Now think about that for a moment. Man has not sinned. His mind is not darkened. His affections are not alienated. His will is not bound. He's not fallen. He is in the pristine state as God made him to be. He is what God said when he got through making man, he is good. But yet, man, the first thing God did when he created him was said, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. You're in my image." What did he do? He told man who he was, why he's here and what he needed to do, and what that tells you is man, even before sin entered the world, could not know who he was without God telling him, could not know why he's here without God telling him, could not know what he needed to do without God telling him. If man in his pristine state, pre-fall, needed the word of God, how much more do you and I who were born and conceived in sin need the word of God every moment of our lives to tell us who we are, why we're here, and what we're to be doing.

This is what he's saying, long for it, hunger for it, the need is so great. But he also shows the need, second subpoint is to look at not just the word picture, but the participle. The phrase "putting aside." Verse 1 really, "putting aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, all slander." This verb translated "putting aside" in the New American Standard, "laying aside" in the King James, "put away" in the ESV, means "to put away from yourself," and it's used often to speak of taking off an outer garment that is soiled and laying it aside. It's used in Ephesians 4:22 to put off the deeds of the flesh and to put on the new man, put off the old man, put on the new man. Romans 13:12, put away everything associated with darkness, the deeds of darkness. Colossians 3:8 makes the same point, put off, and uses a lot of these same ideas here, relational sins like malice and mistreatment of others. He's going to say then in Colossians 3, then put on love. What's interesting here is he says, "put off" but he doesn't say "put on," and I think it's partly because he already told us what to put on a few verses back. But it's instructive that he says "put off" and what you need to do when you put off these things is you need to hunger for the word of God. You need to get in Scripture.

The reason we so desperately need the word is we have these things that we have to put off. I mean, that's what he's saying. When you become a Christian, you are born again. Isn't everything new? Yes, it is, but there's still an old man and you wake up with him every day. And so that's why you have to lay aside all malice. Malice is enmity, personal attitudes of of hatred and opposition. This speaks of an evil habit of mind where you look at other people with not a desire to bless them but, if anything, a negative attitude toward them. So lay it aside. Lay aside all deceit.

The second word there in verse 1, this word means "to practice fraud." It actually comes from a word literally which means "bait." Like you bait a fishhook and you throw it into the pond and you're practicing deceit, aren't you? You're not really, "Hey, I just, fish, I

want to bless you so I'm throwing you a worm." No, you're throwing a worm because you want to take hold of the fish. So he said that we can live that way, we can be that way where whatever we do good to others is actually just bait that's actually used to prey on them, to draw something from them. It's not really giving. No, see, remember we talked about last week love, supernatural love actually seeks to bless the other person the way God has blessed us. No fishhooks in it. He says you have to lay aside because we have formed the habits through all of our lives of malice and deceit. Got to lay it aside.

Hypocrisies. Actually in the original it's plural. Hypocrisy means "to wear a mask; to deceive." It means "to wear a mask to pretend in order to manipulate." It's related to deceit but it's more about the way we act. It's not giving something, it's acting like something that you're not in order to gain some advantage. Pleasing people. Pleasing man to get something from them. Doing things to benefit personally.

Envy. Here again, this is actually plural in the original too. Envy. It means in the plural means "bursts of envy." Lay aside bursts of envy. Envy sees what other people are benefiting, or when they're doing well, and it feels pain that you don't have that, pain that you can't have what they have. That's an ungodly attitude. Of course it is. But he says you have to lay it aside now that you've become new. That is, it's still there. You've got to put it to death. The Christian life is putting to death the deeds of the body by the cross of Christ on a daily basis. It's putting it away.

And the fifth thing, evil speaking or slanders. All slanders. That is, saying things to tear down other people. Demeaning comments. Hurtful speech.

The reason you and I so desperately need the word is because these things are still in our old man and if we don't cling to the word of God, these things will gain the ascendancy in your life. If you belong to God, he's going to discipline you at some point, he's not going to let you keep on going in it forever. That's right, but the message here is you have to actively, you have to actively long for the truth and you have to actively be putting it away as you long for the truth, as you hunger for the word. But you don't just need it because you're a newborn baby, you need it because you've got sin in your members. We do. We have sin in our members.

So that's the second subpoint, and I think the third thing is I want to point out, third subpoint: see your need. It comes back to that issue of relationships. The word picture, the participle, now relationships. These five nouns all speak of relational sins. Now think about this. When do you envy? When do you try to please people, act a certain way? You only do it when you're around other people. I mean, there's no need by yourself to sit and try to fool yourself, right? I'm going to try to act a certain way and see if I can manipulate myself. You've got more problems than just hypocrisy. No, it's these things happen with other people and what I'm saying is, isn't it good of God to put you around a lot of other people who expose the sin that comes out of you? This is God's plan. He put you around people who are doing well, you see envy come up in your heart and he says, "Put it away. Long for the word." And so like being around other people, the reality is this is one of the things that happens for new Christians sometimes, you come to Christ, you're born again,

your heart is changed on the inside, you now know what it is to love other people, you have an unfeigned love of the brethren like he just talked about in the previous passage, you have a sincere love that you actually really enjoy being around other Christians. You get to know them, you're like, "Wow, look how they're growing," and you think, man, this is just going to be a continual heavenly party until we all go home. I talked about this last week too, right? This is obviously a point we need to get.

No, the reality is the church is filled with people who are putting sin to death, therefore are needing to put it to death every day, and so what you encounter when you encounter other believers is you encounter other sinners who are saved by grace. And so by encountering them, they often are going to rub you the wrong way. Sometimes they don't do anything wrong. Sometimes they just are blessed and envy comes up in you, but it came up in you because you're around somebody who's being blessed right now. And what I'm saying is we have to learn that relationships are God's laboratory to make you more like Christ. That's why one of the most sanctifying things in the world is to get married. Anybody that's been married more than a year or two can say that, right? Once the honeymoon is over, you realize, hey, yeah, but there's nothing more wonderful and blessed in the world than to be married to another believer who is walking with Christ through life. No greater joy. No greater pleasure. No greater miracle of grace than that. I mean relationally in this world. The most greatest miracle is salvation but to be able to walk through life together arm in arm, that's a great treasure. But every day this is part of what you have to do. These things come up in your hearts and you're right around that person close together and the closer you are to people, the more you're going to see these things come up. So relationships make us know our great need. This is why it's insane, the monk's idea of of, you know, the Catholic idea of the monastery and being alone by yourself, you can't be holy like that. You've got to be around people so that you can see your sin, repent of it, cling to Christ, cling to the cross, go into the word and become more like him.

So see our ongoing desperate need. Ongoing need. If we're going to long for the word, we have to learn to recognize our need, and this is really encouraging. So when you see your need, when these things come up inside of you, I mean, yeah, we're to mourn over our sin, yes, but there's an element in which there should be some gratitude of, "Lord, thank You for showing this to me. I so need Your word. Thank You for exposing it." Do you see what I'm saying? It's not just all negative. Yeah, we don't want to go in that, we don't want to walk in that, we need to repent of it. Yes, but, "Lord, thank You for showing me how much I need You and how much I need Your word."

So see our ongoing need. Second point, not just see our ongoing desperate need but see Scripture's abundant sufficiency. See Scripture's abundant sufficiency, glorious sufficiency. I was debating which word to use. They both are good. It's all that you need and it is glorious how it meets our needs. Five subpoints under this one to see Scripture's abundant sufficiency.

He doesn't want you to just focus on the need, that you need to put aside these things, that you're like a baby. No, he says, "I want to tell you about the word. I want to tell you

about the milk that you need." I mentioned earlier the word is logikos. The milk is described as logikos, and I think it does mean milk of the word, it bleeds meaning from the previous section, but it also means the mind of God, the logic of God. What you and I need is not just to like memorize the Scripture and have it in your brain, but it is to think like God thinks. It is to reason like God reasons. It is to have the mind of Christ that is revealed in the word. You see, it's to learn how to think differently because the reality is we have been conditioned in this world from the time you're born you're conditioned in this world to think in ungodly and wicked forms of logic, the wisdom of man, even at its best. And there are places where the wisdom of man is right on some areas, but at its best it still is leaving out God, and therefore is wrongheaded through and through and we need to learn to think differently.

So it's not just, like I said, memorize a verse of Scripture, it's actually reason through it. This is what meditation really is biblically. It's like understanding the Scripture and so to do this you have to meditate, you have to memorize, you have to study. You have to know what the text means in this verse, then you have to think about how it applies to your life and how does it change the way I think about my circumstances. How does this tell me to think about life? How is God telling me to think about life? And he's telling you to think about life radically different than you naturally think about life. There's a way that seems right to a man, this is a Proverb that's repeated twice in the Proverbs, there is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is the way of death. You look at the circumstances, you look at what you see, that's what we do, we look at it and naturally we think that's the right way and where's that heading? That's heading to death.

That's why we need to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, Proverbs 3:5. Don't lean on your own understanding. Change your understanding to be what God's understanding is. I mean, it's just insane not to. He's the one who made us. He knows how he made us. He knows how he wired us. He knows what we're supposed to be like, what we're supposed to do. He's told us. You say, "Well, I feel this. I have these desires. These desires are just driving. I can't get past them." I understand you have these desires, we all have desires to do things that are wrong and ungodly and that lead to death. Every one of us. So what do we do? You have to come to know Christ and understand he saves sinners like you and me, and he came to save us from our sins. That's why his name Jesus, that's what the name Jesus means, "Yahweh is salvation. Yahweh saves. You shall call His name Jesus," the angel told Joseph, "because He will save His people from their sins." He doesn't just save you from the future penalty of sin, hell. He saves you from the power of sin in the here and now. He does it as you are filled with his Spirit, as you come to know him, and as you apply his word and his mind to your circumstances.

And it is a process. Listen, he's glorified. We all wish that he would just zap our desires and make them go away, don't we? I mean, if we could do it our way, we would do that. I think any of us. It seems insane not to except God knows better than we do and obviously we're the insane ones, not him. But from our perspective, it would seem that way, but do you know what the Lord is doing? The Lord is teaching us a measure of dependence. He's teaching us a measure of our weakness so that we would cling to him

and come to know him. Not just experience victory. You can't experience some measures of victory through the world's wisdom. Go to an AA meeting and you can find people that have done that. They're using worldly wisdom, and I'm not slamming that, I'm glad that they're putting away debilitating alcoholism. You know, that's wonderful. It's common grace. It's good. But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking God is wanting to change you and me by communing with him directly in his word, getting to know him and having him change us little by little into the image of his Son. And so that we not only get more and more victory, we get more and more of Christ. And at the same time, the more you grow in Christ, as you're growing the way you should, you become more holy and more humble at the same time. Not self-righteous if you're really growing in grace. What are you that you haven't received? You're only what you are by the grace of God.

So more holy, more humble. That's the formula. But most of all, more of Christ. That's what we're going to see. It's not just the mind of God, the presence of God. This is the second subpoint, B 2B. The way that we see Scripture's abounding sufficiency is, first of all, we find in Scripture the mind of God, secondly, we experience the presence of God. It's interesting what he does between verse 2 and verse 3, "like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." That last clause, "if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord," I think what Peter is doing is he's actually alluding to Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the LORD is good." He's alluding to that in this context and what he's doing is he's telling us, "Listen, when you get into the word, what's really happening is you are tasting." Think about taste. I love that image, "taste and see that the LORD is good." I've mentioned this before, you know, the number of taste buds that we have in our mouths is thousands, tens of thousands, and it's just kind of amazing. Stop and think about that. God made you to be able to appreciate sweet, sour, bitter, salty. Is that it? Anyway, we don't want to stay here too long because we're going to get hungry. So he made you to be able to appreciate all of those different tastes and you cultivate your palette as you grow, right? You always like things at first, but then you come to love it. Like, "This is fantastic." And God did that because he is good. He could have just let us eat where you didn't really care about what you're eating, you just eat and you got like a like a car getting filled up. You just got what you need, now you can go farther. No, he made it so that eating was this delightful experience. We talked about a while back, that one thing you see in the New Testament church is that they eat together. This is one of the things God loves. There's something about eating with people and communing with them and enjoying food together. The pleasure of that and the pleasure of the company, and we're going to eat with God when we get to heaven. Those who belong to Christ, one of the first things we're going to do is have the marriage supper of the Lamb. We're going to eat with God. And so tasting is experiencing something. Your senses are involved.

So you have tasted that the Lord is good. That's why you should be longing for the word. You see, he's saying long, hunger for the word because you're going to taste more of the Lord's goodness. If you have tasted it, don't you want more? That's what he's saying. So get into the word because in the word you actually experience the goodness of God, the presence of God. This is where you meet God. God has ordained that we meet him and

experience his presence in his word. Isaiah 66:1 and 2. The prophet, the Lord speaking the prophet says, "You know, where will I dwell?" You know, basically, "I made the highest heavens. Where can I dwell? I don't dwell in a mere temple made by hands." But he says, "This is the one I will look to, to him who is humble and contrite and trembles at My word." What he's saying there, read that passage this week, Isaiah 66:1-2, he's saying, "Listen, if you want to experience the presence of God, tremble at His word because God makes Himself known through His word." This is where he reveals his heart, his character, who he is, and think about this: how do you know what somebody else is like? Haven't you had the experience where you see somebody, you're in a situation and maybe you're meeting some people and you're like you're gonna meet this guy over here and you're like, man, he looks kind of rough, like maybe he's just mad and going to be, you know, I don't know. I don't know what it's going to be like talking to that fella. And then he opens his mouth and he says something and your image totally changes, like this guy's really warm and friendly. I want to get to know him. What happened? He spoke. And what is God like? He has spoken in these 66 books.

And so if you want to experience his presence, you go to his word. That's what he's saying. That's what he's teaching through the whole Bible. "You want to know Me? You want to commune with Me? Don't go off and try to have some mystical experience like so many worldly people do in the name of Christ. No, get in My word. And don't just read the word in a surface way to try to do behavioral modification. No, commune with Me in My word. Want to know My mind? I will reveal it to you. I delight in the person who trembles at My word. I come down out of the highest heaven and make My abode with him." That's what happens when you read the Bible and you read it with a heart that longs to do what God is saying. You experienced the presence of God.

Third subpoint, C: you experience the power of God. He says this is how you may grow in respect to salvation. It's the word. It's the mind of God and the presence of God, encountering God through his word. This is what actually empowers growth. This is what changes you. I mean, growth is just an amazing thing. If you stop and think about how everything works in our world, it's just mind-blowing. I mean, you plant a seed and you put it in the ground, and you water it, and from that seed a plant grows up, and from that plant tomatoes grow, and you cut those tomatoes and you put them on a sandwich and you've got a sandwich now. Homegrown tomatoes. Is there anything better than that? Anything more vast difference between the homegrown versus the store bought than a tomato? I think that's right up there at the top. It's like you buy a store bought tomato and you say, "You should be ashamed of yourself for calling yourself a tomato. Imposter. Hypocrite." But think about that, a seed, and God made the life is in that, but yet it's not. If you just leave that seed alone, what happens? Nothing. That seed must be acted upon from external forces. It must be planted in the ground. It must be watered. It must receive nutrients from the soil as its roots begin to grow. It must receive sunlight. Photosynthesis must happen. All of this must happen for the seed to grow. He's saying in the same way you and I must grow in respect to salvation by being rooted in the word of God, and in the word of God, something outside of us comes into us and changes us and we grow in respect to salvation.

Here he's saying when you're saved, if you truly come to Christ and you repent and believe, you're saved forever at the moment you repent and believe. Nothing else needs to happen. It's Christ alone that brings salvation and the moment you believe you are justified forever if you truly have believed on Christ. But you grow in respect to salvation means your life experiences more and more the benefits of salvation. This is what I was talking about earlier. He came to save you not just from the penalty of sin in the future, but from the power of sin in the present. You grow in respect to salvation. Your life looks more and more like a life that belongs to God. Little by little, incrementally growth. But it's the power of God and that comes through the word of God. That's what he's saying. It is the word of God that waters. It's the word of God that brings the sunlight. It's the word of God that is everything that you need. I mean, yeah, you're gonna have relationships are going to expose things, people are going to be a blessing to you but how are people, how are you and I blessing each other to grow? The only way you and I can bless each other is with the word of God.

There's no other way for you to help me than for you to give me the word of God, and the way the Lord has made it, this is something that's just amazing, his infinite wisdom, he's made it so that you and I, and I find this, I mean, as a pastor, you know, I study the Scriptures every week but I find myself when somebody else says to me something that I already know, now I understand. Isn't that true? So often you find somebody tells you something like, "Yeah, I I knew that. Why did I not know that?" Well, because you and I need other people to speak God's word to us. It's part of what makes us humble. I need other people. If I don't have you helping me, I will not grow like I need to. But how are you going to help me without the word of God? You're not going to help me unless you bring the word of God.

And it's the unalloyed word of God, the unadulterated. The fourth thing here is that you need to see the Scripture's abounding sufficiency, not just that it brings the mind of God, the presence of God, the power of God, but it must be with the purity of God. The purity of God. He uses this key adjective in verse 2, pure milk of the word. Pure milk of the word. It's actually akin to that word, actually it's the same root word as the word for bait, deceit. It just has an alpha privative on the front. It means basically an unbaiting word of God, an undeceitful word of God, for an unadulterated word of God, an unmixed word of God. It's the pure word of God. That's why they translate it pure. It's basically that's what it is. There's no mixture of deceit in it.

Now what this tells us is, listen, if we need the word, if our need is so great that we need the word of God more than we need our breath, if we need the word of God like a baby needs milk, if we need the word of God because of sin in us, if we need the word of God because it's where we get the mind of God, we get the presence of God, we get the power of God, then how important is it for us to have it with the purity of God? One of the things that has always happened from the beginning of the church is false teachers have arisen who have combined the logic of God, the wisdom of God with the wisdom of man. And they do it in a way that's very enticing, draws large crowds. You can draw a lot larger crowds with the wisdom of man mixed with the word of God. But he's saying, listen, that does not bring the power of God and the presence of God. It doesn't do it. You

have to have the unmixed word of God. This is why it's so important for us to be in churches where the word is taught like that, but also to make sure we're learning how to think biblically so when we speak to one another we're not using man's wisdom mixed in with the word of God either. We're filtering it out. "No, that's not really biblical." And the Christian life, the good news is, hey, we're all like that. We're all at various stages trying to let go of unbiblical things that are in our minds. If we had it all figured out, we'd already be ready for heaven. Good news, you've got more work to do tomorrow. You have plenty to do. You don't have to worry about it. I don't have to worry about it. There's more than we can do tomorrow and every day for the rest of our lives in just applying the word of God to our lives.

But we need to learn to speak it with purity. We need to become better handlers of the word of God. This tells us that this is what everyone needs, that, "Lord, help me be faithful in giving the milk of Your word to other brothers and sisters with the very best that I can to be pure, to deliver it correctly." And if we do that, if we give the pure word of God, the mind of God, the presence of God, then the people see the goodness of God. That's the fifth subpoint. You taste and see that the Lord is good or the kindness of the Lord is what it says in my translation. This word which means "kindness, goodness, benevolence." You see when the word of God is rightly understood, you see that God is completely a God who blesses his people. He doesn't hold anything. He withholds no good thing from those who love him. And you say, "Well, I think I need this." Yeah, you think you need this. It's not a good thing if God says you can't have it. And when you were instructed by the word of God to change the way you think and it's a fight, it's a battle, you need the power of Christ on a daily basis, and your brother's encouraging, especially when you have ingrained habits of sin which we all have. You've got to have help and as you're fighting for the pure, unadulterated word of God to walk in it, the battle sometimes can be overwhelming, but as you come to the word of God looking for the mind of God, looking to experience the presence of God and the power of God, you will come to see the goodness of God every single time. Every time, if you stay with the word of God. His way is always best. Even though it seems diametrically opposed to everything that you feel, it's just because our world's a mess. We're a mess. His word is perfect. It is the word which we saw earlier that is living and abiding forever.

You think about how this looks in life. I mean, example of problem with anger. A man has a problem with anger. He flies off the handle, yells, says things. Most all of us can relate to that. Not everybody is a yeller. Most people are pretty good at it. Other people that aren't good yellers sin other ways in anger. They have their own strategies. They withdraw, for instance. Anyway, the point is, we're going with one who is a yeller. And so he yells and he says things that he wishes he could take back and the Bible says that our words can murder. That's what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount, that if you called your brother a fool, you're guilty of murder. But to say, "What were you thinking, you stupid." that is murder. Okay, so you have this tendency. It's anger and things come out of you. How do you change? I belong to Christ. Well, if you belong to Christ, then surely you're going to over time be grieved by it. You're going to see it. It takes time sometimes because God's working on something else but then you're going to see it, how egregious this is that I do this. "I need the word. I need the word, Lord. I need

Your word. Malice is coming out of my heart. Evil speaking is coming out of my heart. Slander is coming out of my heart, out of my life. Stop it, Lord! Help me!" What does the word of God do? You start, it takes time. It's little by little. It's incremental. It's various things that have to come in truth by truth, precept by precept. You add things in. One of the things that you begin to maybe meditate on is, "Hey, you know, the Bible says that when I came to Christ I became His slave." One of the favorite things the apostles refer to themselves is as slaves of Jesus Christ. "I'm not my own. The Bible says I can't gratify my sinful nature," 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who's within you, whom you have from God and you are not your own for you were bought with a price." I don't belong to me anymore so I can't use my members for my own purposes. So here I am spouting off and yelling and sinning, I'm using my tongue and my attitude and even my actions, maybe slamming things or whatever. I don't belong to me. I can't do that. I'm supposed to be like Jesus who had no rights, who did not insist on maintaining his own rights. And, "Lord, I can be like You. I I can unite because of my union with You. You'll give me your meekness. You'll teach me." And meekness is such a beautiful thing. It doesn't mean weakness. It means gentleness that flows from an inner understanding of mine and it's a new way of understanding yourself, and this is this, the key of meekness is whatever God does to me is right and good. I'm his servant and whatever he brings to me.

So now, if you really start meditating on that truth and taking it to root, then when your son drops something or your daughter does something they didn't fulfill what they need to do, your new way of thinking the logic of God is, "Wow, the Lord has brought me a new challenge today to follow Him and glorify Him in this difficult situation." Do you see that? I'm not my own. It's the truth of God's word transforming our understanding, thinking his thoughts after him, but not again in a mechanistic way. It's not behavior modification. It's the presence of God. "Lord, You're here. I belong to You. You're right here. You see what I want to say and if I say it, I'm going to do it in Your presence. I don't want to displease You, but Lord, I'm so angry right now. Help me! Lord Jesus, You're meek." I cling to him. I think his thoughts. His presence now is here. He's here with me. "You're my sufficiency. It's Your power, not my power. I don't have the ability to overcome this but You do. Your power is now here."

What does he say? He says a gentle answer turns away wrath. You ask a question rather than make a statement. "Hey, are you okay?" They drop something, it breaks, "Are you okay?" Rather than, "What are you doing? Why weren't you careful?" That was the old me. The new me, "Are you okay? Okay, let's see what we can do to clean this up. You're alright? Okay, good." Do you see how that's transformation? That is the Spirit of God working. I'll want to tell you, that is a miracle. That's the kind of miracle that God wants to do in his body all the time. Spiritual miracles which are much more glorious than physical miracles, even though we would love to have physical miracles too. We pray for our brothers and sisters who are ill. We pray for them. We want them to be healed. But more than that, we have the sense, the understanding biblical, we think like God thinks, the spiritual miracles last forever. The physical miracles, well, you're still going to die one day.

The Lord wants us to be transformed people and the way we will transform is we hunger for his word. He wants to change you and me in so many different ways and we have to humble ourselves, we have to be under the word, to crave, long for the word. So let your failure this week make you long for the word. Let next time that you stumble make you long for the word. Get in the word, but don't just get in the word, ask God to make you long for it. I don't want it like I should want it. Tell that to the Lord. Confess it and receive in Jesus a longing for it. He loved to spend time with his Father. They said, "Did you eat something?" Remember in John 4 and they come back and he's been thirsty. He got water from the lady at the well. Then they come back with food and he says, "I have food you don't know about." Hey, where? I didn't see any food. Did you guys see a McDonald's bag laying around? No, he said, "I have food that you don't know about. My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him who sent me."

So you have Jesus' sufficiency. You can cling to him and he will help you want the word. It's all Christ. It is all Jesus every moment, every day. And it's the word, the written word that makes you come into the presence of the living Word. That's why God calls him the Word of God. When you go to the pages of Scripture, you can meet the living Word every time.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we praise and honor You, Lord, for giving us such a precious treasure as Your holy word. Thank You that You didn't leave us in our sin and our misery when we were running away from You and we were shutting our eyes to Your glory and shutting our ears to Your truth. But You came after us. You have come after us to save any who will turn back to You. Thank You that You bring difficulties and judgment and You bring even the struggle with sin that gets us to where we're so we can't take it anymore, that we then look up to You. Thank You for Your wisdom. Father, we pray that You would make us holy, that You would make us truly long for Your word. We pray for those that are here that have not yet been born again, that You would grant them the gift of life today, that You would help them to look to Jesus even now, surrender to Him, trust Him, put all of your hope in His finished work at Calvary, put all of your hope in His resurrection. He will save any who comes to Him. He always says, "Come unto Me." And Father, for those of us who already belong to You, there's so much in our lives that is not as it ought to be, so many areas that need the light of Your word to shine. God, help us to apply our hearts to wisdom. Help us to not be distracted from what really matters. We are so easily taken away when all that matters, all that lasts are the souls of men and the word of God. Make us a people of the word who look more and more like our Savior. We pray this in His name. Amen.