Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Desiring the Word
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-3
Code: 60-16

Turn in your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 2, we look tonight at verses 1 through 3...1 Peter chapter 2 verses 1 through 3.

Let me just read these three verses in order that you might have them in your mind as we discuss them. "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all slander, like new born babes long for the pure milk of the Word that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

Genuine godliness is always marked by a love for and a delight in God's Word. Jesus said that he who is of God hears the words of God. And the word "hears" there means to obey. In that same chapter, John 8, Jesus said that the true believer keeps God's Word. Paul expressed this love for and delight in the Word of God that is characteristic of the heart of the believer when he said in Romans 7:22, "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." Job in the Old Testament, chapter 23 verse 12 said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." The psalmist said in the very first Psalm that the godly man is blessed because his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night. It was likely David in writing Psalm 19 who said that the Word of God is more desirable than gold, yea than much fine gold and is sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Again in Psalm 40 and verse 8 the psalmist expresses the cry of the godly, "I delight to do Thy will, O God, Thy law is within my heart."

All of these and many more, including Jeremiah 15:16 where Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy Word was in me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart," point out that it is characteristic of the believer to delight in the Word of God. Perhaps the richest text that points this out is found in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm. I need to refresh your mind on that because it is such a repeated theme in Psalm 119. Just listen to several verses from the Psalm. Verse 16, "I shall delight in Thy statutes, I shall not forget Thy Word." Verse 24, "Thy testimonies also are my delight." Verse 35, "Make me walk in the path of commandments for I delight in it." Verse 47, "I shall delight in Thy commandments which I love." Verse 48, "I shall lift up my hands to Thy commandments which I love." Verse 72, "The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces." Verse 92, "If Thy law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction."

And then beginning in verse 97 the psalmist says, "O how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day. Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies for they are ever mine. I have more

insight than all my teachers for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged because I have observed Thy precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way that I may keep Thy Word. I have not turned aside from Thy ordinances for Thou Thyself has taught me how sweet are Thy words to my taste. Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth. From Thy precepts I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way." Then verse 111, "I have inherited Thy testimonies forever for they are the joy of my heart." Verse 113, "I hate those who are double-minded but I love Thy law." Verse 127, "Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, yes above fine gold." Verse 159, "Consider how I love Thy precepts." Verse 167, "My soul keeps Thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly." And then verse 174, "I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight."

Let me ask you a question. Does that express your heart? Is that the way you feel? Do you find your heart crying, "O how I love Thy law?" Is the law of God your delight, more precious to you than silver, more precious to you than gold? I want you to think about that question because that is the question that is behind the text that is before us.

Peter says, "Like a baby desires milk, so should you desire the Word." In a sense he is echoing the cry of the psalmist. There is to be in the heart of the believer the love of the law of God. This love for, this delight in, this literal craving to know the Word of God is Peter's theme in our text. Now you will remember that Peter is here concluding a series of exhortations. These exhortations are built as a response to salvation which was his theme in the first twelve verses of chapter 1. After having outlined salvation, he then says there are three responses. The first response in verses 13 through 21 is a response toward God. And what is our response toward God? Primarily be holy, he says, be holy. In response to the gift of salvation toward God we should be holy.

And then what is our response toward others? Verses 22 through 25, to love. Our response to salvation toward others is to love them, those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And then thirdly, what is our response toward ourselves? Toward God it is holiness. Toward others it is love. And toward ourselves there should be the responding desire for the Word of God. It should be a dominating driving force in the life of a believer. And yet I think you will acknowledge with me that in many of our lives there is lacking in that kind of desire.

Some of you can go day after day after day, week after week, and seemingly demonstrate no delight in, no love for, no craving to study the Word of God. And thus this exhortation from Peter becomes very very important to us.

Look with me for a moment at verse 2. The emphasis there comes in this statement, "Long for the pure milk of the Word." Long for the pure milk of the Word. "Long for" is an imperative, it's a command. And the term epipotheo basically is a term of intensity, it means to crave. It means to desire strongly. That compound preposition strengthens the intent of the verb. It is an intense compelling craving. I wish we could translate it "crave the pure milk of the Word." And we shall see a

perhaps even better way to translate that in a moment. It's talking about a craving. And by the way, that unusual word that expresses a craving is used in the Old Testament Septuagint a couple of times in ways that I think convey its intent. Do you remember Psalm 42? I'm sure you do and how it begins with these somewhat familiar words, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God," a breathless panting, a craving for God. The same term is used there. And as I read you a few moments ago, the very same word is used in Psalm 119:174, "I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight," a craving for God, a craving for His Word as a thirsty deer craves water.

The verb in the New Testament is used nine times. Seven out of those nine times it is used by Paul. In Romans 1:11 and Philippians 1:8 he uses it as a craving for an effective ministry. In 2 Corinthians 5:2 he uses it to speak of the craving and the longing and the desire for heaven that is in the heart of the believer. In 2 Corinthians 9:14 and Philippians 2:26 he uses it to refer to the longings and the desires and the intense cravings of love. And in 1 Thessalonians 3:6 and 2 Timothy 1:4 he uses it to express the craving that one has for intimate fellowship with other believers who are specially loved. It is also used here by Peter and once by James in chapter 4 verse 5.

But in all of those cases whether in the Septuagint of the Old Testament or in the New, it expresses an intense and ever- recurring desire, an insatiable passion. And Peter is commanding that here. He is commanding us to have that strong consuming craving. Now we all know what it is to crave. We remember the tremendously strong impulses and cravings and desires of love when we first fell in love. We still experience those strong desires for those we love. We understand the strong craving in the physical dimension that comes if ever we have experienced hunger and we know what it is to long for a loved one who has gone on and whose fellowship is so deeply missed...whether it be separation of miles or a separation because of death. We know what it is to feel the pain of those strong desires for the salvation of someone whom we love so deeply and so passionately that their lostness is a burden that's almost unbearable. Some of you know what it is to feel the craving and the intense desire for a child to come back from waywardness and embrace not only the love of parents but the faith the parents have tried to teach. We understand those cravings.

Peter says you are to crave, you are to have an intense desire. For what? Well he says for something pure, long for the pure, he says. What do you mean, Peter? That which is unadulterated, that which is uncontaminated. And by the way, that term is used very often in the Greek language to refer to farm products, interestingly enough. It is used in reference to pure corn, pure grain, pure wine, pure oil. And in this case it is used to speak of pure...what?...pure milk....pure milk, uncontaminated milk. We are to long for something that is pure, something that like milk is the source of life, a source of sustenance, something that like milk is pure and clean. Milk as it comes out of a mother's breast is pure and uncontaminated. And so Peter says we are to crave something pure like milk.

Now what kind of milk are we to crave? Well the New American Standard translation and I believe also the Authorized says, "The pure milk of the Word." I want you to listen because you must understand that phrase. What does he mean "of the Word?" The Greek word here is the word logikon for you Greek students, it needs our attention. Technically it does not translate "of the Word." It is used only here and in Romans chapter 12 verse 1. Now you remember Romans 12 if you've been a Christian for any length of time, you may have memorized Romans 12:1 and 2. But let me refresh your mind. "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your either spiritual service of worship, or which is your reasonable service." Some translate it reasonable, some translate it spiritual, but it is the same word, logikon. The fact that some translate it spiritual, some translate it reasonable, some translate it as here "of the Word" let's you know that we are not too sure what it means.

To go back to its etymology is then important. The original term meant "belonging to speech, or belonging to reason." So originally it had the idea of something that is reasonable, that is rational. And if we read it that way, Peter is saying we are to long for the pure rational milk, or the pure reasonable milk. But why is it not translated that way? Well it's the same reason why the New American Standard translates the word "spiritual" in Romans 12. Because when you go back to Romans chapter 12 you find that the Apostle Paul is making a contrast. And he is contrasting, obliquely admittedly but nonetheless it is the contrast, he is contrasting the Jewish form of external physical sacrifice with what God wants. And so he says, "I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God not to present an animal, not to put a lamb or a goat on the altar, but to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is not your physical act of worship but your...what?...spiritual one." And based upon the context of Romans 12, the translators have chosen to translate logikon spiritual and I think that is its best translation. In contrast to the Jewish physical sacrifice, Paul is saying God wants you to make a spiritual sacrifice of yourself. So spiritual fits.

If the translation here would be "of the Word," it would seem to me in Greek it would say tu logoo(??) which literally means "of the Word." But what he is saying here is "long for the pure spiritual milk, the pure spiritual milk." The rabbis used to refer to God's law as milk. The Bible says every word of God is pure. Psalm 19 says the Word of God is clean and thus it endures forever because it's unpolluted.

You say, "Well then why did they translate this `of the Word' of that's not a direct translation from the Greek? And if the word logikon is better understood as spiritual, why did they take liberty and translate it the pure milk of the Word?" And the answer is, where does the pure spiritual milk come from? From where? From the Word. It is not unfair then to translate it that way. And I believe it is because the Word is the source of the pure spiritual milk that translators have chosen to do it that way. Also, the word logikon from just hearing it you can note has in it at least a part of the word logos which is the term for the Word. And also, because in verses 22 to 25 Peter has been majoring on the Word, he has been saying there that the Word is the living and abiding Word of God, verse 23. In verse 25 he says, "The Word of the Lord abides forever and this is the Word preached to you." And

then when you come down in verse 2, context dictates that this pure spiritual milk is that which flows out of the living and abiding Word.

So, I would think that a very complete way to translate this and do justice to all the intent of the writer would be to say we are to long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word. If you'll indulge me, I think that all ought to be there if we're going to try to capture the intent.

Now, having said that let me sum it up. Peter says you are to have a craving for the Word of God...the pure spiritual milk as it were that flows out of the breast of the Word of God, unadulterated, uncontaminated, unstained, untainted. Desire the Word.

Now listen to me, Peter does not say "read the Word." Paul said that in 1 Timothy 4:13. Peter does not say "study the Word." Paul said that in 1 Timothy 2:15. Peter does not say "meditate on the Word," as Joshua 1:8 puts it. Peter does not say "teach the Word," as 1 Timothy 4:11 commands. Peter does not say "preach the Word" as 2 Timothy 4:2 enjoins. Peter does not say "search the Word" as we see illustrated by the Bereans in Acts 17:11. Peter does not even say "hide the Word" as the psalmist does in Psalm 119:11. All of those things are very important. But there's something even more basic than that. Before you can read it, study it, meditate on it, then teach it, preach it, search it and hide it, you have to...what?...you have to desire it. This is basic. This is foundational.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 2:10 for a moment. He says here, speaking of salvation and those who do not believe, he says they aren't Christians, they aren't saved, they've been deceived, they perish because they do not receive...please note this...the love of the truth so as to be saved. What a statement. Before you can even be saved you must demonstrate...what?...that you what?...you love the truth. Before you become a Christian you demonstrate that you love the truth. I'll tell you, you're never going to experience perhaps a greater love for the truth than at the moment of your salvation, right? You are so thrilled to hear the truth, you are so exhilarated to know that there is forgiveness of sin and eternal life and the life of the truth floods your heart, should it change? If it is a part of that first love, that first love of which the Lord wrote in His letter to Ephesus, if part of that first love is the love of the truth, isn't it sad that it wanes, isn't it sad that you can go days without studying the Word of God, without reading it, isn't it sad that you don't have a hungry heart for the Word of God? Isn't it sad that you don't delight in it? Isn't it sad that it's not more precious to you than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter to you than honey and the honeycomb? Isn't it sad that people in our society will spend money and time on gold and physical exercise and the pursuit of fame and fortune and glory and self-aggrandizement and seem to have little or no appetite for the Word of God? Sad.

And Peter gives us a very good analogy, a very graphic analogy. He says "long for the pure milk of the Word," and the analogy is like a baby longs for milk. Physical birth brings a little one into the world and the great need of that little one is for feeding on milk. So in the spiritual realm we are to be so singly minded as to crave with a passion the Word of God. So it's a magnificent series of exhortations

here in response to salvation, beginning back in verse 13 of chapter 1. In response to salvation be holy toward God. In response to salvation love your brother and sister. In response to salvation crave the Word. And let me tell you, those three things sum up Christian living. Be holy toward God, love your brother and sister and crave the Word, that is the challenge of Christian living. You sum it up right there. Peter has really wrapped it up.

You say, "What are the major elements in the Christian life?" Holiness toward God, love toward the brethren, personal hunger for the Word. Now I'm sure we need to stop at this point and ask whether we have such a craving. Are you honest enough to ask that question and then to answer it in your heart? Do you crave the Word of God like a baby does milk? Do you hunger for it? Is it to the point where if you do not have that time in the Word there's a great void, an emptiness in your heart? If the answer is yes, you're on track with the right response to salvation. But I am sure that in many cases if you're honest, the answer is no.

How can that happen? And how can I get to the place where I crave the pure milk? I think one of the ways it happens is because you're too busy eating junk food. Junk food being disseminated out of pulpits and through books and through the society in which we live. Junk food on television. Junk food every which way that you turn. Junk food in magazines. Junk food in newspapers. Some of it secular, some of it supposedly Christian. Until we have literally jaded ourselves with junk food that has falsely satiated our spiritual appetites without nourishing us one whit.

How do we get back to the place where we desire the pure spiritual milk of the Word? Where Bible study is not a duty, where Bible study is not a chore, where Bible study is not something we do out of fear that God will punish us if we don't? But where it is the delight of our heart.

Let me be real practical. I can usually tell somebody who is a faithful student of the Word of God. Usually I see them with the same Bible. When I see people and every time I see them or frequently when I see them they have another Bible, it's as if they've pulled one off the shelf periodically to come to church. And when I see a person who has the Word of God in their hands and it's obvious that they have spent a great amount of time in that very one, there's a sense in which I know where their heart is because you become very attached almost in a strange way to the book itself which contains the Word that feeds your soul. That's not always true, but I love to see a well-worn Bible in the hands of someone. Occasionally there's a new Bible in your hand because you wore out one.

The question then is, how can we develop that craving? I want to give you some principles and I just will have time tonight to lay them before you. Principle number one, this is to help you develop a craving for the Word of God, and if you have not that craving, here's what Peter's suggests...number one, remember your life source...remember your life source. If you're not craving the Word of God you have forgotten something. Yes, you have forgotten something. You say, "Well where does it say that?" What's the first word in verse 1? What is it? What is it? "Therefore." You say, "You going to find

something in that?" That's right. "What?" In that one word this whole point exists. What do you mean therefore? Well it builds on what he just said. The Word of the Lord abides forever, verse 25, and this is the Word which was preached to you therefore...

What do you mean, Peter? I mean, listen to this, that little word "therefore" accumulates tremendous richness of meaning because of everything that adheres to it. It reaches back to verse 23, the living abiding Word of God by which you have been born again. What is the single greatest miracle that ever happened in your life? What is it? It's your new birth. The transformation of your life and your eternal destiny was a miracle worked through the Word of God which is living and abiding, which was preached to you and by which you were saved. And so Peter is saying therefore long for the pure milk, spiritual milk of the Word. Here's his point, since this living and abiding eternal Word of God...follow this...was the power that transformed your life, since this living and abiding Word brought you new life, transformed you, saved you, since God's creative grace worked by the Word which was the seed that gave you life, since the Word is your life source, since the Word is the power of your new existence, he says therefore long for it, desire it. Why? As the source of your continued transformation, your continued power. If it transformed you in the beginning, it will keep on transforming you. That's right.

Have you forgotten your life's source? That word therefore is a reminder to all of us to remember the life source. If you don't desire the Word, have you forgotten the power of the Word of God in your life? Are you going to live your Christian life without the Word of God? Have you forgotten that it was powerful enough to save you and transform you and give you new life and totally change your very nature? Are you going to take that powerful Word and set it aside? The Word is the seed that gives you life. That's why Philippians 2:16 calls it the Word of life. It is alive. It is powerful. It gives life.

Isaiah 55, wonderfully does the prophet testify to the power of the Word of God. In verses 10 and 11, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be which goes forth from My mouth, it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." The Word is powerful, alive, sharper than any two-edged sword, says Hebrews 4:12. Do you remember back in John's gospel the marvelous teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ? In the fifteenth chapter where teaching on the vine and branches He says, "You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken unto you." It is the Word that gives life. We are saved by faith and faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ, Romans 10:17. These things are written, John 20:31, that you might believe and that believing you might have life through His name. The Word is a spiritual inexhaustible, inextinguishable life source. It gave you new life. It gave you new love. It gave you a thrilling glorious marvelous fulfilling joyous life full of hope and peace and grace and forgiveness and power. You mean to tell me you're going to set it aside? You should crave that Word and the inherent power in it to continue to transform your life.

The law of the Lord is perfect, Psalm 19 verse 7, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes. The Word is just as powerful in your life today as it was then. And if you want to have a desire for the Word, then go back and remember your life source is the Word. It is your life source. Will you turn your back on that the greatest power which you possess?

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 the writer says, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the Word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men but for what it really is, the Word of God...listen to this...which also performs its work in you who believe." If you're a Christian, you believe it will perform its work in you. There are a lot of Christian crumbling, a lot of Christians roaming around wondering why their Christian life isn't all that it ought to be and they have no craving for the Word of God and therefore they are never put in touch with the power of that Word...the power to change their life. So, if you look at your heart and you don't have a craving, then remember your life source. And that ought to make you crave the Word because its power is still able to perform in you who believe.

Second principle, eliminate your sin...eliminate your sin. Verse 1 says, "Putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all slander." The verb here, apotithemi means to reject. Putting aside modifies the main verb to long for. Part of longing for the Word means putting aside. And this is a participle but it takes on the imperative tone of the verb so it comes out as a command and is rightly translated that way...putting aside, laying aside. It can be used to refer to stripping off dirty clothes, stripping off soiled garments, that's its intent. You have to get rid of some things in your life. It's used in Colossians 3:8 where it says "put them all aside, anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth, do not lie to one another," and so forth. Put it all aside. Get rid of the sin.

In early Christian baptism when people came to be baptized it was customary to take the clothes they wore when they arrived and throw them away and after they came out of the baptism to give them new robes as a symbol of the newness of life. It was a custom to symbolize this truth that in salvation the old is put off and the new is put on and how important it is that we maintain that. So, says Peter, in the light of your new life begun, in the light of a new love given, these ugly hindrances hanging over from your past need to be eliminated. And I'll tell you something, as someone said to me a long time ago, and they wrote it in one of my Bibles as a kid, sin will keep you from this book and this book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book until you eliminate the hindrances.

Five of them are named...malice, all malice, kakia is the basic Greek word for evil. It just means wickedness, general wickedness. It's an all inclusive word...evil, wickedness, baseness. Some have suggested it means disgracefulness or good for nothingness, wickedness...just general pervasive

malignancy of the flesh out of which all other evil emerges, has to be eliminated. What do you mean by that? Confessed and repented.

Second thing, all guile. Not just some malice, all of it, all guile. This word guile originally meant fishhook, deceit. A fishhook is a very deceitful thing. You put bait on it, a fish thinks he's going to get dinner and he becomes dinner. Very deceitful. Deceit is what it means, deception, dishonesty, falsehood, seduction, treachery. Paul used it in speaking to Elymas the sorcerer in Acts 13:10 when he said you are full of deceit and fraud. Get rid of it.

Hypocrisies, spiritual phoniness...originally the word meant an actor who wore a mask, not real, not genuine. Envies, wanting what others have, resenting their prosperity and their blessing leads to grudges, bitterness, hatred, conflict...ugly sin. And then he says for the third time, "All slander, all malice, all guile," then he put in hypocrisies, envies, both of them in the plural. And then he says "All slander." This is katalalia in the Greek, it's an onomatopoetic word, katalalia, la-la-la-la-la, backbiting, talk, gossip, defamation, disparagement, malicious talk behind someone's back. You've got to put it away. Evil leads to deceit because when you're evil you want to deceive people. Deceit leads to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy leads to the envy of the genuine and that leads to the slander of others.

This would be the very opposite of brotherly love, wouldn't it? Brotherly love wouldn't be malicious, brotherly love wouldn't be deceitful. Brotherly love wouldn't be hypocritical, envious or slanderous. Get the trash out of your life, Peter says, strip off the filthy rags. Now he only gives five things here and they're really only representative of all the evil. The first word would have been enough, all malice, this covers the ground, get rid of it, strip it off, deal with it, confess it, repent, eliminate it. It needs to go out of your life if you're going to have an appetite for the precious milk, the pure milk, the spiritual milk.

I remember a man who was living with a woman not his wife. And I heard that they were attending a Bible study together. And I thought to myself, "what hypocrisy." A man in adultery taking his adulterer to a Bible study? And somebody said, "Well he's interested in the Word." Don't tell me that, he's not interested in the Word. There is no appetite for the Word of God until there is a laying aside of wickedness. To have that desire then requires some strong repentance and confession.

Thirdly, not only does Peter say remember your life source and eliminate your sin but thirdly, if you're to have a desire for the Word of God that is compelling and intense, you must admit your need...you must admit your need. I love this in the first of verse 2, "Like new born babes..." The word for babes here means newborn. It means a breast-feeding infant. And it was only used, the word is brephos, it was only used as long as a child nursed at his or her mother's breast. It means the smallest child. It would have been enough just to use that word but Peter wanting to make his point emphatic adds another word that literally means born just now. So what he is saying is like a born just now baby, you're to desire the milk. He's talking about a brand-new born baby. This one isn't even out of the

hospital yet. And the instant that baby is born it comes out crying. What for? Blue curtains? A yellow crib? Pretty booties? A bonnet? A baseball? Some fathers deliver them to the maternity ward. What is it wanting? One thing...what?...milk. And that baby comes out and the first place that little baby goes is to the breast of its mother. That's the only craving it has. Why? Because that is its profoundest and only need.

A baby recognizes its need. It might not be educated. It might not be worldly wise. It might not know anything but it does know its need. And it knows its need can only be satisfied with milk. And it cries and accepts no substitute. It won't do you any good to set a bag of potato chips in front of a newborn infant. Try to feed him a cracker. There's only one thing they want, one thing that's satisfies and it's the most beautiful scene in all of human affection, that little life when it first is placed upon its mother's breast is infinitely at rest in a split second, knows exactly that it is where it belongs and it is receiving exactly what it is intended to receive, the pure, uncontaminated, unadulterated milk from its mother.

Peter says it's that that you should characterize your desire for the Word of God. You cry if you can't get it. You long for it. A baby has one God-given instinct, one great craving, milk. And if it doesn't get it, it gets as violent as a little life can possibly get.

You say, "Is Peter talking here about recent converts?" No. You say, "Isn't he talking about spiritual babies?" No. "Well isn't he talking about the milk of the Word?" No, John talks about spiritual babies in 1 John 2. Paul talks about the milk of the Word, that is the more easily received elements of doctrine in 1 Corinthians 3. Peter is not talking about any of those. He is making an analogy and he is simply saying every believer whether he's a new convert or an old convert, whether he is young in the faith or mature in the faith, every believer is to crave the Word whether it's the simple part or the profound way that a baby craves milk. The analogy is in the craving, not in the nature of the milk or in the nature of the baby in that sense. It's just a graphic simple analogy. As a newborn baby craves the milk he needs, so a believer must crave the Word he needs.

And let me tell you something. Don't ever get to the place where you think you don't need it. Three times the Bible says, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You never attain to that, you spend your life pursuing every word out of the mouth of God. The baby cries in its infancy because it wants milk. It needs nourishment. And the believer should have that same cry. But as I said before, so many Christians have been stuffed with junk food that they've lost their appetite without ever being nourished. And they have no appetite for the spiritual milk of the Word.

Beloved, we have a desperate need. Get back in touch with your need. Get back in touch with your need. It's great. Even Jesus used the Word to combat temptation, Matthew 4:4, Luke 1:4...pardon me, Luke 4:4. Both those passages. We have such a desperate need for this. We have so many weak Christians, so many weak churches, rampant spiritual mal-nourishment today reflects junk food and a

rejection of the pure spiritual milk. We desperately need the nourishment of the Word of God.

Some people read the Bible but they don't read it for nourishment. Some read it traditionally. Because their parents read it, they think they should read it. Some read it superstitiously, like a religious charm thinking it will work magic in their life. Some read it educationally, they want the knowledge of the facts, they want to compile information so they can be fun in a Christian Bible study. Some people read it denominationally, they want to defend their articles of faith, it's for the purpose of proof and refutation that they read it. Some people read it professionally, they want material for their lesson or their sermon. And some people read it inquisitively, they want to satisfy their curiosity and their intellectual pride so they spend time reading the Bible to see how many beasts they can find and how many horns and all of the prophetic ins and outs.

But how should it be read? It should be read like a hungry baby sucking with all its strength to draw out the nourishment of its mother's breast, that's how it ought to be read. If you want to develop that craving, remember your life source is there. Eliminate your sin and admit your need, you're being malnourished spiritually and it's going to show up in your life. I can look at a person's life style basically tell you whether they're craving the Word of God. It shows up...it shows up.

Fourth principle, pursue your growth...pursue your growth. Verse 2 says that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. Pursue your growth, this is the main issue here. You need to be fed because you need to...what?...to grow. So tragic to see a human being that doesn't grow, malnourished, distended, weak human being. It's just as tragic if not more to see a spiritual life like that. The verb here, by the way, is passive and it could translate this way...this is good, "Crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word that it may grow you." It's passive, that it may grow you. It grows you. It will cause you to grow, is the translation. And that's not optional. Second Peter 3:18 Peter says, command, "Grow in...what?...grace." In Acts chapter 20 the Apostle Paul in verse 32 lays it out, very simply to the church he says, "And now I commend you to God and the Word of His grace which is able to build you up." It will make you grow. First Timothy 4:6, Paul says to Timothy, "Be being nourished up in the words of the faith and the good doctrine."

It will grow you in respect to salvation. In other words, it will grow you to the fullness of the expression of your salvation, Philippians 2:12 and 13. It will grow you to the fullest expression of salvation. It will grow you literally into salvation, into its full final glorious expression.

I'll tell you something. If you're content with where you are spiritually, you'll never pursue your growth. But if you're discontent you will. So let me tell you something, spiritual growth rises out of discontent. Did you get that? That's a very important principle. Spiritual growth rises out of discontent. Lord, deliver me from ever being satisfied with where I am spiritually. Oh blessed discontent that propels me to spiritual growth.

Whenever I autograph a book I put 2 Corinthians 3:18. People sometimes say, "Why do you always put that verse?" Because it's a reminder to me. It says we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one level of glory to the next by the Holy Spirit. And I just always want to remind myself that I want to be transformed from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next as I gaze into the Word of God and see the glory of the Lord, His Spirit will transform me from one level to the next. And that rises out of discontent with where I am.

Paul says, "I haven't arrived," Philippians 3, "I haven't arrived, I press toward the mark." You say, "Paul, you're the best Christian that ever lived." I'm not there, I press, I want to know Him more fully. Blessed discontent. Listen, you're in real spiritual danger if you're content with your spiritual progress. That's a serious place to be. So if you're saying in your heart, "John, I don't have a craving for God's Word," let me suggest that you remember your life source. Have you forgotten the power that's here that you're ignoring? Secondly, eliminate the sin, confess, repent. Thirdly, admit your need. You're malnourished if you're not in that book. You're going to be weak and ineffective and unhappy. Fourthly, pursue your growth, don't ever let yourself become content. Let me tell you something, one of the biggest lies that Satan will ever give you is that you've arrived spiritually and when you believe that lie, you probably will believe it came from God and that it's a commendation. It isn't, it's a deception. Pursue your growth.

Fifth and finally, if you want to develop a craving for the Word of God, survey your blessings. Verse 3, he says, "Long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word if you've tasted the kindness of the Lord." What does he mean by that? You know what he means. It's a first-class conditional in the Greek, it means since or because. Because you've tasted, it's based on Psalm 34:8, taste and see that the Lord is good. What's he saying? He's saying this, if you have in the past tasted in your own personal experience the kindness, the goodness, the grace of the Lord and if you know how good it was and how wonderful it tasted and how blessed it was, then don't you crave more? Don't you crave more?

Let me tell you something. The more of God's goodness you enjoy on your spiritual pallet, the greater will be your craving for more. It's like those real good candies that once you start you can't quit. Have you tasted the goodness of the Lord? You say yes, at my salvation I tasted it and I've learned what Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:22 and 23 that the Lord's mercies are new every morning. And I remember the truths of the psalmist, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." And I remember the sweetness of my salvation and I remember the times God answered prayer and I remembered the times He touched my life with His kindness and His mercy. I remember all the good things, I've tasted so many. Listen, survey your blessings, friend. And if you've tasted already the kindness of the Lord, wouldn't you like some more? Wouldn't you like some more? And wouldn't you want to do what Jeremiah said, "Find the Word and eat it and find it to be the taste that you thought it always was and it will become the joy and rejoicing of your heart."

I never come out of a time in the study of the Word of God without an exhilarated heart saying, "O God, what a blessing." And I tell you, the frustrating of preaching is I struggle to communicate to you or anybody else in words what I feel in the exhilaration of the study of God's Word.

You want to develop an appetite for the Word? You want to crave the Word? These are the principles. Very simple ones, really, very simple. Just remember your life source, remember the power that's there. Eliminate your sin. Remember your need, admit it, you need to be nourished. Pursue your growth and don't believe the devil's lie that you've arrived. And count your blessings. Recount, rehearse all the times you tasted the kindness of the Lord. Do you want it again? These are the things that will bring back the craving. My prayer is that you'll take these steps.

Anorexia-nervosa is a disease of the women who starve themselves, sometimes to death. I got out a medical book this week and I thought I'll read on the symptoms of anorexia-nervosa and see if I can see some spiritual parallels. You know what the symptoms are? Symptom number one, long periods without eating, punctuated by binges, followed by vomiting and enemas. It's sort of an occasional overdose that is rejected. I thought, what a parallel. To most Christians who go through long periods, or many Christians, who go through long periods of the starvation of the Word of God, punctuated by occasional binges which they reject.

The second characteristic of anorexia-nervosa is excessive exercise usually in an effort to prove oneself competent. And I thought, there's another parallel. No desire for the Word of God but an effort to make up for what is lacking spiritually by church activity.

The third characteristic of anorexia-nervosa is depression, an inability to deal with problems. Hum...perfect spiritual parallel. A malnourished Christian will be unable to deal with sin, hence spiritual depression, inability to deal with it.

Fourth characteristic and last one of anorexia-nervosa, social isolation, a fear of being with people, of being discovered, of being questioned. And that's where spiritual malnourishment leads, too. Starve yourself to death and you're going to not want to answer questions about what's wrong in your life so you leave the fellowship.

You want to know what's so silly about anorexia-nervosa? You can cure it so easy, all you have to do is...what?...eat. And eating starts with the desire. I hope you crave this book.

Father, thank You for our time tonight in Your Word. I would pray for any in our congregation, Lord, who are really victims of a self-imposed anorexia-nervosa who are starving themselves because there's no desire for the Word. Lord, help them, help them to remember, to reach back remember their life source. Help them to eliminate their sin. Help them, Lord, to admit their need, to pursue their

growth, to rehearse their blessing. Give them a desire for Your Word, may they like David say, "O how I love Thy law." And, Lord, for all of us, give us a greater love for Your Word. May it be more precious to us than gold, fine gold, sweeter than honey. May it be more desired than our necessary food for You have exalted it above Your name, it holds for us all the treasures. May we not believe the lies that would divert us from it.

While your heads are bowed in this closing moment, can we together tonight just affirm a new commitment to begin to cultivate a craving for the Word of God? Just pray that prayer in your heart. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).