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

Hungering for God's Word
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-3
Code: 80-183

Let me invite you to open your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 2...1 Peter chapter 2, and I want to read for you three very familiar verses that open this chapter. First Peter chapter 2 verses 1 through 3, the Apostle Peter writes, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn 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."

I want to talk to you, this morning, about desiring the Word...desiring, longing for the pure milk of the Word. The pursuit of God starts here. The pursuit of Christ starts here. Knowing the will of God starts here. Knowing the mind of Christ starts here. And if you want to go all the way back to the foundation, all the way back to the prime issue, genuine godliness and genuine spirituality is always marked...let me say that again...always marked by a love for the delight in God's truth. Jesus said, "He who is of God hears the words of God." The Greek term for "hears" implies obey. In that same chapter, the eighth chapter of John's gospel, Jesus said that the true believer keeps God's Word. Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do what I tell you."

Paul in Romans 7:22 expressing the desire of the heart of a believer and that of his own experience, said, "I joyfully concur in the Law of God in the inner man." And Job said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." In other words, I would rather be exposed to the eating of the Word of God than physical food. The psalmist said in the very first Psalm that the godly man is characterized as one whose delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates...what?...day and night. He can never get enough.

David, who was the likely author of Psalm 19, said, "The Word of God is more desirable than gold, yea then much fine gold, sweeter than honey from the honeycomb." It was David's greater treasure, it was David's greatest pleasure. Again in Psalm 40 and verse 8 the psalmist says, "I delight to do Thy will, O God, Thy law is within my heart."

But the richest testimony, at least the most consummate and extensive testimony to the delight of the Word of God is found in Psalm 119. And let me just read you some of the verses in Psalm 119 that express this delight. Verse 16, "I shall delight in Thy statutes, I shall not forget Thy Word." Verse 24, "Thy testimonies also are my delight, they are my counselors." Verse 35, "Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments for I delight in it." Verse 47, "And I shall delight in Thy commandments which I love and I shall lift up my hands to Thy commandments which I love, I will meditate on Thy statutes."

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." Psalm 97, O how I...or verse 97, "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 hast taught me, how sweet are Thy words to my taste, yes sweeter than honey to my mouth." 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. Revive me, O Lord, according to Thy loving kindness." 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." Repeated over and over and over again is this foundational reality that one who belongs to God has a delight in His Word.

You say, "Yes, but that's the psalmist and he's way beyond me spiritually." Oh? Look at the last verse in the Psalm. He comes crashing to earth here. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments." That, friends, is a parallel to Romans 7. "In the inner man I delight in the Law of God, but I see another thing warring in my flesh." He's no different than we are, but if there was anything that gave him triumph, to the psalmist and to the Apostle Paul wrote Romans 7, it was his delight in the Law of God.

Let's go back then to our text. Now that we understand how far-reaching and how essential and how important and how vital this idea of delighting in the Word of God is, I want to take us back into this text and have us look at its immense and wonderful riches.

The main emphasis of the text comes in the statement of verse 2 which is a command, "Long for the pure milk of the Word." Now I want to talk about this and break it down a little bit so that we can get a grip on the meaning. "Long for" is an aorist imperative of a Greek word, *epipotheo*, which means to crave, it means to desire. It is typically in the Greek language a compound verb from which it draws its intensity. What he's talking about here is a compelling craving. He's talking about something like Psalm 41:1, "A deer panting after water." It reflects an intense and a consistent or recurring or relentless craving. In fact, I think it would be safe to say it's an insatiable craving. It's the kind of craving that having been satisfied in one moment makes demands in the next again. Peter is demanding such a strong, consuming craving as that which should be the experience of the believer. And people in our society, of course, crave every imaginable wrong and unhealthful, if not damaging and damning, thing and we're called to crave the right thing. And what is it? How does he define it? He says, "Crave the pure milk of the Word."

Let's talk about the word "pure," because this too is vital in our understanding. The word actually would be expressed best as uncontaminated. In fact, the term is a commonly used term to refer to farm products. In fact it is used outside of Scripture and even in Scripture occasionally in a Septuagint version of the Old Testament to refer to corn and grain and oil and wine and milk, designating the purity of those products. In this case it is used in an analogous way with milk, milk that is uncontaminated, unadulterated, pure. And what is this brand of milk? What is this milk that he's talking about? Notice again that phrase, "The pure milk of the Word." Now the little phrase "of the Word," actually translates one Greek term and that term is *logikon*. And this is a very interesting word and it does demand our attention if we're going to understand the passage and therefore the principle and therefore be able to live it out. The word *logikon*is used only here in the New Testament and in Romans 12:1. And in Romans 12:1 it is used in, of course, very familiar expressions, that verse is known to all of us, "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...and here comes the word *logikon* ...spiritual service of worship." Some translations say, "Your reasonable service of worship." And so it is defined there as spiritual and some translations as reasonable.

Now let's talk a little bit about how it came to have that meaning. The original word, *logikon*is connected to *logos*, or word, or speech. It literally originally meant "belonging to speech," or belonging therefore to reason, speech being the product of reason, we would trust. It eventually then came to be used in Greek philosophy to mean something rational, something reasonable. The Greeks would say a man was *zoan(?) logikon*, a rational being, a reasonable being. And what separates man from all other irrational beings in the creation of God is his speech...his speech reflecting the fact that he has been given a rational mind which sets him apart from all other beings. And so *logikon*meant rational. It even came then to refer to the inner part of man and took on the meaning of spiritual. That which is true of man and not true of any other element of God's physical creation, man has an inner part, a spiritual component and that is the reason it is so translated in Romans chapter 12 and verse 1. So it could be translated here this way, "Long for the pure spiritual milk," that would be a legitimate translation. It could be translated, "Long for the pure rational, reasonable milk."

Why then did the translators choose to translate *logikon*"of the Word?" For obvious reasons, because the pure, unadulterated, uncontaminated, rational, reasonable, spiritual milk that feeds the believer is contained...where?...in the Word...in the Word. *Logikon*is related to *logos*and *logos*is used back in verse 25. "The Word of the Lord abides forever and this is the Word which was preached to you." And the Word is the key to that text. Go back to verse 23, "We have literally been born again through the living and abiding Word of God." The pure spiritual milk is connected inextricably to the true Word of God. And so the exhortation then comes to us, "Long for, crave for the unadulterated pure milk of the Word."

Now if Peter was going to exhort his congregation through this letter, he could have chosen a number of approaches to this. He could have said to them, "You need to read the Word." That's what Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:13. He could have said, "You need to study the Word so that you're not ashamed, rightly dividing it," as Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:15. He could have said what the psalmist said in Psalm 19:14 what Joshua 1:8 says, what Paul said in Philippians 4:8, he could have said, "Think on the Word, meditate on the Word." He could have said what Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:11, "Teach the Word." He could have said what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the Word." He could have said what it says in Acts 17:11 about the Bereans, "Search the Word." He could have said what is instructed to us in the armor of the Christian in Ephesians 6, "Take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," or wield the Word, but he didn't. I suppose he could have said what is in Psalm 119:11, "Hide the Word." Put it in your heart. All of those things are certainly critical.

But at the very foundation of all of that, and Peter knew it and the Holy Spirit knew it, is the desire of the Word because if you don't desire it, my friend, you won't read it. And if you don't desire it, you won't study it and you won't meditate on it, and you'll never be able to teach or preach it and you won't be interested in searching it, and you certainly won't be able to hide it in your heart and you will not be able to wield it.

So Peter goes right down to the very foundation. And let me put it as simply as I can, my dear friend, the most compelling thing that I can say to you in this morning's message is you need to examine your heart as to the level of your craving for the Word, because everything flows out of that, absolutely everything. And, you know, I have to confess to you that I really believe that-that God expects that of all of us. Can I say that? I don't think anybody's off the hook at that point. I do thank the Lord that He gives some of us an overwhelming desire for this that catapults us into the ministry, and I confess in all honesty, I am in the ministry today, I am a preacher of the Word of God today and have been for all these years I've been preaching the Word of God not primarily because I want to preach, but because I want to understand the Word of God. That is what drives me. And if I never got to preach, I would be content. It's not the preaching that draws me. When I went to seminary I can say to you in all honesty it wasn't because I wanted to learn how to be a preacher, it was because I desperately wanted to know how to interpret the Scripture. And when I was a kid and people would say to me, "You need to have your daily devotions," I would always say, "If you mean sit for a half an hour, read a passage and not understand it, then close my Bible and go away, I can't do that." I had this drive to understand the meaning of the Scripture. And I do believe that it is right to have that and it is appropriate to have that and I believe in some measure God gave me an overdose of it and that's what drives me to write books and say a lot more than I know and to preach sermons and it's... the passion has never slowed down and its never ceased. In fact, I think in some ways the greatest experience of my life was writing the notes, the 25 thousand notes for the Study Bible. I was never more fulfilled, I was never more content, I was never happier then when I was going through 8 to 14 hour days for a year finalizing all of that. And if I never got to preach it, that would have been all right, too. I don't expect everyone to have that level of craving or you'd all be useless in the place the Lord

has put you. And the Lord put me here because I would be useless anywhere else.

But I believe there's another element to it, I think it's right to crave the Word, I think God may give us special doses of that craving, dependent upon our giftedness. But I'll tell you something else, I...the love that I have for the Word of God and the craving that I have for the Word of God was...was developed in me because I sat under men who had a love for it and they transferred that to me and they exposed me to its riches. And it was when I began to really come to grips with what was there that it began to develop that insatiable appetite. And sad to say, there are people sitting in Christian churches, quote/unquote, who never ever hear the deep things of God and who have no idea what's there. We just need to stop at this point and ask the question...do I really have a craving for the truth? I think some of you do, I think most of you do that's why you're here. This is a marathon, folks, this is a marathon. Somebody said, "Why are you having two speakers in the morning and two speakers at night?" I said, "Because we don't have time for three." You didn't come here to wander around a patio, did you? You certainly didn't come here to try to find a parking place. I imagine you came here to be fed, this is a feast, this is a festival and we just hope that you can stagger back to wherever you came from at the end of the week.

How do you get to the place where you have that craving? That's the question. How do you get to the place where you have that longing? You have that passion? You have that desire? How do you generate that?

Well Peter surrounds this command with the motivations, so we're going to go down to the foundation, desiring the Word, we're even going to get below that a little bit to the footings here and find out what creates that, what drives that. Peter gives us several things that produce the craving.

Number one, remember your life source...remember your life source. What does that mean? Go to verse 1. You see the first word there? What is it? Therefore, right? Now what's the therefore there for? To take you back, right? So my first point is built into the therefore. "Therefore putting aside all malice and all guilt and hypocrisy and envy and all slander like newborn babes crave the pure milk."

"What do you mean--therefore?"

On the basis of what I've just said.

"Well what have you just said?"

Let's go back, verse 22 of chapter 1. "Since you have in obedience to the truth," that is, you believed the gospel, "purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." He's talking about their salvation. You have heard the gospel truth, you have obeyed the gospel truth which has brought about not only justification, but conversion, regeneration and begun

sanctification so that you've been purified and you now have a capacity to love each other. Verse 23, "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable." So he's talking about the new birth, regeneration, transformation, conversion, sanctification and he says this has all been accomplished by a seed which is imperishable. What is it? It is the living and abiding Word of God for all flesh is like grass...and here he quotes out of Isaiah 40...and all its glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever and this is the Word which was preached to you and we can add, and you believed and you were transformed and you were converted, therefore crave the Word.

Peter's point is clear. You've already...you've already experienced the power of the Word, right? It moved you from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It moved you out of the wrath of God into the grace of God. It moved you from being a child of the devil to being a child of God. It moved you from being an enemy to being a son. You've already experienced the power of the abiding, eternal Word of God, it regenerated you, it converted you, it justified you, it transformed you, it sanctified you. And this was God's new creative grace working in you. It gave you life, it gave you a new heart, it gave you a new mind, a new perspective. It gave you a new power, a new joy, a new peace, a totally new existence. I mean, literally, you have already in the past experienced the monumental power of the Word of God. The Word is the seed, Matthew 13, that when thrown into the fertile soil produces life. James says, "Of His own will begot He us by the Word, the Word of truth," James calls it. That's why the Word is called the Word of life in Philippians 2:16, it's our life source. It's called the living Word in Hebrews 4:12. It is alive, we know that. It has made us alive. It is the Word, Psalm 19 says, and Psalm 19, many of you know, is my...one of my all time favorite passages with regard to the Word of God, but it says in Psalm 19 and verse 7, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." It is the Word of God that totally transforms the whole inner person. It is the Word of God, Isaiah 55, that goes out and never returns void, but always accomplishes its redemptive purpose. It is the Word of God that saves, as Paul said in Romans 10, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, or the Word of Christ. These things are written right here, John says, these are written that you might believe and that believing you might have life in His name. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but to those of us who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation. The Scriptures repeat that over and over and over and over again.

The Word gives us life. Jesus praying in His high priestly prayer in John 17:17, "Father, sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." You have passed from death to life. You have come to know the living and true God. You have gone through a spiritual transformation. You have entered into an inexhaustible, inextinguishable life which will go on forever and ever. You now have in you the life of God. And some day you will have the privilege of having the full manifestation of what it means to be a glorious child of God when, as Paul calls it in Romans 18, you experience the redemption of the body, but you've already received the redemption of that inner man. The Word has given you a new life and a new love and a thrilling and a marvelous joyous life full of hope and peace and grace and

forgiveness and power, all of that.

And Peter's question is then this...if you already know the power of the Word to do that, why would you not crave what it can continue to do in your life? That's the point.

Do we get so cold, do we get so indifferent, do we get so far from our conversion, so far from the transformation that we become indifferent to such an unequaled power source? I want to long for the Word. I want the Word of God in my mind. I want the Word of God in my heart because I want to know the power of God in my life. I've seen the Word kill the old self. I've seen the Word kill the old man and create a new life, a new heart, a new spirit, a new will, a new mind. And I want continually day in, day out, hour in, hour out to see that power expressed in my life until Jesus comes. So, if you're going to have a desire for the Word, you've got to remember your life source. Remember what it did in your conversion.

Secondly, Peter says, you have to eliminate your sin. Verse 1 he says, "Putting aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander." *Apotithemi*means to reject, put it away, get rid of it. Before you can desire, before you can crave, that's a positive thing, you have to deal with this negative thing of unloading, stripping off. The verb is occasionally used for stripping off filthy clothing, soiled clothing. Unload the...the filth in your life. I really believe that effectiveness in the study of the Word of God demands a genuine repentant heart and confession of sin. In the early Christian baptisms they reflected this attitude because they baptized people in their old clothes and after baptism gave them new robes symbolizing this truth that the old had been buried and the new had been dawned. The ugly elements of the old life still hanging on need to be dealt with otherwise they will spoil the spiritual appetite and they'll take away the taste for holy truth and they will dull the desire for the Word seriously. James says when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Sin produces death, the Word produces life. They're incompatible.

Now five sins are listed here and I don't think it's because these are the five that singularly need to be dealt with but rather they're representative. And the first one is all encompassing, really, he says, "Putting aside all *kakia, pontos kakia*. The word in the Greek means evil, just evil. It's translated malice in the NAS, it's simply an all inclusive word for evil. It conveys the idea of general wickedness or baseness. Some translators could even translate it "good for nothingness, disgracefulness." In Acts 8:22 it is translated wickedness. It's just the general pervasive malignance of the flesh out of which evils emerge. You have to deal with it. If in your life there is no appetite for the Word of God, it may be that you have left your first love. It may be that you have, as Joe was saying last night, become self-sufficient and forgotten the power of God expressed when you were converted. It may also be that your life is crowded with sin and your appetite is so turned toward sin that you have no appetite for the Word.

Secondly he says, "All guile." It's an interesting word, guile means deceit and it's the Greek word *dolos*which literally meant bait on a fishhook. Now that's a very deceitful thing to do to a fish...make the fish think you're going to feed him and you're really going to eat him. Deceit, deception, dishonesty, falsehood, seduction, treachery, that's what guile means. In fact, when Paul was confronting Elymas the sorcerer in Acts 13:10, he said, "You are full of *dolos*, you are full of deception and fraud." You've got to deal with the issues in your life and if there's no real hankering, no strong desire for the Word, you need to deal with the sin, you need to strip off the general, evil, whatever it might be, and any deception, any dishonesty, any falsehood.

And he started narrowing down even tighter, the third word is the word hypocrisy-hypocrisy. Anything in your life that's a fabrication, that's a mask, that's phoniness, any cover up, anything not real, not genuine. And then he talks about envies, any hankering for what others have and you don't, any resentment of somebody else's situation in life or their possessions, anything that leads to a grudge or bitterness or hatred or conflict...anything like that which inevitably can produce slander, so you've got to get rid of all of that. This is the third time he's used the word "all" here, all malice, all guile, and he ends with all slander. Comprehensive term here, it's an interesting word, I don't know if you remember your English courses but it's an onomatopoetic word. Onomatopoeia is a term we used to describe a word that sounds like what it means. We say bees buzz, that's onomatopoetic, or cars crash...that's an onomatopoetic word. This is the word that's onomatopoetic used for slander, it's the Greek word *katalalia*, that's what slander is, lah-lah-la-blalia, you go around blabbering about somebody else that you envy. It's a word that means defamation, disagreement, disparagement, malicious gossip, and so forth.

General wickedness will lead to deceit. Deceit will produce hypocrisy. Hypocrisy will cultivate envy. And envy will lead to slandering of people that you resent. This is quite opposite, by the way, chapter 1 verse 22 where he says, "Since you've now come to know the truth, you should be distinguished by sincere love of the brethren, fervent love for one another from the heart." Strip off the filth, Peter says. Confess it. Repent of it. Eliminate it.

Now we get right down to the reality right here. If there's no desire for the Word in your life, you need to do some spiritual inventory. You need to take your sin before the Lord and in honest confession acknowledge them and tell the Lord, and this is the real stuff of true confession, you don't want them in your life anymore. And when you can say that sentence, you've expressed a genuine confession.

There's a third element here that contributes to desiring the Word. First, remember your life source. You already have experienced the great power of God, why would you now cheat yourself out of it? It was there in salvation, it's still there in sanctification. Secondly, eliminate your sin. Confess it, repent of it. Thirdly, admit your need...admit your need. And here we come back to the discussion of self-sufficiency. You may think you need nothing, but that's not the case. He says in verse 2, "Like

newborn babes crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word."

This is a very...a very clear emphasis here because he sort of piles up his words. He doesn't just say "like babes," but he says "like newborn babes," but it's both words sort of mean the same thing. *Brephae*the word for babe or baby means a newborn baby. In fact, *brephae*or *brephos*in the plural was used to speak of a nursing infant, still at the mother's breast. And he adds the*artigennetos*and he's saying, "Not only am I talking about a breast-fed baby, but I'm talking about a newborn breast-fed baby." We could assume that what he's talking about here is a baby immediately born, immediately born. And the instant that baby is born, it comes out of the womb and whatever necessary care for that baby it's then done immediately. And where does it go directly? To its mother's breast where God has already prepared the milk. And I've got to tell you something, ladies, I hate to burst your bubble here, but the baby doesn't care what the clothes its wearing looks like and the baby doesn't care about the wallpaper and the curtains in the room or the blanket you wrap it in, or the things you put on its feet, the baby doesn't care about any of that. The baby only cares about one thing, MILK. "Just give me that stuff, deal with the consequences and then give me some more." I mean, it's a very simple process. It's very one-dimensional. And when they don't get the milk, what do they do? They cry and the louder they cry the more they express their desperation. Pretty graphic illustration, isn't it?

How about you, are you like that? Do you crave the Word like a newborn baby craves its mother's milk? That's what Peter said. And it's not like a baby says, "You know, I really would like some potato chips and I'll chase it down with a little milk." I...you know, I love little babies and, you know, I mess around trying to feed little babies, you know, honey on the end of my finger or a little ice cream or just having fun with them and when they're real little they just spit it out. They just want their mother's milk. And you know what? Their mother's milk, wonderfully designed by God, has antibodies that protect that little life. It's not just nourishment, it's defense mechanisms. It's immunity. I mean, that little baby needs that and it's not just because they like the flavor. They don't have anything to compare it to. Later on they will and they'll leave milk way behind. But at that time they just want that milk. It's necessary for nourishment, it's necessary for protection. And isn't it wonderful, also, it's just...it's God's wonderful, beautiful, tender way to nurture the intimacy between the mother and that child?

And, you know, the analogy is just magnificent here. Craving that Word as our only source of life, craving that Word as our only antibodies, as our only hope of protection from the myriad of diseases that threaten us under the subtleties of Satan's devices. And craving that Word because it speaks of intimacy. It draws me right into the arms of God.

You know, the church has learned to get satisfied with junk food, it's so sad. And then they have no appetite for the pure, uncontaminated, spiritual milk of the Word and consequently they're weak, malnourished, unprotected and lack intimacy with God.

You know, when I...when I emphasize the Word of God, I'm not mad, I'm not upset. I just care. God has exalted His Word to the place of His own name. And, friends, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. I know what gives you life and protection and nurture and strength and intimacy. It's the Word of God. It's not as if I want to impose on somebody, or any preacher who preaches the Word wants to impose on somebody something. This isn't Castor Oil. This isn't painful stuff.

Jeremiah got it right. Jeremiah, what a guy. The greatest preacher of his time and everybody hated all his sermons. They did, they hated him. They finally threw him in a pit. Couldn't shut him up so just threw him in a deep pit said, "You can yell at the walls of the pit." Nobody heard him but he said this, "Thy words were found and I did eat them." It was a one-man feast. "And Thy Word was in me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

You know, some people read the Bible traditionally because their parents read it daily and so they read it daily. And some people read the Bible superstitiously, sort of like, "Yeah, it's sort of like a religious charm, you know, you better do your daily reading deal or, I don't know, God might zap you. You can miss two days, but three days, you're in real trouble." Some people read it educationally. They want to know the facts that are in there and they want to...they want to answer the theological debate. Some read it denominationally to defend the articles of the faith. Some read it professionally so that they can extract its material for the use in sermons. Some read it proudly so that they can spout off every knuckle on the right hand of the Antichrist and the theological implications of all of that.

How should it be read? It should be read like a hungry baby sucking with all its strength to draw out all the nourishment he can get necessary for life. That's how it should be read. Remember your life source, eliminate your sin and admit your need...you need it. Fourthly, pursue your growth. At the end of verse 2, "That by it you may...what?...grow in respect to salvation."

Salvation is a great reality. It embraces the whole of the Kingdom experience. And do you want to grow in that? Here's the way you grow. Spiritual growth...spiritual growth is the issue. If you want to experience your salvation to the fullest extent, if you want to move literally ice(?) into the fullness of your salvation, if you want to participate in all the best that God has for you, to borrow the words of 2 Corinthians 3:18, if you want to move from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next, or to take the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3, if you want to chase after the prize which is becoming like Jesus Christ, if where you are is not enough and you're not satisfied and you want more, or to borrow the words of Peter in 2 Peter 3:18, if you want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, if you have any desire to be something more than you are and to extend yourself into the greater and greater riches of your salvation, then you need to get into the Word, or you just deprive yourself.

Can I make it in a real simple sentence? You need to be discontent with where you are. And I'm not saying, "Oh...all these people come...God has more, I believe God has more, are you into the more?" Look, the only more that God has for me is the part of this that I haven't yet understood and applied. I'm not looking for anything beyond this. But I want to know more. I want to know more of His Word because the more I know His Word the more I know Him. The goal for me is not to know the Bible, the goal for me is to know the God of the Bible. You see, spiritual growth goes in three steps, 1 John 2:12 to 14 indicates first there's spiritual babies and it says they know the Father, Da-Da. And there's spiritual young men who are strong in the Word and they've overcome the wicked one. The wicked one is disguised as an angel of light, propagates false doctrine, young men are strong in the Word. So you go from being a baby, just know God and you're tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and you get strong in the Word and you know your theology and you overcome the deceptions of the evil one. But that's not where spiritual growth ends. There are spiritual fathers, it says, who know Him who is from the beginning.

What does that mean? It means you've gone beyond the theology and you've begun to know the God who wrote it. That's what...that's what the pursuit of God means. And it rises out of discontent. Discontent which Paul expressed with these words, "Not as though I have already...what?...attained." You know, he was in his sixties when he said that? And he had been converted 30 years when he said that. Do you know what also he said in that same passage, Philippians 3? "That I may know Him." You say, "Paul, I've got news, you know Him better than anybody knows Him." It's not enough. I'm not there. I haven't attained and I'm pressing and I'm pressing, *dioko*, I'm pursuing, I'm going as fast as I can after Him.

There needs to be a discontent. If you ever get smug and content with where you are spiritually, that's a sin as well as cheating yourself out of the riches of the glories of God's truth and its understanding and application.

Well, I better go to the last point, time's almost gone. How do you stimulate a desire for the Word? Remember your life source, eliminate your sin, admit your need, pursue your growth and finally, survey your blessings...survey your blessings. And this kind of takes us back to where we began really. Look at verse 3, it's interesting how Peter says, "Now only do this if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

What's he saying? Well just do it if you think it's worth it. Have you ever tasted the kindness of the Lord? Sure you have. Have you seen His goodness, *chrestos*in the Greek, goodness, kindness, graciousness? Has He poured out His mercies new every morning to you? Has He been faithful? Has He blessed you with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies? Have you enjoyed all of that? Have you taken all of that in? Have you had your prayers answered? Has He brought to salvation

your children? Has He given you an opportunity for ministry? Has He given you strength in the midst of a trial, the suffering, the loss of a life partner, the loss of a child? Has He carried you through the pain of a serious illness? Has He given you a triumphant view of death? Have you tasted the Lord's goodness?

Let me tell you, folks, there's more there. Christians who don't crave the Word, that's sad. They're like people with anorexia nervosa. That's a disease that women get who starve themselves, sometimes they starve themselves to death. Let me give you the symptoms. Occasional binges, food binges, followed by vomiting, or enemas. Second characteristic is hyperactivity, an almost fidgety hyperactivity, excessive exercise to prove oneself fit and competent. Thirdly, depression, an inability to deal with the real problems of life. And fourthly, this is always a component of this disease, social isolation, you have to continually hide from everybody because you have to hide the truth. That's a sad disease. You know what makes it really sad? You can't catch it and it doesn't come from any germ and it doesn't come from any bacteria and it doesn't come from any injury and it doesn't come congenitally and it doesn't come from any physical source, therefore it's ridiculous in the sense that it isn't even necessary.

And I look at the church and I look at Christians and I see masses of people with spiritual anorexia nervosa. Oh they have occasional binges, they go to a Bible conference. Or they overdose on a bunch of input, they listen to a tape series, they read a book but it is immediately eliminated without benefit of application. And they tend to be characterized by hyperactivity. They are very involved at the church.

However, they are depressed, they lack joy, peace, confidence, comfort, courage. They are characterized by doubt and fear because they never enjoy triumph over sin. They can't handle the issues of life. And inevitably they isolate themselves from any intimate fellowship with God's people, lest the truth be known.

Now I'm not going to play doctor here but I'm going to give you a gilt-edge guaranteed cure for anorexia nervosa. Normal nutrition. True? Just eat. Just eat. Take out a prescription thing and write, "Eat." You've got all these problems in the church, we've got these people who are binging here and binging there and purging without a benefit of application. We've got all this hyperactivity going on in the church everywhere. We have people who are depressed because they can't triumph over sin. We have people who won't get into intimate fellowship because they don't want the truth to be known. And the answer to all the problems that flow out of that in the church is eat.

Join me in prayer.

Father, what a great, great day this is. Precious people who are gathered here to hear Your Word and apply it certainly bring joy to Your heart. And may this not be something that comes and goes

but may it be the cutting of a new path for us and a fresh new devotion to Your glorious Word. We thank You for the beauty of the music, for the sweetness of the fellowship we're enjoying, but what really feeds us is the Word and we thank You, God, for giving it to us. What a treasure. And we reaffirm our longing, our desire for it that we might grow so that in our maturity we may bring You glory. That's the goal. We'll praise You and thank You in Jesus' name. And everyone said...AMEN...AMEN. God bless.

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