



Desiring the Word of God

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

(1 Peter 2:1–3)

One of the most important issues that must be settled in the heart of every believer is the assurance of salvation. Every believer must be confident that they can never be snatched out of the hands of Christ, because the lack of assurance of salvation causes a believer to be unproductive in the Kingdom of Christ. And the lack of assurance is a direct result of a lack of time spent in the Word of God. You see, it's the Holy Spirit working through His Word in the heart that gives the believer the assurance of salvation.

1 John 5:13:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

This is why the Word of God must continually be preached, taught, and read!

But we live in a day of confusion, a day when many so called churches and so-called preachers do not faithfully preach God's Word. 2 Corinthians 2:17: *“For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”* The word “peddling” is the Greek word *kapeleuo*, which has reference to a merchant who adulterates wine with water for personal gain. And so Paul said in his day there were many peddlers of God's Word who corrupted or watered it down for their personal gain. In other words, they ignored the truth and told people what they wanted to hear. And we have many such peddlers of God's Word in our day; all one has to do is listen to one of the many TV preachers that are broadcasted on “Christian Television.”

Amos prophesied of Israel during his day that the people *“shall wander from sea to sea and run to and fro, seeking the Word of the LORD, but shall not find it.”* In the same way, today you can go from place to place seeking the Word of the Lord and not find it because many “preachers” are afraid to preach the Word of God with boldness and conviction because they have a fear of men. However, Proverbs 29:25 says, *“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”* Some are afraid to faithfully preach the Word because they fear offending one of their church members. However, 1 Peter 2:8 tells us that: *“Jesus is called a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”* Others are afraid to preach the Word because they are man-pleasers. But the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 1:10:

“For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men I would not be a slave of Christ.”

Many “preachers” simply don't understand their calling as a herald — one who is called to preach the Word of God in season and out of season; when it's convenient and when it's not convenient! (2 Timothy).

Another reason for confusion is that we live in a day when many church members don't hunger for the faithful preaching of God's Word. We live in a day when many who call themselves Christians

would rather be entertained on Sunday morning than hear the faithful preaching of God's Word. The truth really doesn't matter to so many people. People in our day ask: "How does it make me feel?" or "Does it work?" Seldom do they ask if it's biblical. That's why we see so much distortion in worship on the Lord's Day, and why there's so much confusion regarding salvation. Paul wrote to Timothy,

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

(2 Timothy 4:3-4)

The word "fables" is the Greek word *moothos*, which means tales or fiction. People will run after fairytales and fictional stories rather than the truth of God's Word. What about you? Do you hunger for God's Word? Do you realize how important the truth of God's Word is in the life of the believer?

In the midst of all this confusion in our day, the Apostle Peter says in our text: *"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."* The word therefore takes us back to what Peter previously wrote in 1 Peter 1:22-25, where he said that the living, abiding, eternal Word of God is the source of the believer's new birth and cleansing from sin. Jesus told His disciples in John 15:3: *"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."* It's the Holy Spirit who transformed us and brought the grace of God to our soul, and He did it through the Word. And since every believer has experienced God's saving work through His Word and Spirit then we ought to desire this continual influence and power in our life. Therefore Peter said, *"lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking."* This is a command to lay aside all the filthy sin in your life. To "lay aside" originally meant to take off filthy clothing, and in this same manner Peter mentions five things the believer must practice laying aside: *"all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking."* And we lay it aside by confessing it and turning from it always more and more (HC Q88–90). *"All deceit"* means *"deception, dishonesty or falsehood."* It's a word used for a "fishhook" because of the deception of a baited fishhook. Peter is telling believers to continually set aside everything that is deceptive or dishonest in your life.

"Hypocrisy" is something that's not real. It's a fake like the cubic zirconium ring. It may look real and it may even fool many, but the truth is it's a fake diamond. The word hypocrisy has reference to the Greek stage actors who wore a mask on stage. They were called hypocrites who were playing a part. Our text tells us to be real and genuine as followers of Christ. Don't play the hypocrite in any area of life; don't play-act. How many times have people worn a big smile to worship on Sunday morning, but underneath they despised the individual to whom they smiled? Our text calls believers to repent of the sin of hypocrisy. Peter then adds "envy," which means to covet what others have, to desire to be someone else, or resent somebody else's situation because it's not your situation. For instance, envy sprouts to the surface when someone receives an inheritance, money, land, possessions, etc. that someone else did not receive. Envy leads to grudges, bitterness, and hatred, which the Heidelberg Catechism calls the root of murder (HC Q106). And so we must put off envy by confessing our sins to the Lord and asking for the grace of repentance. Peter then says *"all evil speaking,"* which refers to all unkind words or gossip. Peter says if you desire deceptive things, hypocritical things, if your mind is filled with envy, or you get pleasure from slandering others, and if this is the pattern of your life, then your desires are corrupt and you cannot desire the pure milk of the Word of God.

Instead of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, Peter says: *"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby."* True godliness is always marked by a love for and a delight in God's Word. John 8:31: *"True believers keep God's Word."* Job said: *"I have treasured the Word of God more than my necessary food."* Psalm 1 tells us that the godly man delights in God's Word. In Psalm 19:10, David refers to the Word of God as *"more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."* This desire for God's Word is what Peter is referring to in our text. He's calling us to desire the pure milk of the Word. The word "desire," which is the Greek word *epipatheo* (the prefix *epi* is a preposition that intensifies the verb *patheo*) means to have a desire that's over and above everything else.

Peter is saying above all else in life, believers should strongly desire the Word of God. David illustrates this in Psalm 42:1: *“As the deer pants after the water brook, so pants my soul after Thee oh God.”* In other words, believers are called to thirst for God’s Word as a panting deer seeks for water.

Peter uses the analogy of a newborn baby that longs for its mother’s milk to describe the believer’s longing for God’s Word. “Newborn babe” is the Greek term, *brephos*, which literally means “a baby just born.” Peter is clearly talking about a baby that has just come out of its mother’s womb and is dependent upon the nourishment of its mother. And the instant a baby is born it has the God-given desire to nurse from its mother, and if it doesn’t, then it’s either stillborn or seriously ill. A healthy baby craves milk and only milk. This is what nourishes a baby and gives it the necessary antibodies to protect it from disease. And as a baby craves milk, in that same way, believers are to crave God’s Word. This is the God-given spiritual desire to all who are born of the Spirit of God. In other words, Peter is saying that a sign that a person has been regenerated or given new life by the Holy Spirit is a hunger for the Word of God. Do you have a real desire for the pure Word of God? This is evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in your soul. And when you have this craving, then worship on Sunday morning, Bible Studies, and Scripture reading at home are not a burden but a joy, a privilege, and a delight! You see, it’s the Word that nourishes and protects the believer. The Word gives us assurance, confidence, strength, comfort, wisdom, joy, peace and understanding. The Word of God is *“a lamp to our feet and a light to our path”* (Psalm 119:105), and it sets us free from Satan’s lies (John 8:32). The Word of God enables us to discern truth from error, it teaches us to walk in obedience to the Lord, it causes us to grow as believers, and we should continually desire the Word *“if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”*

Have you tasted the graciousness of the Lord? Has He saved you by His grace? Have you experienced God’s goodness and kindness? Have you experienced answered prayers and have you seen God’s hand of protection in your life through His wondrous providence? Has He provided for all your needs and comforted the cries of your broken heart, and filled you with joy and gladness in the midst of your trials? All of these things came to you through the eternal Word of God, which lives and abides forever. *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4). Today, across the world, we have weak churches filled with weak Christians who are spiritually malnourished because they’re fed a constant diet of junk food rather than the pure milk of God’s Word. Because of this they’ve lost the desire for the pure Word of God, which brings consequences that makes the church vulnerable to all kinds of doctrinal error. And the only solution is found in our text,

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