

Longing For The Word Of God

A Reflection on 1 Peter 2 and Spiritual Transformation

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This evening, we're turning to 1 Peter chapter 2, moving into a new chapter where Peter presents fresh insights. Chapter 2 begins with a transition. We've seen this pattern before in chapter 1, and so we're pivoting to what was spoken before. Just briefly, what I mainly talked about last Sunday evening was the idea that if God loves us supremely, it should show, not perfectly, but with that fervency, with a pure heart, the idea that you're giving it all in. Remember the athletic runner, he's giving it all in. That's the approach we ought to have. God has given us the ability to do it. When something God says in His Word, He gives us the ability to do it. Amen. That was the big picture of what God is showing us. Beginning with our resurrection, just like Jesus resurrected, we have new life. So this new life is what we should desire to have more and more, and remember it's not for our individual benefit. There's that aspect of one another I shared, that Christians have the opportunity to have that agape love. It's the idea that you're denying yourself and you're loving your brother, your sister, and it's the idea, like in Philippians, not for selfish gain, not for selfish ambition, but for the benefit of the other person. That's the kind of love we ought to have for one another.

Let's go right into chapter 2, and I'm going to read it and then share some thoughts. It says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings." What we see here is that Peter is showing us there are these sins you're going to have to deal with in your new nature. Your old nature is still there. It's still calling for your attention, as it were. The idea is that Peter is saying, "Okay, it's there for sure." But there is an action you have the ability to do. We have power over sin. Whose power is it? It's from God. Kept by the power of God, the Spirit of God. He gives us the ability to do what? Lay things aside. That's an amazing thing, that it doesn't control us anymore. You sense that in this word "laying aside." It's the idea that, look, that's not you anymore. You can put that away now. That's another way of translation. You can put that away now. You ever grow out of something and you're going, "I can't fit into that"? That's the idea, like, "I don't fit into this anymore."

I'm going to go into it with the idea that it's not one action. There are two actions that are actually happening, but one is overtaken by the other. I want you to keep that in mind before I need to touch on the big picture. Peter, you're going to see when we get there in chapter 2, he brings up this word "newborn babes." I saw this in other places in Scripture, and I want to be accurate in why he's saying "newborn babes." Well, we know that newborn babes, it's a new birth, right? Born again, a spiritual birth has taken place

in a believer. So we get that idea from newborn babes. But Peter is not emphasizing the idea of, "Hey, you know, you're a newborn babe, and newborn babes, what do they do? Drink milk, right?" We get that idea. He's seen a lot of babies, apparently. I've seen a lot of babies. That's a normal thing to do. A baby just knows what to do. You don't have to teach the baby what to do. The baby just naturally gravitates toward wanting milk. It's sincere. It's a genuine need.

If you look at 1 Peter 1:23, where it says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God," that word in the Greek means it's the translation "logos," the seed of the Word. Then what we're going to see is the connection with sincere milk. It's the idea, like milk, when you're drinking it, there's a process that's happening internally, isn't there? Just like the Word of God works in your own life. There's a work happening. You're not just receiving it, and then it goes nowhere. There's that aspect of growth. Milk equals growth. The Word of God equals growth. The idea in the Greek is processing the Word of God in your mind. When we get to the sincere milk aspect of it, it's the idea of processing the Word.

We get other things also. I looked at Old Testament references to milk. Isaiah 55:1-2 comes to mind, where it talks about drinking wine and milk to represent hearing the Word of the Lord in order to sustain spiritual life. See that connection with the milk. Another passage is Joel 3:18: "The hill shall flow with milk." Then 1 Corinthians 3:2, this is where it's not a one-to-one comparison. This is a different meaning altogether. It says, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat." Here, what Paul was saying in this passage is that it's not sustaining you. Clearly, that's different from what I've been sharing, that milk, sincere milk, seed of the Word, processing it leads to growth. That's what I want to share, that there are some distinctions between other passages and then similarities. Let me take up one more, Exodus 3:8 says Canaan had been a land flowing with milk and honey for all, so there's this blessing attached to the word "milk."

Another thing I want you to notice is Peter is very much similar to wisdom passages in this way, where he does a lot of contrasting. If you look at 1 Peter 4:14-15, you see a contrast. In 1 Peter 1:18, a contrast. In 1 Peter 1:23-24, a contrast. Now we're going to dive in. There's this contrast here, which is receiving milk and then putting something away. That's the contrast Peter is trying to convey to us. I mentioned the growth aspect of processing the milk, which is the Word, and here's the thing I think all of us can relate to: as believers, we came from some kind of history, right? Some of us in this room have generational sins. Do you know what I mean by that? Similar to what we saw in verse 18, where it talks about vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. That's the idea of generational sins.

For example, alcoholism. That's a big one for generation to generation, isn't it? How about gambling? I've seen that. Abuse. I've seen that. The idea is all of us have something to that effect, where it's been generational sin, and somehow with you as a believer, it stopped with you. The buck stopped with you, as it were. Praise God. Amen. Praise God for that interruption or disruption. Actually, disruption is totally changing course. That's what happened in our lives. But we still have to deal with the old life, not

just with our biological family that are still wrestling with that, but with your problem, if you've had that problem too, right? There's a thing where you have to deal with your old life, your old habits, that's thrown at you with temptation after temptation, and if it's generational, the word that comes to mind is accumulation. A lot of accumulation, a lot of time has passed. It's a generational sin. That's the way it's put. It has to be dealt with purposefully. It's not like, "Oh, it's just a sin." No, it's a serious thing you have to deal with.

We see this a little bit with the Apostle Paul. 1 Corinthians 6:10-11, I won't go through all of it, but he's calling out some thieves, some people that are covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, right? He says, "That's what some of you were." We see Paul doing the same thing with it. Now we're seeing it with Peter doing the same thing. Another thing to point out is Peter is not only speaking to Gentiles but his primary audience is actually Jewish converts, and with Jewish individuals, they had to deal with their religion, which is Judaism. A lot of that is corruption. I don't know how much you know about Judaism, but there is a lot of corruption, number one, against Christianity. They are hard-pressed, antagonistic toward Christians. That's what Peter has to deal with too. He's dealing with two types of people, two groups.

Let's go into verse 1. I read it already, but let's now dive in. I mentioned to you already the laying aside, putting away, another way it's translated. Here's the thing: you cannot control your environment. You cannot change your external circumstances. That's not what he's trying to say here. He's saying it's an internal conflict, an internal situation you've got to deal with. This is personal. He's not saying you've got to go change everything out there. It's an internal conflict, just to be clear. That's what he's conveying. He's saying you have power to control that. You have the ability to lay that aside. It doesn't control you anymore. It doesn't have a hold on you anymore. You have that control from the Spirit of God.

He says to lay it aside. Let's go down all the various ones. There's five of them, if you notice. Let's go with the first one. He says "all malice." What is all malice? It's directly opposite of love and forgiveness. That's the way to think about it. It's a dark conscience, the opposite of love and forgiveness. What is it by definition? Intent to harm, desire for revenge, retaliation. It starts off with annoyance, anger, and it leads to these bigger things: "I want to harm you. I want to retaliate." There's a process behind malice. Wherever that is, that whole spectrum of malice, lay that aside, better to start early on. You should know, define how it looks like, what you sense, and lay that aside, wherever you are in that stage. That's a good thing, right? We want to love, we want to forgive. That's one of the main messages of Christianity, isn't it? Malice is primarily a sinful attitude, contrary to God's nature, who is love, and also to God's commands. His Word, Ecclesiastes 7:9, puts it this way: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Let that be a reminder. Every time you're angry, it's a foolish thing in the eyes of God. Let's call it what it is, right?

Then he goes into a triad of other types of sinful attitudes, namely guile, hypocrisy, and envies. It's all kind of clumped up together, and I'll explain. These three together are still

inner sins. They're sins that creep up on you, very subtle. You've got to be very careful in how they come up inside of you. The goal is to defile you as a believer. It hinders the contrast, which is to love one another. Notice the plurals: hypocrisies, envies. All types of hypocrisy, all types of envies. How do they look? Primarily, it's being deceitful, being tricky. The way I deal with this, and I'm sure you have, is like, "I can't figure you out. You're not clear to me. What are you trying to hide?" So you've got to keep explaining: "Tell me more. Tell me more." Because there's some way of, like, "I'm trying to get you away from thinking about it." It's constant shifting, shifting, shifting. The secretive attitude, whereas love is transparent, isn't it? It's honesty. It's the exact opposite. You're not trying to go a long way, and that helps a lot. I think I mentioned that love goes a long way with our conversations, doesn't it, where we don't have to explain a lot because we're just clear. Our words are formed better when we love. But you notice people that are hypocrites and envious, they have a lot of choice words, not good ones. That's something we are to identify within ourselves primarily.

In contrast, Matthew 5:37 is a good verse to remind ourselves. My wife loves this verse: "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Just say yes or no. That's the idea. Don't go this long, "I've got to explain my yes, no." We do that with our child. It saves a lot of trouble. God's Word is good. Amen. It's for our benefit. Secondly, these sins include continually putting on an act, this idea of hypocrisy. I've got to put up this act to this person, this act to that person. The idea is that you're like a chameleon. You're changing your personality based on a circumstance. You're not consistent. You're not genuine. Genuine is, "I'm the same person to you, to you, to you, and so on." I've got nothing to hide because God knows everything anyway. Makes all the difference, doesn't it? Sometimes when we forget that God is in the conversation, that's enough. That's a good reminder. Generally, truth in your inner life is the difference between hypocrisy.

Jesus said that people draw nigh unto me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. That's the heart attitude. That's where it starts. It's a heart issue. Matthew 15:7-8. The idea is you don't want to turn from your sin. You don't want to repent. The idea of, "I just love it," that's when you're in a bad place, when you start loving sin because you should never love sin. Amen. You should never deceive other people. We should never try to deceive God, ultimately. Thirdly, these sins include being filled with envy and jealousy, and they typically come because you saw someone is successful—I put in quotes—because of their wealth, some material wealth, or status or other things. Never compare yourself, right? I preached a sermon on this a while back: we should never compare ourselves. We are all equal as brothers and sisters in Christ. That's our common denominator with everything. Whatever God gives to us as far as status or material wealth, that's a benefit, but it's not the primary thing of our lives. Amen. It's not the essential thing to think about. That's what affects us in a negative way when we treat secondary things as more important than primary things. What is our primary cause? Love one another. So simple, but we forget, don't we? Because it's so simple. Let's always remind ourselves of that.

Some things I grab from Mark and passages where the disciples, the apostles, were saying, "Who should be the greatest?" or "Who should sit in the seat of prominence?" Even the mom got involved with James and John, you recall. It's in us. Let's just call it what it is. Let's not get fixated on those things and learn from them. A great contrast to that verse I just shared is Matthew 20:25-27: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Philippians 2:3: "Let each esteem other better than themselves." Such clear Scripture, isn't it? Very clear. Those are the things we should remind ourselves of.

Next, we took those three. We're going to take care of the last one: all evil speakings. Notice that he went from hypocrisies to envies. There's a reason for that. He's demonstrating that the tongue can do great damage. He's referring to evil speaking. That's the tongue, isn't it? There are passages, such as James, where it says the tongue is set on fire of hell. Let that be a good reminder for you. Our tongue has the ability to set on fire of hell. What about Matthew 12:36? That for every idle word that a man speaks, he'll be called to give account of it in the day of judgment. Even though it has been forgiven, we will still be called out on those things. Ultimately, this is a good reminder. Acts 9:4-5 says it's the Apostle Paul, Jesus speaking to him, saying, "I am Jesus whom thou art persecuting." You're persecuting a brother, you're persecuting Jesus. It's just a great reminder that God worked in Paul's life to show that very clearly. That's a hard one to deal with because, yeah, you're persecuting Jesus, right? It's His sheep.

Let's go into verse 2. Verse 2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." Verse 2 is very similar to the idea of being determined. See that word "desire"? Another way of rephrasing is "determined." Determining the sincere milk of the Word. It's like passages like Psalm 1:2, which I preached this morning. That's a similar kind of desire. Psalm 119, I told you about, that's another wisdom psalm, and it starts with having been begotten again, that we have the ability to desire the sincere milk. We are a new nature, a new creature in Christ, and we can now desire the sincere milk of the Word, and that's our blessing in two ways that we can do that, namely, we can read Scripture personally and also what we're doing right now, having me and Pastor Walder preaching the Word to you, right? Those are just two, there could be others, but those are the two big ones where you can really receive the sincere milk of the Word.

I want to call out the word "sincere." What this means is unadulterated. It's the idea that it should not be misinterpreted. The Word of God should not be misinterpreted. Very important. Who is interpreting? It should not introduce false teachings. That's what sincere milk is. You're getting the pure Word of the Lord, not changing the original context of Scripture, twisting it, adding, removing. That's the idea. But aligning ourselves to the Word of God instead of God aligning to our personal agendas. That's a big one in a lot of churches, unfortunately. We should align ourselves to God, God's agenda. Amen. His beliefs. So we take it as it is, His authority above all else.

We see here, to grow thereby, that the Word of God may grow thereby. The idea is, as a result of taking on the sincere milk of the Word, the result is that it'll cause you to grow more and more, and as we know in other passages in Scripture, where it becomes more Christlike in our attitudes, in our actions, namely in loving each other, right? Just as He loved us, we can love one another. Do you see that in your life? As you're reading the Word of God, you just sense a more love for God. Amen. But also a love for other people, because you cannot separate the two. Jesus said, "Just as I loved you, so you are to love your brothers and sisters in Christ." Ephesians 4:13, it's just a wonderful thing in what Paul says here: "We all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and unto a perfect or complete man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." That's the goal of the Word working in our lives. Then 2 Corinthians 3:18: "From glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord." As beholding Christ through His Word, you're experiencing glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Isn't that amazing? That we get to have the privilege to glorify Him. Until the end, Romans 8:30, full glorification. 1 John 3:2: "Like Him, we shall see Him as He is." Aligning to His Word, we're aligning to Him. Remember, I mentioned this morning, you cannot separate the person from His Word. That's the goal for the Word of God, that we're just so intimately close to the Lord Jesus Christ. The sincere milk of the Word, it's a nourishing aspect. It's a growth aspect.

Another thing to point out is it's best for us conditionally. Let me just go back to that passage where I mentioned in 1 Corinthians, where Paul called out you should already have strong meat. In that sense, it's the idea of what is your spiritual condition. Are you still kind of here, where you need the sincere milk, which is good, but there is a part where you should start taking in the stronger meat. The idea is that it has to match up with your growth. You don't have a baby eating meat. That's just, call it what it is, it's bad. It's evil. You wouldn't do that. It's very similar to our spiritual condition. We wouldn't do that. God wouldn't want that for us. That's something that He points out very clearly.

Another aspect, if you haven't seen it already, growth is demanded on life. Look at vegetables, right? There's a growth process. Animals have a growth process. So, therefore, spiritually, there is a growth process. Wherever there's life, and we have a new life in the Lord, we ought to grow. So ask the question, are you growing, brother or sister, in your life and your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you closer to Him, and do you start seeing your life more like Him in your relationship with others?

Lastly, verse 3. I'm going to read the last verse: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." We are very anxious to gain assurance, are we not? We love the kind of quick answers by nature. We're very instant gratification, if not worse now, and getting worse. But in Christianity, it's delayed gratification. Because growth only works when it's delayed. Amen. Our sanctification process does have assurance, but it takes time, based on your intake, receiving of the Word of God. One of the things I want to share, some personal realizations of this word "graciousness," the graciousness of the Lord is the idea of His goodness, His kindness. Gracious is, if you look at the root word, you experience His goodness. Where have we seen this? We've seen this in Psalm 34:8,

two words: “taste” and “good.” You see that with “taste” and then “gracious.” I mentioned about gracious and good, it can be used interchangeably.

The idea is this is very important: it’s going in. You’re tasting it. It’s not like out here. You’re really letting it do the internal work. You realize that by feeding on the sincere milk, at your soul, you feel good. You feel good when you have tasted His Word. That’s a great thing, isn’t it? That’s the ultimate purpose, that we are to sense His grace, His goodness in our lives when we’re constantly taking in the sincere Word of God. The more we take in, the more we sense the goodness of God, and it’s going to come out in your words. You’re going to say, “This is good.” May that be repeated in your life. It’s supposed to be expressed. The idea Peter is saying is you’re going to express it. You’re going to show it, not just only with your words, but with your life. You’re going to be able to say, “God is good. God is gracious.” I know when I’m in a good, healthy place, I know that, right? I’m sure you have been in the same situation where you’re experiencing God’s goodness. But it comes with that condition: you’ve got to read and feed yourself the Word of God. The more you do, the more you experience His goodness.

I’m going to stop right here with all that I said. I want you to take in this last verse, Galatians 2:20. It’s Paul saying, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Let that resonate with you this evening, brothers and sisters. Is Christ living in you? Is Christ living in you? The more that He comes out, you’re going to say, “It’s not me. It’s Christ. It’s Christ.” What a great way to be a testimony. Amen. You’re not dealing with your problems anymore as a priority, but you’re saying, “It’s not me. God is doing this amazing work in me.” I want you to experience that too. As brothers and sisters, we share that, whether it’s through other times when you’re not here hearing the Word preached, in your own Bible studies, if you have one. Get together if you haven’t already. Share the Word of God, experience this, and express the goodness, express the love, and that’s going to be encouraging more and more because, look, the world is going to get worse and worse. We know that. So let’s not focus on that. Let’s just lay that aside first with our internal work, and then everything else will take care of itself. Amen.

Let’s pray. Father, thank You so much for Your Word. You’re so kind. You’re so good. You’re so loving, God. Any work that is done in us as believers, it’s all of Christ. It’s not of us. Father, help us to repeat that more and more in our lives, to genuinely repeat that, not to be hypocritical in any way, but to genuinely experience the sincere milk of the Word to grow thereby, so that we can say the Lord is gracious, He is good, because we’ve tasted Him. We’ve fed on the Word. Father, I pray, Lord, that You will bless to this end. I pray also for those that are lost in this room, who don’t even know where to begin. Father, if they just start with humbly receiving Your Word, Lord, I know that You will do a great work in them. So if You’re speaking to them, if they’re being spoken to this way, Lord, I pray, Father, that they would want to speak about wanting to know the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ll be privileged, Lord, if You will give me the wisdom and the grace to counsel them. Please bless this, Father, for it’s the Lord Jesus Christ’s name, in His matchless name. Amen.