

Longing for the Word (1 Peter 2:1–3)

Jim did it to me again. Today is “spring forward” day, as many of you are aware. So I asked him—I called him out on it this time. I said, “Why are you doing this to me all the time?” He said, “Look”—it was sort of like when Adam was confronted with his sin and he blamed someone else. Jim blamed John MacArthur for this, for having Shepherds Conference during this time. Well, the joke’s on him because you guys are more awake than usual—OK, I was trying. We’re going to work through this together. First Peter chapter 2, we’ll read the first three verses: “Therefore, laying aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” I’m using the LSB today. If you have another translation, it may be a little bit different. I have a few kind of rolling around in my mind, so I may go back and forth between them. I’ll basically be in LSB.

“Long for the pure milk of the word.” Long for the pure milk of the Word. What does that mean? What’s the meaning of the command here? It’s a command. We want to understand it. We’ll do a careful exegesis of this, but we’ll see that it is a command to have a strong desire, a love, a craving for the Word of God. So for the Christian, this is where knowing God begins and where that knowledge deepens. It’s where a relationship to God is kindled and where it’s nourished. It’s where eternal life begins and where we grow in sanctification. So for us to grow in the image of Christ, for us to grow up in our salvation, as it says here, requires that we have this craving for God’s Word. We see this modeled for us and encouraged throughout Scripture.

In Job—this is Job 23:12—Job says this: “I have not departed from the command of His lips. I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food.”

Psalms 19. This is verses 7–10 from David. David says,

7 The law of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The precepts of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether.

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10 They are more desirable than gold, even more than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. (LSB)

Jeremiah 15:16: “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your words became for me joy and gladness in my heart, for I have been called by Your name, O Yahweh God of hosts.”

Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is full of expressions of devotion to God and to His Word. Cornel read the first forty verses of that psalm today. You know it's much longer than that. There are many repeated statements of the psalmist's hunger for the Word of God. These are some of the words that capture the esteem that that psalmist holds the Word of God in. The psalmist claims to treasure God's Word, to rejoice in it, to muse upon it, to delight in it. He clings to the Word. He longs for it. He trusts in it. He seeks it. He loves it.

And we're to have that same craving, that abiding love for the Word of God. That's the command. It's also the promised means of our sanctification. We're to gain our spiritual nourishment from the Word as a baby gains nourishment from milk. “Long for the pure milk of the word.” Note again, it's a command. Look at it there. First Peter 2:2: “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word.” It's imperative in it. Do you see the intensity of it? We're to crave the Word in the same way that a baby craves milk. Do we have any babies here today? Raise your hand if you're a baby. Oh, lots of hands back there behind that window. If you've ever—well, let's look at the language Peter uses here, and we'll understand the analogy. Because Peter uses some very emphatic language here to communicate that these are little babies. These are newborns. The noun there translated as “babies,” it can mean a preborn child or an infant child. It's used of preborn John the Baptist. It's used of Jesus in the manger as a baby. But he adds an adjective there, *newborn*. Peter really wants to clarify this means a brand-new, just-born baby. This word is only found here, and it specifically means “just born.” It's “now born,” a newborn baby. So Peter is specific. It's not a preborn baby that doesn't yet have a desire for milk. It's not like a six-month-old baby who may be interested in other foods. This is a newborn baby with only one interest. So if you've ever been around a just-born baby, you know this is characteristic of newborn babies: they want to eat. That's what they want, and they want milk. Nothing else is going to satisfy them. You could offer them your favorite food. You could offer them a T-bone steak, you could offer them a crab leg. Nothing. Right? You could give them a gold bar, a stack of money. No interest. I think some of the babies here might be interested in Bitcoin at a very

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young age, but even that is probably going to pale in comparison to milk. They want milk. If you want your baby to quiet down, you give them milk. That's what they want.

The children of God are to have that same extreme, single-minded longing for the Word of God. That's what we're commanded here. We're commanded to have that longing. As newborn babies long for physical milk, we are to long for the pure milk of the Word. We have to have this powerful, all-consuming, intense desire for one thing above all, the same way a newborn baby longs for this one thing. We're to long for the pure milk of the Word.

Now that phrase, “of the word,” it deserves a little bit of attention and clarification. You may have different translations for the word. You may have different translations for the word that is translated “of the word.” And yes, the word for today, kids, is *word*. So you should be doing pretty good. It's translated here as “of the word.” You may have “spiritual” or “reasonable,” something like that. And I'm treating it as a reference to the Word of God, the milk of the Word. I'm treating that as a reference to the Word of God, the Bible. That word—there's a word, a Greek word; it's *logikon*. It's translated here as “of the word.” You may have another translation. It's kind of important that we get to that because I'm claiming that this milk is a reference to the Word of God, as pertaining to God's Word.

And in context, we do know that. It is “of the word” in the sense of pertaining to God's Word, His communication, His reasoning with the world. It's His revealing His truth to humanity, God's communication of Himself to us, Holy Spirit to our human spirits. And we can tell that. Without going into the word itself, we can tell from our immediate context that it is God's Word that Peter's making an analogy to. Turn back to chapter 1, verses 22–25, the preceding context just before this.

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a love of the brothers without hypocrisy, fervently love one another from the heart.,

23 for you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For, “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off,

25 but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news. (1 Pet. 1:22–25 LSB)

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Do you see that? It's the Word of God which gives us our eternal life. It makes sense here that it's the Word of God that we ought to long for as the means of sanctifying us, of growing that life. That's the context. So we gain spiritual nourishment from the same source as that from which we gain spiritual life, the Word of God, especially the gospel. You see at the end of chapter 1, "the Word which was proclaimed to you as good news." That "good news" is our word for "gospel." OK, so all that's to say that we are safe to continue to interpret the analogy of the milk of the Word to be a reference to the Word of God.

OK, so Peter refers to that Word of God here as "pure." Do you see that? Pure. Crave the "pure milk of the word." What does that mean here? Why would he put it here? The word is *adolos*. *Adolos* is used only here in your Bible. There are other words that are translated "pure" in your Bible. If you look for the English word *pure*, you'll see it other places, but it's not this word. Those other words mean things like "clean" or "genuine" or "holy." This word *pure* means without deceit, without adulteration of any kind. It was used almost entirely of agricultural products like milk, and it meant unadulterated or unmixed. So in the context of physical milk, you can think of it as pure, being not skim milk. Nothing added to it or subtracted from it. It's just milk, pure milk, as close to its original form as possible. Some of you may think of it as raw milk. It's not changed. It's not added to or subtracted from.

So we're to long for the pure, unadulterated, genuine Word of God. What would that mean? Well, I don't have time to go through all that, right? You see, that's an entire sermon on its own. What does that mean for the Word to be pure? We're to crave, we're to long for, what we are to consume in our spirits is the Word of God unadulterated. The Word of God straight, unmixed. We're to consume God's Word in a condition as near to its pure, original form as possible.

So I hope you can see, without going into this in much detail, it has a lot to say about a lot of things. It has a lot to say about the translations that you use. It has a lot to say about the books that you read, the sermons that we preach, the teaching that we consume, videos and podcasts and all that stuff. We're to consume God's Word unadulterated and unmixed. That's what we're to crave. Not the musings of man that have a few Bible verses sprinkled in. We're to ingest no perversions, in other words, of the Word of God.

As newborn babies crave physical milk, so we as children of God are to long for the pure, unadulterated, unmixed milk of the Word. That's a command. That's the command.

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Long for God's Word, crave it. Desire it strongly, powerfully. We're commanded to want to consume the Word of God as if we would starve to death without it. That's the command. Now, I know some of you, you can't say that you have that craving. You can't say you have that kind of longing for God's Word like a baby craves milk. Now, others may be further along in this regard, but those who are spiritually mature, they understand their shortcomings even better, right? Nobody can say that they have this all-consuming, always-on desire, this irresistible longing for God's Word that Peter describes here. None of us can be satisfied with the degree or the consistency of our commitment to our love for God's Word. Aren't we all occasionally at least distracted in our reading? Aren't we? Aren't we sometimes deficient in our commitment to being regular in the Word and to doing what's necessary to carefully comprehend it? We all get tired, especially today. We all let our sinful flesh get the better of us at times, don't we? We let sin keep us away from the Word for a time or are less careful with it. We can let sin diminish our desire for the Word. There are times when it just doesn't fit into our busy lives. We had a lot to do today. It's not a priority today. We can find all sorts of reasons to give it a cursory glance, a dutiful glance, if anything at all. And I don't care who you are, I don't care what you think of yourself, none of us has this nailed. None of us crave the Word of God as a baby craves milk. We don't have that intensity and consistency always, OK?

We have a command here to long for God's Word. We can take it to heart. We can admit we don't have the longing to the degree or consistency that Peter commands here—the Holy Spirit commands. And we can use that as a reality check and say, “OK, let's now do what's necessary to grow in our love for God's Word.” Not going to stop there, right? That would leave you in nothing but despair. But the Word helps us with this longing. The Word itself helps us. Peter doesn't leave us with just the command. Look, he gives us a motivation to help us crave God's Word. Look, if you long for it, you'll be sanctified by it. Look at verse 2 again: “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.” That's the promise. There's a motivation there. Long for the pure milk of the Word. If you do that, you'll grow in respect to your salvation. Now, that's a strong focus of the book of 1 Peter, the sanctification of God's people, rising above the world. Peter explained in the book that our life on this earth is for the purpose of sanctification. That is 1 Peter in a nutshell. You can read that in chapter 1. You can listen to one of the prior eighteen messages on 1 Peter. If you really long for the pure milk of the Word, you can listen to all eighteen of them. We'll see. I don't think I could do that. You get the idea. In 1 Peter, it's all about

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sanctification. That is the point of the book. It's helping you to understand that the trials that are in this life, trials that are necessary and temporary, are working in us to demonstrate the genuineness of an invincible, God-given faith that will result in an inheritance that's already waiting for us. You see it—well, I don't have all of chapter 1 in front of me. A salvation that's ready to be revealed—that's promised as we go through even chapter 1.

Now here in chapter 2, verse 2, Peter tells us one of the means by which God sanctifies us. It's through His Word. And so we have to have a craving for the Word. We have to have a longing for the Word so that we grow in sanctification through it. Again, it makes sense in context. The Word that gave us life in the end of chapter 1, that is the same Word that gives us growth in that life. It's our source of nourishment, just as it's a source of life. Now this calls for a degree of discontent. If you remember the last few weeks, we've been learning a lot about contentment from Hebrews, being content with what you have. And the rationale for that contentment is what? Do you remember from last week? I know, it's not a Sunday school lesson, it's hard to—but I'm sure a lot of you remember. The continual companionship that we have with Christ. That's the source of our contentment. But Jim reminded us a few weeks ago that we also have to have a discontent. We have to have a discontent with our level of spiritual maturity. And that's what's called for here as well. We have to want to grow in sanctification. And as a means to that end, we long for the Word of God. It is the primary means of our sanctification.

If chapter 1 tells us that it is trials, that the trials of this life—the purpose of all of that is for our sanctification. Those trials are for our sanctification. Well, how is the Word also for our sanctification? Look, it doesn't do you any good to go through trials if you don't know how you are to respond to them. If you don't know the God in whose image you are supposed to be growing, it doesn't do you any good. It is the Word of God that teaches us how to respond properly. We have to know how we're to respond from the Word of God. We have to learn Him if we're going to grow to be like Him. And we can only do that through the Bible. That is the only means. That's the only revelation of God to man. OK, so that's our motivation to long for the pure milk of the Word. We want to please God. We want to become more mature. We want to be able to better handle a hand mic—that's not in the Bible; I made that part up to try to. . . But we want to be complete in our faith. And the only way to do that, the only way to accomplish growth, the only promise of growth comes to us through the Word.

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So let's back up to verse 1. And I know it starts with a conjunction. I know it starts with "therefore" in most translations. I'm going to pass over that right now, and we'll come back to it when we get to verse 3. There's a reason for that. The verb in verse 1 is a participle. It's translated here as "laying aside." You may have another translation. This has "laying aside." So it's an action that's assumed to have been done in the past. It's a prerequisite for the kind of longing that we're commanded to have. Do you see that? It takes the full force of a command for that reason. So even though it's not an imperative verb, it is a command because you have to have done this in order to fulfill the terms of the command. So we first must lay aside these five vices that are listed in verse 1. That's the only way we can then long for the pure milk of the Word. You see the vices: "all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander." I'm gonna go through these quickly. First the verb translated "laying aside," and then we'll see what all these vices mean.

To lay aside means to lay aside. Very simple translation. It means to set aside. Some of you may have "cast off," to place away from you. It's used in the New Testament nine times, seven of them very similar to this one. We'll look at those seven. But the other two are kind of instructive to help you understand what the verb means. It's used once of John the Baptist being cast into prison. He was laid aside into the prison. The other time was when, at the stoning of Stephen, when the people laid their cloaks aside, they laid them aside at the feet of a man named Saul. So you get the idea; it's laying aside.

Here are the six similar uses. We'll go through these quickly. They're all somewhat similar. In Romans, Paul says to "lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12). Similar to this. In Ephesians, we're told to lay aside "the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph. 4:22). We're told to lay aside falsehood (Eph. 4:25). In Colossians, we're commanded to "lay them all aside: wrath, anger, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth" (Col. 3:8). You remember Hebrews 12:1: "laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us." And then James 1:21, very similar to this one in 1 Peter: "Therefore, laying aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in gentleness receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." So in all of those verses, we're told to lay aside—and these are—I've read you all the usages of "lay aside" in the New Testament. Other than John the Baptist, other than the cloaks, we're told to lay aside what? In every instance, sin. We're told repeatedly to lay aside sin. In some of these passages, there are specific sins listed, but all of them are sufficiently general to tell us to lay aside sin. It's not like, oh, lay aside these, and we'll prioritize them, and we'll

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indulge these for a while while we work on these. There's none of that. It's a comprehensive casting off of sin, OK? That's the idea. The idea is casting off filthy garments. Get them off you.

So what are we to lay aside? Here are the five vices. First is “all malice.” In some of your Bibles, it will be “all evil” or “all wickedness.” In English, malice is an intent or desire to do evil toward another person. But the Greek word is actually broader than that. It includes all sorts of evil intent, whether that's directed at a person or not. And it's more than just intent, it's also action. So that's why it's often translated just as “wickedness” or “evil.” It's a general term for evil or wickedness.

Peter then gets more specific with the second vice listed. It's translated here as “deceit.” It's sometimes translated as “guile” or “trickery.” Now it's *dolos*. When we looked at “pure” a minute ago, it was *adolos*, the only difference being that prefix alpha, which is the negation. So this is the antonym, the opposite of that word translated “pure.” It means any deceitful means to hide the truth, especially to harm somebody else. But it most literally referred to the bait on a fishhook. That gives you an idea what deceit is, right? It's that alluring thing that really means harm. It was used of the manner in which the Lord was arrested, the kiss of a friend.

We're to lay aside all evil, including all deceit, and also the third vice listed, hypocrisy. We saw this in context—it's opposite in context, in 1 Peter 1:22. Cornel read, “a sincere love of the brothers.” I think that's how it reads in NASB. A sincere love of the brothers. In the LSB, it's “a love of the brothers without hypocrisy.” So that word *sincere* translated here “without hypocrisy,” it's again the antonym of this word here, *hypocrisy*. So it means to present yourself in a way that hides who you really are, who you are in secret. So as Christians, we know—don't we?—we know we are always before God. Remember that Latin phrase, *coram Deo*, “before the face of God.” We are always before the face of God. We know that He's our judge, He's our master, He's our king. We can't hide anything from Him, and He's the only one that matters. So hypocrisy is stupid, and it's pointless. It accomplishes nothing. It's difficult, it's frustrating. It's hard to remember how you're supposed to present yourself in one place versus how you are in another. It can cause you mental illness, it can cause you physical illness, but more importantly, hypocrisy dishonors God. It's a vice that we are commanded here to lay aside. I have to note, the noun *hypocrisy* is plural in the original language—hypocrisies. We're to lay aside all hypocrisies. The Spirit knows we're very capable of having more than one hypocrisy, right? We could show up with one mask here. We can have another

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with our families. We can have another at work. We can have another with a group of friends. We can have another when we're anonymous somewhere in a city, some other place. And then we can have another when we're alone in secret, right? We're to throw away all of those, stop hiding all of that evil activity and evil intent, stop being deceitful.

Look, there's—and this has meant a lot lately as we've had different counseling situations. Stop hiding. Stop hiding evil activity, stop pretending you're something you're not. You will be found out. Whether any human being ever finds you out, you will be found out. Stop. Let's deal with this thing now. We're never going to have the kind of love for one another that Peter described in chapter 1 if we aren't open and authentic and honest with one another about who we are. We can work together to overcome sin in your life, but we have to know that it exists.

We're also told to lay aside envy. It's another vice that's listed off in the New Testament list of vices. It's again plural here, envies or jealousies. That carries the idea of being energized by bitterness toward other people, having ill will. You want to bring someone else down to your level rather than raising yourself up to theirs. That's the idea. It's the opposite of being happy for somebody else's blessing. 1 Corinthians 13, the famous love chapter, that summarizes love. I think, if you just chose one of those phrases in 1 Corinthians 13—love doesn't seek its own. Remember that? That's the essence of Christian love. So for us to love that way, we have to lay aside envy, lay aside all envies, all malicious jealousies.

The last vice listed is slander or evil speaking. It's also plural, evil speakings or slanders. And it just means to prattle on in a negative way, to speak somebody down. It's evil speaking or evil babbling. So all of these have to be cast aside, laid aside. If you put all of them together, you put those five vices there in that verse together, you see a connection of thought from Peter's thought before, right? He's exhorting Christians to love one another fervently and from the heart. You see these sins would prevent that kind of love from flourishing in any body. All of these vices exalt the self. They're the opposite of the self-effacing, self-sacrificial love, that agape love that Peter commanded a few verses ago.

I want to move down to verse 3 now, but before we do that, I want to keep track of Peter's flow of thought because I've jumped back and forth a bit. Peter says let's be in the process of laying aside these vices so we can then have a growing craving to get to know God from His Word, so by that we can grow in sanctification as God intends for us. This is the purpose of our life. This is why we were decreed and why we were conceived.

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This is why we're in the circumstances we're in, whatever they are. He wants us to grow spiritually. In order to do that, we have to crave His Word, and in order to do that, we have to lay aside our sin. So if you are a Christian here today, you want that same thing. You want that. As believers in Christ, we want to be like Him. We want to grow in our spiritual maturity. In order to do that, you see there's some things you must do. You have to lay aside sin. You have to long for God's Word.

But how? Now, here's the big question: how? It's good to have commands and know what's expected of us, but how? How do we lay aside our sin? How do we crave the milk of the Word? What could change our very nature so that we could be at war with our sin and we could have this strong desire to get into God's Word? Am I just up here preaching a helpless moralism where you can just all walk out feeling bad about yourselves? Are we being commanded to do something impossible? How can we do it? What could change us? What could it be? Look at verse 3: "If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." We can't obey these commands, not by ourselves or our own power, of course we can't. Apart from the regenerating work of the gospel, apart from Christ, we can't do anything good. We know that. But because we've tasted the kindness of the Lord, because we've learned the gospel, because we've been converted, regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin. We've been made alive in union with Christ. We are different. Because of the gospel, we can lay aside sin and we can go after God. We can long to find Him in His Word. So verse 3 is the answer. It answers the question of how. It shows us the power. It shows us the change in us that enables us to obey these commands.

Peter's saying if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord, if you've learned of the kindness of God to you in the gospel, if you've been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as he says in chapter 1—that's the *if*. That's the important *if*. If you've never tasted the kindness of the Lord, none of this works. But like Peter, I'm assuming in my preaching today that the condition is true. I'm *assuming* that. I'm assuming that you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. Other translations reflect Peter's confidence in that by translating *if* as "since" or "because of" or "now that you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." I'm speaking to you as if you are a Christian. I am, as Peter did, assuming you have tasted the kindness of the Lord in the gospel. But that may not be true. I know for some of you that's not true. Well, if it isn't true for you, then none of the rest pertains to you. We'll get to you in verse 7 and 8 later on, not today. You'll have your time. But as an unregenerate person, you can't lay aside sin. You can't possibly long for the Word of God in the way that Peter means. You can't

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grow up into a salvation you've never known. So in order to participate in this upward path that he's talking about here, laying aside sin, craving the Word, growing in sanctification, you have to first taste the kindness of the Lord. You need to repent of your sins. You need to put your faith in Christ. You need to do that now, right now. There is never, ever going to be a better time than right this minute. And I'm not going to call you up. You can do it in your chair. Don't listen to the rest of this. Get right with God, and then this will pertain to you.

But Peter is assuming his readers are Christians. That's what I'm going to do. It's easy to see that's true. It's easy to see he's writing to believers. We see that throughout the book. You could look back to chapter 1, or you could just look ahead here in chapter 2, verse 7. Look at verse 7 of chapter 2. It makes it very clear. "This precious value, then, is for you who believe." He's writing to people who believe. Or look at verses 9 and 10; "But you are a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." There's no question, Peter's writing to people he considers to be Christians, to people who have tasted the kindness of the Lord and so are now willing and able to lay aside sin, to long for God's Word and to grow by it. That's you.

Now I've smuggled in an interpretation here—what it means to "taste the kindness of the Lord." Some of you may have caught that. I'm completely confident that this is a reference to conversion, to learning of the kindness of the Lord toward us in the imputation of His perfect life and in His atoning work on the cross. That is the kindness that Peter has in mind. While there's much kindness in God, much for which we could praise His goodness toward us—even unbelievers could—the pinnacle of His good acts toward us is in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. His kindness is in the gospel. It's in the good news of Christ, in the life and death and resurrection of Christ. He is the kindness, the goodness of God to us. The gospel is His great act of kindness. It's in the gospel that we learn of His kindness and we appreciate all of His other kindnesses toward us. In context, I think it's very apparent that's what Peter has in mind. Look at what follows immediately in chapter 2, verse 4. He refers to us as coming to Christ, the choice and precious living stone upon which the house of God is built. So it follows. Peter here, thinking of our conversion in verse 3, moves on to thinking about our coming to Christ, our growing in Him, this beautiful symbol of a building, and then he refers to us as a priesthood, as a family, as a nation.

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It's also apparent from the *therefore*. I skipped that. I passed over that earlier. Let's take a look at the *therefore* for a minute, back at the beginning of verse 1. *Therefore*—it's just a conjunction, but you know that it links up what's about to be said with what has recently been said, some point that was recently made. And I'm gonna show you that that *therefore* makes exactly the same assertion as verse 3. It's exactly the same. *Therefore* connects the laying aside of these sins, the craving for the pure milk of the Word, and the subsequent growth in sanctification to something that Peter had just declared. And what was that? Go back, look at verse 22, chapter 1. Peter's just commended his readers for sincere love for one another. He then commands them to fervently love one another from the heart. Then he gives them a rationale for that love. He gives them the reason why that love is a good investment. He directs them to the fact that the source of their eternal life is held in common by all of them. The source of eternal life is God, it comes from God. We have that life in common with Him and with one another. That's what makes love a good investment. So Peter refers to our common source of life as a seed. You see that in verse 23. He says that seed is God's Word. He points out the eternal nature of that Word in verses 23–25. He says it's living and enduring. He says it lives forever. And then he makes it a little more specific: “[that] which was proclaimed to you as good news,” emphasizing the gospel as that Word of God which gives life and sustains life.

OK, so that's the context we come out of. There were no chapter divisions, remember? We go right out of that into *therefore*. So because you are born again through this living and abiding Word of God, because you are that, lay aside these sins, now long for that Word of God, long for the pure milk of the Word, and so grow in respect to salvation. Same exact thing in verse 3. Since you have tasted the kindness of the Lord in the gospel, lay aside these sins, long for the pure milk of the Word, and so grow in respect to salvation.

Do you see in this—this is what you have to see in this. Do you see the transforming power of the gospel? We have here a command to lay aside sin. Apart from the gospel, is that an easy thing to do? It's an impossible thing to do, right? Apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit through the gospel. We were dead in our sins. Not a little sick. We were dead in our sins. We were slaves to sin, not followers. We were slaves to sin, totally depraved, totally unable. We have a command to long for God's Word. If you think laying aside sin is hard, this is a command to change your affections. This is a command to love something you don't, right? Apart from regeneration, the Word of God is meaningless, it's boring, it's nothing. If we don't believe it is God's Word, it's

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worth nothing. And yet, we're told to love it. We're told to love something. We're told to stop loving something we loved and to start loving something we don't. How could any of us obey commands like that? Lay aside my sin? I *loved* my sin. I was powerless against it. And it wasn't because I hated it. It's because I adored it. I loved it. Long for God's Word? Why? How can I long for that? How could I desire something I don't care about? How can God command a person to have a desire they don't have, to stop loving something they love, to start loving something they don't? It's impossible. It's impossible. That would be like telling a lame man to walk. It would be like telling a blind man to see or a deaf man to hear, telling a dead man to rise. That's exactly what it's like. Telling a storming wind to stop, telling a universe to just be. God does these things, and God who did all of these things is able to create a new creature out of you. He's able to cause that new person then to grow into His image. He is able to change your affections. He is able to remove your irresistible love for sin and to give you a love you never had before, a love for Him and for His Word. We love because He first loved us. We love Him, we love one another, and we love His Word because He first loved us. His love has changed us. And so our love has changed! By that same transforming power of that same gospel, you will continue to transform.

This is from a sermon of an eighteenth-century Scottish preacher named Ralph Erskine: "A rigid matter was the law, demanding brick, denying straw, but when with gospel tongue it sings, it bids me fly and gives me wings." You have heard and loved that empowering gospel. You're no longer commanded without the power to obey. You now have received the wings to fly, the power to obey. God's not telling you now to obey these commands out of your own ability, to gin up some sort of love for the Word of God. But instead He says to use the means available. Trust Him to change you through the sanctifying and regenerating work of the Spirit. Trust Him to do that in and through the Scriptures. But then, yes, in your trusting, yes, now strive. Make every effort. Work to live in obedience to every command that pertains to us.

So you see, it's the same power, the same eternal seed of the gospel that was able to convert you, to make you alive spiritually, that will continue to perfect you in sanctification. You can do this. First Thessalonians 4:3 says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." You want to know what God's will is? It's your sanctification. And God doesn't try to do His will. He isn't trying to sanctify you. He's just doing it. If you're a Christian, He is doing it. So by the power of God made yours through His gospel, lay aside your sin, long for the Word of God so that by it you may grow in your salvation.

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