

PETER #14 Growing by God's Word

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living & abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass & all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, & the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you. So [or “therefore”] put away all malice & all deceit & hypocrisy & envy & all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” [1 Peter 1:22 to 2:2]

I. **A Purified Person's Beginning** (1 Peter 1:22-25)

- A. Hearing God's good news preached (1 Pet. 1:25b)
- B. Obeying the truth of God's Word (1 Pet. 1:22a)
- C. Being born again through the living & abiding Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23 & 1:3)

Note: Believers were born anew through the *‘living & abiding word of God,’* meaning the whole of written Scripture but especially the saving message of the gospel. ESV

- 1. Not of perishable seed – born of the flesh, parents (Jn. 3:6a)
- 2. Of imperishable seed – born of the Spirit, God (Jn. 3:6b)
- 3. Metaphor (1 Pet. 1:24-25a) – flesh & grass/flower contrasted with God's Word

Note: Peter cites Isaiah 40:6, 8 to contrast the weakness of human flesh with the power of *the word of the Lord* that has granted new life to believers. ESV

D. Loving one another (1 Pet. 1:22b; 1 Jn. 3:14)

Note: Peter's call for his readers to *‘love one another’* is grounded in their conversion, which occurred when they were obedient to the *truth* (i.e., the gospel) & therefore were *purified* & cleansed. ESV

II. **A Purified Person's Continued Growth** (1 Pet. 2:1-3)

Note: Since Christians have been given new life by the Word of God, they are...to long for God's Word so that they will continue to grow in faith (2:1-3). ESV 1 Pet. 2:1 says “So...” or “Since, therefore...”

A. *‘Put away’* (or *‘put off’*) things that disrupt relationships & hinder growth (1 Pet. 2:1)

- 1. All malice or wickedness (an all-inclusive term) Reinecker
- 2. All deceit—the word come from a verb meaning ‘catch with bait’ (Reinecker)
- 3. Hypocrisy or pretense
- 4. Envy
- 5. All slander—speaking against someone, the verb means ‘to run down, to disparage’ (Reinecker)
- 6. Believers have the ability to put evil things away (Rom. 6:11, 14)

B. Long for the pure spiritual milk of God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2)

Note: *“Spiritual milk of the Word”* Greek adj.: *logikos*, that which pertains to a word. Possible renderings of the Greek phrase: (1) ‘of the word,’ hence some translations say ‘Long for the pure milk of the Word’ (2) ‘reasonable or ‘rational’ (3) ‘spiritual,’ hence the ESV renders “long for the pure *spiritual* milk.” This ESV rendering is more literal, “however, it seems hardly credible that Peter is not also consciously referring back to God's ‘word’ about which he is so concerned in 1 Pet. 1:22-25” (Kelly quoted by Reinecker)

- 1. *Like* newborn infants
- 2. **Note:** In comparing believers to *newborn infants*, Peter is **not saying that they are immature** in their faith but that all Christians are to be like infants in their longing for *‘pure spiritual milk,’* which likely refers to God's Word (cf. 1:23-25). “Spiritual” comes from Greek word, *logikos*, which echoes “word” (Greek: *logos*) of 1 Pet. 1:23. ESV
 - a. In 1 Peter 2:2 ‘infants’ is *not* an indicator of maturity as it is in 1 Cor. 3:2 & Heb. 5:12-13
 - b. *“I...could not address you as spiritual people, but as ...infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready”* (1 Cor. 3:1-2)
 - c. *“You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature ...”* (Heb. 5:12-14)

- d. **Note:** The above 2 Scriptures contrast ‘infants’ with ‘mature.’ But Peter is not doing that!
- e. This ‘infant’ metaphor in 1 Peter 2 applies to both younger & older believers
- 3. Crave or long for God’s pure Word
 - a. ‘Crave,’ long for, desire, --the verb indicates an intense desire directed towards an object (Reinecker) As in Psalm 42, “As a deer **pants** (or **longs for**) for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...” (Psa. 42:1-2) The Psalm ‘begins with a poignant expression of longing for God himself, using the image of thirst.’ ESV
 - b. A command—the verb “long for, crave, or desire” is active, imperative. It’s a command. Concerning this point John Piper wrote “The word for ‘long’ here is very simply the word ‘desire’—it’s a command to desire. What this means is that if you feel stuck because you don’t have the kind of spiritual desires that you should, this text says, You do not need to be stuck! It says, “Get them!—Get the desires you don’t have.” If you don’t desire the milk of the Word, start desiring it! Now, isn’t that amazing! A command to desire! A command to feel longings we do not feel. A command to feel desires we do not have. Is anything more contrary to spiritual fatalism than that? Fatalism says, ‘I can’t just create desires. If they’re not there, they’re not there. If I don’t feel things the way the psalmists seem to feel things when they say, “As a deer pants for the flowing streams so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psa. 42:1)—if I don’t feel that way toward God, then that’s that. I just don’t. I’m not like the psalmists.’ That’s what spiritual fatalism says. But God says (1 Pet. 2:2), “Desire the pure milk of the word!”...John Bunyan wrote a poem about the difference between the law & the gospel. It says: “Run, John, run, the law commands/ But gives us neither feet nor hands, / Far better news the gospel brings: / It bids us fly and gives us wings.” In the old covenant God gave commandments, but by and large [God] did not give the divine enablement that overcomes the deadness & depravity & rebellion of the heart. But in the new covenant...the gospel says, “Fly! You don’t have desires for the milk of the word? Well, have them.” What this says is that just as essential as having the desires for the Word that we are supposed to have is having the trust in God that he gives what He commands. If God says to desire, when we don’t desire, then we trust him that he must know something we don’t know. He must have some power we don’t have. There must be a way. That’s the opposite of spiritual fatalism. God commands it. So there must be a way. I will not settle for less than what God commands, even if it is a command to ‘fly, God gives wings.’... If God’s Word is powerful enough to create new Christians (thro’ new birth), then God’s Word is also powerful enough to create desire in languishing Christian souls. Don’t be a spiritual fatalist. The power at work within you—just to bring you to life—is like the power that raises the dead (Eph. 1:19-20). Can it not create desire just like it created you? Trust it. John Piper
 - c. “Therefore...long for...” (2:1-2) *Since You’ve Been Born Again by the Word...* John Piper says, “Notice that verse 1 begins with the word ‘therefore.’” What Peter is about to say is based on what just went before. What just went before was the tremendous statement (1:23) that we are born again (by God) through the Word of God. The point was that this Word is imperishable (v. 23) and that it’s living & active (v. 23) & that it’s not like grass & flowers that die but that it endures forever. So if you’ve been born again through this Word, then you will last forever. You are secure forever in the family of God, who caused you to be born again into that family. Therefore—since you have new life by God’s working & since you have confidence about the future—therefore (2:1), “putting aside all malice & all guile & hypocrisy & envy & all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word.” Since you’ve been born again by the Word of God, now long for the Word of God. Do you see the connection between the Word of God in 1:23–25? Born again by the Word...therefore long for the milk of the Word. If you began your life with the Word, sustain your life with the Word.” John Piper
 - d. ‘Pure’—unadulterated, uncontaminated, pure, without deceit (Reinecker)
 - e. Encouraging us to hunger for God’s Word in order to grow well

- f. Through the Word of God we taste that the Lord is good (1 Pet. 2:3)
 - g. **Note:** Christians will continue to long for the Word *if* they *have tasted that the Lord is good*, which they did in conversion. [*If* here has the sense of ‘since’—a condition assumed to be fulfilled.] Cf. Psalm 34:8—“*Oh, taste & see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.*” In writing this letter, Peter likely meditated at length upon Psalm 34, which is about the Lord delivering the righteous in their sufferings—a central topic in 1 Peter. The verb *taste* (Psalm 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:3), in the OT is commonly used in the literal sense, is a metaphor for personal experience; the NT uses the metaphor widely (e.g., John 8:52; Heb. 2:9; 6:4). ESV
 - h. Tasting God’s Word & the Lord’s goodness eliminates the negative elements (1 Pet. 2:1). John Piper writes “as our satisfaction in God’s goodness rises the controlling desires of malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, & slander are destroyed. And the reverse is true: as you resist them & lay them aside, desires for God grow stronger & more intense. Peter’s point is: don’t think that they can flourish in the same heart. Desire to taste & enjoy God’s kindness cannot flourish in the same heart with guile & hypocrisy. So fight against spiritual fatalism from both sides: fight to destroy...guile & hypocrisy; & fight to taste the Lord’s kindness in his Word.” J. Piper
 - i. Different ways to come to God’s Word:
 - 1) Read the Bible consistently
 - 2) Read the Bible prayerfully
 - 3) Study God’s Word
 - 4) Memorize God’s Word
 - 5) Devotions
 - 6) Meditate on God’s Word
 - 7) Sing God’s Word
 - 8) Google God’s Word
4. Carefully search & inquire in God’s Word (1 Pet. 1:10-12)
- “Concerning this salvation, the prophets...**searched & inquired carefully**, inquiring what...the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating...**they were serving** not themselves but **you**...things into which angels long to look.” (1 Pet. 1:10-12) **Comment:** Even though the OT prophets were serving the NT believers (not themselves) they still “*searched & inquired carefully/diligently*.” How much more should we, the NT believers, the direct beneficiaries, be motivated to ‘search & inquire’?
- C. Knowing & standing upon God’s promises in the Bible (2 Pet. 1:4, 19; 1 Pet. 1:25a)
- “God’s divine power has granted to us...his precious & very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...” (2 Pet. 1:3-4) **Note:** God has granted believers his *precious & great promises*...Through these promises they become *partakers* (Greek: *koinōnos*, “sharer, partaker”) *of the divine nature*. Believers never become part of God, but amazingly they share in his nature as they become increasingly like him. The “great promises” include those Peter identifies in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, especially the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in new power. They also include other promises such as likeness to God (2 Pet. 1:4; cf. 1 Jn. 3:2), Christ’s return (2 Pet. 3:4), eternal life...(1 Pet. 1:4), & more broadly, all the promises of Scripture that relate to the gift of new life. ESV
 - “We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns & the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19) **Note:** The truth about Jesus Christ is anchored in the prophetic Word of Scripture. The truth about Christ is based on the prophecies of Scripture, something even more certain than eyewitness testimony [including Peter’s]. Some understand the phrase, “*more fully confirmed*” as an affirmation that the OT prophetic writings are even more sure than Peter’s spectacular personal experience at the Transfiguration, thereby underscoring the complete reliability of written Scripture. Believers are admonished to *pay attention* to the certainty of Scripture’s *prophetic word*. ESV