

IV. Taste and See

October 12/14/15, 2020

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Aim: To apply the grace and hope of our salvation in loving our brothers and sisters in Christ and in desiring to grow in spiritual maturity through the Word of God.

Doriani: Peter used the same pattern of reasoning, which theologians have given the inelegant label ‘the indicative and the imperative.’ The phrase notes the way in which the apostles move from what *is* to what, logically, *ought to be*.... The indicative-imperative interplay governs most of 1 Peter 1. Earlier, Peter described the Godward responsibilities that the gospel creates. God’s elect should set their hope in God’s grace (1:13), be holy (1:16), and live in reverent fear (1:17). In this passage, Peter accents the manward responsibilities of the gospel. We love each other deeply (1:22) and put away all malice (2:1).

Helm: To put the force of Peter’s thought as clearly as possible: when you get a fresh start on life (see 1:3) and its connection to 1:23), love should happen (1:22-2:3).

A. The Eternal Word (1 Peter 1:22-25)

Gardner: Peter now returns to previous themes as he develops further the ideas of his readers living a different and holy life during their temporary stay on this earth. The contrast of what is perishable and imperishable appears for the third time. The idea of re-birth is again mentioned and there is further talk of obedience.

McKnight: Peter’s final exhortation is again rooted in the ‘before and after’ of conversion. Since you have been purified, love one another, because you have been born again.

Doriani: Love is both a feeling and a way of life. Peter says that the gospel both purifies the heart and teaches us to love. This challenges a common belief. Many Christians think of the gospel as the *starting point* of the Christian life, the first step in the journey, but something we can surpass in time. Yet the gospel isn’t the first step of many; it is the core of the faith, the hub of the wheel. The gospel is not for outsiders and beginners, something that insiders supersede as we grow in knowledge and obedience. No, the gospel is ‘the word of His grace, which can build you up’ (Acts 20:32; see also 20:24). Grace makes us strong. From it all action radiates.

1. Doing the Word (1:22)

a) Purified Souls (1:22a)

²²*Having purified your souls...*

Gardner: *You have purified yourselves by obeying the truth* takes us back to 1:2 where Peter spoke of ‘the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience.’ As Peter addresses these Christians, he sees on-going evidence that the Holy Spirit is a work in them as they seek to live pure lives. Since Peter says they *have purified* themselves, it seems that he is referring to the evidence that is already there, that reveals they are growing and maturing as Christians and are doing so *by obeying the truth*.

MacArthur: It was at salvation that believers received the capacity to demonstrate supernatural love (Rom. 5:5). When they evidence *obedience to the truth* (were saved), they also *purified* their *souls*. ‘Purified’ (*hāgnikotes*) is a perfect participle that describes a past action with

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continuing results. Not only did God cleans Christians' impure past (cp. 4:1-3; Heb. 9:22-23), He also gave them new capabilities for the present and future (2 Cor. 5:17; cp. Rom. 6:3-14; Col. 3:8-10; 2 Pe. 1:4-9)... On the surface, *purified* may seem to refer to a human work; on the contrary, it refers to a fully divine work (Ez. 36:25-27; cp. 1 Cor. 1:26, 30-32).

McKnight: The *foundation* for love that Peter builds on is that 'you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers.' Their purification was by means of the sprinkling (cp. 1:2; also Ex. 19:10; Acts 21:24, 26; 1 Jn. 3:3), and they responded to God by obeying the truth of the gospel (1:2, 14). The result of obeying the truth was that they were ushered into the realm of brotherly love.

Doriani: Religion says, 'If I obey, God will love me.' The gospel says, 'Because God loves me, I will obey.' When Peter says that *you have purified yourselves*, he uses a perfect participle, signifying that this purification is an ongoing state. By obeying the truth, the gospel, we are purified in a definitive way, even though we must yet grow into it. As Hebrews 10:14 notes, 'by one sacrifice [Jesus] has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.' To be made perfect forever is the definitive element; to be made holy is the progressive element. Both are true and essential, and both rest on the gospel.

Sproul: We usually think that purification of the soul takes place so that we will obey God, yet here, strikingly, the Apostle tells us that purification is not only *unto* obedience but also *by* obedience. The more our souls are involved in obedience, the greater the purification that occurs, and the more our souls are purified, the greater our obedience will be. This is not a vicious circle but a glorious circle by which obedience feeds purification and, symbiotically, purification feeds obedience.

b) Faithful Obedience (1:22b)

...by your obedience to the truth...

Doriani: The phrase *obeying the truth* is important. Peter does not say we obey a *command*; he says that we obey *the truth*. For Peter, 'the truth' is neither abstract nor general. In this setting, 'the truth' means 'the gospel.' The closest parallel to 1 Peter 1:22 is Galatians 5:7, where Paul tells the Galatians, 'You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from *obeying the truth*?' In the context of Galatians 5:1-6 and the entire epistle to the Galatians, 'the truth' means 'the gospel.' ... So when Peter declares that we purify ourselves *by obeying the truth*, he means that we purify ourselves when we believe the gospel, which is 'the word of truth' par excellence. All Scripture is God's true Word, yet within in it we find something that the apostles call '*the truth*' (1:22) and '*the word*' (1:25)... Elsewhere in the New Testament, to obey the truth is to believe it (e.g., Rom. 10:15b-16)... In short, every proclamation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus implies that the listener should trust and follow Him. Hence the apostles say that we should 'obey the gospel.'

MacArthur: In this passage, Peter assumed but did not refer to *faith*, which the New Testament so necessarily associates with salvation (1:9). But, along with the purging from sin that comes through saving faith (Acts 15:8-9), he did refer to the *obedience to the truth*, an inherent element of the faith that saves (cp. Jn. 3:36; Rom. 10:10; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 5:9; 11:1-34). So Peter did not overlook faith in relation to salvation; he merely defined faith (cp. 1:2)... Clearly *obedience* can be a New Testament synonym for 'faith.' ... Faith is not a human-initiated work of obedience (Eph. 2:8), but if genuinely given by God it will result in believers' regularly obeying

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the truth (cp. James 1:22-25; 2:14-26; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; 3:7-9, 24) and manifesting God's love to others (cp. 1 Jn. 2:10-11; 3:19-21, 14-17; 4:7-8, 16, 20).

Sproul: It is not enough simply to hear the truth. It is not enough even to recite the truth of the creeds. It is not enough to affirm our agreement with the propositions of the truth. Peter says there is a deeper step, which is to obey the truth. Such obedience happens through the Spirit. Peter is speaking here of that process of growth and development in the Christian life that we call 'sanctification,' which is dependent on the operation and energizing influence of the Holy Spirit. I will never obey the truth of God apart from the power, grace, and assistance of the Spirit.

c) *Sincere Love (1:22c)*

...for a sincere brotherly love...

Gardner: It is important for us to understand here, that Peter addresses people who obviously are already doing much of what he now urges upon them. That is seen in the next few words. They have obeyed the truth *so that*, or 'with the result that' they *have sincere love for the brothers*.

MacArthur: Christ sacrificed Himself for all who believe, and each certainly ought to be consumed with demonstrable gratitude to Him for that love, prompting each to manifest love to Him above what is natural. Beyond that love for the Savior is the mutual love shared with all others who have been rescued from eternal death. The apostle Peter calls it *sincere love of the brethren*.... At salvation, believers become members of Christ's body, the church, which then becomes the target for their new, Spirit-empowering capacity for love (Rom. 5:5; 1 Th. 4:9; 1 Jn. 3:14, 23; cp. Jn. 15:12; Phil. 1:9; 1 Jn. 3:18; 4:7-8; 5:1-2). This 'love of the brethren' (*philadelphia*) is to be 'sincere' (*anupokriton*, 'unhypocritical').... *Sincere love* is the prevailing standard for believers (Rom. 12:10; 2. Cor. 6:6; 8:8; Phil. 2:1-2; Heb. 13:1; 1 Jn. 3:11, 18), superseding all earthly limitations and considerations.

Dorani: Love has both emotional and volitional elements. We both *feel* love and *resolve* to love. Love is a result of conversion, since believers become members of God's loving family. Love is a way of life. It fulfills the law (Mt. 22:3-40). If we love others, we respect them, promote their lives, honor their property, tell them the truth, and seek their good, not their goods. Peter describes this love in three ways. First, it is sincere and deep affectionate, and heartfelt—earnest, unfeigned, and without pretense. Second, it is brotherly and filial, not calculating. It has no thought of gaining something in return. It is natural, when we help a brother, to be aware that the friend might return the favor in our own time of need. Indeed, James says that believers have a duty to assist their brothers and sister in the faith whenever any of them needs food or clothing. Yet genuine Christian love does not calculate a return on acts of kindness.

Sproul: The love of which Peter speaks is also fervent and accompanied by a pure heart. The Apostle is speaking of an extraordinary kind of love.... Everyone we meet is our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means treating him with care, kindness, and patience, as the good Samaritan did. It has very little to do with feelings of great warmth and affection. We can love our neighbor actively apart from any personal affection, but when we get beyond the neighborhood to the brotherhood, everything changes. Love of the brethren is to be done fervently with a pure heart.

Helm: The mark of the Christian life is love. And according to the text, our love is to be *sincere* and *earnest*. By that Peter means genuine. It must come from the heart. We must give ourselves fully to it.

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d) Earnest Love (1:22d)

...love one another earnestly from a pure heart...

Gardner: But still Peter commands that they should love *deeply, from the heart*. It is all too easy for Christians to give a nod towards love for their Christian brothers and sisters because they know they should, but sometimes that individual's heart may not be behind the action at all. Loving in a deep heartfelt way will indicate a person's true response to the Lord's grace. *Sincere* love is one free from false or self-centered motives and is the type of 'other'-centered love that becomes, in Scripture, a true marker of believing Christians.

MacArthur: The well-known New Testament verb *agapaō* expresses the ideal kind of *love*, that which is exercised by the will rather than emotion, not determined by the beauty or desirability of the object, but by the noble intention of the one who loves. 'Fervently' (*ektenōs*) is a physiological term meaning to stretch to the fullest limit of a muscle's capacity. Metaphorically, the word means to go all out, to reach the furthest extend of something (Lk. 22:44; Acts 12:5; cp. Acts 26:7)... Such strong love, however, does not derive from some external, legalistic requirement (cp. Ps. 40:8; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1). On the contrary, Peter told his readers that this love is an attitude compelled from within, *from the heart* (Pr. 4:23; Mt. 22:37-39; Eph. 4:32; 1 Tim. 1:5; cp. Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 13:8, 13; Gal. 5:14; 1 Th. 1:3; Heb. 6:10), because it is a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

McKnight: The word *deeply* (found also at 4:8) speaks of the effort required for that love, the depth of it for one another, and the duration of it (until the end). The word is frequently associated with characteristics of prayer: fervency, constancy, and effort (cp. Lk. 22:44; Acts 12:5). Peter expects his churches to be filled with people who love one another in that way, who try to understand one another, who give the other person the benefit of the doubt, and who reach out to others in the same love.... Peter wants churches filled with people who love one another and where intimacy is the inevitable result of being made holy by God's grace.

Dorani: Third, love is deep. The term translated 'deeply' can mean 'earnestly' or 'unremittingly.' The root is a verb that means 'stretch out' and can describe a man or animal running at full speed. Thus, love should be strenuous and enduring. Ideally, sincere, brotherly, and earnest love come together, and we gladly help each other in the hour of need. We stick with each other when the need lasts for weeks or months. We never begrudge of labor.

Sproul: The reason we have the capacity for this kind of brotherly and sisterly love in the body of Christ is that God has changed our hearts. He has caused us to be born anew so that what is not natural can be accomplished by the supernatural work that God performs upon our hearts.

2. Describing the Word (1:23-25)

a) The Power of the Word (1:23)

²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

(1) Rebirth (1:23a)

²³since you have been born again...

Gardner: Recalling what he has said about new birth in verse 2, Peter now points to this new birth as providing the great motivation to a living, real, and deep response of the whole person to

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the Lord. What Peter says here also reminds us that a true transformation takes place in all who are born anew. Of course they have to work at developing a heart that is ever more deeply revealing of their love for the Lord, but they do so with the indwelling Spirit's help.

MacArthur: Believers are to love one another to the fullest extent because it is consistent with new life in Christ.... It is almost as if Peter anticipated his readers' asking why they should love the way he had commanded them. He therefore told them they should be expected to love that way because they had *been born again*. The perfect tense of the participle *anagegennēmenoi* ('have been born again') emphasizes that the new birth occurs in the past, with ongoing results in the present. One of those results is that believers will show love for one another.

McKnight: Peter returns to the foundation of their love: their regeneration. The new birth gave them a new likeliness to a loving God and a new family, which had the characteristic and ability to love one another.

Dorani: Peter asserts that this gospel grants life.... Some Christians balk at the phrase *born again* because certain people use it as a shibboleth. The Greek could be translated 'born anew' (NRSV), but the concept is clear. By His Spirit, God grants His people a new and second life. The theological term for this is *regeneration*.

Sproul: *Regeneration* or *rebirth* is the result of the immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the human soul, once dead to the things of God but now quickened to new life. You are in Christ because the Spirit has raised you from spiritual death, quickened your soul and given you an affection for God that you did not have naturally. You were not given simply the potential for change; you have become a changed person. Regeneration is the beginning of the Christian life. It is a *monergistic* work, which means that only one person is involved in it. The only one who does the work of regeneration is God. You have no activity in it. You cannot make yourself born again. You cannot choose to be born again. You can do nothing to affect your regeneration, but from the instant of your regeneration, for the rest of your Christian life, that process is *synergistic*. It is a joint venture between you and God (Phil. 2:12-13).

(2) Seed (1:23b)

...not of perishable seed but of imperishable...

MacArthur: *Seed* represents the source of life. Everything that comes to life in the created order begins with a seed, the basic life source that initiates plant and animal existence. But nothing in the material world has the capacity to produce spiritual and eternal life. Thus God did not effect the new birth using *seed which is perishable*. On contrast to how an earthly father initiates human birth with his corruptible seed, God initiates the spiritual birth with an *imperishable* seed. Everything that grows from natural seeds is a sovereign creation of God (Gen. 1:11-12), but it all eventually dies (Is. 40:8; James 1:10-11).

McKnight: Their new birth came about by means of an *imperishable* seed; like the precious blood of Jesus (1:19), that seed was rooted in the living God and, because it was eternally effective (1:24-25a), gave them an ultimate foundation for loving one another deeply.

Sproul: Peter reminds us what is involved in having been reborn. We have been born again of a different kind of seed from that which customarily produces life, whether in humans, animals, or plants. Whether a seed that is thrown into the ground actually dies is a moot question that we will allow botanists to argue but to grow a lawn, the soil is first prepared before the seed is

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sown.... The seed by which we have been reborn is not from corruptible seed, the Apostle tells us, but from incorruptible seed. When God generates a soul to life and the Holy Spirit quickens that seed, it cannot perish. This is not a comparison; it is a contrast.

Helm: Like a seed, the Bible is alive. It contains within itself everything necessary for life.

(3) Word (1:23c)

...through the living and abiding word of God;

Gardner: Again Peter speaks of the permanence of the work that God has done in regeneration. The new birth has come about *through the living and enduring word of God*. God's word is *living* in the sense that it is active and produces a new spiritual life in those who believe. His word is also *enduring* and so eternal. It will continue to sustain and give life to each believer throughout eternity.

MacArthur: However, sinners born again of God's Spirit gain eternal life. That is because He uses the imperishable seed of *the living and enduring word of God* (cp. James 1:18).

Dorani: Peter's main interest is the gospel, yet he declares that scripture, which makes the gospel known, is imperishable, living, and enduring so that it will always have the power to give life.

Sproul: Peter goes on to say that all this occurs through the Spirit.... The word 'through' or 'by means of' is emphasized. The Word of God is alive. It pulsates with life. It is the very power of God, because that Word is energized by God Himself.

Helm: Life isn't the only natural result of God's Word. Peter is arguing here that love is as well.... The Word of God has intentions beyond giving life. God says, 'It will accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it' (Is. 55:10-11). And what is the full intention of God's Word? Isn't it that He would be made known in all His fullness? God, we know, is love. Therefore, the imperishable seed not only gives us life but gives us love. The activity of God's Word brings life. And the full intention of God's Word brings love. And all of this is because within the Word of God we gain Christ, who is both life and love.

b) *The Permanence of the Word (1:24-25a)*

²⁴for "All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,
and the flower falls,

²⁵but the word of the Lord remains forever."

Gardner: Peter turns to Isaiah 40:6-8 to make his point about the eternal effectiveness of God's life-giving word.... Peter uses Isaiah's prophetic words to show that, as the gospel is preached, the results are permanent and eternal. Since the word of the Lord *stands forever*, the new birth it has produced is also forever.

MacArthur: To strengthen his point, Peter quoted from Isaiah 40:6-8, which contains a familiar biblical principle about life's transience (cp. Job 14:1-2; Ps. 39:4; 103:15; Mt. 6:27, 30; James 4:14). *All flesh* refers to all humans and animals, and *grass* refers to the wild grass of the typical Middle Eastern countries. The phrase *glory like the flower of grass* denotes the beauty of that scenery in which colorful flowers (cp. Mt. 6:28-29) occasionally rise above the grass. So Peter

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noted that whether something is as common as *grass* or as uniquely lovely as a *flower*, it eventually *withers* or *falls off*—it dies. Human life is brief in this world. People pass away like dry grass under a withering east wind.... In Christ, however, whether people are common or uncommon, they will never deteriorate or die spiritually. Instead they are like *the word of the Lord* which *endures forever*.

McKnight: Humans and humanly crated things are like grass in that they will perish and vanish away. But the Word of God, planted in Christians, is eternal and grows in those same Christians to give them an eternal existence.

Dorani: The gospel is a special case of all Scripture, which, unlike humans, lives and endures forever. To this point, 1 Peter 1:24-25a quotes Isaiah 40:6-8.... Because Scripture is God's Word, it shares His attributes—it endures forever. Human life is, at best, like flowering grass, splendid for a season, but short-lived. The brevity of life could lead us to despair. Or it could take us to Woody Allen, who has often declared his trust or hope in 'the power of distraction.' That is, by attending to things such as the arts and comedy, we can forget that we must die. Or it could hear the grandiloquent atheist Bertrand Russell, who said, 'I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego shall survive.'

Helm: For Peter, this quote is proof for his point. He has been arguing that God's Word is eternal and capable of bringing forth life. And thus he turns to Isaiah 40 to prove it. The reference does more though. It contrasts our inability to *live and love* with that of God's ability to do both. While God's Word may be eternal, our flesh is not. We are temporal. We are here today and gone tomorrow. And as Psalm 103:16 reminds us, after we are gone, this place will remember us no more.

Sproul: Peter says that *the word of the LORD endures forever*. Two thousand years after he wrote those words, we assemble to study the Word that endures through all the criticism and hostility launched against it, proving thereby the poet's expression:

Hammer away, ye hostile hands;
Your hammers break; God's anvil stands.

c) *The Preaching of the Word (1:25b)*

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Gardner: When Isaiah spoke *the word of the Lord*, Peter says that the prophet was thinking of the gospel that one day would yet be preached in order to bring about the conversion of many.... The contrast in the quotation is between frail human beings (who live and then die like a flower in the field) and the word of the Lord that has produced new birth which never dies. And so Peter contemplates a people who are to live forever and eventually come into their imperishable inheritance (1:3-5).

MacArthur: That saving *word* is the gospel, as Peter's choice of words indicates. He uses *rhema* for 'word' (rather than the usual *logos*, for the more broad reference to Scripture), which denotes specific statements. 'Preached' is *euangelisthen*, from the same root word that means 'good news' or 'the gospel.' He is referring, then, to the particular message of the gospel, that scriptural truth which, when believed, is the *imperishable seed* producing new life that also *endures forever*.

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McKnight: This effect seed is, in fact, the sure word of God that they heard in the gospel that was preached to them.

Doriani: But the brevity of life does not drive Peter to despair. Although ‘all flesh is like grass,’ God and His Word stand forever. ‘And this,’ Peter continues, ‘is the word that was preached to you.’ Because we believe the gospel Word, because that Word unites us to the risen Lord, an imperishable and unfading inheritance, kept by God, awaits us (1:3-4, 9)... If renewed by the Spirit, he can taste life eternal.

B. The Edifying Word (1 Peter 2:1-3)

Gardner: Peter’s next command takes his demand for holiness and obedience a step further. Christians are born again, so it is as natural that Peter would think of *newborn babies*. Just as a human child *is* human yet must grow up to learn what that means and how to live as a human being, so these sanctified and chosen people *are* the Father’s children who must grow up and actively seek to demonstrate this in their lives. Called to be holy and to love their Christian family, they must throw off anything which would work against holiness and love.

McKnight: The grammar of 2:1-3 is as follows: an introductory participle *rid yourselves of...* is subordinate to the main verb *crave*, which itself does not appear until 2:2.... Thus, *crave pure spiritual milk* provides the central exhortation of this section.... 2:1 is a repetition of the exhortations and comments in 1:22-23, but at 2:1 the ideas are expressed in negative form. At 1:22-23 they were exhorted to ‘love one another deeply, from the heart,’ with a ‘sincere [brotherly] love’; here, they are told to get rid of the nasty and ugly things that make love impossible. This implies that the growth of 2:2 should likely be seen as ‘group growth,’ not individual growth; furthermore, such an understanding dovetails more neatly with what is exhorted in 2:4-5, where corporate development is at issue.

Doriani: The indicative-imperative structure continues to guide Peter’s commands in 2:1-3. In this case, however, the indicative comes last, in 2:3: ‘now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.’ Logically, however, our experience of the Lord’s goodness comes first. Because we know that God is good, we are good, and it must show in our attitudes and actions.

3. Put Off Malice (2:1)

¹*So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*

MacArthur: *Therefore* refers back to 1:23-25 and the ‘living and enduring word of God,’ ‘the seed which is...imperishable’—the gospel that produced the new birth.... *Therefore* was a concise reminder to Peter’s readers to remember that saving power of God’s Word in their lives as a basis for ongoing commitment to Scripture as the only power to live the Christian life.

McKnight: *Therefore*, Peter says—that is, because his readers have been born again through the word of the living God (1:23)—they must *crave pure spiritual milk*.

a) Put Away

Gardner: Just as how a person might throw off a coat when it gets too hot, Peter gives them some examples of the type of behavior and mindset that they must cast off.

MacArthur: Striving to eliminate sins is prerequisite to sustaining the desire for God’s Word. Clinging to sins drives one in the opposite direction from the truth that exposes and confronts sin

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and demands righteousness. Peter used an imperative participle to command his readers to get rid of the sins in their lives. The verb rendered ‘putting aside’ (*apothemenoi*) applied to any kind of rejection, and sometimes referred especially to stripping off soiled garments, which is the analogy Paul had in mind when he admonished the Colossians (Col. 3:8-9).

McKnight: In early Christian literature it was common to speak of Christians ‘stripping themselves’ of vices and ‘clothing themselves’ with virtues (cp. Rom. 13:12-14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:8-12; Heb. 13:1; James 1:21). This image draws a picture of bad habit that need to be eliminated and good habits that need to be developed. Peter contains only the ‘rid yourselves’ part.

Dorani: *Rid yourselves* of sin, Peter exhorts us in 2:1, using a verb (*apotithēmi*) often used when someone takes off or lays aside clothes (cp. Acts 7:58). When Peter says that we ‘rid’ ourselves (NIV) or ‘put away’ (ESV) these sins, he imagines our taking them off, as if they were soiled garments. The sins that Peter names are not the ‘gross vices of paganism’ but ‘community destroying vices’ so often tolerated by the church.

Sproul: The language he uses is that which describes a person undressing and putting his garments to the side. From a spiritual standpoint, Peter says we are to take the clothes of malice out of our soul, put them in the closet, and leave them there.

Helm: The things we are to *put away* have one thing in common. They all undo other people. They destroy relationships. In contrast, love builds others up; love strengthens relationships.

b) *All Malice*

MacArthur: *All* [is] used here three times to emphasize totality.... *All malice* is the first category of sin Peter lists. *Malice* (which in English has the idea in English of desiring to harm someone) is an all-inclusive word (*kakia*) for sin referring to general wickedness and baseness. Several other time in the NASB it is translated *malice* (Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Titus 3:3), but it is also rendered ‘trouble’ (Mt. 6:34) and ‘wickedness’ (Acts 8:22; James 1:21).

Gardner: He speaks rather generally as he says *all malice and all deceit*. The words refer to all kinds of evil intentions. Perhaps especially Peter is thinking about how these new Christians relate to their unbelieving friends, family members, and work acquaintances. They must not deliberately tell lies to people or mislead them or seek to injure anyone in what they do or say.

Dorani: *Malice* signifies evil or wickedness in the broadest possible sense, ill-will to all, perhaps for its own sake. Or it can signify the bad blood and nursing of grudges that seem to motivate some people.

Sproul: Because we have been born anew by a seed that cannot and will not perish, we ought therefore to lay aside all malice. Malice is the first thing that should disappear from the heart of a Christian.... Malice does not necessarily describe an action by which one person is injured by another. An injurious action might be a malicious action, but the term *malicious* indicates a desire to harm or injure.... Malice has to do with a desire in the heart, a purposeful desire to wound or hurt another person. Peter says that we have to put that aside.

Sproul: He said we are also to put away all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, or slander. I believe he gives us the whole followed by its parts. All that Peter lists here are examples of malice.

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c) *And All Deceit*

MacArthur: Second, believers are commanded to eliminate *all deceit*, a term (*dolos*) literally referring to ‘bait’ or a ‘fishhook.’ It denotes guile, dishonesty, falsehood, and treachery (2:22; 3:10; cp. Mk. 7:22-23; Jn. 1:47; Rom. 1:29; Acts 13:10).

Doriani: *Deceit*, like malice, is a wide-ranging vice. It includes all dishonesty, whether in words or deeds. Yet deceit and slander are both primarily sins of the tongue. When we deceive, we shade the truth, ordinarily to someone’s face.... The deceiver hides the truth.

Sproul: Deceitfulness is borne of malice. Deceit involves a definite attempt to distort, hide, or undermine the truth. It is done intentionally.

d) *And Hypocrisy*

MacArthur: Third, Peter lists *hypocrisy* (*hupokrisis*), which originally identified an actor who wore a mask. It refers to spiritual insincerity and pretense (cp. Ez. 33:31-32; Mt. 15:7-8 23:230-24; Lk. 18:11; 2 Cor. 5:12). The word describes any behavior that is not genuine or consistent with what one really believes or says he believes (Mt. 23:28; Mk. 12:15; Lk. 12:1; Rom. 12:9; Gal. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:2; James 3:17).

Gardner: Today *hypocrisy* is regarded by society as one of the great sins. Indeed, there are few sins which so tempt Christians. Saying one thing and doing another is so easy and regularly gives a bad name to Christians and the church community. Whether or not there is a deliberate attempt to pretend to be something they are not, Christians must strive to be who they say they are, and not pretend to be something they are not.

Doriani: *Hypocrisy* can also be translated ‘insincerity.’ While *hypocrisy* signifies deliberate deception in English, the Greek term does not necessarily have this sense. It includes ordinary inconsistency between belief and practice, between one’s inner and outer life. It includes self-deception as well as deception of others.

We are also to lay aside all hypocrisy. Jesus often described the Pharisees in terms of hypocrisy, which was in antiquity a kind of play acting or pretense. A hypocrite tries to deceive other people about his spiritual state. He pretends to be more righteous than he actually is. So, along with malice and deceitfulness, hypocrisy has to go.

e) *And Envy*

MacArthur: *Envy* (*phthonos*) defines the attitude of those who resent others’ prosperity (cp. Mt. 27:18; Rom. 1:29; Phil. 1:15; Titus 3:3). It often leads to grudges, bitterness, hatred, and conflict (cp. 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Tim. 6:4; James 3:16).

Gardner: *Envy* has always been an obvious sin ever since the days of Cain and Abel and yet again it is one that can overtake Christians before they have even realized it. Whether it is the envy of other people’s wealth and possessions when our thoughts should rather be on the ‘living inheritance,’ or envy of other people’s position and status in society, it reflects an altogether wrong attitude for a Christian. Envy unravels any possibility of love or holiness in life.

Doriani: Malice easily leads to *envy*, which is the gnawing sorrow we feel when someone else has something that we think we deserve. Immanuel Kant said that envy is a wretched vice because it hurts everyone. It torments the subject who envies, and it hopes to destroy the happiness of the one envied.... Envy is that rare state that brings no good to anyone. Vain as it

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is, almost everyone succumbs to envy at some point. The envious compare themselves to others and, for some perverse reason, always decide that they come up short.

Sproul: Christians must not be envious, because when we envy, we not only do violence to our neighbor, but we also do insult to God, who has given us the pearl of great price. It is tragic that some Christians are envious of unbelievers. No matter what an unbeliever has—wealth, fame, position, status—it is not comparable to the unspeakable gift that God has given to us. We have no right to envy anyone. Setting aside envy goes a long way toward curing our lips from slandering others.

f) *And All Slander*

MacArthur: Lastly, Peter mentions *all slander* (*katalalias*), an onomatopoeic word designed to sound like the whispers and tattles reported behind someone's back in gossip and backbiting (2 Cor. 12:20). It referred essentially to defamation of character (cp. 2:12; 3:16; James 4:11).

Gardner: *Slander of every kind* is again a broad statement. It has to do with speaking ill of other people and is completely the opposite of the words of loving kindness that should be coming from a Christian's lips.

Doriani: Deceit and *slander* are both primarily sins of the tongue.... Slander is bald opposition to the truth, ordinarily behind someone's back.... The gossip sometimes tells the truth, but delivers it to the wrong people. The slanderer boldly lies, pretending to deliver the truth.

Sproul: The primary motivation for slandering people is jealousy or envy toward them. When we envy people, we tend to speak badly about them, and in doing that, we fail to love our neighbor.

g) *Summary*

Doriani: As we believers put off deceit, hypocrisy, and slander, we tell the truth more and more consistently. But we don't simply tell the truth, we speak the truth in love, we edify, and we strive to give grace to all who hear (Eph. 4:15, 29). If we must tell painful truths, we do so gently. If we must bring bad news, we take care not to wound or degrade anyone. If we tell a cheering truth, we shun boasting and flattery.

MacArthur: Peter's list of specific sins is not exhaustive, but certainly is representative of evil. In fact, the first term, *all malice*, could encompass all the sins so that his readers were called to confession and repentance. This clears the way for an unhindered desire for the truth of God.

Gardner: These words describe the life led by so many in Peter's world and our own. But the spiritually new-born, like children, should grow up to a maturity which sees them living holy lives that images the Lord they worship.

Doriani: The gospel liberates us from these sins. God pours His love into our hearts, displacing our malice, so that we can love others sincerely, from the heart (1:22). The gospel teaches us to confess our sins, and that drives out hypocrisy and deceit. Faith in the Lord liberates us from envy, since we know that He gives good gifts to His children (Lk.11:13). Envy is the opposite of grace, for it wants to grasp rather than to give. It is also the opposite of love, for the envious see nothing but their anguished desires.

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4. Long for Maturity (2:2)

²*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

Dorani: Grammatically speaking *crave pure spiritual milk* is the lone imperative in 2:1-3.

a) *Like Newborn Infants*

MacArthur: Believers need God’s truth like a baby needs milk. Peter compares the strength of that longing for divine revelation to the singular and dominant desire of *newborn babies* (*artigennēta brephē*) for their mother’s milk. Peter could have made his point just with the term *brephē*, but to underscore it he added the modifier *artigennēta*, which literally means ‘born just now.’ The two words identify an infant that has just emerged from its mother’s womb and is crying for milk from her breast. That sole and desperate hunger for milk is the newborn’s first expressed longing designed by God to correspond to their greatest need, and it illustrates how strongly believers ought to desire the Word. It is singular and relentless because life depends on it.

b) *Long for*

Gardner: Young babies often *crave...milk*. From the first time the new born baby gets a taste of her mother’s milk and knows that it is good, we almost immediately hear her screaming for the next feed. Feeding has to be regular and nourishing, and the result is a healthy growing child, maturing at incredible rates as she grows so quickly. This is Peter’s picture. Some of his readers have recently come to faith, and are children in the faith. But even those who were converted years ago still need to have the same attitude that craves this *pure spiritual milk*.

MacArthur: *Long for* (*epipothēsate*) is an imperative verb that commands believers to strongly desire or crave something... Its meaning encompasses such things as the strong desire a husband or wife has for a spouse, the strong physical craving that accompanies extreme hunger, the poignant longings one has for a deceased loved one, the intense desire a Christian parent has for a spiritually wayward child to repent and return to obedience, and the strong desires believers have for the salvation of an unbelieving family member or close friend. Those definitions each illustrate the kind of strong, consuming desire Peter wanted his readers to have for Scripture. None is stronger, however, than the desire a baby has for milk.

McKnight: While some have seen here a subtle hint that the readers of 1 Peter are young, immature Christians who need to be reminded to desire good things, it is more likely that Peter is referring to the *manner of their desire*. Their craving for spiritual nourishment should be like the cravings of nursing children for milk. When a church yearns for spiritual nourishment, that church will not be involved in bitter disputes with hypocritical showings or deceitful communications.

Sproul: Peter is not so much assuming that his audience is comprised of recent converts, who are, therefore, merely babes in Christ. The Bible does speak of new converts as being babes in terms of their spiritual progress, and there are other occasions when the Bible rebukes people who have been Christians for some time yet are still on a milk diet, not interested in chewing on the meat and the substance of the weightier things of God. The point Peter is making is that just as infants have a strong desire for milk, so the Christian, who is born of God, should have a similar thirst for the Word of God. When it is time for a baby to be fed, he will protest vociferously if the meal is even a few minutes delayed. The baby’s desire for his next bottle becomes a great

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passion. Peter says that we ought to desire the pure milk of the Word just like a baby does his bottle. You will not grow as a Christian unless you are nurtured by the Word of God. There is no substitute for that. We are to be people who, having been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, have a desire within our soul, a hunger and thirst, for the pure milk of the Word. No one has a great desire to drink spoiled milk; nothing is spit out of the mouth faster than a taste of milk that has become impure. We are to desire to be fed by a substance without impurities, which Peter describes in metaphorical terms as the Word of God.

McKnight: The meaning of this verse needs to be distinguished from what is said by Paul in 1 Cor. 3:2 and by the author of Hebrews at Heb. 5:12-14. Confusion has resulted from the identity of meaning because each of these authors uses the metaphor of drinking milk. Peter has in mind the desire characteristic of an infant when wanting milk; Paul has in mind the immaturity of the believer who can have only milk, as only babies drink milk, and the author of Hebrews has in mind an idea similar to Paul's. Milk is the first kind of food Christians drink, and then they mature to the point of eating meat. There is no suggestion in 1 Peter 2 that milk is food for immature Christians; rather, Peter praises the desire of infants and prays that his readers will have that same desire for spiritual things.

Dorani: Humans must take nourishment in order to grow. We crave God's milk and spiritual growth because we 'have tasted that the Lord is good' (v. 3). We don't crave 'religion' and its fantasy that we can earn God's favor if we keep the rules. Religion breeds pride and self-righteousness if we keep the rules, and self-loathing and despair if we cannot. But we crave God's truth and grace.

c) *Pure Spiritual Milk*

(1) Pure

MacArthur: Peter compares the object of their craving with *pure milk*. *Pure (adolos)* means unadulterated or uncontaminated and often referred to farm products such as grain, wine, vegetable oil, or in this instance *milk*. Believers are to crave what is unmixed and pure, that provides real sustenance, namely *the pure milk of the word*.

Dorani: Notice that Peter doesn't counter his list of vices—malice, deceit, and the rest—with a list of virtues for which we strive. Instead, he commands that we *desire* something, God's pure spiritual milk. That milk is pure (literally, 'undeceiving'). It has no corrupting errors or extraneous additions. Therefore, disciples desire God's truth as an infant longs for her mother's milk.

(2) Spiritual

'Of the word' translates *logikos*; however that rendering is not the usual translation of the term. In Romans 12:1 the NASB uses 'spiritual' to translate *logikos*. In that verse, other reliable English Bible versions render *logikos* 'reasonable' (cp. KJV; NKJV), a fact which demonstrates that one cannot be overly narrow concerning the word's meaning. Originally, *logikos* meant 'belonging to speech,' or 'belonging to reason,' which conveyed a sense of rationality and reasonability. If that meaning were applied to Peter's use of the word, translators would have rendered his phrase 'pure rational milk' or 'pure reasonable milk.' But the NASB translators here chose to render *logikos*, 'of the word,' because that adequately conveys Peter's intent to refer his readers to Scripture. The rabbis traditionally referred to God's law as milk and Psalms 19:8-9 and 119:140 say God's Word is pure and clean. Therefore, the translation 'pure milk of

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the word' is a legitimate, fair option that describes the Word as the source of pure spiritual milk for believers.

McKnight: It describes the spiritual nature of their craving as opposed to their former fleshly cravings (cp. 1:18; 2:11). As the 'word' through which they received a new birth (1:3) was from the living and abiding God (1:23), so now the word they are to desire is spiritual. The Greek word is not the normal (Pauline) term (*pneumatikos*) but is *logikos*. J.N.D. Kelly prefers the idea of 'wordy,' in the sense of 'milk of the word,' while F.J.A. Hord prefers the more classical meaning of 'rational;' the vast majority of scholars today, however, prefer 'spiritual.'

(3) Milk

Gardner: So what is this milk of which Peter speaks? The fact that he has been talking about the gospel 'that was preached to you' and the 'word of the Lord' which 'stands forever' indicates that it was the gospel of Jesus that is in the apostle's mind. But this gospel, as we have seen in the quotation from Isaiah, is what the Old Testament was also promoting and pointing to. Thus, we can more broadly say that all *Scripture* is in mind here.

McKnight: This does not refer to having home Bible studies or personal Bible study, or going to church and Sunday school classes, or to attending Christian colleges or seminaries. Rather ... *pure spiritual milk* refers to the very things that nourish the Christian community in its growth; knowledge of God, prayer, instruction in the gospel, faithful obedience, and hearing God's preached word. The desire for spiritual nourishment is the desire of any church that wants to know the Lord and live in light of His will.

d) *Grow Up Into Salvation*

Gardner: They should deliberately seek out food with an urgent desire to *grow up in their salvation*. That is, they need to grow up in their understanding of what it is to be someone who belongs to the Lord, whose sins have been forgiven, and who will one day see the revelation of the Lord Himself.

MacArthur: It is always sad to see a human being who is malnourished, weak, and retarded in development. But far sadder is seeing believers who are spiritually malnourished and underdeveloped. All believers should be motivated by the opportunity to grow strong and mature in Christ, enjoying greater blessing and usefulness. *May grow (auxēthēte)* is a passive verb, literally meaning 'it may grow you.' ... *In respect to salvation* is the obvious objective of believers' spiritual growth. The Word will grow them into the full, final expression of the sanctification aspect of their salvation.... Peter's exhortation for believers through the Word strongly implies the necessity of discontent with the present condition of spiritual development... Motivation for genuine spiritual growth arises out of a righteous sense of discontent, coupled with a sincere desire to be satisfied with nothing but the Word of God.

McKnight: Peter is not concerned here about 'church growth' in a numerical sense, but about the church, regardless of its numerical strength, becoming desirous of spiritual nourishment and spiritual growth.... This spiritual growth is in the direction of *salvation*, and for Peter that salvation is future (1:5, 9-10). Thus, what Peter has in mind here is essentially their 'hope' and perhaps their final vindication. That is, if they yearn for spiritual nourishment, they will grow into that final salvation that is being protected for them by God as they continue in the faith (1:4-5).

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Doriani: In the New Testament era, *milk* could be a metaphor for basic principles, foundational truths, taught to new converts (1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:13), or for any spiritual nourishment. It has everything that a new Christian needs that we may *grow up in* [our] *salvation*.

5. Taste the Lord (2:3)

³*if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

MacArthur: Peter's fifth perspective or motivation for desiring the Word of God echoes the psalmist's words, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good' (Ps. 34:8). *If* begins a conditional clause that explains the facts or conditions necessary for a proposition to be true. Since his readers had *tasted* or experienced *the kindness*—goodness and grace—*of the Lord* in their conversion, they already knew how blessed and wonderful it was. Therefore, they should have desired more of that goodness through feeding on His Word.

Gardner: They have *tasted that the Lord is good* (reminding us of Psalm 34:8, 'taste and see that the Lord is good.') ... Interestingly, though Peter urges people to desire the spiritual milk, which is the word, the quotation from Psalm 34 speaks of tasting 'the Lord'! In the gospel that was preached, as well as in the whole word of Scripture, we encounter none other than 'the Lord.'

McKnight: All of this is *founded* on the fact *that you have tasted that the Lord is good*. The psalmist exhorted his readers to 'taste and see that the LORD is good' (Ps. 34:8). Peter uses this text in his argument, contending that the foundation for spiritual craving is the fact that believers have already found spiritual nourishment to be good and tasty. Because the Lord Himself is spiritually satisfying (again, an allusion to conversion as the foundation of ethics' cp. Mt. 11:25-30), they are to focus their lives on spiritual nourishment and growth, for it is through this kind of development that they will attain their hope of salvation.

Doriani: The gospel breaks this cycle of sin so that we can put away sin. We put off sin and crave spiritual milk because we *have tasted that the Lord is good*. Although this is the last line in our passage, tasting God's goodness is the indicative that *logically* precedes all the imperatives. Because we have tasted—personally experienced—His goodness, we can rid ourselves of malice and envy, for example. God loves us and pours His love into our hearts; surely that should expel all malice toward others. And why should we envy others? 'The Lord is good,' and He will give us what we need, what is best for us.

Sproul: I indeed you have been born of God's Spirit, if indeed the Spirit has put a taste in your mouth for the things of God—apart from that, you can have no taste for spiritual things. The world around you does not care about spiritual things. Spiritual milk is not high on the world's list of dietary pleasures, but if you have tasted it, if you have tasted of the Lord, as the psalmist said, and know that He is good (Ps. 44:8), how can you taste of Christ and not want more? That is why, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled' (Mt. 5:6).

6. Application

Gardner: It is vital that we understand that the Lord and His word should not be seen as separate. In recent times, some Christians have been heard to say that we do not need to study Scripture so much, but rather we should get closer to the Lord Jesus. But this is a dangerously false dichotomy which is not found anywhere in the Bible. As we read the word of the Lord, we are brought close to Jesus. As we long to know Jesus better we find ourselves becoming immersed

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in the living and active word of the gospel. And the gospel is to be found through the whole of Scripture, a gospel that tells of our gracing and saving God. The word *pure* helps confirm that Peter is talking of Scripture, since the word of God is said to be perfect, pure, and eternal (e.g., 2 Sam. 22:31)... If we wish to grow spiritually in the way that Peter describes here, then Psalm 119:9-11 offers us a wonderful summary of what is involved.

MacArthur: Peter's simple analogy comparing a newborn baby craving for its mother's milk with a believer of any maturity level passionately longing for the Word of God concludes the apostle's series of exhortations that began at 1:13. First, as a result of their salvation, Christians are to respond to God by pursuing holiness (1:13-21). Second, believers must respond to others in the church by loving them as brothers and sisters in Christ (1:22-25). Finally, believers must respond to their essential need for the Word by continually desiring it (cp. Ps. 119:140-142).

For next time: Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.

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Lesson Summary

IV. Taste and See (1 Peter 1:22-2:3)

Aim: To apply the grace and hope of our salvation in loving our brothers and sisters in Christ and in desiring to grow in spiritual maturity through the Word of God.

A. The Eternal Word (1:22-25)

The key command in 1:22-25 is to ‘love one another earnestly from a pure heart’ – this is only possible by the life given to us by the eternal Word of God

1. Doing the Word (1:22)

- Our purification comes first through God’s work of regeneration
- Then through the ongoing process of sanctification whereby we live in faithful obedience to the truth of the gospel
- Obedience and purification (unto holiness) is a virtuous circle
- Christian love is an outcome of our ongoing sanctification
- Christian love is sincere (*anupokriton*, ‘unhypocritical’) & earnest (*ektenōs*, ‘fervent,’ ‘deep,’ from the heart)
- It is toward the brothers (*philadelphia*) and an act of the will, not emotion (*agapaō*)

2. Describing the Word (1:23-25)

- The Power of the Word (1:23) comes from rebirth or regeneration (cp. 1:2)
- Regeneration is *monergistic*; sanctification is *synergistic* (cp. Phil. 2:12-13)
- The Word give us life because it is an imperishable seed
- Because the Word is living and enduring, it produces enduring (eternal) spiritual life
- The Permanence of the Word (1:24-25a) is described in Is. 40:6-8
- The Preaching (*euangelisthen*) of the Word (*rhema*) (1:25b) is the way in which the imperishable seed of the Word was used to give us new life in Christ and empower us for lives of purification, obedience, and love

B. The Edifying Word (2:1-3)

The key command in 2:1-3 is to ‘long for...pure spiritual milk,’ that is to strongly desire the Word that edifies and enables spiritual maturity

1. Put Off Malice (2:1)

- *Put away* (*apotithēmi*) is a verb that pictures removing soiled clothing and discarding
- The list of sins is representative; they are the opposite of love (cp. 1:22)
- Malice (*kakia*); general wickedness and evil; desire to harm/injure others
- Deceit (*dolos*); guile, dishonesty; hide/undermine the truth
- Hypocrisy (*hupokrisis*); insincerity, pretense, playing a part, false religiosity
- Envy (*phthonos*); sinful desire for what others have; leads to bitterness, hatred
- Slander (*katalalias*); defamation of character

2. Long for Maturity (2:2)

- *Newborn infants* – focus is not on immaturity (cp. 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14, but on...)
- *Long for* (*epithēsate*) – strong craving, desire; as infants crave milk
- *Pure* (*adolos*); unadulterated or uncontaminated
- *Spiritual* (*logikos*); reasonable, logical, rational, spiritual, related to the Word
- *Milk*; the gospel, the word of God – gives us strength and maturity
- Goal or objective is to *group up into salvation*; i.e., become mature in our future hope

3. Taste the Lord (2:3)

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- ‘O taste and see that the Lord is good’ (Ps. 34:8)
- Verse 3 logically precedes vv. 1-2; it is because we have tasted and know the Lord is good (through our conversion), that we are motivated to *put away* sin and *long for* the Word that matures our faith and hope
- The Lord and His Word are inseparable

I Peter 1:22-2:3 consists of two paragraphs, each with a central exhortation that is based upon the salvation Christians have through the gospel, which Peter has previously described (1:2-12, 18-21). The first command is to *love one another earnestly from a pure heart* (1:23). The love Peter desires us is sincere, fervent, volitional, and from the heart. The power to carry out this exhortation does not spring from within; rather, it comes from the regeneration of our souls through the imperishable seed of the Word of God. The Spirit has applied that eternal, life-giving Word to our hearts through its proclamation. Having been reborn to new spiritual life, we are enabled to obey that Word of truth, resulting not only in the purification of our souls towards holiness, but in the enablement to carry out the command to love the brethren.

Because of the new birth, because we have tasted of the goodness of God’s salvation in our conversion, Peter’s second exhortation in 2:2 is to *long for the pure spiritual milk* of the Word of God, just as a newborn infant strongly desires her mother’s milk. The inclination of the converted heart is toward God and His Word, which is able to mature us in our faith, deepening our understanding of salvation and the hope of our future inheritance which awaits us. As we grown in maturity, we are to *put away* our former evil ways, including malice and its associated sins. Together, these two exhortations form a ‘virtuous circle’; our desiring of God and His Word leads us to greater holiness (purification) and obedience (including loving others and putting off evil). This glorious circle by which obedience feeds purification and, symbiotically, purification feeds obedience, is driven by the eternal, edifying Word of God.