

**Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 2:2-3** (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Crave Pure Spiritual Milk - For Growing Up And For Halting The Damaging Of Brotherly Love

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READ: 1 Peter 2:2-3, with vv.1:22 and 2:1 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has designed and intends that purifying ourselves is to result in us true believers living in holiness, serving God effectively, and possessing a deep sincere brotherly love for one another. (v.1:22)
  - - Due to the priceless gift of spiritual regeneration that we true believers have received, we are commanded and obligated by God to "therefore, rid ourselves" of the sins listed in verse 2:1.
  - - Sins, such as those listed in verse 2:1, that are engaged in by true believers in a church or ministry bring direct harm to those churches and ministries because they are counterproductive to and bring damage to the important foundational ministry dynamic of extending "love for one another deeply". (v.1:22)
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v.2 - READ

[Lesson Question: What does this section of verses 2:1-3 imply about the spiritual state of these believers, and the behavior characteristics of their actual spiritual maturity level?]

SECTION POINT: Believers, who engage in any of the sins described in verse 1, give direct evidence of their actual stunted and infantile spiritual maturity.

***immature***

- - Believers who behave in the sinful ways as listed in verse 2:1 are being declared here in verse 2:2 as still being very immature in the faith - "so that... you may grow up in your salvation".
- - - - In other words, conducting oneself in sinful manners such as those listed in verse 2:1, for examples, is a direct correlation to and indication of one's spiritual immaturity, therein resulting in stunting and inhibiting of one's spiritual growth so that progress has not been and is not being accomplished towards spiritual growth.
- - Since the moment in their life when they genuinely placed their faith in Christ, that He died on the cross to save them from the eternal punishment for their own sins, these sinful-behaving believers never progressed beyond the initial stage or spiritual condition of being infants in Christ.
- - This prolonged stunting and inhibiting in their spiritual growth is because they have been and are continuing to behave from natural "old self" sinful instincts rather than from "new self" Holy Spirit-empowered "righteous and holy" instincts. (Ephesians 4:22-24)
- - Achieving ongoing and substantial spiritual growth over time foundationally involves diligently pursuing God's righteousness and holiness in one's life - in other words, "craving pure spiritual milk".

- - Some believers do accomplish ongoing and substantial spiritual growth over time because they naturally "crave pure spiritual milk", which is a simple and basic God-given instinct that is given through the indwelling Holy Spirit to all believers when they initially get saved. (1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 4:24; Romans 5:5; 8:5)
- - Here in verse 2:2, however, the imperative is given to "crave pure spiritual milk", which implies that these immature believers instead naturally crave behaving in sinful ways, promoting their particular personal agenda through "malice / deceit / hypocrisy / envy / slander" rather than behaving in righteous ways, which includes promoting the benefit of other believers through the extending of "deep and sincere love". (vv.2:1; 1:22)
- - From the evidence, these immature believers are in some manner failing to "crave pure spiritual milk" - perhaps failing to desire it and consume it on a personal level, or failing to comprehensively apply it to their own life, or failing to properly interpret the Scriptures.
- - In effect, then, they corrupt or taint the "spiritual milk" that they consume, thereupon generating adverse consequences and outcomes everywhere they are, including in the ministries and churches they are in.
- - Yet, these sinful-behaving and immature believers probably think and in essence self-delude themselves into thinking that over the years they have progressed to now being spiritually mature, but God clearly declares here in verse 2:2 that they definitely **have not** progressed beyond being spiritually-immature infants in the faith.
- - These believers may even hold ministry positions of leadership or of teaching the Scriptures, but nevertheless God declares them to still be spiritual infants in the faith. (similar example: 1 Timothy 1:3-7)
- - Therefore, by implication, God has serious major problems and issues with their ministry service because of their sinful behaviors listed in verse 2:1, which in reality correspond with and proceed from their stunted and infantile spiritual maturity.

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[Lesson Question: Why is an analogy being made here that exhorts these believers (represented in verse 2:1) to behave like "newborn babies" do? Specifically, what are these believers to do that presumably they are not doing? Describe.]

**SECTION POINT:** Believers, who engage in any of the sins described in verse 2:1, give direct evidence that they are not appropriately feeding on God's written Word and consequently they are not maturing in the faith.

**"crave"**

- - All believers are instructed and even commanded to "crave" "pure spiritual milk" - the verb is in imperative form.
- - We are to set aside and extinguish whatever natural sinful desires that we have, and instead we are to "crave" or "intensely desire" what God has for us - "pure spiritual milk" - which furthermore incorporates into our pursuing and engaging in those ways of relating to our fellow believers as delineated in verse 1:22. (Strong's #1971 in v.2:2)
- - We are to "crave" the righteousness of God in our life - "like newborn babies", as if it is the only food we know and which keeps us alive, satisfies our hunger, and nurtures us in growing - having a comprehensive effect on all areas of our life, like milk does for newborn babies.
- - We are to "crave" "pure spiritual milk" - daily feeding on God's "pure" righteous written Word.

- - God is the only source for "pure" righteousness, so we have to be very careful and discerning in selecting advice on how to live, ensuring that it is directly and appropriately sourced from God, who recorded his righteousness in His written Word, for us humans to read and act upon accordingly.

- - When we drink, or take in, or consume the pure "milk", which is God's "pure" righteous written Word, like the newborn babies drink "milk" multiple times per day, we are daily exposed to specific ways in which God wants each of us to individually be completely transformed towards the righteousness that He offers.

### **"grow up"**

- - If we take to heart and genuinely conform ourselves to those specific ways of being transformed, then this will result in "growing up", making progress towards spiritual maturity - "so that by it".

- - By implication, other approaches or courses of action do not accomplish this outcome of personally progressing in spiritual maturity, because they are **not** God's prescribed way, which is clearly specified here in verse 2:2.

- - We believers, who genuinely have "salvation", should want to do this - to grow up and mature in the faith - it comes natural by means of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit working together within our spiritual hearts to change our thinking and beliefs, which will then change our behaviors, words, and actions - resulting in transforming us from what we naturally are and into what God wants us to be. (Romans 12:2)

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### v.3 - READ

[Lesson Question: Why is the content of verse 2:3 a motivation to do what is mandated in verse 2:2? And, how do we do what is mandated in verse 2:1 along with what is mandated in verse 2:2 - both together?]

SECTION POINT: Because believers, who engage in any of the sins described in verse 2:1, have already experienced the "goodness of the Lord", they should continuously ensure the correctness of their thinking, words, and actions.

### **"taste"**

- - As a general dynamic that occurs subsequent to genuinely acquiring "salvation", true believers "taste", or take in, or consume the reality "that the Lord is good" - they "perceive" it, they "experience" it. (Strong's #H2938 in c.f. Psalms 34:8; Strong's #G1089 in 1 Peter 2:3)

- - Proceeding from the moment they get saved, new true believers "taste" "that the Lord is good", initially experiencing it from perhaps brief and limited encounters that result in reaping a few or some benefits, or enjoying some God-orchestrated relief, for examples. (cf. James 1:17)

- - In His gracious treatment of us, apparently the Lord even lavishes "goodness" and blessings on those of His children (His true believers) who are behaving in a significant sinful manner that in reality is substantially damaging His churches and ministries by destroying "deep and sincere brotherly love" within those ministries. (c.f. Ephesians 1:7-8; 1 Peter 2:3, 1:22; for explanation or clarification, see the previous sermon-or-lesson document "1 Peter 2:1 - Damaging Our Church / Ministry" on the website [www.BelieverAssist.com](http://www.BelieverAssist.com))

- - Indeed, the Lord bestows upon these sinful-behaving and damage-causing believers actual and tangible and discernible experience of "tasting that the Lord is good". (v.2:3)

- - The goodness of the Lord is "profitable" - of benefit that is applied to the individual lives of true believers. (Zodhiates, p.1482)
- - Even sinful-behaving and damage-causing believers experience the "goodness of the Lord" in a distinct and personal way, but yet they continue in their brotherly-love-destroying ways despite the goodness that the Lord lavishes on them nonetheless.
- - "Now that" or 'considering that' sinful-behaving and damage-causing believers have already experienced the "goodness of the Lord" in a distinct and personal way, there is motivation, obligation, and inner compulsion from the Lord to act upon what He is prescribing and mandating here - to "rid yourselves of all" the sinfulness that is listed in verse 2:1, and to "crave" and apply to your life the "pure spiritual" righteousness as recorded in His written Word "so that you may grow up" in spiritual maturity.

### ***self-monitor***

- - To "crave" involves authentically implementing that righteousness of God within your thought-life, and within your speaking, and within your actions, which will then result in advancing towards a higher level of spiritual maturity, in which you are collaborating with God to create conditions that are conducive to maximizing the impact that your righteous words and actions have on other persons around you.
- - Acquiring and authentically implementing the righteousness of God in your life necessitates that the contrary corresponding sinfulness in your life is entirely extinguished, and not merely somewhat managed.
- - The sinfulness in your life does not disappear on its own; similarly the righteousness in your life does not appear and then dominate on its own.
- - You have to deliberately "rid yourself of" the sinfulness and deliberately "crave" the righteousness. (vv.2:1,2)
- - Ultimately, this 'ridding yourself of the sinfulness' and 'craving the righteousness' is a matter of choice, followed by a distinct and restrictive course of action that takes intentionality, work, determination, pursuit, and perseverance.
- - At its core, this 'ridding of / craving' course of action takes self-control, which is to develop a moment-by-moment continuous and daily ongoing personal inner monitoring awareness of your own thought-life and simultaneously likewise a continuous corrective critique of your inner thoughts, of the words that are coming out of your mouth, and of the actions that you are doing.
- - If we do not self-monitor with self-corrective-critique of our thoughts, our words, and our actions on a moment-by-moment continuous and daily basis, then we will not be successful in "ridding ourselves of all" of each of the sinful behaviors listed in verse 2:1 that damage ministries by destroying the brotherly love in ministries. (v.1:22)
- - If we do not actively and continuously strive to extinguish the engaging in the sinful behaviors, then likewise we will not be successful in "ridding ourselves of all" of each of the sinful behaviors listed in verse 2:1 that damage ministries by destroying the brotherly love in ministries. (v.1:22)
- - Therefore, in essence, an aspect of "growing up in your salvation" and becoming progressively and substantially more-and-more spiritually mature involves radically transforming from being a ministry damage-r to being a ministry nurturer, by means of transforming from being a spewer of "malice / deceit / hypocrisy / envy / slander" and etcetera to being a prolific spreader of "sincere and deep brotherly love" to all the people in the ministries that you attend. (vv.2:1; 1:22)
- - Ultimately it is your choice: to serve yourself by pursuing the gratifying of your sinful desires, which simultaneously damage ministries, or to serve the Lord by pursuing the

loving edifying of "your brothers", which simultaneously builds the effectiveness and attractiveness of ministries.

- - Within this consideration of contemplating whether you are going to serve yourself or serve the Lord, the Lord's way is the good way because "the Lord is good".
  - - You cannot serve both yourself and the Lord, because your natural cravings automatically incite you and propel you to engage in sinful and selfish behaviors such as those listed in verse 2:1 for examples, which are **not** "good" and which the Lord outright rejects and commands you to get "rid of" - totally, "all" of. (v.2:1)
  - - Your choice is one or the other, not both; you can serve yourself (who is naturally sinful and selfish) or you can serve the Lord (who is "good" to the perfect extreme).
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BIG IDEA: Believers, who engage in any of the sins described in verse 2:1, should instead "crave" and appropriately implement comprehensively in their life what God mandates in His written Word so that they "grow up" in the faith.

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#### IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - For all of you here who are true believers, is growing up in the faith a priority for you?
- - - - If not, then why not?
- - - - Are you in fact still a newborn baby in the faith, even after all these years or decades of being a true believer?
- - - - Does God consider you to still be spiritually immature?
- - - - Does God consider you to be inappropriate at times in how you regard and treat other brothers and sisters in the faith, which of course gives evidence to your spiritual immaturity and stunting in its growth?
- - - - According to the implications of this verse section 1:22-2:3 and with verse 1:17, what will your stagnation and failure to grow up in the faith get you on Judgment Day?
  
- - For those of you who assert that growing up in the faith is a priority for you, do your actions support your assertion right now that growing up in the faith is indeed a priority for you?
- - What efforts are you making to grow up in the faith?
- - What specifically have you been doing to grow up in the faith? Can you cite specific ways that you are pursuing this? And pursuing this consistently?
- - Do you genuinely "crave pure spiritual milk"? Daily? What specifically are you doing to fill this craving of pure spiritual milk? Essentially nothing? Or perhaps nothing substantial?
- - How significantly have you been growing up - maturing in the faith?
- - If you cannot distinctly measure this growth from year to year, then you are not growing!!
- - Likewise, if you have not completely and consistently "rid yourself of all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind", then you are not growing up in the faith!!
- - Whose responsibility is it for you to grow up in the faith?

- - For those of you who hold a position in the church or a ministry, do you have any closets in your life, so to speak, in which you have not yet cleaned out the last of the sinful garbage that remains in your life?
  - - Why not carve out some time to work on cleaning out that sin / those sins so that you will be more completely holy and spiritually mature, which lead to being more effectively usable by God?
  
  - - For those of you here who truthfully have essentially **no** "craving for pure spiritual milk", then from that evidence arises the legitimate and warranted question of whether or not you are actually saved.
  - - And if sins such as "malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, or slander" naturally 'gurgitate' within you and spew forth from you, then from that evidence likewise arises the legitimate and warranted question of whether or not you are actually saved.
  - - So if indeed you are not actually saved, then what do you think that will get you on Judgment Day?
  - - Do you think it would be wise to now fix this problem of your lack of possessing actual salvation, while you still can?
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - What implications does this "pure spiritual milk" have for the kind of teaching that should be conducted in churches and ministries? Should the Word of God be softened in its intensity or meaning? Or watered-down with humanism, sociology, or psychology? Or mixed with prattle such as glitzy stories that are in essence unconnected and irrelevant to the Scripture passage supposedly being taught?]
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