

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expositional Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 2:1-3**

### 14- Longing For Pure Milk by Tasting the Kindness of the Lord

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December 31, 2017

#### **1Peter 2:1-3**

**1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,**

**2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,**

**3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**

To the Glory of God

Charles Manson recently died at the age of 83. And for those, who don't know, this man was the motivation behind the brutal mass murder of nine people in California back in 1969. He was convicted in 1971, and spent the next 46 years in prison.

But, according to an interview back in the early 1990's, Manson said something that caught my attention. He said that his father, who routinely beat him, often called him names. He said his father told him he was "bad" and "no good", and that "he would never amount to anything". Manson said he could never remember being told he was loved or wanted, and he told the interviewer that these comments helped to form his life and that he strove every day to "live up" to his father's very low expectations.

Many modern psychologists jumped on Manson's statements as "proof" that a "bad" upbringing always produces "bad" people. The psychologists, as well as those opposed to the Death Penalty, point to statistics that *seem* to suggest that the way that grown people act is really not their fault, but they are simply "products of their environment".

Now, to a point, Christians believe this. Those, who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, understand that the way a child is raised has *enormous* impact on his life. That's why there is so much in the Bible about Marriage, and about how to teach and nurture children. And many of us, who have been parents, hope that God will use the way we raise our children to help bring them to Jesus at some point in their lives.

But we hold *that* Truth with *another* Truth that this world is broken, and that *all* humans born after the Fall are radically ruined with both the rebellious *nature* of Adam along with the *personal guilt* of his Sin. And every human on earth manifests his fallen condition in some way. So, we believe and teach something called "The Fall". And we hold to the Biblical Truth that all human beings are "fallen", and they are fallen not by what they "do". They "do" what they "do" precisely because they are already fallen. So, they are fallen at the moment of conception.

But, we also believe that very "bad" people, who have done really "bad" things, can change. Absolutely. And the proof of that reality are the people who sit in this Sanctuary this morning. Many of us are guilty of horrendous acts and terrible thoughts, and yet, God in His Mercy, has washed and redeemed us. So, we passionately believe and teach that hard-hearted men can become gentle. We believe that selfish and uncaring people can become giving and selfless. We believe that wicked and evil people can become godly and holy. We believe that people who loved darkness can begin to adore the Light of Truth, and that skeptics and agnostics can become devoted followers of Jesus Christ and see Him as the Treasure of the Universe.

And that's because we believe in a concept called "Salvation". And Salvation is very different from any other concept that people outside of Jesus Christ believe or even understand about how people can change. Because Salvation is *not* "self-help". It is *not* about using the power of Education combined with the means of Finances along with the blessing of Opportunity to affect Change in our own lives. It is *not* about "tapping into the power that lies within us". Salvation is not human beings "turning over a new leaf" or making "New Year's Resolutions". And it isn't even about us adopting a moral code to live by.

Biblical Salvation is the radical transformation of the human nature, from being fallen to being divine. And Salvation has a totally

*external* Source. It originates from *outside* of us. Salvation comes from Heaven, from the one God Who is manifested in His triune Persons. And Salvation comes from the external Word of God.

Because, since the Fall, it is not inherent anywhere in the human nature to either love or to obey God with joy. And that means that Salvation has nothing to do with human will or human choice. It has nothing to do with rubbing the two sticks together of human intellect and will-power to produce love for God.

And we believe in the beauty of Forgiveness, where, because of the Grace of God, the guilt of wicked, fallen sinners can be removed from them and imputed to Jesus. And when that happens, the evil that they did is removed, and the guilt of their acts is thrown into the depth of the sea.

So, many people both *inside* and *outside* of Jesus, believe that people can change. Yet there is a large group of people who, for one reason or another, don't believe that human beings can change. These people believe that what a person is right now, he will always be. That liars will always be liars, and that thieves will always be thieves, and that unfaithful people will always be unfaithful.

And sadly, a lot of people, inside the Church, believe that, too. And they believe that the way a person is right now, he will always be, even if he is saved. And they teach that drunkards will always be drunkards, and womanizers will always be womanizers, and that Salvation doesn't change that. And because they believe this, they seldom, if ever, expect people, who lay claim to be saved, to actually live as the Scriptures command that we live.

And this is called "Spiritual Fatalism". And Spiritual Fatalism not only deals with people and their behavior, it extends over into situations, as well. For example, according to Spiritual Fatalism, the situation that you're in right now will never change, the circumstances that surround you will always be there. You're suffering will never stop and your agony will never change.

But this is much more dangerous than some people simply being gloomy. Because Spiritual Fatalism is a great threat to Biblical Salvation and to our growth toward Sanctification. The belief or the feeling that you are stuck with the way you are, that *"this is all I will ever experience of God, the level of spiritual intensity that I now have is all I will ever have. Others may have strong desires after God and may*

*have deep experiences of personal pleasure in God, but I will never have those because . . . well, just because . . . I am not like that. That's not me."*

So, Spiritual Fatalism is a feeling that genetic forces and family forces, and the forces of my past experiences and present circumstances are just too strong to allow me to ever change and become more zealous for God (**Titus 2:14**), or more fervent (**Romans 12:12**), or more delighted in God (**Psalms 37:4**), or more hungry for fellowship with Christ (**John 6:35**), or more at home with spiritual things (**Romans 8:5**), more bold (**2Timothy 1:7**), or more constant or joyful (**Romans 12:12**), or hopeful (**1Peter 1:13**).

Spiritual Fatalism is very tragic when you see it in people in the Church. It leaves people stuck. It takes away hopes and dreams of change and growth. It squashes the excitement of living, which is growth. And so, it's tragic, because it's just wrong. It isn't true. It isn't what the Bible teaches. Believing that your circumstances will never change is as ridiculous as saying to a gawky little 13 year-old girl, who feels like her body is all out of proportion, *"Well that's just the way you are, and you will always be that way."* When, in fact, she is meant to grow and change. It would be terrible to convince a child like that about a sort of *"Physical Fatalism"*, that her growth has stopped right there at 13. And that is the way it is with the Spirit. Only Spiritual Fatalism is *infinitely* worse. Because infinitely *greater* things are at stake with our soul, and because we *never* do get to a point where we've arrived at the "final stature" of maturity in the Spirit like we do in our physical bodies.

Yet, tens of thousands of people live year after year without much passion for God or zeal for His Name or joy in His Presence or hope in His Promises or constancy in His Fellowship, and think, *"Well, that's just the way I am."* And they just settle in, like an adolescent who stops growing, and lives with pimples till he's 80.

Christians should entertain thoughts of the impossible when it comes to penetration into the most unlikely places and peoples in the world with the Message of Jesus Christ. Fatalism, based on a mere human trajectory of two thousand years, is impious. Ultimately, fatalistic thinking is unbelief in the Promise of Jesus, Who said:

## Mark 10:27

**With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.**

The main help in breaking the habit of fatalism is the book about God's superhuman Acts, called the Bible. But God ordains *other* books, too. And one of the values of being aware of these sorts of things, Philip Jenkins, of Penn State University, writes about in *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, is that it helps explode fatalistic thinking. Because just when you thought you knew how the Christian mission and the world would end, and were yawning toward Armageddon, along comes Jenkins with a story of the last one hundred years that makes you realize you must have already fallen asleep.

This book is mainly about the shift of visible Christianity (Christendom) from the Northern hemisphere to the Southern, from Europe and America to Africa, Asia, and South America.

Over the past century . . . the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. If we want to visualize a "typical" contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria, or in a Brazilian *favela*. As Kenyan scholar John Mbiti has observed:

"...the centers of the Church's universality [are] no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa and Manila." (p. 2)

Who would have thought that the most powerful influences for sane doctrinal faithfulness in the global Anglican Communion would come not from the evangelical resurgence of British evangelicals (as wonderful as that is), but from African bishops who regard so-called "homosexual marriage" (for example) as the oxymoron that it is?

Who would have thought that thirty or so conservative Episcopalian congregations physically located in North America would now technically be part of the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Rwanda?

Who would have thought that there would be twice as many Presbyterians today in South Korea as there are in the United States? Who would have thought that China would be one of the largest “Christian” nations. In 1949, China had only four million Christians. Today the number stands at about eighty-two million. That's over a twenty-fold increase, and is more than all the Roman Catholics in the United States. Former Beijing bureau chief for *Time* magazine, David Aikman, projects that within a few decades one-in-three Chinese could be Christian (*Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*).

Who would have thought that, as Mark Noll says in *Books and Culture* (March/April 2002),

“While European Christianity has become archaeology and North American Christianity hangs on as sociology, Christianity in ever-expanding sections of Africa, Latin America, and Asia is dynamic, life-transforming, and revolutionary—if often also wild, ill-informed, and undisciplined”?

And what utterly unforeseen things might the future hold? Lots of danger and lots more than danger. Here is one of Jenkins' speculations:

“The next 20 years or so could well be the worst and the most dangerous period. [But] all around the world, there's a major demographic change. Surprising areas are now experiencing the kind of demographic transition that Europe experienced 30 years ago, and fertility rates are declining very dramatically. For instance, just in the last 20 or 30 years, Iran has gone from six children per woman to two. In other words, the U. S. now has a higher fertility rate than Iran. Now that's of interest in its own right, but it also means that in 15 or 20 years, you're going to have far fewer young men of the sort who represent the violent, active militant groups. It's quite likely that there will be a decline of religious conflict. But in the intermediate time, it's a very dangerous situation indeed.” (*Christianity Today*, Nov. 2006 50/11, p. 103)

How can we not get on our knees with a fresh sense of trembling expectation and ask our prayer-hearing God for Christ-exalting, global impossibilities beyond anything the last one hundred years have seen?

Now, in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you, God, through the Apostle Peter, *commands* us not to be spiritual fatalists.

Peter says in verse 2:

**Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation**

... and the original Greek word for "**long**" here is very simply the word that is also translated elsewhere in the Bible as "*desire*". So, this is a Divine Command for believers to desire.

And what this means is that if you feel stuck because you don't have the kind of "spiritual desires" that you should, this verse screams out loud to you, "*You do not need to be stuck!*" It says, "*Cry aloud to Me about these desires, ask Me to visit you with these spiritual longings!*" So, if you do not now desire the milk of the Word, beg Jesus to come near to you and *grant* that which He commands that you do!

Now, isn't that strange? This is a Command to *desire*! This is a Command for us to experience longings that we do not now experience. It is a Command to have a desire that we don't have right now. So based on that, is anything more contrary to Spiritual Fatalism than the fact that Peter commands believers to experience what they do not possess at that point?

Fatalism says, "*I can't just create desires. If they're not there, then they're not ever going to be there. If I don't experience things the way the psalmists put them like,*

**Psalm 42:1**

**As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.**

*... if I don't experience that now, then that's that. I just don't. Evidently, I'm not like the psalmist.*" That's what Spiritual Fatalism says.

But Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to say:

**Long for the pure milk of the word**

Now before you raise all kinds of objections, like, "*How can you command me to have a desire? What can I do to obey a Command like that? How do I just produce a desire? My problem is that I don't have the strength of desire that I want. And so, you think that will all just*

*change by commanding me to desire? You might as well tell a lame man to walk!"*

Really? Can you imagine such a thing, someone like Peter *commanding* a lame man to walk? Who does that? Well, **The Acts 3:6** says:

**But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!"**

Now please notice that this was a *command*, not a *request*. And the next verse says that Peter was not even content with simply commanding a man, who had never learned to walk:

#### **The Acts 3:7**

**And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.**

Now **The Acts 3:2** says that this man had been lame “**from his mother’s womb**”. So, he had *never* walked. He had never taken a single step his entire life. This man had no idea what it was like to walk. And yet, after Peter *commanded* the man to do what was impossible for him to do, and then after he took him by the hand and raised him up, look what Dr. Luke wrote next:

#### **The Acts 3:8-10**

**8 With a leap he stood upright and *began* to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.**

**9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God;**

**10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to *beg* alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.**

No rehab, no crutches, no weak, wobbly legs trying to learn how to walk. No, this man not only walked, He leaped into the air! So, I dare you to try to justify Spiritual Fatalism to this man. But you just don’t understand my situation, Brother Blair. I simply can’t do what you’re asking me to do. You may as well command a lame man to fly? So, do you think God might command that?



Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century the great Puritan, John Bunyan wrote a poem. And it's one of the best statements I have ever heard about the difference between the Law and the Gospel. You'll see how it relates.

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 other words, under the Old Covenant, God gave Commandments, but by and large did not give the *Divine Enablement* that overcomes the deadness and depravity and rebellion of the heart. So, all the people had was human strength and will-power. And so, they failed. But under the infinitely superior New Covenant, which God set up at the Cross of Jesus Christ, God gives infinitely *harder* Commands, yea, *impossible* Commands, but He also gives the Power we need to fulfill them (**Romans 8:4-6**), through faith (**1Thessalonians 1:3; 2Thessalonians 1:11**).

Run, John, run, the Law commands  
But gives us neither feet nor hands

As believers, we are duty-bound to run, even though our feet are willfully frozen in the ice of sin. We can't run in ourselves, and so the Commands of the Law condemn us. But it is wrong to run into the safety of the Gospel, because you perceive that the Gospel has no Commands or that it makes no demands upon our lives. It does. Except the Commands and Demands of the Gospel are exponentially harder than the Commands of the Law. Because flying is much harder than running.

Far better news the Gospel brings:  
It bids us fly and gives us wings.

This is powerful deliverance from Spiritual Fatalism. The fatalist says, *"I can't fly. I can't even run. My feet are frozen in my genetic makeup and my dysfunctional family of origin. And besides that, I don't*

*have any wings. I cannot fly. That's the way I am and that's the way I will always be. I just can't do it."*

But over against that Fatalism, the Gospel says, "*Okay, so don't run, fly! You don't have desires for the milk of the Word right now? So, go to God and ask Him to give to you what He has already said was His Will. And you will not simply run, you will fly*"

What this verse 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 is eager to give that which He commands. And that means that the New Covenant is not merely a different set of Commands. God didn't save us by Grace through Faith only to give us a list of acceptable behavior, and then tell us, "*Now work real hard in yourself to try to work up enough strength to keep all of these Commands*". That would make us helpless to fail.

And if human beings were unable to keep the *lesser* Command of the Law to *run*, what makes us think that any of us can keep the *greater* Command to fly under the New Covenant? Why bring us to this place by His Grace only to abandon us to human effort and will-power now? How is that better than what we had under the Old Covenant? And how does that make the New Covenant "Good News"?

But if God commands us to desire, when we *don't* desire, when we *can't* desire, *especially* when we can't desire, then we have no option but to run to Him for help. Which is *exactly* what God wants. Christianity is not about us becoming super spiritual warriors who are always on top of everything and who never need any help. That kind of person doesn't exist. And people who think they are like that are simply deceiving themselves. The strong and dynamic Christian is the person who is *more* dependent on God than the person who just *thinks* he has it all together.

You see, dear friends, the common notion that being "strong in the Lord and the Power of His Might" means that you have no faults and that you instantly obey with perfect joy all the time, is a myth. No human being is like that. And anyone who thinks they are is deceived. And that really isn't Christianity anyway. That kind of thinking only produces self-righteous Pharisees.

More than anything else, God wants His children to depend on Him, to run to Him, to ask Him, to beg Him, to plead with Him, to trust

Him, to hope in Him. And God gets more glory out of that than He does with all of our perceived obedience and spiritual victories.

By commanding us to do what we simply cannot do, God forces us to trust Him that He must know something we don't know. He must have some Power we don't have. And that proves that there must be a way to obey. And that's the very *opposite* of Spiritual Fatalism. Since God has commanded it, there must be a way. So, I will not settle for less than what God commands, even if it is a command to fly.

One of the ultimate non-fatalist statements was made by Augustine some 1700 years ago. And anyone who enters into Reformed Theology knows it full well, because it is the very foundation of the concept of Grace. And it is deeply Biblical. In his *Confessions* (X, 40) he said:

“O love that ever burnest and art never quenched! O Charity, my God, enkindle me! Thou commandest continence. Grant what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt.”

This simple statement, “Grant what Thou Commandest and Command What thou Wilt”, set the world on fire and produced the greatest challenge to a Biblical understanding of Grace and Salvation the world has ever seen in the form of “Pelagianism”, which we would call today “Secular Humanism”. Augustine was saying that everything God requires *from* us, God must graciously provide *for* us, or we cannot do it. And this is fundamentally what “Grace” is, God giving to us what we do not deserve, so that we may do what He has commanded us to do.

So, Augustine understood what many today seem not to, that God does not simply command and then step aside to watch us struggle in our own power and strength to obey. That would be sadistic. But God always *graciously provides* that which He commands. And God set it up this way so that two things would be true:

1. God alone would get all the Glory.
2. No Man could boast in any of his accomplishments.

... not even our obedience!

So, if you believe that whatever God commanded you He expects you to obey, then you are a Pelagian and not a Christian. But if you

believe that it is your duty to obey, and yet you *cannot* obey unless He graciously *empowers* you to obey, and that because it is His Will He will most *assuredly* grant you that Power, then you are a Christian.

So, our prayers are to be for those things that God has already told us to do. We are to ask God to give us both the will (desire) and the ability (power) to obey the Commands that he gives us in His Word.

But we are not told to ask one time and then stop. Jesus said:

#### **Matthew 7:7-11**

**7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

**8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?**

**10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?**

**11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**

Now the verbs here are all in the "perfect tense" which means that the "asking" and the "seeking" and the "knocking" that Jesus is talking about are to be *ongoing*. So, as we *continue* to ask, as we *continue* to seek, as we *continue* to knock, the Promise from our King is that we *will* receive, and we *will* find, and the door *will be* opened to us.

That is the way you are supposed to pray and believe when you read **1Peter 2:2**:

#### **Long for the pure milk of the word.**

So, long for it! Desire it! But wait. You might say, "*I simply don't have that longing?*" That's okay. It is God, Who is revealing that absence to you. And the reason He has revealed to you what you do not have- is because He desires to give it to you! So, cry out to God and ask Him to provide you with that desire. Seek after that desire. Knock so the door of desiring will open to you. But never say, "*Well, I'm just this way. I don't desire the Word and that's just the way I am.*" Do not settle for Spiritual Fatalism. It is not God's Will for you.

Now notice that verse 1 begins with the word:

**"Therefore."**

And that means that what Peter is about to teach us is based on what he has already taught in the first Chapter. So, what did Peter already teach? What came before this Command to long for the pure milk of the Word was several earthshaking Biblical Truths:

**WHEREAS:**

- ✓ We were chosen according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father (verse 2)
- ✓ We were chosen by the sanctifying Work of God the Holy Spirit
- ✓ We were chosen so that we would obey Jesus Christ
- ✓ God the Father has *caused* us to be born again to a living Hope
- ✓ Our eternal Inheritance is Imperishable, Undeified, Unfading, and Reserved
- ✓ We are sovereignly protected by the Power of God through Faith
- ✓ We may rejoice, even in the worst kind of persecution
- ✓ The Proof of our Faith in Jesus Christ is more precious than gold
- ✓ This Proof will result in Praise and Glory and Honor when Jesus comes back
- ✓ We love Him even though we have not seen Him
- ✓ We greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory in the midst of suffering
- ✓ The Grace we have experienced is the same Grace that the OT Prophets foretold
- ✓ Angels desire to examine this great Salvation
- ✓ Because we have prepared our minds for action and because we keep sober in Spirit, we fix our Hope on the Grace that Jesus is bringing with Him
- ✓ As obedient children, we are no longer driven by the lusts that dominated us when we were lost
- ✓ We pursue Holiness on purpose to the same extent that God Himself is Holy
- ✓ Our heavenly Father is also our Judge
- ✓ We are to walk in reverential fear

- ✓ We were redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ
- ✓ Our Faith and Hope are in God
- ✓ We have purified our souls by fervently loving the brethren
- ✓ We have not been born again with imperishable things but with the living and enduring Word of God, which is imperishable
- ✓ We do not trust in Flowers and Grass, but in the Word of God which lives and abides forever

Now **THEREFORE:**

- ✓ We put aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,
- ✓ We long for the pure milk of the Word.

So, if you have been born again through this Word, then you will last forever. And you are secure forever in the Family of God Who sovereignly *caused* you to be born again into that Family.

And because that is true, because all that Peter said in Chapter 1 is true, and you have new Life by God's working, and since you have confidence about the future, now therefore, put aside all malice and all all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, and you now long for the pure milk of the Word

So, Peter is saying:

**Since you have 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 verses 23–25 and the Word of God in Chapter 2:2? You were born again by the Word, therefore long for the milk of the Word. So, if you *began* your new spiritual Life with the Word, *sustain* and *strengthen* this new Life with the Word.

Now, the NASB says:

**"milk of the word"**

... in verse 2. And this is an *explanation*, a *commentary*, and *not* a translation. Now I think that this explanation is a good one, but it is far

too limiting. Is "the spiritual milk" merely the "Word of God" in general, or is it something more specific *in* the Word? I think we have good reason to suggest that what Peter was actually saying here was not the Word of God in general, but something more specific. Here's why. Look again at verses 2&3:

**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.**

So, Peter is telling these scattered aliens to "long" (the way that babies do) for the pure milk of the Word so that by it (the Word) you may grow in respect to Salvation, since you have tasted the Kindness of the Lord.

So, do you see the connection between the intense "longing" or "craving" for the "spiritual milk" in verse 2 and the "tasting" of the Kindness of the Lord in verse 3? And when you put them together you get:

Long for the spiritual milk, since you've tasted the Kindness of the Lord.

So, it seems logical the "milk" here is *not* simply the "milk of God's Word", but the "milk of God's Kindness, that is found in His Word". And that is what we are commanded to long for. So, which is it, the milk of the Word (NASB), or the milk of God's Kindness?

But as we try to figure that out, we don't see any contradiction. And when we ask where the readers tasted the Kindness of the Lord, we find that the answer is:

**in the gospel, the Word of God (v. 25).**

So, they were born again by that Kindness through the Word of God. So, the "spiritual milk" is the Kindness of the Lord that is experienced *through* the Word of God *in* the miracle of the New Birth. Or you could say that the "spiritual milk" is the Word of God as it *reveals* or *transmits* the Kindness of the Lord by *causing* the New Birth.

So, yes, we were born again by the Word, specifically, by the powerful Kindness of God *in* that Word. And because that is true, we

should *go on* longing for that Word, and for the day-by-day experience of tasting the Kindness of the Lord through His Word!

So, if the Word of God is powerful enough to *create* new Christians (through New Birth) in the first place, then that very same Word of God is powerful enough to *create a desire* in those who are already saved that may, at times, become weak and languish.

So, don't be a Spiritual Fatalist. The Power that is constantly at work within you, to bring you to this new Life, is just like the Power that raises the dead (**Ephesians 1:19-20**). And since that is true, we can have full confidence that it can also *create* a desire in us that we may not have now. So, the same Power, that *created* us in Jesus Christ in the first place, is well able to *create* in us whatever may be lacking, so that we can *keep on* longing. And so, we must trust that. And to paraphrase Bunyan's poem:

Run, John, run, the Law commands  
But gives us neither feet nor hands,  
Far better news the Gospel states:  
It bids Desire and then creates.

But it also destroys. Verse 1 describes the destructive side of the Word of God.

**"Therefore, putting aside [get rid of/destroy] all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word."**

So, one of the ways the Word of God creates desire for the milk of God's Kindness through the Word is by *destroying* the desire we have for other things.

- ✓ **Malice:** a desire to hurt someone with words or deeds.
- ✓ **Deceit:** a desire to gain some advantage or preserve some position by deceiving others.
- ✓ **Hypocrisy:** a desire not to be known for what really is.
- ✓ **Envy:** a desire for some privilege or benefit that belongs to another with resentment that another has it and you don't.



- ✓ **Slander:** the desire for revenge and self-enhancement, often driven by the deeper desire to deflect attention from our own failings. The worse light we can put another in by slander, the less our own darkness shows.

Malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, these we must “put away” or destroy. This is the other side of longing for the spiritual milk of God's Kindness that is in His Word. If you want to experience a burning desire for God's Word, if you want that desire to grow, if you want to taste fully the Kindness of the Lord, we must realize that as our Satisfaction in God's Kindness grows and rises, the controlling desires of malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and slander are diminished and destroyed.

And the reverse is also true: as you resist these carnal lusts by the Power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as you seek very specific ways to literally lay them aside, the Promise of Scripture is that a desire for God will grow stronger and more intense.

So, Peter's point is this:

Don't think for a minute that a desire for God's Kindness in and through His Word and these carnal lusts can flourish in the same heart. They can't. It is “either/or”. It is one or the other. It will never be “both/and” A real, passionate, burning desire to taste and enjoy God's Kindness cannot and will not flourish in the same heart that embraces guile and hypocrisy.

So, we are told to fight against Spiritual Fatalism from both sides:

- ✓ Fight to destroy the desires of guile and hypocrisy.
- ✓ Fight to taste the Kindness of the Lord in His Word.

And the result will be:

**you will grow in respect to Salvation.**

... literally: **"you will grow into Salvation."** So, Salvation is reached by growth. And to be sure, God gives that growth (**1Peter 1:5; 1Corinthians 3:6**). But we must understand that spiritual growth is *mandatory*. So, fight against the Spiritual Fatalism that says, *"I can't grow, I can't*

*change, and I don't need to."* Throw that idea away like an old smelly garment, and seek God with all your heart for help in desiring His Word, and let us grow up together to Salvation.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.