

Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter as we continue our study through this epistle. We come to verses 1-3 of chapter 2. “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” Imagine for a moment that Islamic extremists suddenly took over the United States and because of their hatred for Christians, they began to torture and kill as they do in many parts of the world. Some of the people they are torturing and killing are your family members and friends, some perhaps in this room. Imagine for a moment that you are incarcerated and you knew that your own violent death was imminent. What would you wish to tell your family and your friends as you sit in some prison cell someplace, perhaps in another state? What would you want to tell other fellow believers that were scattered all over the United States and other parts of the world?

Maybe you would want to tell them how much you love them and how important it is for them to keep the faith. Maybe you would want to call them to arms to rise up against those who have brought such death and destruction upon our land. Well, this was precisely the context of Peter’s epistle here. You may recall that in the first twelve verses Peter has given us a doxology of praise because that’s what he wanted to share with his friends, his family members, brothers and sisters in Christ scattered abroad. He wanted to encourage them to first of all, contemplate the mysterious glories of their salvation, as spiritual aliens, to help them somehow transcend the difficult times they were experiencing, and to give them a better grasp of the triumphant hope that was theirs because of their salvation by reminding them that they were chosen, sanctified, sealed and blessed. He reminded them of the source of their salvation who was the heavenly Father who drew them, and of the power of their salvation which is that quickening power of the Holy Spirit that regenerates people and transforms them.

He reminded them of the promise of their salvation, the inheritance we have as believers and all that entails. And the certainty of our salvation, that it is an inheritance that is protected by the very power of God and therefore because of that living hope he wrote to them and said I want you to understand your inheritance and therefore live in light of eternity. I want you to live separate from the world, I want you to live with a reverential awe. Because of the magnificent redemption that is yours, I want you to remember that it’s important to live godly lives and to have an undying love for the brethren. That was the passion of the apostle’s heart as he sat in a cell awaiting his own death.

But he doesn’t stop there because he knows that these marvelous truths will lose their luster unless five key elements are nurtured in the lives of believers, and that’s what we want to look at today. There are five crucial virtues of the Christian life that cannot be emphasized strongly enough. Five marks of a mature saint that will not only help one

survive the tragedies of life, but will literally transcend them with victorious living. Let me give them to you and I will elaborate on them.

First of all we must celebrate our power source, which is the Word of God. Secondly, we must jettison our sin. Thirdly, we must acknowledge our desperate need for the Word of God. Fourthly, we must disapprove of our current spiritual level of maturity. Fifthly, we must learn to rejoice over past blessings. Indeed these were the central truths that sustained Peter in the midst of this great trial, in the final days before his own crucifixion. History tells us that his wife was crucified first, before him. He had to watch her die. And from reliable sources we know that he knelt before her cross and kept reciting to her, “Remember the Lord. Remember the Lord,” until she passed through the veil into eternity. Then he chose to be crucified upside-down because he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

And yet knowing the things that were facing him, this was his heart. This is what he wanted to share with his brothers and sisters in Christ. These were the noble virtues that he gave to them, and therefore to all of us, that can bring comfort, joy, strength and hope in times of need. I might also add that these are really the marks of a mature saint, the marks of saints who have persevered in their faith down through redemptive history.

So again, after extolling the marvelous aspects of their redemption and helping them understand that they now have an imperishable new life that is empowered by the equally imperishable, “word of the Lord that abides forever...which was preached to you” in chapter 1:25, then he says, “Therefore” in verse 1 of chapter 2. Here we come to the first category of what we would want to consider and that is that we need to learn to celebrate our power source. Therefore. In other words, he’s saying to them, in light of your miraculous, supernatural Holy Spirit-empowered new birth, that now you are a transformed new creature in Christ, because you have been, as he says in verse 23, “born again not of a seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding word of God.” Therefore, in light of the incomprehensible power source that you have from God through His Word, I’m going to ask you to do a few things. We’ll look at those in a moment.

But first, he’s saying in essence, “Won’t you join with me in celebrating the power source we have for Christian living both now and through eternity, namely the Word of the Lord that is revealed to us through Scripture? You must understand that if God had not revealed Himself to us in the Word we would never have been born again. We would merely grope around in the darkness of sin until someday we die, without life, without meaning, without hope. That’s why Jesus prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them in the truth, Thy Word is truth.” It is this Word that Paul spoke of when he said “(I am) not ashamed of the gospel of

Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.” The message of God carries with it the omnipotent power of God, the only power in heaven or earth that can overpower man’s sin nature and cause us to be born again. The only power that can generate the miracle of the new birth. The Word of God has the power to save as well as to sanctify.

I often go to Psalm 19:7-9 where the psalmist extols both the benefits and characteristics of Scripture. He says that the Word is perfect, meaning it is whole, complete, sufficient, restoring the soul. He says that the Word of God is sure, meaning that it is trustworthy, making wise the simple. He says that it is right, meaning that it is appropriate, fitting for every aspect of life, rejoicing the heart. He tells us that the Word of God is pure, utterly untainted by sin and it enlightens the eyes. He says it is clean, meaning that it is uncontaminated by any falsehood or error, enduring forever. And finally he says that it is true, righteous altogether.

You must understand that whenever the Lord reveals Himself through His Word, through its teaching and preaching and when we read it, the Spirit of God will inevitably unleash supernatural power upon that Word. He’s doing that even now in this room, as He will do when other people hear this message around the world through the internet and media. Because whenever the Word is preached we know from what God has said in His Word that it is going to accomplish one of two purposes. It will be the divine agent of sanctification or the divine agent of condemnation. It will either lead people to salvation and to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, or it will further seal them in their unbelief. The prophet Isaiah in chapter 55:10-11 said, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

It is for this reason that in the preaching of the Word there is no need for endless anecdotes and little stories. There’s no need for clever props and entertaining humor. There’s no need for multi-media presentations and some musical extravaganza to manipulate people so that somehow they might respond to the Word. There’s no need to integrate man-centered philosophies and the misguided tenets of psychology to tickle the ears of people with the message of Scripture. Dear friends, why taint purity with poison? All we need to do is unleash the Word of God and it will do precisely what God has promised that it will do.

In Hebrews 4:12-13 we read, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that “it transforms us from glory to glory.” In 2 Peter 3:18 we’re told that

the Word gives us “all things pertaining to life and godliness.” And in 2 Timothy 3:16 we’re told that the Word of God is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” We begin with this first concept that Peter writes to the spiritual aliens scattered abroad, and therefore to all of us, that we must begin, therefore, by celebrating the power source of the new life that we have in Christ.

In light of that he tells us, secondly, that we are to jettison our sin. Notice what he says in verse 1. He says, “...putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” This will be the natural response of anyone who truly celebrates the Word of God in his or her life. Putting aside, he says. In the original language it has the idea of jettisoning something, of rejecting something or throwing off or discarding. It was even used in other places in early Greek to describe the jettisoning of one’s filthy clothing. For example, you can imagine going down to lower Broad here in Nashville and you see some of the poor winos with the horrible clothing that they wear, that somehow stinks of every imaginable bacteria. Imagine if you could clean up that person and give them clean garments, and a bath, and then to think of that person going back and putting on those old rancid garments. How foolish that would be. It’s in light of this that Paul would say to us in Ephesians 4:22, “In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self,” which is the same verb in the original language—lay it aside, put it off, jettison that stuff. He says, “which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit...be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

We read in the New Testament that biblical change is always a two-fold process. It’s putting off and putting on. We are to strip off the old and put on the new. In fact, the apostle Paul used this very figure in Colossians 3:8-10. He says, “Put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self.” History records that in ancient baptisms many times people would emerge from the waters and go to a place and dispose of the old clothes and the church would furnish them new clothes that would symbolize putting aside the old filthy garments of the old life and donning the robes of righteousness of the new life.

Peter is saying here to put aside all the sins that might cause you to forfeit blessing in your life. That would be tantamount to putting on the filthy old garments of the old life. What are the things he mentions here that we should put aside? First he says all malice. This is a term that extends beyond the English definition of scheming to inflict injury or suffering upon someone, but rather it is a much broader term. It is the idea of putting off wickedness and evil in general. Therefore he’s saying that I want you to put off all wicked things in your life, all manner of ungodliness. Secondly, put off all guile. The verb literally is one

that means to catch something with bait. It's the idea of being deceitful, devious, duplicitous, where you say one thing but mean another. The idea of being dishonest, where you spin and misinform people to trick them into believing a lie. This is common among politicians or anyone trying to manipulate people. Put that off, all the guile, put it away.

Also all hypocrisy, the original language gives us the idea that this was a term used for actors wearing a mask. He's saying, put off the mask. Get rid of the masquerade. Get rid of the veneer of sincerity and spirituality. Quit trying to pretend you're something that you're not. Put aside the public show of religiosity to try to impress somebody with your spirituality. He also says put aside all envy. This was used in secular Greek to describe someone who would begrudge or resent another person for possessing something that they might long to have. As a result of that, it would cause you to develop a seething bitterness within your heart that would energize slander and outward hostilities. In other words, put that all aside, all of this jealousy that will lead to strife.

This is at the root of the third world's hatred of the United States. This is at the root of the Middle Eastern hatred of the West. For example, the Muslim people see us all as the great Satan. They see themselves as the people of God and yet they look at us and we live in prosperity and they live in poverty. We live, for the most part, in perpetual peace and they live in perpetual sectarian violence. They are, as many people are, as all unsaved people are, filled with malice, guile, hypocrisy and certainly envy. We see this especially in light of those many Arab and Muslim nations that want to destroy Israel, that lives with such enormous prosperity and military might. Think of the envy that is there. You've got twenty-two Arab countries with five million square miles and 144 million people aligned with one billion Muslims, and they are unable to conquer one tiny little country called Israel with a little over four million Jews. A great example of guile, of malice, of hypocrisy and certainly envy. We are all subject to that, and Peter is saying put it all aside, especially when you're suffering under the persecution of some other group of people. We see this as well in the church. It can be resentment and jealousy over someone else's gifts or privileges, or someone else's blessings. He's saying to put that all aside. So Peter speaks to us all and says, in essence, "As you celebrate the power source of the transforming, imperishable Word of God, put all of this sin aside, jettison your sin, confess it, forsake it, mortify your flesh."

Instead of that, he gives us a third consideration here, a third virtue. He says, "like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word." Said differently, and this would be my third point: acknowledge your desperate need for the Word. "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word." What a stark contrast here, going from depraved infidels to dependent infants. Going from selfishness to selflessness. Be like newborn babies. Literally in the original language it refers to a baby that is born just now, a newborn infant.

We've all seen newborn infants. I've had the joy of seeing my children born. I know what it looks like when they first enter the world. They are utterly helpless. They are utterly dependent. They are struggling to survive, and they are desperate for one thing: mother's milk. What a powerful analogy. What Peter is saying to the saints scattered abroad is this: even as a newborn infant has a natural instinct to desperately crave mother's milk, knowing that they cannot survive without it, so too, this is how you must be. You must acknowledge your desperate need for the Word.

The inspired apostle knows that the counterfeit milk of the enemy can be very tasty to infant Christians. It can spoil our appetite for pure milk, so therefore he commands that we are to be like newborn babies that "long for the pure milk of the word." 'Long' has the idea of a passionate, intense, insatiable craving for something, a consuming desire. But for what? The pure milk, meaning something that is without deceit, something that is unadulterated, something that is not contaminated, not polluted. In other words, he's implying here, "Don't crave for something that could be a polluted substitute. Crave the living and enduring Word of God that was preached to you" as he has mentioned earlier. "Long for the Word which is the supernatural source of your new birth."

It is so tragic, is it not, to look on television and even in our communities and see malnourished children. It is also tragic to see malnourished Christians. I find them very easy to spot. They will be Christians that will nurse on soft drinks, so to speak. They will enjoy eating spiritual junk food. They will enjoy listening to cotton candy sermonettes for Christianettes. This becomes their only nutrition. As a result, these types of Christians can be those who have little, if any, discernment. They will certainly not be able to grasp all that Peter has reminded them of in the first chapter here. They will not grasp the glories of their salvation. They will have no comprehension, yea they will even hate the doctrine of election. They will not understand what Peter has told them, that they need to celebrate because they are chosen, sanctified, sealed and blessed. They will not understand the source of their salvation being the Father that drew them, the power of their regeneration. They will not understand the promise of their eternal inheritance, nor will they rejoice in the certainty of their salvation which is reserved in heaven. Of course because of this, because of their poor diet, they will not be living in light of eternity. Nor will they live separate from the world, nor will they live in reverential awe, nor will they have an appreciation for the magnificence of their redemption that would cause them to long to live separate from the world, to live holy, obedient lifestyles. They're not going to have an undying love for the brethren.

Instead, they will be like those mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:3. "They will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth,

and will turn aside to myths.” They will be like those children that Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:14, children that are “tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” This is what happens when you refuse to acknowledge your desperate need for the Word. Satan knows how important the Word is, not only for salvation but for our sanctification. That’s why his primary assaults are on the Word of God. I think of this new movement that is spreading so rapidly around our country and the world, the emerging church. They believe that the Bible is unclear and that what we need to do is just enjoy the mystery of our confusion. Of course they therefore assume that God is unable to clearly communicate to His creation, and yet He will hold us accountable for that which we could never understand, which is ridiculous. They believe in what is called the hermeneutics of humility, which means that we need to be humble in our approach to Scripture because, after all, nobody really knows what it says. It is so unclear, nobody really knows what it means.

Dear friends, I would submit to you that this is arrogance of the worst sort. It is only unclear to those who are unsaved, for to them it is foolishness. And tragically, I believe that this is indicative of people who have been fed polluted milk. They have suckled at the breast of deception. They have no understanding of the glorious truths which Peter has given to us here in his first chapter, with respect to our salvation, with respect to the imperishable, living, abiding Word of God. Therefore they will have no discernment, no power to jettison sin, because without the Holy Spirit living within, there will be nothing to restrain the flesh, and of course for those kind of people, they will have no longing for the pure milk of the Word.

When I think of humility, I think of faithful saints who have shed their blood for the Word of God. I think of humble saints who spend many hours during the week meditating on the Word, praying with their Bibles open, rightly dividing the Word of truth. I believe that true humility occurs when men who are called and gifted and empowered by the Spirit of God—teaching shepherds—humble themselves in their studies. They try to rightly divide the Word of God, to be a workman that’s not ashamed. And then they will ascend the sacred desk and say to the people, “Thus saith the Lord.” Then humility carries on when the people of God preach to them, and by the power of that Word they commit themselves to holy living and glorify God in their lives.

Child of God, please hear this, for this is the Word of God. Our spiritual birth originated from the Word of God, and our spiritual survival and growth depends upon it. There is no substitute. Therefore we must not only celebrate our power source and jettison our sin, but also acknowledge our desperate need for the Word, and commit ourselves to a steady diet

of the Word, to feed on it every day. In verse 2 he says to do this, “like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

Here we come to the fourth virtue of maturity, necessary for not only surviving a wicked world of persecution and suffering, but literally transcending it with victorious hope. What is it? We must disapprove of our current level of spiritual maturity. “...long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.” The assumption being that you need to realize that you need to grow beyond where you’re at. Are you suspect of your own spirituality, or are you quite comfortable with where you’re at? If you’re quite comfortable with where you’re at, then you’re not growing, and there will be an increasing level of sin and immaturity that will begin to manifest itself in your life. Spiritual growth cannot occur apart from a sincere desire to grow.

The grammar here in this passive verb “may grow” literally means that it’s the Word of God that will grow you. In essence, he’s saying, “long for the pure milk of the word, so that it may grow you in respect to salvation.” Again, this is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that “we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.” There’s a metamorphosis that’s occurring within a believer and that occurs by the power of the Word. This is why Paul says in Romans 12:2 that we are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind and the idea of a metamorphosis. This metamorphosis will happen to you by the power of the Word, it’s not necessarily something that you are going to choose to do, but the Word will cause it to happen to you. That’s the power of the Word.

Peter emphasizes this same truth in 2 Peter 3:18 when he exhorts us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” But this will never happen unless you’re dissatisfied with your current level of spiritual maturity. I might also add that there’s an amazing thing about the Word. The more you devour the sincere milk of the Word, the more dissatisfied you will become with your own spiritual condition. Likewise, you must know that the polluted milk that Satan offers in so many ways, will make you feel great about yourself, will make you relish your current spiritual condition. I think of Philippians 3. Remember when Paul spoke of how he would gladly give up everything in life for a greater more noble and exhilarating goal, which was to know Him. Paul said oh, “that I may know Him.” Is this the passion of your heart?

Charles Spurgeon, that great English preacher of a century past, spoke to this very issue. I remember reading this quote some years back and I wanted to find it and share it with you. It’s a bit long but it’s something I think will speak to your heart as it did to mine, with respect to this whole issue of being dissatisfied with where you’re currently at, wanting to grow more, wanting to know the Lord more deeply, more intimately. Here’s what Spurgeon had to say.

“It is only the regenerated and saved man who can feel the desire, ‘That I may know him.’ Are you astonished that a saved man should have such a desire as this? A moment's reflection will remove your astonishment. Imagine for a moment that you are living in the age of the Roman emperors. You have been captured by Roman soldiers and dragged from your native country; you have been sold for a slave, stripped, whipped, branded, imprisoned, and treated with shameful cruelty. At last you are appointed to die in the amphitheatre, to make holiday for a tyrant. The populace assemble with delight.

There they are, tens of thousands of them, gazing down from the living sides of the capacious Colosseum. You stand alone, and naked, armed only with a single dagger—a poor defense against gigantic beasts. A ponderous door is drawn up by machinery, and forth there rushes the monarch of the forest—a huge lion; you must slay him or be torn to pieces. You are absolutely certain that the conflict is too stern for you, and that the sure result must and will be that those terrible teeth will grind your bones and drip with your blood. You tremble; your joints are loosed; you are paralyzed with fear, like the timid deer when the lion has dashed it to the ground.

But what is this? O wonder of mercy!—a deliverer appears. A great unknown leaps from among the gazing multitude, and confronts the savage monster. He quails not at the roaring of the devourer, but dashes upon him with terrible fury, till, like a whipped cur, the lion slinks towards his den, dragging himself along in pain and fear. The hero lifts you up, smiles into your bloodless face, whispers comfort in your ear, and bids you be of good courage, for you are free. Do you not think that there would arise at once in your heart a desire to know your deliverer?

As the guards conducted you into the open street, and you breathed the cool, fresh air, would not the first question be, ‘Who was my deliverer, that I may fall at his feet and bless him?’ You are not, however, informed, but instead of it you are gently led away to a noble mansion house, where your many wounds are washed and healed with salve of rarest power. You are clothed in sumptuous apparel; you are made to sit down at a feast; you eat and are satisfied; you rest upon the softest down. The next morning you are attended by servants who guard you from evil and minister to your good. Day after day, week after week, your wants are supplied. You live like a courtier. There is nothing that you can ask which you do not receive.

I am sure that your curiosity would grow more and more intense till it would ripen into an insatiable craving. You would scarcely neglect an opportunity of asking the servants, ‘Tell me, who does all this, who is my noble benefactor, for *I must know him?*’ ‘Well, but,’ they would say, ‘is it not enough for you that you are delivered from the lion?’ ‘Nay,’ say

you, ‘it is for that very reason that I pant to know *him*.’ ‘Your wants are richly supplied—why are you vexed by curiosity as to the hand which reaches you the boon? If your garment is worn out, there is another. Long before hunger oppresses you, the table is well loaded. What more do you want?’ But your reply is, ‘It is because I have no wants, that, therefore, my soul longs and yearns even to hungering and to thirsting, that I may know my generous loving friend.’

Suppose that as you wake up one morning...you are informed that this wondrous being has not only done for you what you have seen, but a thousand deeds of love which you did not see, which were higher and greater still as proofs of his affection. You are told that he was wounded, and imprisoned, and scourged for your sake, for he had a love to you so great, that death itself could not overcome it: you are informed that he is every moment occupied in your interests, because he has sworn by himself that where he is there you shall be; his honors you shall share, and of his happiness you shall be the crown.

Why, methinks you would say, ‘Tell me, any of you who know him, tell me who he is and what he is;’ and if they said, ‘But it is enough for you to know that he loves you, and to have daily proofs of his goodness,’ you would say, ‘No, these love-tokens increase my thirst. If ye see him, tell him I am sick of love. The flagons which he sends me, and the love-tokens which he gives me, they stay me for awhile with the assurance of his affection but they only impel me onward with the more unconquerable desire that I may know him. I must know him; I cannot live without knowing him. His goodness makes me thirst, and pant, and faint, and even die, that I may know him.’”

Oh, dear Christian, I must say to you that tears of discontent should stream down every cheek when we consider how little we know Him, and how tragic is the reality that so often our desire is not for Him but for the things of the world. Don’t you understand that in order to know Him we go to His Word? That’s where we hear His voice and commune with Him. That’s where we grow into a sweeter fellowship with the lover of our souls. That’s where He illumines our minds and hearts and encourages us and gives us a song in the night. How can we possibly be content with our current condition, knowing the infinite galaxies of His glory and grace that we have yet to behold? And yet we are content with our pitiful television sets and our romance novels and all the allurements of the world. We can see Him through His Word because He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. Or as John 1:1 says, “in the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And it is the Word of the living God that does this marvelous work. For as Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:12-13, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” Oh would that we all be appalled with the undeveloped and sickly appearance of our spiritual estate, and instead long therefore, for the pure milk of the Word, that it may grow us in respect to salvation.

In Psalm 119 there are forty benefits that are ours from meditating on God's Word. I will give you a few of them. The Word of God will bring God's blessing, enable you to imitate God, produce a clear conscience, produce thanksgiving to God, produce an obedient lifestyle, purify your life, give you counsel, enhance your wonder at God's wonders. It will strengthen you in time of grief, remove the false way from you, produce new understanding, produce reverence for God, comfort you in affliction, give you a hatred of evil, give you a song through life, guard you from panic, give you good discernment and knowledge, give you direction in your life, give joy to your heart. It will sustain you when you feel hopeless, cause you to fear God's judgments, bring a love for God's Word, bring conviction for sin, surround you with delight in spite of difficulty, develop the spiritual discipline of prayer, rescue you when you are defenseless, draw you back when you go astray and effect every aspect of your life.

Friends, is there any wonder why the Holy Spirit would speak through the inspired apostle and tell those suffering saints to "long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." And that ultimate salvation will be when we are in perfect conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. I ask you, do you long to hear the very voice of God through the Word? Do you long to know your savior more intimately? Do you perceive as the psalmist did that the Word of God is sweeter than the honeycomb? Do you want to ingest every morsel completely and immediately when you do feel the surge of supernatural insight and discernment and power? In time of trouble do you run to find your Bible, knowing that there is no other source on earth that can bring comfort and discernment? How precious is the saint that has a discerning palate for the truth, for the pure milk of the Word, who, as the psalmist says, "delights in the law of the Lord and in that law he or she meditates both day and night."

Such a person will want to grow in respect to salvation and Peter gives us one of the most powerful reasons for having this desire for the Word and the growth it produces. He gives it to us at the end of verse 3, "...if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." Here we arrive at the fifth and final mark of the mature saint. Not only must we celebrate the power source which is the Word, jettison our sin, acknowledge our desperate need for the Word and disapprove of our current level of spiritual maturity, but fifthly we must rejoice over past blessings. The grammar here helps us understand the term 'if' is the idea of 'since.' It's the if/then concept. Since we have tasted the sweetness of God's blessing, since we have been born again, since we have experienced in the past sweet communion in our secret devotion to God as we come into His very presence and enjoy Him as He ministers to us in fellowship, since He has proven Himself powerful on our behalf over and over again, since He has demonstrated His faithful love toward us, since His Word has given us enormous clarity and comfort and hope and joy in our life, because of all of this, naturally

we're going to want more of the same. If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. Oh, child of God, think of all of the ways you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. Think of that right now. Look at your family and your friends, your health, look at all that God has given us. And this is just a trifle, a sample of that which will be ours in glory someday.

I remember as a little child we used to sing in our Sunday school classes a little song, "Count your many blessings, see what God has done, count your many blessings, name them one by one." Maybe some of you remember that. See what God has done. If you have tasted of the kindness of the Lord, if you will count your many blessings, if you will think of all that He has given you, and realize that these marvelous blessings have come from the storehouse of divine love that is revealed to you through this Word, when you realize this, you will run back to that only source of nourishment and you will be like Jeremiah in chapter 15:16, "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts."

May this be the testimony of our heart. If this is the testimony of your heart, you will celebrate your power source, which is the Word of God. You will commit yourself to jettisoning and laying aside all those old filthy garments of sin that pollute the world. You will acknowledge your desperate need for the Word on a daily basis. You will be suspect of your spirituality, disapproving of your current level of spiritual maturity. And certainly you will rejoice over past blessings, and my, how many of them we have been given.

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