

1 Peter 1:13-2:3 "Harry Potter and Holiness"

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Date: 28 April 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

And just bow our heads in prayer. Father, lots of things in your Word are things that are easily mocked. We confess that sometimes we read things in your Word that if we were to tell them to our neighbors, they'd maybe make fun about us behind our back. And Father, we confess before you that sometimes that can make us a bit silent about things. But Father, we know that your Word is true, and it is good, and it is beautiful, and it is you talk about and give us exactly what we need.

So we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move deep within us so that your Word would come into us and would mold us and form us and change us and conform us to your character and your purposes.

And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Thank you. I'm not, I'm setting the stopwatch. I'm not checking my Instagram updates or anything like that, just so you know. So, I don't know, about a month or so ago, we had a, maybe two months ago now, I'm the chair of something called Dig and Delves. It's Dig and Delves. It's Ottawa's only apologetics ministry. And we sponsored an apologetics event on demonology. And part of it, the main part of it, of course, was just to talk about the beauty and the power and the wisdom of how the Bible, how Christianity understands angels and demons. But it was also partially to contrast what Christianity teaches with what Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and secular Canada thinks about such matters.

[3 : 0 3] And I was the fellow up at the front when there was a Q&A; time. And I had my mobile phone, and there's this thing called Slido. People would type in their questions. And I could look and see what the most popular question was. And I would tell the speaker the next question. And one of the questions was whether Christians should read Harry Potter novels. And so, I'm taking my life in my hands by mentioning this as a sermon illustration. And John gave, I thought, a very wise and helpful answer to it. And he asked me what I thought, and I basically said, ditto. Well, within a couple of weeks, we had two angry emails denouncing us as false teachers who are leading people astray, because we didn't categorically denounce the Harry Potter books and say all Christians should be forbidden from reading them. Sometimes you get very pleasant emails that just make your whole day.

Anyway, by the way, if it was from one of you or one of you online, I'm over it, by the way. But I think it was not a very Christian email. It's really funny when people send me or sometimes really un-Christian emails saying I'm being un-Christian. Like, I just sort of think, if you look in the mirror... Anyway, that's not the point of the sermon. Here's the point. I'm going to take my life in my hands. I'm going to talk about one of the reasons why Harry Potter novels and movies are very, very popular and touch into one of the deepest longings of all human lives, especially human souls in Canada today. And by the way, I'm not making any pro or negative comment about the books or the movies.

You can make up your own decision about that in, you know, with your parents and your spiritual advisors. But this gospel, the text we're looking at today directly talks about what makes Harry Potter novels work.

So let's read. I'm looking at 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 13 and following, if you can follow along in your Bibles. By the way, there's always some Bibles over here. If you come without a Bible, you can come and take one of these Bibles and take it home if you want as a gift or to give away to somebody else. Now, just before I start to read it, this is originally a letter that Peter was one of Jesus's closest disciples. He spent the full year, three plus years of Jesus's public ministry with him and was a leader of them. So he's an eyewitness to what Jesus did. In fact, not only is Peter an eyewitness, Peter would know whether Jesus snored. I mean, that's how close he was to Jesus. He would know whether Jesus snored.

If he had to go out to a restaurant to pick up some food, he'd know what the type of tabbouleh and hummus that Jesus liked. Like, that's how close he was to Jesus. Okay?

[5 : 57] And so this is a letter written about somewhere between the year 62, 63, 64, somewhere in there. It's written to a group of churches. It was a circular letter in churches which we now call Turkey. And Peter is going to die a martyr's death within a year or two of writing this letter.

And he's going to die a martyr's death because he proclaims that Jesus had risen from the dead. And that was an offense to the powers that be in the religions and the cultures of the day.

And so Peter is going to pay for his life this proclaiming of the truth of the resurrection. Anyway, that's the context. He's writing a letter of encouragement to these Christians in what we now call Turkey. And the letter continues like this. Verse 13.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, just sort of pause. A little bit of an important aside here about this. First of all, preparing your minds for action.

Some of you might have a little note there. It's a really interesting phrase. It says, girding up the loins of your mind. And it's an image. Just as I was leaving the service, there were a couple of Muslim men wearing clothes that went all the way down, like a big robe that went all the way down to their foot. If they had to run, they'd have to pick everything up and sort of hold it and run. And that's the image, that you get things dealt with in terms of your clothing and everything like that and be prepared to action. And that's what's being talked about.

[7 : 45] The other thing that's being talked about here in terms of hope is hope isn't optimism and hope isn't wishing. At least that's how the Bible understands it. So, you know, we might say that I sure hope that it's sunny all afternoon because I want to enjoy it when it's warm. But that's just a wish. Some of you might say, oh, it's going to be sunny this afternoon. That just means you're an optimist. I haven't lived in Ottawa for very long where the weather can change so quickly.

The biblical virtue of hope is very different. It's a growing confidence and trust in the promises of God. So I myself am not an optimist. My life would be easier if I was an optimist. I really think that. But I'm not an optimist. As you know, if I had a patron saint, it would be Puddle Glum, the Marsh Wiggle, who always thinks the worst things are going to happen but goes ahead and does what has to be done anyway. That's sort of almost like that sort of me to a T in lots of ways.

But you see, if you ever read the story about Puddle Glum, the Marsh Wiggle, he's definitely not an optimist. He's way off the scale and pessimism. But he believes the promises and acts on them. And that's what hope is about. It's hearing the promises of God and growing into a subtle conviction about them. So I'm going to read the verse again. Therefore, preparing your minds for action, verse 13, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So what that's saying is, listen, you're going to have bad things happen to you in your life. You're going to have good things happen to you in your life. You're going to have really, really hard times you live through and really, really sweet seasons where everything is going fantastic. You might get falsely accused.

You might have things that happen to you that you definitely don't deserve. You might have things that happen to you that you do deserve. All of us will grow old. And with growing old, there will be certain types of aches and pains and other things that go along with it.

But listen, amongst all of those things, it's more and more important that you set your hope, hope, this overarching hope on the fact that when you have given your life to Jesus, the final, your final end will be seeing Jesus face to face. That's the end of grace in your life, that you will see Jesus face to face. And when you see Jesus face to face, you will, in a sense, you close your eyes on death and you open your eyes in the new heaven and the new earth. And the first face you will see will be Jesus beaming at you with the biggest smile.

[10 : 24] That's your hope amongst the changes and chances of this fleeting world. Get your mind sober and get your mind set so you can put that as your overarching hope. It doesn't mean you can't have other smaller hopes, but that's the overarching hope that you, and whether that means you see Jesus at the moment of death, or if we are alive when Jesus returns and you see him face to face, it's exactly the same thing. And by the way, in the terms of the letter, this is sort of a verse that looks back and then looks forward to explain other types of things. And it goes on like this, because I'm still going to get to Harry Potter with this bit right here. Verse 14.

As Harry Potter, no, no, it's not in the Bible. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. Now, here's one of the...

I sometimes watch, I don't watch the whole comedy specials, but I sometimes watch comedy specials, especially by certain types of comedians. Those of you who are regular here will probably guess one of them, but the way I pronounce the name once, and it's only the way a certain comedian pronounced that person's name. But I can tell you this. If I was a stand-up comedian, and I wanted to come on this stage because it's a comedy show, and I wanted to get laughs, I'd come walking on out, and I'd stand here and say, I want to be holy. Everybody would laugh. No, no, that's my goal in life.

I want to be holy like God is holy. Everybody would laugh. Right? Saying you want to be holy is not what gathers a pleasant crowd around you at a party.

But it will sure get you talked about with sniggers and mockery. So here on one level, the Bible is telling you to do something that will make you mocked.

[12 : 32] But actually, all of the people who mock you long for it. Now, George, that's an outrageous claim. Canadians long to be holy? That's like, George, you're completely not really wrong. Well, listen to me.

What is one of the things that drives the Harry Potter novels that makes them so popular? I'll tell you. How does it begin?

Harry Potter is completely and utterly oppressed by his prayers that he doesn't get along with. They don't understand him. He has a very, very powerful sense that he's special. But all of the evidence is that he's not special.

And one day, an owl comes with a letter. And then other letters come. And then eventually, he discovers, you know what? I am special. Everybody around me is a muggle.

I'm a wizard. Not only am I a wizard, my parents are legendary wizards. And in fact, not only that, but I have this vocation to be the person who's going to help defeat Voldemort.

[13 : 46] Because my parents sent him back. I am not just an oppressed, bullied kid in my family where nobody likes me and they don't respect me.

I'm really special. I always knew I was special. And it's true. I am special. Now, if you think about it, that movie is wildly popular in our culture.

Going back a while, for Christians who've never read the Harry Potter novels, you've probably read the Narnia Chronicles. And if you've read the Narnia Chronicles, there's a story called The Horse and His Boy.

What is The Horse and His Boy all about? It begins with the main character. One of the main characters, the boy. And he's in a fishing village. And his dad is a guy that's not a very, very nice man.

And he feels constrained. He feels special. But he's completely hemmed in by everybody else who doesn't think he's special. And one day he meets a talking horse.

[14 : 45] It's the Narnia Chronicles. And by the end of the novel, he is special. In fact, he's the heir to the kingdom. He's the next king. He is special. What is the governing story for most Canadians?

What's the governing story? I'll look at Steve. Steve, you need to be your authentic self. I can't tell you what your authentic self is. If your parents try to tell you what your authentic self is, you don't listen to them.

If the church tells you what your authentic self is, don't listen to them. Only you can know your authentic self. You need to discover your authentic self. And once you discover your authentic self, you need the autonomy.

And you need the applause from everybody around you. I have to give you autonomy. I have to give you applause as you pursue your authentic self. It's called actualization. That's exactly the thing.

We all suspect, I'm not ordinary. I'm special. I must be special. I have to be special. And part of it is, by the way, that we think that we won't be loved unless we're special.

[15 : 54] Now, what does it mean to be holy? What does it mean to be holy in the Bible? What it means to be holy, as we are instructed by the gospel, is this.

God loved you so much that he sent his son to die for you. And not only has God loved you so much that he sent his son to die for you, but even from before you were born, God began to call you because he wants you to be his own.

What does he want you to be his own? He wants you to be his own because he wants you to be his special, precious, treasured possession, set apart as his, deeply special and precious.

That's what we all long for. And just as in the governing Canadian story, you have to figure out who your authentic self is, and you need the applause and autonomy of others as you try to pursue all of that.

The fact of the matter is that being holy is as you're called by God and you give your life to Christ or realize that you've given your life to Christ, if you've grown up sometimes in a Christian home, and you start to realize that you're God's special, precious treasure.

[17 : 16] That's who you are in Christ. The world might mock you, but that's who you are in Christ. And you're called to so be close to God and intimate with God and his wonders and purposes for you that you begin to conform your life to his character and his purposes.

Now, some people might say, well, George, that's all very interesting, but I prefer my way. Well, the Bible text anticipates that, and will actually show why what we desire, on one hand, is something which is innately human after the fall, but that the way that we in our culture try to get that is doomed to failure.

And you actually only will get what you desire by receiving the gospel. Well, let's see how that goes. Let's continue on. We're going to have to deal with, yeah, well, let's continue on.

Look at verse 17, right? So verse 16 was, you shall be holy, for I am holy. And verse 17, and if you call on him as father, who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

Now, just sort of pause there. If I remember, I'm going to say a little bit about the fear of God. It seems like a discordant note. George, if you're saying that to be holy means that God redeems you through Jesus, and he makes you his special treasured possession, then why this language of fear?

[18 : 57] Well, I'll talk more about it at the end if I remember. Hopefully I will. If I don't remember to do it at the end, you can ask me over coffee. But here's a really important insight about this.

Now, once again, if I mention a movie, it doesn't mean you should watch it, okay? I started to watch, just before I went off to Vancouver last week and came back on Friday, I started to watch The Beekeeper, starring Jason Statham.

And in that is a very common theme in lots of Hollywood movies and lots of stories, that partly what drives the action is a mother who is indulgent about her son.

So, she's indulgent. It means that it doesn't matter how much evil her son does. She doesn't want anything bad to happen to him. Terrible things can happen to everybody else.

But for her own son, she is terribly indulgent. And she's obviously a bad person in the movie. And if you think about it, that's actually part of what goes on with our cultural thing, that people think that because they're special and they've figured out their authenticity, what everybody else has to give them is applause and affirmation and autonomy.

[20 : 17] And actually what they want is everybody around them to be indulgent towards them. And the same people in our cultural story, it's one of those things about our cultural stories being incoherent.

On one hand, we desire indulgence for ourselves. On the other hand, when we watch a movie like The Beekeeper, everybody doesn't like the mom because she's indulgent towards her son.

You notice the inconsistency there? And so what the Bible is saying here is that the Bible is not inconsistent. God is not indulgent to you. But he really loves you.

And being holy means starting to cooperate with God as he transforms your character. To live a more moral, a life which is based on justice, not injustice.

On generosity, not being ungenerous. On love rather than hatred. On the truth rather than the lie. That's what God's push and desire is. And if you start to stray from that, he says, oh, well, that's fine.

[21 : 21] They can be as lying and as unjust and as ungenerous and greedy as they want because, oh, gosh, they're the apple of my eye. No, that's not God. That's the devil. Not God.

So it's actually a very, very powerful. Even as we go into it, we can see why. You know, you might say that my way of describing the Bible's way of describing holiness, you rather your own way. Your own way has problems, Canadians.

What you really are longing for is what the Bible is revealing. It's actually clarifying your desires and making you realize that only the gospel can solve it. But it continues.

Verse 18.

Who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and your hope are in God. See, this is once again. Remember, when he says that Jesus was risen from the dead, he's an eyewitness to the fact that the tomb was empty.

[22 : 42] He's an eyewitness to the fact that the stone was blown out as if pushed out from within. He's an eyewitness that the grave clothes were there. He's an eyewitness that the body was never found.

He's an eyewitness of Jesus actually being alive. He's a witness, eyewitness of the fact that you could touch Jesus, that you could hear him, that you could see him in different things. He's an eyewitness of the truth of that.

And this is one of the most important things, you see, because a hope that is not based on truth is vain and futile and will only disappoint you. And the Bible is saying when you put your hope and your faith and your trust in Christ, you're putting your hope and faith and trust in Christ.

And it's true. He really did rise from the dead. And if he really did rise from the dead and defeat that which sin, the sin which causes death and death itself, he does in fact stand on the far side of death.

When he calls you to believe in him, he's calling you from the far side of death to be with him and to share in all that he has done and accomplished on the cross.

[23 : 45] That's what he's calling you to. It's based on the truth. And it's based on his great love for you. It's very beautiful.

Now, there's a hint in here about another thing. I told you why there's another reason, a more powerful reason why the hope that you get in Christ is actually that and the identity and the specialness that you get in Christ is actually that which you deeply long for.

And it's better than anything Canada can offer. It is better than anything Canada can offer. And it's already been hinted there, but I want to show how it's said a bit more before I draw it to your attention.

And so verse 22, and here's one of the things about verse 22. It's another sort of a nail in the coffin about the way, I mean, you know, here's the thing.

We have this inherent deep longing to be special. And we don't think we can find it in the triune God in Christ, so we try to find it in other places.

[24 : 52] That the desire is a good desire. It's a true desire. It's just we go in wrong places to pursue it. And so, and we probably, many of us have seen this.

The people who most embrace the idea that they need to be their authentic self and that everybody has to recognize that authentic self and we have to applaud it and we have to give them autonomy and help them in their pursuit.

That ends up being a type of life absent of love. If Louise and I are both pursuing that, demanding everything of the other, how on earth could we ever love each other?

If you have somebody in a group of friends and everybody in the group of friends is demanding constant affirmation and applause, that's inherently competitive.

It inherently creates suspicion and unhappiness because of your longings. It's inherently going to uproot and disrupt and tear apart the type of communal love that you actually also deeply desire.

[26 : 06] And in fact, it's the lack of love in our culture which is maybe pursuing people in this path which is ultimately very narcissistic and dark. But you see, here's, and this is the division between verses 14 and 21 and 22 to the part we're going to read now.

The first part is this call to George as George. George, you are to be holy. You are to, you are to cast no longer, George, you need to be the biggest non-conformist in Canada.

You need to stop conforming to everything that the culture says. And you need to pursue holiness. And that's what you need to do. But now, for me, who've given my life to Jesus or recognize that, I become part, I become a follower of Christ.

But I never follow Christ alone. It's part of his whole design that we follow Christ together with friends in the context of a local church. And so now, after this call to George as an individual person, now there's this call to George to live with others.

Right? It's inherently that it's a very, very wise and powerful vision. And listen to what it says. Verse 22. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere, brotherly, sisterly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

[27 : 28] Now, just a bit of an aside to my Muslim friends. One of the things that I think you need to wrestle with, I know you say lots of things you think I need to wrestle with, and that's fine.

We can have a conversation about it, hopefully sometime. But you need to acknowledge that one of the profound differences between Christianity and Islam is Allah boasts that he is the greatest deceiver of all time.

He's proud of the fact that he can deceive. And that creates a radical difference between Allah and the triune God.

The triune God never says, I am the best deceiver. It's always a love for truth. Always a love for the truth. And so here we can see right here, once again, verse 22.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, this is going to lead to a sincere, brotherly, sisterly love. Love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

[28 : 30] Since you have been born again, verse 23, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. For, and now he's going to quote from the book of Isaiah, all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of the grass.

The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever, and this word is the good news that was preached to you. Now, you might not have noticed it, but in the first half and the second half, the individual call and the call to be part of a community, there's a same point made.

The perishable, there's a difference between the perishable and the imperishable. The impermanent and the permanent. And it's actually, and if you think about it for a moment, the perishable can never produce the imperishable.

The impermanent can never produce something which is permanent. It's actually a category of thought that an effect cannot be greater than its cause. Ask those who've studied philosophy.

Ask scientists. An effect cannot be greater than its cause. And so if you think about it, if you who are perishable, the most you can ever do, I as a perishable person in Canada, if I listen to the best wisdom of Canada, I'm listening to perishable people giving me perishable advice.

[29 : 56] I am impermanent. I'm listening to impermanent people giving me impermanent advice. And what we long for is something better than that.

If my authentic self and my pursuit for that and my desire to be special, if that's just a perishable search, if that's an impermanent search, that makes my life completely and utterly unstable.

What I actually long for is to be special in some type of way that is not perishable, but imperishable, that is not impermanent, but permanent.

That's the longing of my heart. That's the greater thing. And reason itself will tell you that all of your own efforts will only create things which are perishable.

We need an act of grace from the imperishable, permanent God that calls us to himself and makes us special and holy.

[30 : 58] Now, some of us might hear that and instantly we get a little bit uncomfortable because on one hand what we long for is that which is imperishable and permanent, but at the same time the main way that we think of things which are imperishable and permanent is very, very sterile.

It's very, very plastic. It's not something which is very, very desirable. And dear ones, that is why the gospel is so precious. It is why only the Christian faith has the answer to the longings of your soul and the longings of your heart.

Because only in Christianity do we understand that that which is imperishable and permanent is not static and sterile.

It is that from all eternity the love of the Father has flowed endlessly and ceaselessly towards the Son and the Holy Spirit. And from all of eternity the deep love of the Son for the Spirit and the Father has been dynamic and flowing from all eternity.

And the love of the Holy Spirit for the Father and the Son from all eternity has been this Niagara of ongoing love. And the love of the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit.

[32 : 13] And the love of the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit. But to something which on one hand is like the most serene flowing lake and like the most powerful rushing waterfall.

And both are true at the same time of God. That's what the permanent is. And that's why God's act to save you is the great love of God, the Son of God.

God has called you to this. Just before I go, I'm going to wrap up now. Now, just before I go any further in terms of how we should live. I mean, this is the great beauty and wonder of the gospel.

Before I called out to God, God was calling me. And I just want to say to anybody who is here, if you at all feel a tug in your heart, if you at all feel a little tiny even hint or whisper that you wish that something like this was true, I just want to tell you that's God calling you.

That's the triune God calling you. And I just want to urge you to just don't try to stifle it. You can think about the fact that if you give your life to Christ, your friends might think you're weird and all sorts of other things can happen.

[33 : 29] But listen, let me tell you, it is so worth it. It's the creator of all things is calling you to himself. The creator and sustainer and end of all things is calling you, unworthy as you are, to himself.

Do I tell you this because I have any type of worthiness? No, I believe very deeply what Spurgeon once said, that the whole Christian faith, I am a beggar who's received free bread, telling you another beggar where to get that free bread as well.

And I just say it's time just to stop pushing him away and just say, come, Holy Spirit. Come, Lord Jesus Christ. Come, Father.

Come, Jesus, and be my redeemer. We live by breathing in and breathing out. You can't live by endlessly breathing out because you have no air.

And you don't live by just endlessly breathing in without breathing out. And Christian growth is the same basic principle. If you looked earlier on, you can look at it for yourself in terms of your own private call for holiness.

[34 : 41] It tells you to, on one hand, and it's really interesting, outside of the Christian faith, and even some versions of Christianity are very rules-based and all about no, no, no, no, and all the things you shouldn't do.

That's my memory of the type of Christianity I learned growing up, that it had a long list of all the things that I wasn't allowed to do. You know? And I wanted to do almost all of those things.

And frankly, does God really care if you play a card game? Like, I just never understood that. But anyway, I learned lots of good things from my background, too. I'm very grateful for it.

Overwhelmingly grateful. But if you look at it, you go back and look at the first part, you'll see that the breathing in, as God says, purify. Why? You know, sort of that. So in a sense, another way to put it is not just breathing in and breathing out, but to embrace and reject.

And it says to breathe in or embrace setting your hope on the grace that you'll get at the end. And you're to embrace or breathe in being holy. And you're to embrace and breathe in fearing God, which is just very, very briefly what fearing God is.

[35 : 47] Because if you go back and you read the Old Testament, there's this weird connection between longing for God and fearing God. It's often in the same psalm. And what the fear of God is at its very root is an increasing awareness of where you begin and end and where God begins and ends, and you don't confuse them.

If you think about it, how dare me who is perishable confuse myself for the imperishable? How wrong is it for me who am impermanent that I confuse myself with the permanent?

And as I become clearer and when I begin and end, and clearer about where God begins and ends, then you can truly long for him. Anyway, breathe in or embrace that your hope on the grace, be holy, fear God.

What you breathe out or reject is being conformed to the passions of this present age. And now look at the next bit, the last bit, chapter 2, verses 1 to 3. Put away all malice.

That's an ill will towards other people. All deceit. That's where you're lying to other people. Hypocrisy. Another way of lying with other people.

[37 : 02] Envy. That's where you want to bring people down who are around you because they have some good that you don't have and you want them to be squashed. And slander. That's telling lies about other people.

Put all those things away. And like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation and if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

And if you go back and you read from verse 22 on, it says, you know, embrace purifying yourself by loving truth. Embrace loving, a life of love that is earnest and pure.

And embrace a longing for sustenance that comes from God. That's what this spiritual milk is. A sustenance that comes from God. It not means, not only does it mean reading God's word, it means praying, it means being part of a fellowship in a local church, it means the sacraments of baptism in the Lord's Supper, it is receiving grace from God.

And we're to long to be fed, to crave that which comes from God. And while we're craving that, we try to, as much as we can, put away malice, put away slander, put away hypocrisy, put away deceit, put away envy.

[38 : 15] You see, there's this whole Christian life is embrace and reject. Breathe in and breathe out. And that's how we grow. Let's stand. Let's stand. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you, Father, our hearts are restless till they rest in you.

You are the creator of all things and you have created us so that we have certain basic longings that can only, and yearnings that can only be met in knowing you.

And we give you thanks and praise that you didn't take those longings and yearnings away from us when we fell and rejected you and chose being proud over being humble and being held in the hollow of your hand.

And we give you thanks and praise that your strong hand of love reached down from heaven in the person of your son who lived amongst us and died on the cross and rose from the dead and is coming again.

And, Father, we give you thanks and praise that you call us, you reach out to us, that we might put our faith and trust in Christ and that as we put our faith and trust in Christ, Father, we become your special, precious, treasured possession.

[39 : 38] And so, Father, we ask that you help us to grow into that identity and to know that identity so truly that we are freed up to love the truth and to deeply love others and to live lives which are generous and lives which are just and beautiful and good as we, well, Father, as we just have our lives conform more and more to who you are and our purposes conformed more and more to the purposes that you have for us.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that this is not something we do on our own effort, that Christ is with us and in us and moves us in that direction. Your Holy Spirit grounds and propels and draws us that we might grow in holiness and that that is a good thing even if people mock it.

It is a good thing, Father, to be holy. So, Father, help us to grow. Help us to set our minds on this great hope of seeing you smile at us at the end of the end of the end.

And we ask all these things in the precious name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior and all God's people said, Amen.