

Craving The Pure Milk Of The Word

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Preacher: Alex Cowie

[0 : 00] We are going to turn back to 1st Peter and the opening verses of chapter 2. This is something that we ought often to visit in our own reflections on the word of God.

We may just read the words again. Therefore he says, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed or since you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

He says, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, and so on, as newborn babes desire or literally crave the pure spiritual milk.

And I want to think about cravings by way of introduction, because I reckon that every one of us knows too much about cravings.

We all have them. I'm getting smiles already, so you have it. You're just like me. We all struggle with cravings. And we crave all sorts of things.

[1 : 22] Sometimes we crave particular chemicals without realizing it. Our body craves. I remember once a homeopathist telling me that when he was looking at the different things we eat, that our body will crave a particular food, because there's something in it that we need.

And I have a particular liking for Brazil nuts, and there's something in Brazil nuts that my system needs. Well, it doesn't need the fat, that's sure, but it needs the simple thing.

The point of making is simple. Craving. And the word there, desire, in verse 2, desire is really crave. Crave. And at a general level, as we were saying by way of introduction, we crave things.

And we live at a time, perhaps a time as never before in the history of the world, where we've got all these professionals, these gurus, that will give us information on how to curb our cravings.

Sometimes, sadly, we give people license to indulge their cravings, I know. But in the main, it's how to handle your cravings. How to be able to totally resist them and be the better of doing that.

[2 : 45] Well, Peter is dealing with the subject of craving here. And craving so as to counteract the negative and the bad cravings that come naturally to us, not for our physical appetites, but our moral appetites.

And so he speaks to us here about scripture as, if you like, the great buster or blaster of these moral cravings.

And he says, laying aside all these, and he lists them, and we'll look at them in a moment, crave the pure spiritual milk. See, this is how he deals with his subject.

If we are to benefit in the life of faith, in following Christ, we have to have the word of God used and right in our experience, so as to best these cravings.

And what he does is he shows us that there is a way to counteract these bad cravings, as so that we may have a spiritual and moral health.

[4 : 02] And to this end, the word of God has to be seen for what it is. Therefore, he says, laying aside all these, as newborn babes crave the pure milk of the word, or the pure spiritual milk, as we'll see.

So we are to resist what will affect us in a bad way. These cravings have to be suppressed, and we are to crave the pure milk of the word, in order that we grow in Christ and develop on in the faith. And it seems to me, as it is often by the apostles' use, you'll look at the negatives first, in order to focus on the positive.

And that's what we're going to do. First of all, think about cravings to resist. Peter says, Therefore, he says, laying aside, or having laid aside, all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.

There are these things that human nature, even renewed human nature, tends to crave to do. To be malicious, to be deceitful, to be hypocritical, to be envious, and to be evil speaking.

[5 : 25] But he says, in a generous way, you've laid aside these things. In other words, this is the fruit of the work of God in you, this is the fruit of being born again.

He's assuming his readers have been born again, you see, back at the tail end of chapter 1, he says, Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, having been born again, verse 23, not of corruptible seed, see there's the negative again, bit of incorruptible, this is the way to think, look at the negative, emphasize the positive.

And so he assumes, this is their position, as he writes to them. And he says to them, put aside these things, having laid them aside, make sure you keep doing that.

You're in the faith by profession, or you think deep down, you're there, so you may not have professed it.

And as such, you are to act as if you really are there. Having been born again of incorruptible seed, this do lay aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.

[7 : 05] The fruit of the new birth in us has to be seen. And it has to be seen by us mounting resistance to these cravings.

We're to mount a resistance against them. We're to suppress them. Of course, by grace. But we have to act. We have to take action.

We have to keep on endeavoring to lay them aside. They come naturally. And they come naturally even in the renewed nature.

There's still that taint is there. And it's easier to do the wrong thing than the right thing, even for a Christian. And therefore, we have to mount a campaign against these cravings.

Don't do what nature inclines you to do, Christian believer. That's what he's saying. And so, first of all, he refers to malice.

[8 : 10] We're to resist that craving. Basically, the word malice in the original is ill will. And one of the more modern commentators has an interesting comment on this.

He says about malice, it is the force that destroys fellowships. It is the force that destroys fellowships.

And what malice, if you were to round it down, means, is simply bad-mouthing. Malicious-mouthing. Malicious-mouthing others for one's advantage.

And of course, the Bible has much to say about that very issue because it is a real problem. James himself, in chapter 1, verse 19, says that the believer is to be slow to speak.

In other words, he's to weigh his words. How they'll impact. Because our natural tendency is to fire off and sometimes with ill will.

[9 : 26] It's interesting that Paul also has something to say about this. We were reading this just the other evening following our Bible reading.

Let no filthy communication proceed out of your mouth. Let your speech always be seasoned with the salt of the covenant.

And that's easy to understand. It's to be healthy. And so we have to mount resistance to this craving to be malicious, to bad mouth.

The second thing he says is we have to resist all deceit. The old word guile conveys the idea of being twisted in our words.

Because this is what causes again problems. Jeremiah says the heart of man, Jeremiah 17 9, the heart of man is deceitful above all things.

[10 : 44] And who can know it? we hardly know our own hearts. The more we know of them, the more we acknowledge that's true.

And so Peter says here we are to suppress this craving. We're to deal with it. We're to lay it aside. Because it's a problem.

And the fact is it's a problem in Christian believers, even Christian believers, born of the Spirit, washed in the blood, so to speak, receiving Christ by faith.

We're not entirely clear of this craving to be guileful, to cook up schemes to advantage ourselves at the expense of others.

And we have to be brutal on this sin in ourselves. It's an evil craving. Lay it aside. how much has been done in recent months of this very thing.

[11 : 47] We've witnessed it. Canning, crafty schemes, guilefulness. We're to resist it. There are solemn words there in the book of Acts.

You remember how Ananias and Sapphira conspired by guile. And they were found out. They were guilty of lying to the Spirit of grace and of God.

And so it is a craving to resist. It's a no-go area. Let it be a no-go area for us. And he says hypocrisy too has to be resisted.

It has to be laid aside. It is a craving that comes naturally. Much better, I'll rephrase that, much easier to give an appearance of something than to actually be that.

Much easier to give the appearance of godliness than to be godly. Much easier to convey the notion that we're exceedingly pious and not be pious at all.

[13:01] people judge us by our outward strictness or otherwise. Some of you grew up in an environment where it was much easier to see.

I remember somebody telling me the growth of an appetite for mission in the church and when new things came in and some of the ministers who had been missionaries began to go around the church no reflection by the way here on the western isles per se or the christians there but it happens to be a western isles elder I'm going to be talking about but he was visiting in the city and old W.R.

Mackay some of you will remember with fondness I'm sure had a great missionary spirit and he was showing these little films of mission and the way that it was done was a little bit of a problem to somebody who had come from a very strict background and identified piety with shall we say certain forms of dress and when the course of it went on and the picture came up it was of an African elder in his white shirt and his black suit and the man was won over in a flash now I'm telling you that simply because of this we tend to judge on outward appearance it's much easier to see something in terms of the part of godliness identified by the appearance but that's not what it's about it is important to get to the heart of what godliness is and it is certainly not putting on an appearance or acting the part it is being

I remember once having a disagreement over what to do on the sabbath with another minister and he said he would never hospital visit on the sabbath because it wasn't good sabbath keeping well I thought that was bank and I still think it's bank in fact it's double bank the years have convinced me all the more of our saviour's teaching I will have mercy and we are to be identified with what is true and wholesome and not an appearance of I wouldn't do that on the sabbath actually we ought when it is in our duties path to do as much as we have the strength to do it I mean and so you see there are things that we are to these cravings who are to resist vehemently and envy of course envy is not something we're immune to it is a craving and it works against our own growth and the growth of other people in the faith and therefore we need to strenuously resist it and seek ways of helping one another to grow if we believe that the

Lord's people are on the same road heading for the same destination then we must rid ourselves of envy we ought to be generous if somebody is more gifted than ourselves great praise the Lord if somebody is better at hospitality than ourselves great praise the Lord and so on and so on we praise the Lord for it we capitalise on it by promoting it not trying endlessly to stifle it or to rubbish it in some way this takes grace I know and it takes real effort that we need to resolve to resist this evil craving and so on we touched on the whole business of evil speaking already and so we remind ourselves here of the importance of mounting a campaign against such evil cravings and positively we are to crave the word of

[17:48] God crave the pure spiritual milk this is the way that you grow and the illustration here we have thought about this before is the most wonderful illustration he takes nursing infants and the way they crave mother's milk as it was in those days they didn't have approved powdered milk and so on but the point is easy to understand just as the baby craves pure mother's milk so the believer is to crave the word of God God has given us his word to strengthen us to feed us to do for us spiritually what mother's milk did for the child physically it's important it's vital it's vital to our growth that we use the

Bible right that we see it as necessary spiritual food it is pure spiritual milk it is unadulterated and that's why the word of God preached ought to be just that the word of God preached and not speculations and fanciful notions but what the word is saying those who came into the church in the days of the apostles adulterated the word they put a good they shoot in their own ingredients to it and it was a hodgepodge the word of God is what is pure spiritual milk and it's what best fits us for the Lord's service we were singing that in the psalm the importance of the word purifying us how does a young man learn to purify his way by taking heed to your word our savior in his great high

priestly prayer said sanctify them father by your truth your word is truth and if Jesus himself said this is the way they're made holy by that word feeding them and strengthening them then it ought to be good enough for us so we need to have a positive and healthy attitude to the place of scripture in our own thinking it's a great mistake you see to fail to apply the scriptures we can know them and not apply them but deriving benefit from the scriptures is to assimilate the truth and work it out in our lives it's not enough to know it it's good to know it but an important thing is to apply that word in our lives so that we are kept by it and we need to grow by it that's what Peter says in order that in order that you may grow thereby and here again there's this powerful image of the body craving and craving for what will cause it to grow the little child craves the mother's milk because the child will grow by it the better it is the better the child will grow you see in these nature programs if you like watching them and the more we appreciate the genius of our creator God the more we should enjoy these things you take some of the animals and how mother's milk will cause them to grow and grow rapidly and grow strong those of us who have been around crops and farms you will have seen at the spring time good sheep produce good lambs they grow on and it's a simple step for us to see that that's the way the word of God is for those who use it aright who depend upon it as pure spiritual milk we read it and not simply read it we take time over it we seek to assimilate it in order that we will grow spiritually by it

I know our tradition is good up to a point in that we would try and read chapters in the course of a day but just to read the chapters and to shut the book and to say a prayer that's not what it's about we need to digest the word we need to derive goodness from it for our spiritual life in order that we are strengthened by that word and we ought always therefore to depend upon the spirit of God to make that word fruitful in us to enable us to grow by it to so approach it as to derive benefit from it humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that's the way to benefit from the word he will make you grow by it and you know we can't benefit from it unless we take time over it we need to meditate on it

[23 : 49] I know meditation is practically a lost art but we need to regain it in order that we grow crave this is the craving we are allowed crave the pure spiritual milk and lastly and briefly and logically too crave the Lord in the word he says here if you have tasted the Lord the Lord is gracious rather since he assumes it he assumes that they've come to faith having been born again and therefore they have tasted that the Lord is gracious that he's good and they want to know more of him in the word he's everywhere in the word he communicates to our souls through that word he touches our spirit as we approach the word properly looking for soul food and he strengthens us in order that we may strengthen one another in the most holy faith and the more that we crave the

Lord in the word the more we will benefit from him in the word we will be looking for him to speak to us and strengthen us maybe rebuke us maybe correct us but we will be looking for benefit from the word the word the word is never separated from the word you will notice that when the minister is dispensing the sacrament he always says in prayer

Lord that you would bless word and sacrament it's always that way and that's deliberate the sacrament in itself is nothing apart from the word the Christ the word incarnate and the word inscripturated we benefit from the Christ who is the word and the word that speaks to us of Christ and the signs and the seals of covenant grace are meaningless to us apart from the word of God and the Christ who is the word incarnate and therefore we need to crave that pure spiritual milk and we need to crave the Lord himself in the word this is how we grow let us therefore resist all these sinful cravings that we have reflected on for a little and let us renew our resolve to crave the pure spiritual milk to benefit from the

Bible and to benefit from the Lord himself in the word may he bless to us then his own word