

1 Peter Chapter 1 v 13 - Chapter 2 v 3

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[0 : 0 0] and what he's doing in the church. So just listen for a moment to Ephesians 5. I'm going to read from verse 25, just after Paul gives instructions to husbands. He says this, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. The church of Jesus Christ is the most glorious and beautiful thing. We are beautiful. That's the truth. We have no wrinkles. We have no blemishes. We have no love handles. We have no spare tires. In heaven, we shall be perfect. Christ has done that work in us and is doing that work in us as well. That's the ongoing work of Christ in the church, transforming us into his loveliness. And so our first hymn reflects on the church, glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God. It's a hymn about the church and what it means to be part of the church of Jesus Christ. Something which is wonderful, glorious, glorious and beautiful. So we'll stand as we sing 366, 366.

Even now the church triumphant, that's all the saints, all the believers who are in heaven, are gathered before the throne of God in worship and praise. But we can approach this throne of grace grace and prayer. So let's do that together now. As we come to this time of worship, O Lord our God, we want to thank you for the immense honour you've given to us that we have been brought into and made part of the church of Jesus Christ. We thank you, O Lord, for that church, that company of your people that spans through all of time and even through space. For Lord, we thank you that indeed in heaven above, there are those who are one with us in spirit, one in Christ, who have fought the fight, finished the race, and are now enjoying the benefits and the blessings of being in your presence. Free from all sin, free from all pain, free from all sorrow and grief, free from all trial and labour, enjoying that everlasting rest. And we thank you again that, O Lord our God, we will be with them one day. We too shall be taken up to be with him, and so we will be with the Lord always.

But in this time, at this time, O Lord, in our lives, in this time in history, you have called us to be your church militant, to be that church which is active, that church which is working, that church which is fighting, yes, Lord, that church that is wrestling in spiritual battles, that church which is suffering, that church, O Lord, which is manifesting your love and your truth in this world and to the world. And Lord, we thank you for that privilege. Thank you that we are ambassadors for Christ.

Thank you that we are heralds of his wonderful good news, that we are those who are the living church of the living Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you again that we are those who have been called to live as foreigners in this world. We are passing through. This isn't our home. This isn't where we shall spend eternity. This isn't where we shall only exist. We thank you indeed that we are marching to Zion, glorious heavenly Zion. We pray, O Lord, that as we come together this evening, that you would strengthen us, strengthen us, strengthen us in that work you've called us to do in these days, that you would encourage us, that you would help us, that you would cheer our hearts in the midst of the battle, that, Lord, you would speak to us those words which would motivate and move us, O Lord, to live for you.

We ask that you would come down and dwell in the midst of your church here on this earth, even here in Whitby. Lord, make yourself known.

[4 : 25] We thank you for the fire and the cloud that followed your church in the Old Testament as they went through the wilderness, that wherever they went, Lord, you were with them. And though we do not have the fire and the cloud, we thank you we have something much better.

We have your Holy Spirit, for he dwells within us and will never leave us. We ask that we might know and sense his presence with us and amongst us, that we may know him ministering, encouraging, helping, speaking, giving us understanding, opening our eyes.

Oh, come by your spirit, we pray, O Lord, and have your way in our midst, that we, your church here, may grow, may deepen, may mature, may go forward, may minister, O Lord, and be ministers of your abundant and manifold grace.

to those around about us in the week ahead. Equip us then, for we ask these things as we recognize our great need, but Lord, we also rejoice in and have faith in your great provision, and we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. We're back in 1 Peter. So if you've got one of these Bibles, it's page 1217.

[5 : 42] 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning at verse 13. Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

For it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors. But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect, he was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him. And so your faith and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart.

[7 : 17] For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers, and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Amen. Thank you, Janet. So please turn then to 1 Peter and chapter 1, the end of chapter 1, into chapter 2.

We'll be finishing chapter 1 this week, God willing. Thank you. So we're particularly concerned then with verses 22 of chapter 1 into chapter 2 and verse 3.

[8 : 34] Sometimes chapter breaks can be unhelpful, because they break into an argument which flows through, and I think there's an argument that flows through from 22 into verse 3 of chapter 2.

This morning and over the past weeks, we've been praying for that Australian couple, Ken and Jocelyn Elliott, who were kidnapped. And they had been running a medical mission for over 40 years in northern Burkina Faso, and was snatched just a few weeks ago by what I believe to have been Islamic militants linked to al-Qaeda.

And please can I encourage you to continue to pray for their release. God willing, they will be released. And when that happens, like many of those who've been in a similar situation released after being kidnapped, they will certainly want to be reunited with their family.

It's the first thing that happens, isn't it, when you see people being brought back to the UK, or wherever it may be, the US, or somewhere else where they've been held kidnapped for months or weeks. There's the family to greet them.

They're immediately reunited with their family, their loved ones. It's the first thing. It's the natural thing, isn't it, to want to be with those that we love.

[9 : 52] Now, last week, when we were looking at the end of chapter 1 of 1 Peter, we were looking at this incredible truth in verses 17 through to 21, that we have been redeemed.

We've been ransomed with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, ransomed and set free from that way of life which holds all people captive, that empty way of life as it's described there in verse 18, the way of living which is without God and without his loving kindness.

And Peter had been reminding his readers of what God had done for them to encourage them to live holy lives. That's the theme, isn't it, as we saw in verses 13 and following.

Verse 15, Just as he who called you is holy shall be holy in all you do. And the outcome of that we are working through. The rest of the letter is the outcome, the working out of living holy lives, living lives separated unto God.

And there are many reasons why we should do that. One of them is primarily because God has rescued us, redeemed us, ransomed us out of the world so that we are now foreigners in the world.

[11 : 06] We are strangers in the world. We don't belong anymore. Our home is heaven. That's where we're headed. And that's where our hearts are. So far we haven't had a great deal of instruction in that.

I believe that Peter is building up to that. He's leading his argument, as all the New Testament writers do, to that place to give us some instruction. We only know, of course, that we're to be nonconformists.

Not in the denominational sense that we are, but particularly in the spiritual sense. We are those who are to act now as those who do not conform to the pattern of the world, but conform to the pattern and the will of God.

Once we lived in ignorance, verse 14, now we have understood, we understand, we understand who God is, that he is holy, and therefore we understand that we are his children. And therefore, as his children, we are to bear his likeness in the world, in the way that we live.

And so we begin, I think, in verse 22, the very first lesson, lesson one of the series, Be Holy in All You Do. This is Peter's teaching and instruction.

[12 : 19] We may be somewhat surprised when we get to verse 22 what that first lesson is. What is it that he teaches and instructs the believers there and us too?

He doesn't go back to the Ten Commandments and begin teaching about them and say, now that you are to be holy, God has expressed his holiness in the Ten Commandments, therefore keep them and let me explain them to you.

Nor does he go to the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, which in many ways are the explanation of and the opening up of the commandments of God in the Old Testament.

But rather he goes to the very new commandment that Jesus gave his disciples in Peter's hearing many years earlier.

In John 13, verse 34, he said, A new command I give to you, love one another. And so we find here, verse 22, that the encouragement and the instruction of Peter is this, that we are to love one another deeply from the heart.

[13 : 24] That's the first of several occasions in Peter's letter where he calls for the living out of this commandment. Almost in every single chapter, he will come back to this point of loving Christians, loving one another.

Chapter 2, in verse 17, he says this, Love the family of believers. Chapter 3, in verse 8, love one another.

Chapter 4, in verse 8, Above all things, or above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

And so why does Peter start here? Why does he begin with love? And love for one another? Well, because, of course, the whole of the Bible teaches this truth, isn't it?

From the Old Testament to the New Testament, there is this truth that we are to love one another. But also we see and understand that love, according to the Bible, is the fulfillment of all of God's will and commandments.

[14 : 28] In Romans and chapter 13, Paul makes it clear there, Romans 13, 8, Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another.

For whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. Has fulfilled the law. Jesus himself, of course, was the one who taught this.

Remember when he was asked by a religious leader, one day, what's the greatest commandment? Jesus goes back to the Old Testament and responds with two commandments. One concerning loving God with all of our mind, soul, strength, and heart.

And secondly, loving your neighbor as yourself. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 13, we've sung a sort of paraphrase of that in that last hymn.

1 Corinthians 13 is that glorious, poetic description of the love of God and what true love is like. And what does he show? He shows again and again that every single action is worthless, valueless, unless it is covered in love.

[15 : 41] Unless it is saturated in love. The Apostle John, in his first letter, having lived longer than any of the other apostles, spends the majority of his letter expounding the necessity of loving one another.

So it should not be a surprise to us that Peter begins and explains to us the practical outworking of holiness, of godliness, is loving one another.

I don't believe we can ever underestimate the importance of love between believers. And yet, sadly, if we're honest, we know that it can often take second place.

But it is to be the number one priority of this church and of every body of believers that we love one another. Surely it is the greatest triumph that the devil can bring to any church to hinder, to prevent, to undo love between brethren.

Sadly, sadly, again and again, and many of us know this only too recently as well, love for believers, once removed, decimates a church, destroys the work of the gospel, and undermines the glory of God in his people.

[17 : 07] If we are to be on guard as Christians in the 21st century, and there's many things that we are to be on guard against, one thing we must be on guard against is losing anything.

If we are to be on guard against losing anything, we should be on guard against losing our love for one another. And if there's one thing we're to work hard at together as Christians, and we do work hard, many of us, and we need to work hard, we are to work hard at growing in love for one another.

I can't believe that we can stress that highly enough, the importance, the necessity of love. Because I believe that once we get that principle right, once we lay that foundation, and once we are working in that way, then everything else will be added to it.

Once we have a right love for one another in the church of Jesus Christ, then everything else will come together, the matter of what we believe, the way we worship, the way that we outreach with evangelism.

All these things will be worked out, but if we concentrate on all of them, and we do not concentrate on or neglectful of loving one another, then everything else that we do will come to nothing, ultimately.

[18 : 26] Because there must remain a church which is based upon love to which unbelievers are brought into, built up, strengthened, encouraged, and then sent out with the gospel.

And so we have here this command to love one another. It's his practical spiritual instruction. And notice when I read there from chapter 4 and verse 8, that he have these words above all or above everything else.

Number one on the list. Top priority. Love one another. But Paul isn't calling for us to love one another because somehow it's unnatural for us as Christians to love one another.

What he points out is this, that the reason that we are to love one another, and as he puts it, with sincere love and deeply from the heart, is because we already have been enabled by God to have love for one another.

Notice what he says there in verse 22. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, we'll come back to that phrase in a minute, so that you have sincere love for one another, love one another deeply from the heart.

[19 : 40] Because it's already there, then you can work on that. You are to cause it to grow and to cause it to go deep as well. From the time that we obeyed the truth, that's the gospel, God has been at work in our hearts, transforming our hearts, enabling them to become more loving.

You see, the love that the world speaks about, and the world has a lot to say about love and to sing about love and to write about love and to make movies about love, but the love that the world has, on the whole, is a corrupted sort of love.

It's a distorted love. Here's what Paul writes in 2 Timothy. Listen carefully to how many times he uses the word love and lovers. When he talks about the terrible times in the last days, that we're in the last days, by the way, we've always been in the last days since Jesus went back to heaven, and we're in the last days until he comes again.

So this is now and always. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power.

You notice more than four occasions, five occasions, he talks about people being lovers and having a love, but all of those lovers and the love that they have is for the wrong things.

[21 : 24] It's for money, it's for pleasure, for themselves, not God, not good. So yes, the world is full of love, but even in the best places, even love within marriage, even love within a family can be a wrongly motivated love.

People can love someone because they are afraid of being alone. People can love because they want to be rewarded for the love or the things that they do.

They can love because they want to be accepted or popular. Even love in the right place can be a distorted type of love. But you see, the gracious work of God in our hearts as Christians means that we have been purified in the heart so that we now love with sincerity.

Our love has been run through the mill in one sense. It's been put through the washing machine. It's been cleansed because we've been cleansed. How often, again, we have that picture spoken of in the New Testament.

Here's Titus chapter 3. He saved us through the washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit. That's why baptism is a picture of our conversion, our salvation.

[22 : 44] It pictures what God does inwardly, washing us from our sin, washing us and cleansing us and changing us. Now, that doesn't mean, of course, we're perfect yet.

Far from it. though we have been purified by our obedience to the gospel and that purification is the work of God, it's ongoing. That's where the Bible speaks about sanctification and being sanctified.

It's ongoing. God hasn't finished with us yet. But it must mean and it does mean that we are changed, that we are different. And that change is a change which has begun on the inside and must manifest itself on the outside like everything else.

If you eat something unpleasant, then the manifestation of that will not only be that your tummy is up sore, but you will maybe go red or come out in a rash or spots or boils or something else that starts on the inside and it comes out.

And so it is with the work of God in our lives. There must be evidence of the work of the Spirit in the believer and the evidence that we are believers, the evidence that God has purified us, the proof that we really have been born again of God is that we love other Christians.

[24 : 12] As John's words in 1 John 3.14, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love each other. What did Jesus say about love?

Love one another. The world will know that you are my disciples by the fact that you love one another. The sad truth is that amongst Christians and even amongst Bible-believing Christians, that sense of loving one another has been put to one side for the sake of being a sound church or a spiritual church or a reformed church.

At times, we have neglected this reality of love and we have exalted other things above what God has put at the first place.

So, that's why we meet together as believers, that's why we pray for one another as believers and so on. So, the first step in the life of holiness that God wants to accomplish in you and me and in the church is this state, this act of love.

love. But notice that, as we've already seen, that love that begins at the work of God's grace in our hearts is a love that increases, that is active, that grows.

[25 : 42] Therefore, now that you've purified it, love one another deeply from the heart. There can never be a point when as a church and as an individual my love bottoms out, to think of it that way.

There can never be a time we can say, well I now have loved to the limit of the believers or I've loved as much as I possibly can love. That can never be the case.

Our love is to be fathomless, bottomless. It is to be always, always striving to be going deeper and going further.

Why is that? Because of what God has done in our hearts. Again, this is the argument that we have. Why should we love one another deeply from the heart?

Verse 22. For, because, says Peter, you've been born again. Yes, we know that, we've already argued that, but listen, not with perishable seed, but of imperishable to the living and enduring word of God.

[26 : 44] Where is his argument going? It's this, the love within our hearts is a love that comes from the spirit of God and it is therefore a supernatural love.

We've already received it, but the reality is we've received it by new birth and therefore we are to carry on in it and it is to continue to grow and develop and mature.

Why? Because we are born again of supernatural seed. You've been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, not of that which fails, not of that which dies or decreases or corrupts or fades away, but that which never fades away, that which is everlasting.

How is it everlasting? Because it is born of the word of God, which itself is everlasting, the living and enduring word. We've all been to the panto and we've all seen Jack and the beanstalk or the film or the pantomime or read the story and what happens?

Jack goes and swaps his cow for some beans. But they're not ordinary beans, are they? They are supernatural in one sense, seeds that when planted grow and grow and grow and grow and reach up into the heavens.

[28 : 00] And just as we obeyed the truth, we came into a life by which the word of God, that supernatural seed, took place and implanted into our lives.

It's of divine origin, the word of God. It's something which carries none of the faulty genes of the love of this world, but carries the pure and wholesome genes of eternal life.

And so Peter's mind is now moving on from there to Isaiah chapter 40. Four. Okay, so notice these fours because each one is a step of an argument.

You are to love one another deeper. Why? Because you've been born again of imperishable seed. What's so special about that seed? It's the living and enduring word of God. Therefore, all people are like grass and all their glories like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall. We know that's the case. Everything human has to fade. Everything man made has a short shelf life.

[29 : 10] It fails. It dies. It only runs a certain course and then it's finished. But, he says, the word of the Lord endures forever. That which is born of God, that which has its origins in God, takes on the very nature of God, and therefore it cannot have a short shelf life.

It cannot just fizzle out and fade away. It has to carry on. It has to grow. It has to last eternally. We often say, nothing lasts forever.

It's perfectly true, isn't it, in the world? Perfectly true when we come to human things, but it's not correct when we come to the things of God. And we are of the things of God, born of the word of God, by the power of the living God.

We have been changed and we have been endowed with that eternal life. this is the word that was preached to you, the word of the gospel, the word of God, which once it takes root in the life, grows, bears fruit and keeps on fruiting.

everything that God has done in you, dear Christian, is a good work.

[30 : 31] Whether it's faith, whether it's hope, whether it's perseverance, all of the things that God has done within you last.

Nothing that he has given he will take away. Nothing that he's given will come to an end. Nothing that he's given will somehow let you down at the last hurdle or in the last hour.

When you are Christ's, when you are God's, then his supernatural spiritual power has imparted into you that which will carry on to the very end. And though you and I feel weak, and though you and I feel like we fail, and though you and I go up and down in our faith, the fact of the matter is that none of those things can stop the work of God accomplishing its purpose.

And for us, a particular encouragement, that includes love. There are times as believers when we do not feel loving towards another Christian.

There are times when we do not feel like we want and long for the very best for them. As we shall see in a few moments, there's going to be a few tests that we need to place upon our hearts, monitors, to see what state they're in.

[31 : 47] But the love of God within us can never be extinguished. So we come into chapter 2 and verse 1 and I said to you before that I think that it follows on the argument and I say that because we have another therefore and because the things that Peter speaks about now really are practical things which are the undeniable outcome of what we've been talking about growing in love.

We are to grow in love because we've been born of the Spirit of God and the Word of God which doesn't fade and therefore there's an outcome of that. There's an undeniable fruit, there's an undeniable work that must take place now in our hearts.

We have to root out everything that obstructs our growing love for one another. It's not just enough for us to say and rightly so God's love is in my heart and I'm going to grow in love and grow in love.

What does that mean in practicalities? It means that as that love grows other things have to be pushed aside, other things have to be removed. There's weeds to be cleared before we can grow the fruits.

There's obstacles to be removed before the church can move forward. Here's where we come to some heart searching. And to some praying so that we might know Christ bearing fruit in us so that we might be fruitful for the glory of God.

[33 : 23] I want to just spend a few moments as we close upon these things. We have a list. Therefore rid yourselves, prune yourselves, weed yourselves of these things.

The overarching title as it were of all these things is all malice. Because you notice there's a difference. Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander, be kind.

Malice really just means evil. Some of the other translations apart from the NIV use that word. Remove, get rid of all evil. All evil thoughts and feelings about any other believer.

Now evil sounds rather severe when we think of evil. We think of IS, we think of the devil. But evil really ultimately means this, to wish bad upon somebody else.

To have an evil thought or an evil concern or evil attitude is to want bad things for somebody. To want them to fall, to want them to fail.

[34 : 27] It's to have a negative attitude towards somebody. So as I'm speaking through these things, I want you, dear friends, in your minds and hearts to be considering, not just within the fellowship here, but are they believers?

Because of the way perhaps they've acted towards me, things they've said or not said, is there anything in my heart there that's negative towards them that says I really would like them not to do well?

I don't want them to be blessed. May the Holy Spirit just search our hearts as the word of God prunes us. Malice then, evil, bears fruit in the following ways.

First of all, deceit. Lying really, isn't it? But lying is much more than just saying what is false. It can be withholding what is true.

What was the politician several years ago, maybe decades ago, spoke about being economical with the truth. In other words, lying. Disguising the truth so that it becomes unrecognisable.

[35 : 44] Am I truthful towards this person, this person who perhaps I don't get on with? Am I hiding the truth from them to their detriment? judgment? Or am I being totally truthful?

Is there deceit in the way I'm dealing with them? And of course part of that deceit naturally leads to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is deceit, isn't it? It's pretending to be something I'm not.

It's giving that false smile when you see them, how are you? But inside, I don't really care. I'm sorry if these words are painful.

Do I give a kind word but really don't mean it? Do I say I'll pray for you but I never do? Is there hypocrisy?

Is there because perhaps there's envy there in our hearts? What is envy? Really it's almost a hatred that's brought on by jealousy. Perhaps the reason I don't like this person is because I have a certain envy about their finances, their possessions, their gifts, their abilities, their intellect.

[37 : 05] There's a sort of covetousness that I have but because I know I can never have those things it turns into a well a malice towards them. Even to the sense of which if they can't have it, so if I can't have it I'd rather that they lost it.

What a sad thing to be eaten up with envy. And then we see finally here slander of every kind. You notice every single one of these sins is all about relationship isn't it?

It's all about relationship, relating to others. And he's talking about relating to others within our fellowship with other believers. Can it be possible? Of course it's possible because we're sinners.

Yes we're born again of the spirit. Yes we have that incorruptible seed. Yes we are being changed and have been changed but our dear friends the old man as Paul calls him in Romans 7 the sinful nature still there still nagging away still dragging us down still doing all to diminish and undermine the work of God.

God so we have to work hard. Slander. Well yes what's that? Well it's gossiping about somebody isn't it?

[38 : 25] It's gossiping about somebody but particularly sort of speaking about their faults or as I see them their faults. Talking about those things that to others that I think are wrong with them.

Running them down. hoping that they will look less godly in the sight of others if I let out a little secret about them or tell a tale on them.

Perhaps even just questioning their motives. Why does he do that? Is it because he wants glory for himself? Is it because he wants to look good? Oh dear friends, dear friends, what's the antidote then?

How can we deal with these things? How can we grow in love deeper and deeper? Well it seems to me verse 2 is part of the antidote. Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk.

What's wrong with all these other things? Well they're impure aren't they? They're impure. They don't belong to the believer. What purifies us from them surely? What purifies us from these love hindering attitudes is that we feed our spirits and our minds upon the pure milk of God's word.

[39 : 43] That's what he's talking about. Spiritual milk, Paul talks about it when he writes to the Corinthians I've given you milk and you should by now be eating meat but we're all babes in Christ.

We need good nourishment for our souls and the truth is the world in which we live does not nourish our souls. The things that we watch and see and hear are all reflections of that corrupted love we were looking at in 2 Timothy.

What shows us true love? What helps our love to grow? What helps our love to overcome the false and the foolish, the hypocritical? Well surely it's again as we drink, as we thirst, as we imbibe off the word of God which is full of love isn't it?

Full of love. The love of Christ to us. The love of God brought to us. That's how we grow when we get the right nourishment. That's how we develop and mature when we are fed with the good things.

The things with all the right vitamins or vitamins if you're American. Now we already know that the Lord is good. We've already tasted of his word haven't we?

[40 : 58] Now that you've tasted the Lord is good how do we taste as we thought this morning as we took God out his word and believed his word and trusted in him and put our faith in him.

We've already had the blessings that God's word brings our salvation and the joy of being right with God and so craving is part of a very healthy appetite.

I want more. Are you a spiritual Oliver? Thank God that when we come to the Lord our master as spiritual Olivers with our empty bowls and our empty hearts he doesn't say more and turn us away empty but rather he gladly fills and satisfies and supplies and provides.

In fact our heavenly father longs for us to ask for more. Longs for us to crave spiritual milk that we may grow up in our salvation and in our spiritual life.

I'll close with these words of Paul from Ephesians in chapter 4. Listen to what he says there. Then we will be no longer infants tossed back and forth by the waves, blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

[42 : 23] Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head that is Christ.

From him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

Let's just speak a moment quietly before the Lord, asking he might search our hearts, bringing to him our great need of love and asking for his purifying increase.

book. husband of