

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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The Lies We Listen To

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Prayer: *Father, we just again, we thank you that you are an awesome God. We thank you that you are our God, that you are a gracious God who has given us of your Son and of your word. And this morning, Lord, we have the privilege of opening up your book. And so we pray that you would give us the privilege of your Holy Spirit's presence who makes your book understandable. Give us the ability, Lord, as we open up your word to again make it of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, for the last few weeks now we have been parked at one particular verse in 1 Peter 1, and like the rest of all scripture, we find that the minute you dive into one portion of God's word you find that it's far, far deeper than you thought and you can spend hours and weeks and even months examining it. And so the verse that we've been looking at in the surrounding context is this; this is 1 Peter 1:22. It says: *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.*

Well, the first thing we've learned is that the love that we are to express is not those who are willing to love us in return. Instead this is love that is to be offered to those who can't or won't or don't love us back. Jesus tells us that anyone can love people who love you back and that the love he's expecting from us is far different from the natural love that is Jesus as even sinners give to their own. God's expectation for us believers is that we love with a supernatural love that God has given us at salvation. In *Romans 5:5* he tells us that *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*. And as I said the last time, our task is to grow that love. We spoke about the "how" of loving deeply, as an unfolding process that involves perspective, it involves patience and it involves prayer. The perspective is the new perspective that we get in God's word. See, the world has its way of reacting and responding to people who won't love us and God has his way. God's way is so counterintuitive that we realize that until we've had this perspective of God's word, we realize that we would have never, never stumbled on this on our own. God says in *Luke 6:27*: "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.*" And we've been raised in this world with a completely natural understanding of how this world operates, we might think when we hear these words from Jesus that this is -- this is not only impossible, this truly is insane, but

this is God's way of doing business. You know, as I said before, God could have very easily taken Satan out right at the very beginning when he rebelled up in heaven. But that would have only demonstrated the superiority of the power of power over the power of love. The most excellent way that God has chosen insists that love is a far greater power than power itself, and the cross was God's perfect example of that. God has elected to use the war in heaven as a showcase to demonstrate the power of love over the power of power, and he has given us the ultimate demonstration of that love in the cross. Make no mistake about it, the cross was in addition to everything else, it was a military maneuver and the weapon of choice was love itself. You know, it's hard to imagine love as a weapon but it's the only weapon that God allows us to fight with. *Colossians 2:15* puts the cross in military terms. And speaking of Jesus, it says this, it says: *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.* You see, the enemy, Satan himself, sought to display a beaten, naked God in the flesh as a trophy of his overweening power. In so doing the enemy failed to realize that he was unwittingly displaying the holiness, the justice and the mercy of God. And that in fact the only spectacle the universe saw was God triumphing over Satan and the power of love wreaking havoc over the power of power, all by means of the cross. And now the height, the depth, the width, and the breadth

of the love and the wisdom of God all became apparent but it became apparent only after the event of the cross took place. And during the event, God looked every bit like the universe's ultimate loser. He was broken, he was beaten, he was abandoned, he was crucified, he was dead and buried and yet all the while, he as the Lord Jesus Christ, all the while he was winning, he was triumphing, he was in fact making a spectacle of the enemy through the cross. Jesus won the ultimate battle. But for now for us there's a war, and the war goes on. And every day, every moment there are literally countless opportunities to fight, as Paul describes it, the good fight. The day in, day out fight for the glory of God where the only weapon that God allows us to use is the same weapon that he used and that's the love of God in Christ Jesus. It's a love for your enemies. It's a love for those who hate you, abuse you, curse you. You see, it's only in that arena that the power of love as a weapon becomes apparent. And that's why loving the loveable doesn't really count. Anybody can do that. As Jesus said, even sinners love those who love them. See, it's only when the power of love is extended to those who hate, who curse and mistreat us that the real power of love is made evident.

We're looking at Peter's command: Love deeply, from the heart. And we understand that command was to a church that was divided racially, theologically and politically. Its members had ample

opportunity to love people who were very difficult to love. These were folks who knew what it was like to suffer grief in all kinds of trouble and to have their faith tested and refined by fire. They understood that this call to love deeply from the heart was not a call to the soft, mushy kind of Hallmark card kind of love but to a determined, gritty love that was propelled by obedience far more than emotion. The opportunity to love deeply from the heart is presented to us every time we are challenged by someone who is not easy to love. Now that could be your spouse, it could be your sibling, a child, a friend, an enemy, could be anyone including a stranger. We've been blessed to have that kind of love here at Grace, I mean, I have seen wives grit their teeth determined to love their husbands because they know that it pleases God. I've seen the same from husbands as well. I have seen folks who have struggled deeply in order to love. But I've also seen folks who miss completely the idea of loving deeply. You know, they move through their Christian life desperately looking to avoid conflict when it's that very conflict that's the thing that God wants us most to confront. Part of the point of the church is to live in community. This is the place that God often chooses to bubble out the sin that's within us. God has placed us in community because oftentimes that's where the opportunity to love deeply and from the heart presents itself.

Many years ago I had this thing, this little thing called a rock tumbler. I don't know if you've ever had one of those things. It's a machine, and you load the stones into it, along with them you load some abrasive and it tumbles the rocks and after a few weeks and a lot of noise it produces these beautiful polished stones. Well if you wanted to avoid the noise, if you want to avoid the hassle of that noise, you could fill the tumbler with stones and feathers and you could let it tumble and it would be nice and quiet but nothing would be polished. No hard edges would ever be removed. And unfortunately some folks want the church to be like a rock tumbler that's filled with feathers. They want it comfortable, they want it quiet. But comfortable and quiet changes no one and no hard edges get removed and certainly nothing gets polished. You see, we are in community for the purpose of polishing each other. *Proverbs 27 says: As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.* So nothing is sadder to me than the idea of folks leaving the church because of personality conflicts. And nothing is more satisfying than seeing folks do the hard work of working through those conflicts for the sake of Christ. And it's there that I've been privileged to see the power of the weapon of God's love at work. But you see, God doesn't just tell us, oh, love deeply from the heart and then leave us to figure it out. In fact again, I have to point out that God's immediate response to loving deeply from the heart is to plunge us right back into the

Scripture. Listen to what he says. This is our text. This is 1 Peter 1:22-25. He says: *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. 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 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. Listen carefully, listen carefully to what God is saying here. He's saying obeying the truth purifies and empowers you to love deeply, and knowing that truth only comes from the word of God. I mean we love because we are born again through the imperishable seed of the word of God, and the scripture is clear, if you want the ability to learn how to love, you've got to go to the word of God. Paul says in *Philippians 1:9*: And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. You see, the knowledge, the depth, the insight and discernment to grow that love from this acorn that God's given us into the oak that he would love to see, they all come from one place and one place only and that's the word of God. 1 *Thessalonians 4:9*: Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by*

God to love one another. There's only one place to go to be taught by God to love each other deeply and that's the word of God. God's enduring word is where we are confronted with an alternative way of loving, and God takes great pains to tell us that his way of loving is not at all the way of the world's way of loving. And as counterintuitive and as jarring as that love is, we, he says, are not the source of that love but that he is. And God is only asking that we love the unlovable with the love that he's already poured into us at salvation. As I've mentioned many times, it's not -- it's not the hose that's supplying living water to dying plants, it's the well. The hose merely conveys what the well is supplying. And God's not asks us to be the well here; that's his task. And he willingly gives us a limitless supply of love. He is merely asking us to convey that love particularly to those who are unlovable, and that requires a whole new perspective.

Now another aspect of this process is patience. You know, God seldom if ever works at the pace that we Westerners have come to expect. I've said it before, much heartache accompanies our demands that the conflict and the painful situations that we find ourselves in be resolved and resolved quickly and you all know that seldom happens. I mean God is always at work but he's seldom at work on our schedule. And thirdly, we talked about the importance of prayer. I mean our praying for our enemies deprives the enemy

himself, that is Satan, it deprives him of the opportunity to use our hurt and our bitterness as a club to beat us with. And furthermore, praying for our enemies every single time they come into mind not only denies the enemy the opportunity of using it to torment us, but it also changes us and it changes us from the inside, oftentimes giving us insight and wisdom about the situation that we might not have had we been unwilling to pray.

See all of these parts: perspective, patience, and prayer, they're all part of this ongoing process that God uses to grow the love that he has given to us. And God says he has poured his love into our hearts, but we receive it like an acorn. And it is up to us by God's grace and wisdom to grow that acorn into an oak. And God is telling us in verse 23 that God's word has given us this power in the new birth. He says: *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.* And then in verse 24 he tells us that the power of his word is going to last forever. He says: *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 then finally he tells us that this power has been given to us. He says: *And this is the word that was preached to you.* As Peter goes on to tell us, that starts with us learning more and more about ourselves for the express purpose

of being able to love others more deeply, from the heart. But now Peter starts to shift gears. He turns away from that somewhat in the next statement. This is *1 Peter 2:1-3*. This is what he says. He says: *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation -- if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.* At first the statement looks like a non sequitur. I mean there is a chapter break here, this goes from the end of chapter 1 to the beginning of chapter 2 but that was never in the original. You know, Peter's been taking on -- taking us on this lengthy discussion about the word of God and he's told us that the grass withers and the flowers fall and the word of God lives forever, then he goes on to suggest like newborn babes we are to crave this spiritual milk. But before that he gives us this rather jarring command to rid ourselves of some pretty nasty stuff: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. How do you respond to that? I think we can respond in either of three ways: Number one, you say, "No problem, Lord, you commanded it, your will is done." Or number two, you can say, "no problem, Lord, that was never a problem for me in the first place." Or number three, "Lord, show me how I can obey this command." Well, it's pretty obvious that in only one of these responses are you likely to hear God actually speaking to you. What is not so obvious is why. You see, one of the main reasons why we don't

often hear God speaking to us is that we don't put ourselves in any real position to hear what he's saying.

What is God actually saying to us in our text this morning? I mean why is God asking us to get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander and not other sins like drunkenness or adultery, rage, disobedience or stealing? I mean after all, sin is sin, isn't it? Isn't it? Well the answer to that question is yes and no. Yes in that any and all sins were enough to condemn anyone; and no, not all sins are alike. See, some sins shout and some sins whisper. And the ones that whisper are deadly. Sins like drunkenness, adultery, rage, disobedience and stealing, they all shout. They're right out there, right out in front along with their consequences. But you notice this list of sins that Peter gives to us: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander, every one of those sins whispers. And they're very different from any other group of sin and that does not escape God's notice. In *1 Timothy 5*, he says: *The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.* See, if I wake up tomorrow having stolen a car while I was in a drunken rage, I'm pretty sure I'm going to know about it; somebody's probably going to tell me. If I wake up tomorrow morning having deceitfully slandered somebody I envied, I may be blissfully unaware of it. I mean not unaware in the sense that I'm innocent but unaware in the sense that I have

successfully deceived myself so well that my capacity to detect my own sin has been compromised, diminished or is even nonexistent. Because this sin is not obvious, because this sin trails behind us we can easily think well, out of sight, out of mind. And that's true when it comes to whispering sins. Out of sight generally does mean out of mind but out of mind is not out of conscience and is not out of consequence and this is what kills and cripples us as believers. See, the good news is that God tells us that we believers have the power to wrest our lives from the crippling power of the lies that this whole world lives under. But the first step of accessing that power is to realize how persuasive those lies are. You know, C.S. Lewis once noted that fish have no idea that we are wet. Being totally surrounded by water all the time makes it impossible for them to know what "not wet" is all about. I mean you have to be dry at least once to ever realize what being wet is, and so it is with the truth and lies. You see, if the ocean that you are swimming in is an ocean of lies then you will not know until you begin to experience truth and the only truth that you can absolutely experience as absolute truth is Jesus Christ. He says in *John 14:6*: "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" You see it is his truth that sets the standard. It is his truth that shows us what a lie this world lives in, which is also one of the reasons why the world hates the truth. *1 John 5:19* says: *We know that we*

are children of God, and that the whole world -- the whole world -- is under the control of the evil one. Well, you know, it's not a coincidence that the evil one is also known as "the father of lies."

In one of the many confrontations that Jesus had with the Pharisees, he's having this big argument and he's arguing with them, believe it or not, about his legitimacy. They claim that they are true sons of Abraham and they claim well, you're -- "We're true sons of Abraham, you're an illegitimate child." And Jesus responds with a very matter of fact description of their lineage and in so doing he describes the very nature of the being that's in charge of this entire world. This is what he says. It says:

Jesus said to them, "If God were your father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in it him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do

not belong to God." He's talking about the native language of the place that we live in, the world that we occupy, and the native language is a lie with a capital L. He says virtually nothing in this kingdom is rooted in the truth and that's what he has come to liberate us from.

He said in *John 8:31*: *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* Well, the question that we want to ask this morning is very practical one: Free from what? You see now when you first came into the kingdom of God, chances are the answer to that question was pretty obvious because usually our sins at that point were obvious. They mostly shouted. And we may not have even thought of whispering sins because the shouting sins had a tendency to block them out. But God is telling us that the truth that genuinely sets us free is a truth that never stops pursuing itself, and that once you deal with the shouting sins, it will start to deal with whispering ones. But there's a problem. The problem is the truth that Jesus offers requires a willingness on our part to embrace the pain that comes along with the truth. Jesus said in *Matthew 11*: *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* You have to understand this, his yoke is easy and his burden is light only in

comparison to the yoke and burden of living your life in a lie, and malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander are the calling cards of that kind of burden. They are all sins that are based on lies, and they all operate by getting you to lie to yourself first.

It's interesting that the Holy Spirit puts that list of sins right at the center of a declaration of the power of Scripture because that's where the power becomes evident. And we see that in Hebrews 4:12. Listen to what *Hebrews 4:12* says about the word of God. It says: *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* And so if we take Hebrews 4 and we apply it directly to Peter's list of sins, we see that all of them are there to reveal hidden attitudes in the heart, and that the word of God directly exposes and judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. See this list that Peter's given us, this is a list of sins that thrive, thrive under rocks. The word of God just flips the rock over and it exposes what's under it to the light and that's where the light becomes painful and that's why we try to avoid it, and it's only when you realize the value of that discipline that you are willing to put on that yoke. It is only

when we have truly tasted the power over the lies in our lives that the gospel is that we are willing to invite that power into our lives. I mean indeed God wants us to welcome it.

Now maybe the obvious if irreverent question is: Why should I? I mean, why should I invite God into examining the thoughts and attitudes of my heart? Why should I welcome being uncovered and laid bare before him? Here's the key. This is an incredibly important thing to understand. Understand it is not God who is being invited into this process, rather you are inviting yourself. God already knows the thoughts and attitudes of your heart. It has already been laid before him. I mean to accept this discipline is to be willing to see what he already sees, to be willing to know myself what God already knows about me. I've said this many, many times but there's two truths that are the key to leading sanctified lives and growing in Christ and these are the two truths, you've heard me say this so many times. Number one, God loves me; number two, what? I'm full of it. You know God loves you because he has chosen you before the foundations of the world were even established, he has chosen to make you holy, he has chosen to make you to the very image of his Son. He knew the greatest sin you would ever commit thousands of years before the day you were even born. There's never been a time when God has been caught by surprise by anything you could do. And for reasons unfathomable to

me, he has still chosen to love us. He says in *Romans 5:8* but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So the first order of business is recognizing that God has seen the very worst you could possibly be and he still loves you. And knowing the very worst that is in you, he is now inviting you to see what he already knows, and that is that you and I are full of it. And it is just what you might think it is. This is what Paul said in *Philippians 3:8*. He says: *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.* The word translated "rubbish" there is the Greek word "skubalon". It has two separate definitions. Number one is excrement; number two is rubbish. Understand what Paul is saying. Paul is saying everything in my life is just skubalon compared to Christ. See, Paul was willing to look inside and see that there was nothing pretty inside all the while knowing that he was still deeply loved by Christ. He knew God loved him and he knew he was full of it. We have become expert at producing people who only understand one-half of that formula. You know, the church has spent a great deal of effort telling people only the first part: God loves you. How many times have you heard that? But hearing that alone produces egocentric self-oriented carnal Christians who oftentimes see God's love as some kind of mysterious entitlement and they see

Jesus as their cosmic butler whose main assignment is to go after them cleaning up after their messes. And the other side alone, the side that says that "you're full of it," well, that produces Christians who see themselves as worms; "skubalon" if you will, unworthy of God's love. See it's only when you bring both of these parts together as equals, that God loves me and I am full of it, that you see the beauty of what the gospel is trying to say. Tim Keller puts it this way, he says: "You are more sinful than you could ever dare imagine and you are more loved and accepted than you could ever dare hope -- at the same time." See, being willing to be that open and honest with God requires an attitude and an awareness of the hardness of your heart that drops its guard to truly hear what God has to say. There's no denying that it's painful.

So why should I do it? So why should I take up that yoke? Well, God says in *Hebrews 12:11*: *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.* Well, there's your payoff. The payoff is righteousness and peace, and okay, that's a no-brainer. I mean if it's a choice between living a lie and living in righteousness and peace, well then why is it that we so often choose to live the lie? I think the answer is simple. I think we trust in ourselves. I think we don't go to

the word of God. I think we delude ourselves. I think we don't see the lies for what they are. I mean have you ever confessed to God the sin of malice? You know, that's being malicious. That's truly desiring to hurt somebody. How about deceit and hypocrisy? Now that's two sides of the same coin. Have you ever envied somebody enough to slander them? See, I know I've been guilty of every single one of those sins. I also know I could have gone my entire life not even knowing that I was guilty. See if I'm clever enough, you're never, never going to see those sins in me. Doesn't mean that they're not there. It just means I'm clever enough and our culture is fallen enough to make the expression of those sins socially acceptable. That's how living the lie works. I mean the reason we so easily spot the speck in our brother's eye and miss the log in our own is that the first person that we lie to is ourselves. It was Cornelius Van Til who said: "Man argues from a pre-rational commitment of the heart and he argues in a circle from that heart's commitment right back to it." And what Van Til was saying is that most of the decision that we make about ourselves, they have the illusion of having been made on the basis of truth when in reality there never was a rational decision making process there in the first place. We make instead sub-rational or pre-rational commitments of our heart and then we dress that up with some kind of logic or reason afterwards. And to put it another way, we first decide issues with our hearts and then after

we have decided with our hearts we look for reason to make what our hearts decided look like it came from our heads, from reason, from truth. That's primarily the reason why people get locked into political positions as well. Whether you're Trumpist or non Trumpist, the chances are you made that decision with your heart and no amount of data to the contrary is going to change that position. See, it doesn't matter if you assemble six facts or 6,000 facts supporting your position, no one's going to budge if they've already made a pre-rational commitment of their heart. Facts become irrelevant because hearts are already committed to one or the other position. And each additional fact, instead of shedding light on the process only serves to harden both sides' heart commitment. And it becomes a national portrait of what we do individually because all of us argue from our hearts. We argue from here and not from here (indicating). And because we trick ourselves into believing our hearts instead of the truth, we deceive ourselves. We make it so we can't even see the truth when it's right in front of our eyes.

Let me give you an example. This is one you can probably easily identify with. This is me arguing with my spouse. You know, when I'm arguing, I'm really, really not listening to what she's saying because I've already made a pre-rational or sub-rational commitment of my heart to my position. I may be listening to her position but

I'm listening, I'm not really listening to her. I'm not really listening to hear what she's saying. I'm looking for flaws in logic. I'm looking for an opening. I'm listening with half an ear. I may hear some of her side but my own heart commitment is to my own position, and it cripples my ability to hear her. And that's exactly what we do with God and that's why we don't hear him. Jesus spoke to many, many people and only those who had ears to hear heard him. God tells us in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Well, God says if you agree with me, I'll forgive you. I've got no problem agreeing with God that drunkenness, adultery, rage, disobedience, and stealing are sins, 'cause like I said, they shout. It's the whispering sins that I have a tough time agreeing with God about. Well, that wasn't slander, Lord, I mean I'm pretty sure that was true. That wasn't deceit, Lord, they just didn't understand me. You see, every time we commit to our hearts instead of to the truth, we limit our ability to hear God and his word. The world says above all else, you've got to listen to your heart. It's the biggest lie that is told in all the world. God says the exact opposite. He says in *Jeremiah 17:9*: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* And do you want to place your trust in your heart or in the truth? If you want to place it in the truth, there's -- you have no other place to go but the word

of God.

And so how do we do that? Well, I have no formula, I have no technique when it comes to the how-to's of getting the word of God into your heart. I don't know of any easy answers there. I know the only way that it gets into your heart is through your eyes or through your ears, fingertips if you're blind perhaps. I also know that the more scripture that enters into my heart, the more able I am to hear God. You know I'm a former woodworker and as a former woodworker I know how a woodworker thinks. I mean, when you've got a problem, a woodworking problem, the more experience you have, the more solutions you see start to pop up and the better those solutions usually are. It's the same with computer people, I mean, the more they understand, the more they understand work-arounds, the more they understand how to get from point A to point B, the more they grow in their understanding of what it is they know, the better they are at understanding it. Well there's a sense that the more scripture you study, the more pieces of God's revelation you have, the more wisdom and the more grace you're going to have to shape your solutions to living wisely. I mean it's not rocket science. When it comes to hearing the word of God, there is something profoundly important to understand and it's not about formula and it's not about technique. Really what it's all about is attitude. Do you or do you not believe that this is the

genuinely revealed will of God almighty? Do you have an appetite for truth even when it hurts? And that brings me back to where we started this morning. There's a command that we find in 1 Peter 2, and it's an odd command but we find it often in Peter's letters. His command is to have an attitude, an attitude of longing. I mean that attitude sums up whether or not we're going to welcome or resent God's presence in the sins that whisper as well as the sins that shout. Peter says in *1 Peter 2:2-3*: *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation -- if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

So here's my question this morning. Simple. Do you long for the word of God? No doubt and I can tell you right off the bat, it's an acquired taste. It's a taste you have to work to acquire. You have to taste and see that the Lord is good, that the truth is sweeter than all the lies we deceive ourselves with. And for me, that involves cultivating a taste that is directly opposite of what my heart is telling me. So here's the key to really trying to understand what God is saying is when I get defensive, when I start making excuses, when I want to turn and run, that's the time to suspect God is trying to speak to me. It's right then and there that you can stop and take that fear as your cue. Listen to what God might be saying in his word, in prayer, in a brother or sister's words, in any way he might choose. Or you can listen to

your heart. I mean your heart will always tell you whatever you want to hear because your heart doesn't mind lying.

You know it's helpful to think of the Christian life like a used car. God looks at this and he says oh, there's tremendous potential here but there's dirt and there's rot and there's rust all over it and if you're willing, I'll show you the secret places where all that junk has accumulated and I'll help you scrape it off and I'll help you prime it and paint it and it's going to be painful and it's not going to be easy but it will be glorious. On the other hand, you can slap a new coat of paint on it and hope for the best. The evangelical world is filled with rusting, rotting cars that have shiny new coats of paint on it. You can commit to your heart or you can commit to the truth but you cannot commit to both. Commit to your heart and you will have comfort, ease and the delusion that the world loves you to have; commit to the discipline of truth and you will have righteousness and peace. Commit to the word of God as a habit and you will learn to crave it as newborns crave milk, because it's all a matter of attitude. *Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!* Let's pray.

Father God, I recognize this is tough stuff and I just -- I pray that your Holy Spirit is speaking individually to every one of us

about the sins that whisper in our lives, the sins that we would love to pretend are not there. Lord, you've already seen them, you saw them before we were born. You're merely inviting us into the process of discovering what you already know. Lord, give us the ability to truly grasp and understand that you do love us and we are full of it. Give us the ability to lead sanctified lives where we have the courage to hear and see those things we may not want to hear and see, knowing that you love us, knowing that your word gives us the perspective of what real truth is. Give us the grace to pursue it, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.