

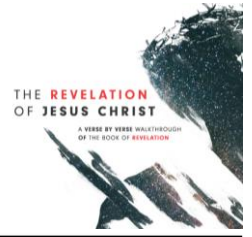
Title: Revelation, Part 18: How Strong is your Spiritual Sweet Tooth for God's Word?

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 10:1-11

Big idea: If you want the Bible to make a difference in your life, you gotta' do 4 things.

Memory verse of the month: Rev 11: 15b The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.



I'm going to put a phrase on the screen.... *"They have a sweet tooth."* ... and I'd like you to ask yourself this question. What would make you describe someone in this way?

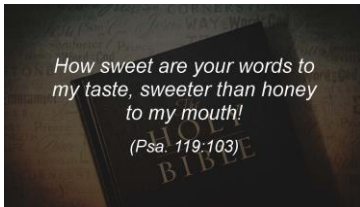


When we describe someone that way, we mean that they desire, want, really like things like...

Who among you here would self-describe yourself as a sweet tooth kind of a person? Sorry that I may have set you up for that craving this morning. But it really fits this message.



As a result, you'll probably need to visit Tim Horton's and get some of these on your way home. You know what this really are, Tiny temptations.



Another question.

What if I had put up this image along with all these other images?

You probably would have done a double take. You probably would not have put a bible as one of the desires of a person with a sweet tooth.

But did you know that the bible says that there is something akin to a physical sweet tooth but it's a spiritual sweet tooth, so to speak. That is, an important attribute of a follower of Jesus should be that they have a deep desire for God's Word, to know and experience it, what I'm calling a spiritual sweet tooth for the bible. Of course it's on a much different and deeper level.

The Psalmist wrote, *Psalm 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

This is not the only place we see this idea of hunger for and eating God's word. We'll see it today as we continue our series on the book of Revelation.

I've titled my message: [How Strong is your Spiritual Sweet Tooth for God's Word?](#)

[Big idea: If you want the Bible to make a difference in your life, you gotta' do 4 things.](#)

Again, this idea is on a totally different plane than liking candy, but it's a metaphor I hope will help you remember the big idea today.

As a quick review, two weeks ago we looked at 4 decisions that help us stay upright in an upside down, topsy-turvy world that Revelation describes will be increasingly prevalent.

[Decision 1: Learn from the times.](#)

[Decision 2: Practice spiritual vigilance.](#)

[Decision 3: Resist compromise.](#)

[Decision 4: Engage in cultural conversations with grace and tact.](#)

So today, we will be in [Revelation 10.1-11.](#)

Rev. 10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. ² He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ³ and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. ⁴ And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

⁵ Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. ⁶ And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! ⁷ But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

⁹ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." ¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. ¹¹ Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

Rev. 10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven.

Some believe this refers to Jesus, but others believe it is a mighty angel, which I believe because in Revelation when angels are mentioned they always refer to actual angels. He describes this angel with images of a cloud, a rainbow, the sun, fiery pillars.

² He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand.

Little scroll also means little book. It was opened. I believe it is a metaphor for God's word.

It's probably a different scroll from the original scroll we've looked at yet it includes events about the end times to be revealed.

He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ²

One of the ancient wonders of the world was a giant statue called the Colossus of Rhodes (Rhodes is an island off the coast of Turkey). Remember this book of Revelation was written to 7 churches in what is now western Turkey.

This statue that stood almost 50 meters high including its base, about the height of the statue of Liberty in NYC. 50 years after it was finished an earthquake brought it down but its remnants were still on the ground for centuries and the people knew about this and some maybe had even seen its ruins. So this was quite an image of this might angel appearing to John that would evoke images of power and dominion to the people then, reminding them of God's supreme power over all, land and sea for when you put your foot on something it indicated control over it.

This should encourage us as it reminds us that God is in control in this crazy world.

Then he writes about 7 voices of thunder which probably refers to the voice of God.

⁴ And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

This is interesting. We don't know why he was told to not write down what he heard. We don't know what the words were that he didn't record. Perhaps God didn't have him write it down to remind us that there is still a great mystery about the end times, like you only see a part of an iceberg. Some mysteries are so deep that they lie outside of our knowledge and won't be revealed until the end.

The Apostle Paul also refers to a vision he received that he records in *2 Corinthians 12.4*, *He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.*

This angel raises his right hand toward heaven and swears to God that the end is soon.

This alludes to the Jewish oath-swearing procedure by raising your right hand to signify that you are telling the truth. Even in some cases in the US and Canada in the past a witness being called to the stand would put their hand on the bible and raise their right and swear to tell the truth.

Now we see something else that is puzzling.

⁶“There will be no more delay!

Probably every generation has expected Jesus to return in their lifetime, as many today may think he will come in our lifetime. With what’s happening in the world, we think certainly Jesus’ return is just right around the corner.

But we can’t say definitively that he’s coming really soon, although it may feel like it. This statement implies that when the necessary conditions have been met Jesus will return.

And time as we know it will end and eternity will begin. In heaven time as we know it will not exist. We will live in a great eternal present.

Now the scene is being set for Jesus’ final conquest of satan.

⁷ *But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”*

Again, the mystery of God reminds us that now there is a lot we don’t understand. Much is still a mystery, like why it seems that evil is so much in control. But in the end, our questions will be answered, we will understand, and God will make all things right and new. The prophets had prophesied for hundreds of years that a final judgment would come as well as God’s restoration of the world.

Isaiah 65.17 “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

We should be encouraged that this will be the end result.

⁸ *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: “Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.”*

This is the third time he describes this mighty angel as standing on the land and the sea to emphasize God’s dominion over the world.

⁹ *So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.”* ¹⁰ *I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.*

In the OT Ezekiel and Jeremiah do something similar.

Ezekiel 3:1-2 And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.” ² *... So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.*

Jeremiah 15:16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.

One scholar said this, “It may well be that behind these words lies a Jewish educational custom. When a Jewish child was learning the alphabet, it was written on a slate in a mixture of flour and honey. The child was told what the letters were

and how they sounded. After the original instruction, the teacher would point at a letter and would ask: 'What is that, and how does it sound?' If the child was able to answer correctly, the letter could be licked off the slate as a reward!

So, when the prophet and the psalmist speak about God's words and judgments being sweeter than honey, it may well be that they were thinking of this custom.¹⁷

This little scroll symbolizes God's word, and our hunger for it. God's word feeds our soul like food feeds our bodies. When a person receives God's word, believes him who sent it, there is joy and sweetness. For those who reject it's message, it seems sour, distasteful, and unbecoming.

Why would I want to give up what I like doing even though your bible says it's sin? I like it. God's word is greeted with a response anywhere from a yawn to outright antagonism.

Recently Tiffany and I went to a local grocery store to get some groceries. In the car we keep these packets that Tiffany has put together that includes a bottle of water, a protein bar, a pair of socks, a gospel tract and couple of dollars. She will give this to homeless people she sees.

We saw homeless guy holding a sign and he was baking in the sun. She gave it to him and we went into the store. As we walked out and put our groceries in the car, I felt prompted to talk to the guy. So I went back and asked him his story, briefly shared the gospel with him, and asked him if he'd ever heard that story of Jesus before. His response was 'yea.' I encouraged to consider the Gospel, gave him a few more dollars, and went back to my car. His response was pretty much a yawn. People will receive the word of God in different ways, some with joy, some with antagonism, and some with indifference.

Let's go back to our [Big idea: If you want the Bible to make a difference in your life, you gotta' do 4 things.](#)

1. Take the initiative to engage God's Word. Two times John was told to take the scroll. He wasn't forced. He had to choose to do this odd thing of taking and eating a scroll. He had to make a choice to reach for it and take it. In a similar way you and I must make the effort and take the initiative to take in God's word. It won't happen on its own. You need a plan on how you will engage: devotional time when you read and study God's word, when you come to church to hear God's word taught, when you get in a group to study it with others. If you were to write down what you currently do to engage God's word, what would you write?

Would what you wrote down be pretty sparse, reflect a haphazard approach, indicate that maybe you're not that hungry for God's word or would it reflect a thought out, intentional plan that reflects a significant commitment to and hunger for God's word? Stuff doesn't get done in life without intentionality.

Take the initiative to engage God's word.

2. Enjoy the message of God's Word. The scroll was sweet to him. The Gospel is good news. The word of God is meant to encourage us at multiple levels. Listen to how the Psalmist describes God's word as sweet to us, from Psalm 19.

Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.

*The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

¹ Barclay, W. (2004). [Revelation of John](#) (Vol. 2, p. 65). Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.

*⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The ordinances of the LORD are sure
and altogether righteous.
¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.
¹¹ By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward*

Enjoy and appreciate how it lifts our soul and encourages us. But, it's not like eating cake, like that kind of sweet tooth. When we eat a piece of chocolate cake, it's totally for our benefit because it tastes good.

Here's the balance to the word picture of a physical sweet tooth. A physical sweet tooth is all about my enjoyment of the sweet taste in the cake or candy. A spiritual sweet tooth, however, includes the blessings to our soul and spirit when we engage it, but it also makes demands of us that often don't seem so sweet sometimes. Although obedience gives us peace, obedience may also bring difficulty. Remember a key point about revelation is that suffering and persecution of Christians who fully obey God is inevitable. And that, in a sense, is sour.

3. Obey the hard parts of God's Word. He said that in his stomach it was sour. There are three levels here.

Level 1: Revelation tells us that believers will face a formidable ordeal as we get closer to the end times. Persecution will increase and that's sour. It will be more and more costly to obey God in a world drifting away from him. Yet God is faithful and he will be with us and we will emerge victorious. That will be sweet.

Level 2: Individually, the word of God is sweet to the soul, but it is also incisive as its message makes demands on us and convicts us of sin. There are hard parts to keep because they are costly to obey.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living 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.

Sometimes God's word cuts to the core of our hypocrisy, inconsistency, and sin which is not so sweet, yet good for us.

Level 3: This relates to the role a pastor plays. I must preach and teach the good news of the Gospel which is sweet to the soul. Forgiveness and God's grace and God's love is sweet. But I also must preach the whole Gospel that says that those who reject God will face an eternity without him, without love, or peace or any semblance of joy but will live in perpetual regret. That part of the Gospel is hard and sour. We'd rather hear about the love of God rather than hear that he hates sin and rebellion. In my early days of ministry, I unfortunately skipped some of the hard stuff.

You see, receiving God's word is great joy but since it is also carries themes of judgment and woe upon evil doers, it is a mixture of joy and comfort and sadness. We hurt for those who reject the gospel.

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

The Gospel is good news to some. For others it's offensive to say there is one way to God and that God has moral and ethical expectations of us.

Obey the hard parts of the Bible.

4. Go and do God's Word.

¹¹ Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

John's work was not done, even though he was nearly 100 years old. He was to obey what this vision was instructing him to do, obey and preach the gospel. He was to warn the church against unbelief and compromise as well as warn the unbelievers of what awaits unless they repent.

The verb "prophesy" does not refer just to predicting future events but also to provide God's perspective on what is happening in the present² what we might call forthtelling God's word. It is for the future and the present, calling believers to put truth into practice.

Eating a scroll symbolized the reception of the Word of God into his innermost being as a necessary, prerequisite to proclaim it with confidence.

This is simply plain old obedience.

So, let's look at these things we must do on the same slide.

If you want the Bible to make a difference in your life, you gotta' do 4 things.

1. Take the initiative to engage God's Word.
2. Enjoy the message of God's Word.
3. Obey the hard parts of God's Word.
4. Go and do God's Word.

I want to go back to the question that made up the title of today's message. [How Strong is your Spiritual Sweet Tooth for God's Word?](#)

Let's admit it, sometimes we need a kick in the rear end to move us forward in areas of our life, including how we value God's word. And real-life examples can often grab the heart to move us forward. I'm going to show you a video of how a few years ago the Kimyal tribe in Indonesia received the first translation of the NT in their language.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq9Ox0e8gUk>

Convicting, huh?

May God stir our hearts to hunger for the truth of his word in new and fresh ways.

² Beale, G. K., & Campbell, D. H. (2015). *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (p. 211). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.