

The Book of I Peter – Part Seven

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Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Presented by Ralph Alley

1). As we begin to look at Chapter 2 of Peter's first letter, it is important to remember that within the original manuscript, there are no chapter breaks or verse numbering. Those have been added to help us more easily locate a particular section of scripture within any given book. And so it is important that we see the flow of thought from the previous Chapter -

1Peter 1:22-2:6

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

a) And so at the beginning of Chapter 2 we see the word 'therefore', a word that means, 'in view of the fact that.' In other words, "therefore" takes us back to that which has immediately been said before it.

b). So let's take a look at where we were last week -

- 'In view of the fact that', we have purified our souls in obeying the truth in sincere love of the brethren;
- 'in view of the fact that', we are to love one another fervently with a pure heart;
- 'in view of the fact that', we have been brought forth from above by incorruptible seed through the word of God which lives and abides forever;

- 'in view of the fact that', not only is our time upon the earth exceedingly short, but also Man's Day with all its cultural, artistic, scientific and technological accomplishments is but for a fleeting moment and like the flower of the grass will fall away;
- 'in view of the fact that the word of the Lord endures forever, the word concerning the overthrow of Man's Day and the establishment of Christ in His coming Kingdom;
- 'in view of the fact that', this is the very word that has been preached to us by the gospel;
- 'in view of the fact that', it is only that which surrounds Christ and His Kingdom that will have any lasting value.

Because of all of this, we are given a strongly worded imperative -

2:1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

c). The command here is that of 'laying aside,' which speaks of a complete separation from something. And in Chapter 2 there are five particular things that the Holy Spirit sees fit to bring to our attention to 'lay aside.'

d). According to verse 1 in Chapter 2, we are to separate ourselves from all malice, all deceit, all hypocrisy, all envy, and all evil speaking.

2). The word "malice" is the Greek word 'kakia,' which comes from 'kakos,' which means "harm, ill will, or wickedness."

a). This word speaks of intentionally inflicting hurt or pain upon or against someone.

b). Paul uses the word in Romans this way -

Romans 7:20

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil ['kakos'] is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

3). Then also in I Peter we see that we are to lay aside *deceit*...which is the Greek word, 'dolos,' which means "craftiness, or to catch with bait."

a). This takes us to being calculated and deliberately cunning in order to achieve an ungodly end. This can cover anything from self delusion, to manipulating or arranging a situation so as to achieve a desired result. To better understand this let's look at how it's used in James 1:14 -

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed [dolos].

And -

2 Peter 2:18

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure [dolos] through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

4). Then the third of our 5 things to lay aside is *hypocrisy*, which is the Greek word 'hupokrisis,' which means "to act under a made-up part."

a). With hypocrisy there is a deliberate choice to assume a particular part, for the purpose of hiding true intent behind a mask that says something different.

b). Jesus' encounter with the scribes and Pharisees provides an excellent example -

Mark 12:13

Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? 15 "Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at."

5). Moving on to the fourth word, which is "envy," which is the Greek word 'phthonos.' This means "ill-will" (as detraction), i.e. jealousy (spite):--envy.

a). The implication in this word is not that we wish that we had something that someone else has; rather, it implies a vicious spitefulness that looks to the ill-will of its subject.

b). Again the life of Christ provides an excellent example -

Matthew 27:17

Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18 For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy [phthonos].

6). And the last thing Peter tells us to "lay aside" is *evil speaking*, which is the Greek word, 'katalalia,' which means a "defamation" or "backbiting."

a). This is about speaking down a person... speaking against them so that they will be seen in a negative light.

b). This word is used only twice in the NT, here in 1 Peter and again in 2 Corinthians to describe the church in Corinth -

2Corinthians 12:20

For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, [katalalia] whisperings, conceits, tumults;

c). Paul uses a similar word in Galatians, which would show us the intensity of this action -

Galatians 5:15

But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

7). All five of these words describe actions that Peter commands the faithful Christian to totally separate themselves from; therefore, it is extremely important for us to understand what they mean.

a). And as we consider each of these we will realize that each action first begins in our mind. And if we choose to engage in any of the actions described here, then we will have chosen to lay aside the word of God, thereby NOT allowing the incorruptible seed that has been planted in us to produce fruit.

b). All of these words describe actions of the flesh and are attributes adopted by the world. But we have been delivered from this.

To review again what Peter tells us in the first Chapter -

1Peter 1:13

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient

children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." 17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

c). We are not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind. And it is the word of God alone who is able to bring about that transformation.

James 1:21

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

e). The Holy Spirit, through James, says that we are first to lay aside something and then receive something. And the receiving of the Word must be both *hearing the Word* and then *doing the Word*. This, *if implemented*, will result in the salvation of our soul.

f). And this is exactly the same thing that the Holy Spirit says through Peter – Firstly, we are to lay aside all 5 of the actions that he mentioned...

Then secondly, we are to desire the pure milk of the Word (and *act on* the pure milk of the Word).

This, *if implemented*, will result in the salvation of the soul –

1Peter 2:1

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby [relative to your salvation]...

8). The final phrase in brackets at the end of verse 2 does not appear in our translation, but would be helpful for us to put in, so to speak, so as to grasp the full intent of these verses.

a). The phrase "newborn babes" in 1 Peter 2:2 is a metaphor rather than a literal description. The recipients of Peter's letter were not 'babes in Christ', nor were they only just beginning on their journey to spiritual maturity. Rather, the idea that Peter is getting across is a juxtaposition – there's the 5 'worldly-wise' attributes of verse 1... then there's the innocence of a newborn babe in verse 2.

b) When it comes to the manifestation of sin (as detailed in the first verse), we should be as far removed from the deliberate, calculated participation in these as would be a “newborn babe.” The Lord’s words recorded in Matthew would offer a similar thought –

Matthew 18:3

...and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

c). And to continue with the metaphor... the newborn babe, if it is to grow, needs the unadulterated milk of its mother. And so it would be for us – we need the unadulterated word of God if we are to be properly nourished so as to grow up to salvation, the salvation of the soul.

c). The word translated ‘pure’ in the phrase “desire the pure milk of the word” is the Greek word, ‘adolos’ which literally means ‘unadulterated.’

d). This word uses the same root word we saw earlier in the word “deceit” - ‘dolos.’ Only here it has the Greek letter ‘a (alpha)’ on the front which makes it mean the opposite of what it meant before. Therefore, we are to *desire* the unadulterated Word, in order to grow by the unadulterated Word of God... because there is no *deceitfulness* in the word of God; nor is there *craftiness* in the Word of God.

e). All the philosophies of man and all the greatest thoughts of the greatest writers are tainted with deceit, as they are the product of man’s wisdom. But not so the original written word of God –

1Corinthians 2:13

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.....

And -

I Corinthians 3:19

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness..."

f). It is the unadulterated truth that we need, and we must be on our guard to compare spiritual things with spiritual, because the word of God can be manipulated (*intentionally* and *unintentionally*) by someone mishandling it –

2 Peter 3:16

...as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

g). Now within the context of our metaphor, the 'pure milk of the word' is not a reference to the milk mentioned in the Book of Hebrews -

Hebrew 5:13

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Instead, Peter uses the phrase "pure milk" as a metaphor pointing to that unadulterated word in all its forms - even the solid form, the meat and the strong meat - that is able to save our souls.

h). And our scripture says we are to *desire* this "pure milk." It is to be an intense desire, an overwhelming longing for. There is a hunger implied in this that is way beyond a casual interest.

i). And that which stands in the way of having such a desire as this for the unadulterated word is, amongst other things, the five carnal attributes that are listed in verse 1 - all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking. And this should of course be fairly obvious - we can't fill our minds and hearts with that which is contrary to the word of God and at the same time have a passion for that same word which we have chosen to reject. There must be a laying aside first, and then the passion may follow.

9). The opening 3 verses of Chapter 2 then end with this -

1 Peter 2:3

...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

a). The word 'if' here we should understand in the same way that we saw it used in Chapter 1 - 'since you indeed have tasted...' or 'if you indeed are those [which you are] who have tasted...' . And the word, 'tasted' continues to draw on the metaphor of verse 2 - the word literally means to "taste" or "to eat." This is of course not literal, but refers to personal experience. It is our experience, as we have 'fed' upon the word, that the Lord is gracious.

b).The word for "gracious" is the Greek word 'chrestos' which means "employed," i.e. useful (in manner or morals):--better, easy, good(-ness), gracious, kind.

c). The way this word is used elsewhere in scripture gives us the idea of "excellence."

d). A scripture similar to this idea would be –

Hebrews 6:4

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance,

e). Here in Hebrews we have a warning for those who have tasted the heavenly gift and the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, should they fall away.

f). And although 1 Peter 2:3 doesn't contain an explicit warning, we could see how those to whom Peter writes, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, could then fall away as a result of *not* putting aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking.

g). And so to bring all of this together, we need to lay aside these 5 worldly attributes and then, like a newborn babe, we are to come to the All-Sufficient God to feast upon the nourishment He provides through His word (having already tasted how excellent it is), so that we can grow up to the salvation of the soul.

The imagery in the metaphor used in these verses - that of newborn babes desiring pure milk - contains echoes of one of the names of God in the OT scriptures, where on many occasions He is known as 'El Shaddai', which is most often translated, 'Almighty God'.

h). The first use of this name for God is when God changes Abram's name to Abraham –

Genesis 17:1

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God [El Shaddai]; walk before Me and be blameless.

i). Now what is interesting in this for us is that Shaddai comes from the Hebrew word, 'shad' which means "breast," and could be translated as 'many breasted' in the sense of being all sufficient.

j). This isn't to say that we should think of God as a female, but His nature and character are such that He is all sufficient in the same way a mother would be for her child. We can look at a great example of this found in Isaiah Chapter 66 within the context of God's restoration of Israel –

Isaiah 66:9

"Shall I bring to the point of birth, and not give delivery?" says the LORD. "Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?" says your God. 10 "Be joyful with Jerusalem

and rejoice for her, all you who love her; Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her, 11 That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts [‘shad’], That you may suck [lit. ‘suck milk’] and be delighted with her bountiful bosom." 12 For thus says the LORD, "Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; And you shall be nursed, you shall be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees. 13 "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

k). And this in itself echoes an earlier chapter in Isaiah –

Isaiah 28:9

"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."

l). The scriptures describe the all sufficiency of God with respect to the salvation of the soul –

2 Timothy 3:15

...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

10). And so closing verse 3 in Peter chapter 2, we have a focus on our experience of the excellence of God that we have tasted through the Word of God...the ‘All-Sufficiency’ that is who He is.

So we come to another facet of God’s character as we continue in –

1Peter 2:4

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

a). Christ is (in character) a Living Stone – He’s dependable, reliable, immovable, constant, and the second person of the Trinity, to whom we continue to come –

James 1:17

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

b). The word translated ‘stone’ here is neither petros, nor petra, with which we are familiar, but the word, ‘lithos,’ which is apparently a primary word, meaning “a stone” (literally or figuratively).

c). And this would be an appropriate word to use here, as Christ did not come to the earth as the Petra (that will be reserved for the time of the Kingdom), but He came in the form of a man... and there are a number of occasions when the word lithos is used in respect of human beings, two examples of which are -

Matthew 3:9

"...and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones [lithos]."

d). And then the very next verse in I Peter chapter 2 is this -

1Peter 2:5

...you also, as living stones [lithos]

e). Now Christ, as the 'lithos,' came to Israel as their Messiah and was rejected by the nation. Contained in the Greek word translated, 'rejected' is the idea of "putting to the test" in order to come to a conclusion. So what we realize then is that Christ did not meet the requirements that Israel looked for in their Messiah; therefore, they rejected Him.

f). And here we have another of those comparisons... Christ is rejected by men, but is chosen by God. Interestingly enough, the word "chosen" is not a verb, but a noun. And used right here it takes us back to Him having been foreordained from the foundation of the world to fulfill this role. He is the One that God has chosen - He is The Chosen One. He is also described as precious, because He is dear to God (as we would expect).

g). And His being "chosen" by God would be better translated, 'the chosen One in the sight of God'.

h). Again, another poignant reminder that what man sees and what man values is completely at odds with God's perspective. It might be good for us to keep this in mind.

11). Continuing in I Peter -

1Peter 2:5

...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

a). We are also described as living stones, and the exact same words are used here to describe us as were used to describe Christ. And this is really not that surprising, as the faithfully obedient Christian in pursuit of the Kingdom would match this description, as Paul states in -

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

b). Therefore, for those who are walking according to the spirit and not according to the flesh, these 'stones' are being built into a spiritual house. It is a spiritual house, a structure that lives and is led and is directed by the Spirit.... and is made up of faithfully obedient seekers of the Kingdom from through-out this dispensation.

c). The living stones who are being built up a spiritual house are also to be a holy, a separated, priesthood for the purpose of offering up spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Now we are not priests yet, but this picture represents our present action of separation, in order to offer sacrifices, that can only come out of dying to self and walking in the Spirit-

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

d). This present action, if we continue steadfast in it, will have a future fulfillment at the Judgment Seat when we become King/Priests to our God.

1Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,[kingly priests]

And –

Revelation 1:6

....and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

e). And these sacrifices are acceptable to God. The word acceptable in the original language means a good deal more than our English word would suggest – it literally means “to receive to one’s self with pleasure. “

f). God does not just accept the sacrifices we make through the spirit, but He receives them with pleasure. And it’s no wonder, as it is in the death of our flesh and in our walking in the Spirit that is the very image of the One who is His Son... in whom He is well pleased.

Colossians 3:9

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

12). Continuing in Peter –

1Peter 2:6

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

- a). Again we see, 'therefore', meaning, "In view of the fact that we have just seen that Christ is a Living Stone rejected by men but chosen by God, it is also contained in the Scripture..... "
- b).The word "contained" is the Greek word 'periecho' which means "to hold all around."
- c). Central to the content of scripture is the fact that God has laid in Zion a chief cornerstone, the foundation upon which all else is to be built. This cornerstone is Christ, and he who believes on Him – *believes and then acts on that belief* - will not be deceived or defeated in his hope.
- d). It is not possible to do this and then fall short of the salvation of the soul.
- e). What an encouragement and what a motivation – and here we will continue next time if the Lord is willing.