

THE WAY GOD'S CHILDREN BEHAVE

God's children grow in their knowledge of Him & His will.

Intro: In the first section of Peter's letter, he builds his teaching on the theme of God's family. First he reminds God's people of the blessings of God's family, and then shows them the responsibilities of God's family. Using the earthly family as a paradigm, Peter says God's children should:

Be obedient children imitating their father

Be respectful in their behavior their whole lives

Love their brothers and sisters with a sincere and fervent love

Peter continues that discussion now in chapter two. Let's hear Peter's fourth exhortation to God's people as he shows them the responsibilities of God's family or the way God's children behave.

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1 Pet. 2:1-3)

Several years ago I saw a TV show about children who did not grow normally from the time they were born. One of them was a teenager who weighed only 15 pounds. It was heartbreaking to see such a thing. Of course, every parent expects his children to grow and mature. If signs of growth are not evident, then that parent is concerned and consults the doctor right away. In just the same way, Peter says that God expects his children to grow to maturity.

Peter begins with attitudes that hinder spiritual growth.

Some things must be "put aside" (aorist middle participle) The figure is based on the idea of removing dirty clothes. In this case, these are the dirty garments of sin that are to be replaced with the clean clothes of righteousness. To have had the inner man or "soul" purified or made clean implies the need to remove from the outward manifestations of spiritual uncleanness. Peter enumerates them:

Malice (Gr. *kakiva*) in the general sense used of vice as opposed to virtue; but most lexicographers prefer a more specific definition in this context, something like malice, ill will, malignity.

Guile (Gr. *dovlo*) deceit, cunning, treachery, that which tends to deceive or mislead others to their hurt

Hypocrisy (Gr. *uJpokriqh*)--pretense

Envy (Gr. *fgovno*) jealousy, anger at the good fortune of others

Slander (Gr. *katalali/va*)--evil speaking of others

Greeks words do not preserve the meaning of their etymology; but sometimes they give us some idea about the intention of the word that is coined. This word is made up of "kata" down and the common word for "speaking". It makes us think of modern

figures of speech like “putting someone down”, “cutting someone down” or “talking down to someone”.

The connection between this verse and the one to follow is perhaps not always stressed but it is a very important and profound insight into spiritual growth.

First, God is concerned about our attitude toward others. The idea is not that sins toward God do not matter, but that how we treat others is an evidence of our new relationship with God.

Second, our attitude toward others affects our ability to grow as a Christian. The heart must be prepared for the reception of truth. Nothing can hinder that reception any more than a bad attitude toward other people. But how?

These attitudes tend to characterize those who are judgmental and self-seeking. In such a frame of mind, the word has little chance of changing or directing us because their focus is on others and their short-comings. In addition, they reflect a moral superiority that implies that they do not need teaching

I've seen people like that through the years and typically they "go nowhere" in their spiritual development.

What kind of attitude do we have toward others?

Attitudes that promote growth

A taste of the Lord's goodness or kindness (Greek chrestos).

Using the figure of eating, the Psalmist speaks of the spiritual pleasure and satisfaction God gives His people.

O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! (Ps. 34:8)

So Peter reminds us that Christians have experienced the benevolence or graciousness of God and His blessings.

A taste should make us want more of it. Cf. store, free samples!

Have we had enough of Christianity to appreciate and value what it offers us?

A longing for the truth of God's word.

“Therefore”. The truth of this section draws out of the statement in chapter one that it is through the living and abiding word that we are born. It is also the word by which we are nourished to grow.

“Therefore” we ought to be longing for it!

Like newborns (or newly-born babies)

The exhortation here is not just to the new converts, but to all Christians.

The figure is a simile, not a metaphor. All Christians are being urged to have this characteristic of a newborn.

In this simple comparison, we are urged to be like the newborn in our spiritual appetite.

Long! To yearn for someone or something.

Cf. the new parents who are concerned about caring for their newborn baby. They ask the Dr., “How will we know when it is hungry?”

The object of our longing is the word of God!

Though there are those passages that contrast “milk” with “meat”, this is not one of them. That approach would miss the point of the context here. Here “milk” stands for “all the word of God, not just its elementary truths”. It is called "milk" here based on the analogy of what the newborn longs for.

The translators call it the "sincere" milk of the word. Peter uses the word “logikos,” a word difficult to translate and understand:

It may mean here "not literal or physical" but “spiritual or figurative” milk. i.e. that which “milk” might symbolize in the spiritual realm (i.e. that which nourishes).

Or it may suggest that which feeds the “reason” as opposed to the body.

Or, it may simply refer to that milk which conforms to the nature of the “word of God”.

“Adolon” describes this milk also. It is a negative form of the word translated “guile”.

It could mean what is “unaltered” or “uncorrupted by what is false”.

Or, it may refer to the total truthfulness of God’s word, i.e. that it never deceives or leads us astray. It will always be appropriate or nourishing in all places and all times.

Society may discard its principles; but those wise enough to see its continuous value will be blessed by it.

The result of our feeding on the word

That you may grow to salvation!

"A healthy Christian is a hungry Christian."

It is our attachment to the word that assures our salvation. For in it is the evidence for faith. In it is the guidance to live as we should. In it is the motivation to keep keeping on!

What is our attitude toward truth?

What is the ultimate source of truth for us? It should be the word of God!

Do we insist that it is uncorrupted?

Do we have a longing for it?

What kind of spiritual regimens do we have to learn the word of God better?

How do we feel about “extra” opportunities to study the word?

Conclusion: When we put this series of lessons together we get a good picture of what it means to be a child of God—imitating the Father, respecting Him in everything, loving our brothers and sisters, and growing in the knowledge of

God. To live as a child is to understand our identity as the people of God and to live with hope of the inheritance God will one day give His true children.