

## Fact Sheet for “The Pure Spiritual Milk” 1 Peter 2:1-12

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05/01/2016

We have already traversed 1 Peter 1:14-16 and verse 22. So Holy living would certainly be in the context of chapter 2. We now come to the next chapter. 1 Peter 2:1-5 is actually one sentence in the original. This means that the thoughts presented here are even more intimately connected than those in a whole chapter. So look for those connections.

ESV <sup>1</sup> ¶ **So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.**

These five sins of attitude and speech can drive wedges between believers and were obviously posing some difficulties for the exiles Peter was writing to. They are the opposite of the holiness Peter has already written about. He now continues his sentence.

<sup>2</sup> **Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation--  
<sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**<sup>1</sup>

In 1 Peter 2:3 “good” translates a word that means *kind, loving, benevolent*. God’s character is the opposite of the five sins mentioned in the first verse. Peter says “**long for the pure spiritual milk**”. Now, here’s the subtlety. The KJV, NKJV, and New American Standard all add “of the word”. This is a phrase not in the original. It is an interpretive translation partly inspired by verse 8... “**They stumble because they disobey the word**”. There are also the ending verses of chapter one (verses 22-25). Peter reminded his readers that they were born again through the word of God. But is the pure spiritual milk that Peter writes about just the Word of God, or is it more than that?

In Hebrews the illustration of milk is somewhat linked with “the word” (Hebrews 5:12-14). But consider carefully that passage. In Hebrews the person who lives on milk is unskilled in the word. In 1 Peter, *if* the milk *is* the word, then Peter is urging them to long for the milk. The one other passage that uses a similar illustration of milk does not mention the word (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). And even in 1 Corinthians milk was a reference to their spiritual immaturity.

If Peter, as he uses this illustration, has in mind that the pure spiritual milk is just the Word of God then he is encouraging his readers to study it. Studying the Word of God is a good thing no matter what Peter’s thoughts are. But could Peter have had something else in mind? If the pure spiritual milk is the opposite of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander then it is righteousness that Peter was urging them to long for, a righteousness that is based on the Word of God. This is borne out by the end of Peter’s sentence...

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<sup>1</sup> See Ps. 34:8.

<sup>4</sup> **As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,**  
<sup>5</sup> **you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,**  
**to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

“As you come to Him” is not referring to the initial response of a sinner when he comes to Christ for salvation. It refers to a personal, habitual approach of the believer to God in holiness of life. What are the spiritual sacrifices we offer to God but holiness of life... righteousness. They are our life choices based on the Word of God. This is what Peter was urging them to long for. This was the pure spiritual milk he spoke of. We do this by making Christ the cornerstone of our attitudes and actions.

<sup>6</sup> **For it stands in Scripture:**

**"BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION A STONE,  
A CORNERSTONE CHOSEN AND PRECIOUS,  
AND WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."** <sup>2</sup>

<sup>7</sup> **So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,**

**"THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS REJECTED  
HAS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE,"** <sup>3</sup>

<sup>8</sup> **and**

**"A STONE OF STUMBLING,  
AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE."** <sup>4</sup>

**They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.**

Holiness and righteousness are clearly based on the Word of God but Peter is encouraging us to long for the application of that word to our life.

<sup>9</sup> ¶ **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** <sup>10</sup> **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

We proclaim the excellencies of God not only through our words, but also through our lives. Am I off base? I don't think so because of how Peter sums-up this section of his letter.

<sup>11</sup> ¶ **Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.** <sup>12</sup> **Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.**

Now let's re-visit the translation of the KJV, NKJV, and New American Standard. Translations are done with great care. I'm certain that what these translators were after was the *application* of the Word of God to our lives, not just the head knowledge of it. They also were attempting to show that good application was based solidly on that word. So whether you have a translation that includes that phrase or one that doesn't the meaning is the same. Peter urges his readers of that day and us too long for the application of God's word in our everyday lives.

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<sup>2</sup> Is. 28:16.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 118:22.

<sup>4</sup> Is. 8:14.