

1 Peter 2:1-3

1Pe 2:1 (NKJV) **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.**

Once again, we must understand these verses in [1 Peter 2:1-3](#) in light of the command to “**love one another fervently**” in [1 Peter 1:22](#). In looking at these verses, there are very important principles that should be obvious. The first is that if our relationship with God is not right, it will always impact our relationship with people. Not being able to get along with other believer’s is evidence that we are not rightly related to God. The listing of terms that Peter provides in v1 is not a pleasant listing at all. Each of the words listed have meanings that can obviously hinder a believer’s relationship with God and their relationship with other people. For instance, “**malice**” means evil, wickedness, depravity. The word “**guile**” means a trick, to bait someone, to be deceitful and crafty in dealing with someone. “**Hypocrisy**” means to not be sincere, but rather to just be acting. “**Envy**” means to be jealous and have ill-will towards someone. Then lastly, “**evil speaking**” is one Greek word and means to be a backbiter and to say things about people in an evil way.¹ Now, I went over those very quickly just to give us a flavor of what Peter says will hinder a believer’s relationship both with other people and with God. There are many other areas as well that will do the same thing, but apparently these particular attributes characterized some in the audiences to which Peter was writing. The obvious point that Peter is making here is that undealt with sin in a believer’s life will destroy their appetite for the Word of God. The more that believers try to find their satisfaction and fulfillment in the world, the less appetite they will have for the things of God. Once the world fills my heart, the things of God simply become a distraction.² The verb that governs what believers are to do with these attributes is the verb “**laying aside**” or “**putting away**” or “**ridding yourselves**”, and each one of those terms refers specifically to taking off very dirty garments. That is the picture that Peter is providing and painting. So, if any of these negative attributes are in our life, then we are to simply take them off, lay them aside, get rid of them.

Secondly, a believer’s relationship to God is directly related to their relationship to His Word. If a believer is not rightly related to God’s Word in their life, then they simply cannot grow. It does not matter how nice they are, how sincere they seem, or how often they may attend church. The principle is simple - spiritual growth is always a direct by-product of the Word of God. We have all heard of two kinds of relationships - a horizontal relationship with people and a vertical relationship with God. The point that is often made is that if we do not have a good relationship with people horizontally that it deeply impacts our vertical relationship with God. Obviously, God has spiritually wired believers so that their horizontal relationships with people and their vertical relationship with Himself are deeply connected to each other. I.e., I cannot be good at one and bad at the other simply because my relationship to people and my relationship to God are intimately bonded and related to one another. If we do not think much of each other, it is extremely doubtful that we will have any kind of meaningful relationship with God. However, that perspective is exactly the opposite of what it should be. The primary relationship in a believer’s life is their relationship to Christ. That is the focus of the Christian life – being rightly related to God. Until a believer is rightly related to God, only then can they be rightly related to other believers. Very often when we see a believer who simply does not seem to be able to get along with other believers and they treat them with a kind of casual disdain and indifference, what

that actually identifies is the kind of relationship that they have with God. John stated this reality in [1 John 2:9](#),

1Jn 2:9 (NKJV) He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

I.e., our relationship with other believers (“brother”) is one of the evidences of whether or not we are actually saved. [1 John 4:20](#) reiterates the same reality when it says,

1Jn 4:20 (NKJV) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

So, anyone who has any interest whatsoever in growing spiritually has to pay attention to these verses because what Peter is addressing is the genuineness or lack of genuineness in a believer’s relationship to God, and he is saying that the evidence of that relationship is seen in how we treat and relate to other believers.

Obviously, the negative attributes in v1 that we quickly reviewed are attributes for the Christian that will simply impede any kind of spiritual growth that they may want to have. If any of these negative traits characterize a believer’s Christian life, then they simply will not grow spiritually. It does not matter how many times they attend church every week or how often they may pray, if these qualities are asserting themselves in their lives, they cannot grow spiritually. It is utterly foolish on our part to expect that we can be a relational garbage can and still grow spiritually. We have all known people who attend church week after week after week, but they put you on pins and needles when you are around them. They are over-sensitive, touchy, grumpy, quick-tempered, moody, and irritable to anything that anyone says. Their speech is always negative and they make cutting and sarcastic comments about other people. They are actually mean to people and unenjoyable to be around, and the result is that they never grow spiritually no matter how many Bible studies they may attend. When I meet people like that, it always, it always makes me wonder whether or not they are even saved.

Maybe we should say all of this in the opposite way in that the kind of relationship that we have with God is reflected in our relationship with other believers, or that our relationship with other believers is actually a reflection of our relationship with God. If we, for whatever reason, harbor and conceal ill feelings for another believer, there are negative consequences that will surface in our life. Eventually harsh feelings and sentiments will make their way into our speech. Sooner or later, whatever is embedded in our heart will make its way into what we say and ultimately how we treat someone. It seems apparent in these verses that one of the things that Peter is saying is that the list of unwanted attributes that he is describing will eventually place a kind of spiritual strangle hold on a believer’s spiritual life and literally suffocate and throttle down any kind of spiritual growth that God intends for them.

Now, in looking at [1 Peter 2:1-3](#), there are two grammatical elements that are not apparent in the English language. The first element is that the term “word” does not actually appear in the Greek text. The Greek text reads like this. It says,

“as newborn babes, the spiritual pure milk desire, that by it you may grow into salvation”.

The reason that the translators use the term “**word**” is because it comes from the Greek word for “**spiritual**”, or “*logikon*”. The only other place where this particular Greek word is used is in [Romans 12:1](#) which says,

Ro 12:1 (NKJV) **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 (spiritual – “*logikon*”) service.**

Someone is going to correctly ask the logical question – “*Then why did the translators translate it as ‘of the word’ and not as ‘spiritual’?*” If the actual word means “**spiritual**” or “**reasonable**”, then what gives the translators the freedom to translate it as “**the pure milk of the word**”? Generally, it is assumed that they did so for three specific reasons. The first is that the Word of God is the only source for the pure spiritual milk for which believers are to hunger and thirst. Secondly, the Greek word “*logikon*” is derived from the Greek word “*logos*” which refers to the Word of God itself.³ We get our English word “logical” from this particular Greek word “*logikon*”, so it could actually be translated as “**pure logical milk**” because it is referring to the spiritual nourishment found in the Word of God.⁴ An actual third consideration is that [1 Peter 1:23](#) is referring specifically to the “**word of God**”, and is still within the context because of the word “**Therefore**” in [1 Peter 2:1](#) which ties those two passages together. In the original language, there were no chapter divisions, so the interpretation is a very reasonable way to handle the passage. Obviously, based on all of Scripture, the Word of God is the believer’s spiritual nourishment.

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, ep.

² Wuest, *1 Peter 2:2*, 51.

³ MacArthur, ep.

⁴ Zodhiates, 923.

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