

Crave the Pure Milk of the Word

An exegesis of 1 Peter 1:13 - 2:3

[Delivered to the Fox River Valley Pastoral Conference, September 15, 1992]

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BACKGROUND

- i. Author: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1).
- ii. Place and Time: Written from "Babylon"(cf. 5:13), which is almost certainly Rome, cp. Rev. 17:9-10. Written during the reign of Nero, probably around 63/64 AD. Peter was martyred during this reign, no later than 68 AD.
- iii. Recipients: "To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1:1). Jewish and Gentile Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor.
- iv. Content: "A Translator's Handbook" (UBS) suggests this outline for our section:

The Christian Life, 1:13-2:3

- A. The Holiness of God as the Foundation of the Christian life (1:13-16).
- B. The Sacrifice of Christ as a Reason for Proper Conduct (1:17-21).
- C. Proper Relationships Among Believers (1:22-2:3).

While much of this section of the epistle deals with our sanctified life, Peter motivates us with a clear Law/Gospel sermon, and shows us that all of our Hope and Holiness comes from Jesus Christ, who has given us new birth through his Holy Word and Baptism. We suggest this outline, which may be used as a sermon's theme and parts:

Crave the Pure Milk of the Word

- I. It provides Holiness in Christ (1:13-21).
- II. It provides enduring Love for Neighbor (22-25).
- III. It provides the Goodness of the Lord (2:1-3).

- v. See Pastor Martin Spaude's exegesis of 1:1-12 for more background information, delivered on September 17, 1991.

THE EXEGESIS

I. Crave the Pure Milk of the Word, It provides Holiness in Christ (1:13-21).

V. 13

Διὸ ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ἀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν, νήφοστες, τελείως ἐλπίζατε ἐπὶ τὴν φερομένην ὑμῖν χάριν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Translation

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, being self-controlled; set your hope entirely on the grace that is being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Syntax

Διὸ "Therefore", a Christian's life of sanctification is based on the Gospel motivation provided in verses 1-12.

ἀναζωσαμένοι aor. mid. ptc. "gird up, gather up, tighten up" lit. "Gird up the loins of your minds." Eastern way of saying: Prepare your minds for action.

νηφοντες pres. act. ptc. "being sober", positively: "Keep yourself under control." negatively: "Do not let yourself go in every direction."

τελείως ἐλπίσατε aor. act. impv. "set your hope entirely upon the grace..."

φερομένην pres. pass. ptc. "which is being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ." Note the present tense: God keeps giving us grace.

ἐν ἡ ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ "in the revelation of Jesus Christ." Truly Jesus is presently revealed to us in the Gospel, but Peter is probably emphasizing his second coming. Cp. 1:7 and 4:13 which use the same phrase.

Commentary

1 Peter is called the Epistle of Hope. The object on which our hopeful gaze is to be focused is nothing less than the salvation which is already assured for baptized Christians and is about to be finally accomplished on the Last Day, when Christ will come again in glory. Peter calls this "grace", God's love that is presently being given to us through the pure milk of the Word.

Vv. 14-16

ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς, μὴ συσχηματιζόμενοι ταῖς πρότερον ἐν τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ ὑμῶν ἐπιθυμίαις, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν καλέσαντα ὑμᾶς ἅγιον καὶ αὐτοὶ ἅγιοι ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ, διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἐξήθητε, διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] Ἄγιοι ἐσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιος [εἰμι].

Translation

As obedient children, do not conform yourselves to the lusts you formerly had in your ignorance. But just as he who has called you is holy, be holy in all conduct; for it is written: "Be holy for I am holy."

Syntax

ὡς τέκνα ὑπακοῆς "As obedient children", Genitive of quality

μὴ συσχηματιζόμενοι pres. mid. ptc. Translated with the imperative force from "be holy in all conduct" (v. 15), "do not conform yourselves..."

ἀλλὰ "but, rather" A strong adversative.

καλέσαντα aor. act. ptc. "just as he who called you is holy," The Lord's Divine initiative for saving humanity is evident here.

γενήθητε aor. passive inv. from γίνομαι, be born, begotten, be made, become.

ἀναστροφή "conduct, way of life."

verse 16 A quotation of Leviticus 11:44,45/ 19:2/ 20:7.

Commentary

This section of verses (14-16) at once leads us to repentance and points us to Christ as our only source of holiness. Our human flesh is steeped in ignorance and lust; we have no hope but to cling to the holiness that only God can provide in Christ. And he does provide it abundantly with his calling and sanctifying us in the one true faith. The Third Article tells us how we became obedient children, and how we attain the holiness the Lord demands through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins...

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers..."

Peter's call for sanctified living in all conduct is rooted in the calling of the Lord through the gospel and in the holiness the Lord provides in conversion. And so you and I, dear brother pastors, preach the same message: the Lord demands perfect holiness (the FIRST use of the Law - as mirror), holiness in all conduct. And he gives us that holiness because of the blood of Christ. Therefore as obedient children who love their Father, we rely on his power and strength and wisdom to lead godly and upright lives. "It means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever. (From Luther's Small Catechism, Holy Baptism, Fourth.)" Crave the pure milk of the Word, it provides holiness in Christ.

V. 17

Καὶ εἰ πατέρα ἐπικαλεῖσθε τὸν ἀπροσωπολήμπτως κρίνοντα κατὰ τὸ ἐκάστου ἔργον, ἐν φόβῳ τὸν τῆς παροικίας ὑμῶν χρόνον ἀναστράφητε,

Translation

And since you are calling on the Father who judges without respect to persons, according to the work of each man, pass the time of your sojourning here in reverent fear.

Syntax

καὶ εἰ "And since"; lit. "And if".

ἐπικαλεῖσθε present mid. ind. "And since you are calling on..."

πατέρα "the Father". The word is anarthrous (without an article) to stress the quality of God as our Father.

ἀπροσωπολήμπτως "who judges without respect to persons"; lit.: "who is judging impartially". Note the present tense of κρίνοντα pres. act ptc.

ἀναστράφητε aor. pass. inv. "conduct" the time of your sojourning here in reverent fear.

παροικίας "temporary residency", a place where one is not granted the rights of citizenry. NIV= "live as strangers here in fear."

Commentary

Though we are the Father's children, we are not yet in the Father's home; we are still on the way, pilgrims and strangers in the world. This journey may seem like a long and tedious one, yet it is a sojourning in time – χρόνον. It is not to be compared to that eternal dwelling in our home above (cf. 1:1-12), yet there is a constant danger of doing something in the time of sojourning that may make it impossible to arrive at the goal, something contrary to the will of the Father, something that may cause one's feet to stray from the narrow path, that may cause the Father to judge the sentence of condemnation on the wayward pilgrim. Therefore, walk in reverent fear all the days of your sojourning, fearing to rouse your Father's displeasure or the Judge's condemnation of death. St. Paul writes "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling... (Philippians 2:12)." Yet, lest this become a fear to slavery, driving us away from God and filling our hearts with hatred toward him and an unwillingness to do His will, it should at all times be mingled with fervent love of him who is always our Father. The Father, our Judge, - fear him and do not sin. The Judge, our Father, love him and do his will.

Peter is a faithful pastor, an experienced Seelsorger, understanding rightly to divide the word of Truth, preaching and applying both Law and Gospel effectively.

It is also of tremendous blessing for us to preach to our parishoners the truth that God is impartial in his judging. He is not a respecter of persons. He is not impressed with the "do-gooder" who relies on his works for salvation, nor will he snub the most vile sinner who repents. We are all in the same boat: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:23,24)."

Vv. 15,19

εἰδότες ὅτι οὐ φθαρτοῖς, ἀργυρίῳ ἢ χρυσίῳ ἐλυτρώθητε ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαραδότου, ἀλλὰ τιμίῳ αἵματι ὡς ἀμνοῦ ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου Χριστοῦ

Translation

For you know that it is not with perishable things, with silver or with gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or defect.

Syntax

εἰδότες perd. act. ptc. from οἶδα "For you know that. . ." You know from the doctrine taught you.

φθαρτοῖς "with perishable things..." Dative of means or instrument.

ἐλυτρώθητε aor. pass. ind. "that you were redeemed" λυτρόω = release, to be freed by ransom, to be delivered by payment of a price, to redeem, to buy back.

ματαιίας "empty way of life..." Empty, vain, that which lacks reality. This word is used in the LXX for Ecclesiastes' "Meaningless, meaningless!"

ἀλλὰ strong adversative "But with thre precious blood of Christ..."

τιμίῳ αἵματι "precious blood" again anarthrous to stress quality. Dative of instrument.

Commentary

This beautiful passage has been committed to memory by many Christians because of its clear and eternal truth that salvation is from Christ alone, who atoned for the sin of the world. For the Jew who felt (feels) that salvation is a privileged heritage granted to the children of Abraham (children by race), Peter says this is empty thinking. To the Gentile who felt (feels) that there is still some magic left in pagan rites and beliefs, if only a little, Peter says this is empty thinking too.

Much could be said at this point about the empty way of life without Christ, indeed it is meaningless. We do not have to look very far to see it in 1992. Secular humanism leads not to a better world, but only to empty failures of the human race. In the visible church, the Reformed cling to the empty ways of the rationalists, while Rome's syncretism promotes empty pagan idolatry and empty guilt motivation. The REALITY is found in Christ, who shed his holy, precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish or defect. Crave the pure milk of the Word, it provides holiness in Christ because of his precious blood.

As pastors confronted with the problem of our parishioners struggling with empty ways of life, shall we point them to human solutions in our counseling, or to the imperishable blood of Christ? It seems more and more criticism is being levied against the parish pastor's ability to "counsel" today's problem cases, as if the solutions are just beyond our grasp. *Au contrarie*. As a Lutheran pastor, you have been equipped with the only solution to real problems: the message of the Lamb without blemish or defect. So when it comes to true counseling, leave the books steeled in the empty way of life on the shelf and reach for the real help, the Scripture and our Confessions. Crave the pure milk of the Word! It turns meaningless lives into the fullness of God through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Vv 20, 21

προεγνωσμένου μὲν πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, φανερωθέντος δὲ ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων δι'
ὑμᾶς τοὺς δι' αὐτοῦ πιστοὺς εἰς θεὸν τὸν ἐγείραντα αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ δόξαν αὐτῷ δόντα,
ὥστε τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν καὶ ἐλπίδα εἶναι εἰς θεόν.

Translation

He was foreknown from the foundation of the world, but manifested in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God.

Syntax

προεγνωσμένου pf. pass. ptc (Gen. Absolute); "He was foreknown. . ."

δι' ὑμᾶς "for your sake." Christ is manifested for our advantage, for our sake.

ὥστε result clause.

εἶναι pres. inf. Infinitive used to express intended result. "So that your faith...might be in God."

Commentary

The LORD has always been the Savior-God of humanity but he has been manifested in these last times for our sake; manifested in the pure Word; manifested in the washing of Baptism; manifested in the body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper; manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord. Does someone wish to know more about God? Let him learn and believe Jesus Christ, manifest in the pure milk of the Word. Let him learn that Jesus is the Almighty Savior-God from eternity; who was, who is, and who is to come world without end!

II. Crave the Pure Milk of the Word - It provides enduring love for Neighbor.

Vv. 22-25

Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον, ἐκ [καθαρᾶς] καρδίας ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε ἐκτενῶς ἀναγεγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος. διότι

πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος

καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῆς ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου·

ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος

καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν·

τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

Translation

Now that you have purified your souls by obeying the truth unto sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart. For you have been born again, not by perishable seed, but by imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For,

"All flesh is as grass,

and all the glory of man is like a flower of the field.

The grass withers and the flower falls away,

but the word of the Lord endures forever."

And this is the word preached as Good News to you.

Syntax

ἡγνικότες act. ptc. "Now that you have purified your souls..." The pf. tense indicates a completed state or certain condition.

ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας "by obeying the truth. . ." Objective gen., the gospel.

ἀγαπήσατε aor. act. inv. "love one another earnestly from a pure heart."

ἀναγεγεννημένοι pf. pass. ptc. "For you have been born again..."

διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος "through the living and enduring word of God."

"Living and enduring" are present act. ptc.

ῥῆμα "word", also translated "utterance", cp. λόγος in v23. Peter is quoting Isaiah 40:6-8 using the LXX which translated רבד with ῥῆμα.

εὐαγγελισθὲν aor. pass. ptc. "to preach Good News" Mng.: "And this is the word, the Gospel, which was preached to you."

Commentary

At our baptisms, our souls were purified by the washing of rebirth. In conversion, Christians are "obeying the truth unto salvation", obeying the Lord's "gospel imperative" to believe on His Name. In baptism we are sanctified, made holy because of the blood of Jesus. We are given the ability to love God and neighbor by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we pray "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," we ask the Lord to give us earnest love for our neighbors, a love which springs from a "pure" heart cleansed by God. Our new birth is not rooted in any human decision or fleshly choice, but in the imperishable seed of the Word, described by Peter as "living, and enduring." To emphasize the point that rebirth is from God alone and *sola gratia*, Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6-8.

As preachers of the Gospel, it is therefore our privilege and duty to lead God's people away from the pseudo-solutions of mankind, and direct them to the living and enduring Word of God. Crave the pure milk of the Word, it provides enduring love for the neighbor who might otherwise be unlovable: husbands and wives may now have enduring marriages because of the Word; children may now have enduring respect for their elders because of the Word; pastors and parishoners may love each other from a pure heart because of the word of Christ. So we all agree and rejoice, then, that the key to enduring brotherly love is found in the living and enduring Word of the Lord.

III. Crave the Pure Milk of the Word - It provides the Goodness of the Lord (2:1-3).

2:1-3

Ἀποθέμενοι οὖν πᾶσαν κακίαν καὶ πάντα δόλον καὶ ὑποκρίσεις καὶ φθόνους καὶ πάσας καταλαλιάς, ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα ἐπιποθήσατε, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν, εἰ ἐγεύσασθε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος.

Translation

Having therefore rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind, as newborn babes, crave the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into salvation; since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Syntax

Ἀποθέμενοι aor. mid. ptc. from ἀποτίθημι "Having therefore rid yourselves..." It is possible to translate using the imperative ("Rid yourselves of all malice..."), but the indicative translation we have chosen here fits the context of new birth nicely

κακίαν "all malice" or evil.

δόλον "all deceit" or lying. It comes from a verb meaning "to catch with bait."

ὑποκρίσεις "hypocrisy." Again, God is an impartial Judge who looks with favor only upon the sanctified heart.

φθόνους "envy" or jealousy.

καταλαλιάς "slander" or speaking against someone. These sins against the 8th, 9th and 10th Commandments are rooted mostly in the heart, which can only be renewed through the touch of God's forgiveness in Christ.

ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη "as newborn babes" whose only source of nutrition and life is its mother's milk...

ἐπιποθήσατε "crave", aor. act. inv.

ἄδολον "pure" or unadulterated.

λογικὸν ... γάλα "the milk of the word." λογικὸν is used only twice in the NT - translated as "spiritual" in Rom. 12:1: "this is your spiritual act of worship." In this context (2:1-3) we can hardly remove its connection to the Word (λόγον) thus "Crave the pure milk of the word..."

ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ ἀυξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν "in order that by it you may grow up into salvation." Verb is aor. pass. subj. The Greek for this phrase is the standard term for the desired growth of children.

κρηστὸς "food" or goodness, kindness, useful, gracious. "since you have tasted (aor. mid. ind.) that the Lord is good", cp. Psalm 34.

Commentary

In chapter Two, Peter compares Christians to babies, living stones of the Temple, chosen people, a royal priesthood and a people belonging to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Here we are called to crave the pure milk of the word as newborn babies crave mother's milk. Newborns cannot survive without it, and must rely upon parental care for survival. No matter how long a person has been a Christian, he or she must still crave only the pure Word of God. He cannot survive without it; it meets all of our needs just as mother's milk meets all the needs of a baby. Nothing need be added, nothing can be taken away.

Dear pastor, crave the pure milk of the Word in all you do: in the study, in the pulpit, in your writings. Let God's people know that "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Dt 3:3)," since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

We have tasted this goodness in the forgiveness of sins, in the study of the scriptures, in the blessings of our Lutheran Confessions. We crave this goodness, we share the goodness of the pure milk of the Word, pure milk such as Psalm 34:8-10,

"Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes
refuge in him.
Fear the LORD, you his saints,
for those who fear him lack nothing.

The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no
good thing."