



**1 PETER 1:17 – 2:10**  
**THE THOUGHTLESS LIFE OR THE**  
**COHERENT LIFE**

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Library Bible Study

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**1 Peter 1: 18-21**  
**Is There Purpose in Your Life?**

- The holy life is coherent, with thought and purpose.
  - *...but hard to believe?*
- The life without God is imitative. V 18.
  - *...but harder to believe? Clip 9:45-17 The Battle for the Heart*

2

## How Do We Grow in Our Salvation?

- Crave pure spiritual milk. 2:2. “addicted” page 56.
- The word of the Lord always presents the Lord of the word. Pg 58.
- The first word preached- “Salvation is found in no one else” Acts 4:11,12. SP page 62 The apostolic word
- He is the cornerstone- “Anyone who rejects this stone...and anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. 6:11).

Even when Peter lists the evils from which they have been cleansed (2:1), he is describing what has already happened to them as God's gospel has changed their hearts: 'Having therefore put off all wickedness, all deceit, pretences and jealousies, and all recriminations . . .<sup>52</sup> Of course, by reminding Christians of what their conversion means, Peter is indirectly warning them against the sins from which they have been delivered. Yet he states what is already the case. The filthy garments of their past have been removed; they have put them off in receiving the gospel of Christ (cf. Zech. 3:3ff.). In later liturgies, perhaps in reference to his scriptural language, candidates for baptism removed their clothing before entering the water and donned a new set after the ceremony.<sup>53</sup>

The evils from which Christians have been converted are the very opposite of the strenuous love that Peter has pressed upon them. They are contrasted with the fruits of the Spirit and the outworking of sound teaching. Similar lists are found in other letters.<sup>54</sup> Peter first mentions evil in a general sense, then deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy and defamation. Pagan moralists, too, recognized and sometimes listed such vices.<sup>55</sup> They are easily identified as poisons in social life; they are not so easily set aside! Yet Christians have been delivered from them by the power of the gospel; they have cast them away.

Christians who have been given new birth by the word must also grow. They are cleansed by the converting power of the gospel, but they must mature in their new life. What will advance their growth? What will deepen their love? The same truth of God that gave them birth also nourishes them. If the word of God is water to wash us, it is also milk to build better bodies in Christ. Christians must be addicted to the Bible.

*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk* (2:2). The wonder of a mother at the birth of a child becomes delight at the readiness of her infant to feed. Any delay at feeding time brings a powerful reaction from the tiny person. For an infant, milk is not a fringe benefit. Peter writes to

young churches; he has in view many who have only recently confessed their faith in Christ and been baptized. Some were no doubt senior citizens; they are nevertheless newborn in Christ. They must have an infant's desperate desire for basic nourishment.

Peter is not the first to compare the receiving of truth to feeding. In the hymns of the Dead Sea community the Teacher of Righteousness likens his disciples to suckling babies with open mouths.<sup>56</sup> Both Paul and the author of Hebrews use the figure of milk to describe the initial teaching of those who are babies in Christ.<sup>57</sup> Peter, however, is not thinking of milk as an infant's diet to be replaced by meat. In Peter's figure the milk of the abiding word is simply the Christian's necessary food.

The word *logikon*, translated *spiritual* in the NIV, may mean simply 'metaphorical' in contrast to 'literal'. It may also mean 'reasonable' or that which is related to the 'word' (*logos*). Since Peter has just been describing the living *logos* by which Christians are given new birth, it would seem that he is using *logikon* in that sense: the 'milk of the word', as the AV has it.

Peter commends a milk product that is free from additives. The word of God abides without preservatives. Consumers in the ancient world were well aware that milk or wine could be watered down; when Paul says that he was not a huckster of the word of God, he alludes to the common practice of selling diluted wine.<sup>58</sup> Peter uses a word that was employed by merchants to describe *pure*, unadulterated products.<sup>59</sup> The term contrasts with the *deceit* that Christians have renounced (2:1). While this letter does not contain the warnings against false teaching that we find in 2 Peter, it is clear that the growth of new Christians must be in the truth of the apostolic word.<sup>60</sup> Peter's letter sets forth the truth that new Christians must earnestly desire. *The word of the Lord . . . that was preached* (1:25) is more than an abbreviated formula describing the way of salvation. It is the full gospel message that we find in this letter, grounded in the revelation of

<sup>52</sup> Kelly's translation, p. 81. See his defence of it, p. 84.

<sup>53</sup> See the passages cited in Kelly, who thinks that at least the 'putting off' of clothing before baptism was seen to be symbolical as early as the apostolic age (p. 84).

<sup>54</sup> Rom. 1:29–31; 2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:9–11.

<sup>55</sup> See the references in Selwyn, p. 153.

<sup>56</sup> 1QH 7:21, in DSS. As Kelly and Bénétreau point out, it is unlikely that Peter borrowed the figure from the mystery religions, in some of which initiates were given milk (Kelly, pp. 85f.; Bénétreau, p. 115). The milk and honey given to the baptized in third-century Christianity (continued in the Coptic church) appear to refer to the abundance of Canaan (Exod. 3:8).

<sup>57</sup> 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12.

<sup>58</sup> 2 Cor. 2:17; cf. Isa. 1:22, LXIX; 2 Pet. 2:3.

<sup>59</sup> Kelly cites papyrus inscriptions where the word has this technical meaning (p. 85).

<sup>60</sup> 2 Pet. 1:16; 2:1. Paul also calls for teaching the 'sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ', 1 Tim. 6:3, ASV; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:13.

the Old Testament and expanded in the sweep of apostolic teaching. Simple formulas of gospel truth are to be prized, and Peter presents us with some of the most memorable in the New Testament.<sup>61</sup> But the gospel is unique in richness as well as simplicity. The milk that Peter recommends is 'the whole will of God' (Acts 20:27).

How does growth take place through the word of God? The appeals and exhortations of the gospel are grounded in the proclamation and instruction of the gospel. Growth is always growth in faith. The word of the Lord constantly presents the Lord of the word. Coming to the word is coming to the Lord. This central truth cuts both ways. We cannot detach the word from the Lord and, like the scribes and the Pharisees, profess to cling to the Scriptures while refusing the Lord. On the other hand, neither can we profess obedience to the Lord while rejecting his word. To separate a living Lord from a 'dead' book or a divine Lord from a merely human book is to reject the apostolic gospel. For Peter, God's word is *living* as well as enduring (1:23). When Paul describes how the church is built up in faith, he begins with the ministry of the word. By the word the Lord's servant is equipped for the rebuilding of the saints.<sup>62</sup>

The goal of our growth is *salvation*, the full salvation in Christ that the gospel proclaims, and for which we are kept (1:5).<sup>63</sup> Again we see the alpha and omega of our hope. Peter writes to those who have already been given new birth by the word, who have already come to the Lord and *tasted that he is good*.<sup>64</sup> Theirs is a sure hope, for their inheritance is kept for them and they are kept for it. Yet their hope is also future; they do not merely wait for it, they grow towards it, like flowers towards the sun. Faith is purified, love is intensified, grace is tasted as we are tested.

Peter again shows that the Lord who gave us new birth by the word also gives us growth by the word. The word for *grow up* is in the passive: we grow only as we are 'grown' by the milk of God's word. Peter and Paul may plant and water, but it is God who gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:5–7).

What quickens our desire for the life-giving word of God? Peter answers that we know the taste. Our culture makes the image clear; advertisers spend millions to promote the taste of a drink. Reading the Bible is addictive

<sup>61</sup> For example, 2:24; 1:19–21.

<sup>62</sup> Eph. 4:11–12; 2 Tim. 3:15–17.

<sup>63</sup> 'To salvation' (ksv) is a more accurate translation than *in your salvation* (niv).

<sup>64</sup> The Greek reads 'if you have tasted', but the niv translates the sense well. See the 'if' in 1:17 (nksv) and Eph. 4:21 (ksv). See Heb. 6:4–6.

when we begin to get the taste. What we taste in Scripture is not simply the variety and power of the language. What we taste is the Lord. Peter refers to Psalm 34:8: 'Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.'<sup>65</sup> Peter omits 'and see' in his reference. Perhaps he would keep just the tasting in view; he knows that those to whom he writes have not seen the Lord as he has. Yet, not having seen him, they love him in the same personal way. They have found the Lord in the word of the gospel, or, better, he has found them by his living word.

Those who read the word of God, and surely those who teach it, must never forget why the word is given and whom it reveals. The word shows us that *the Lord is good*; his words are sweeter than honey to our taste because in them the Lord gives himself to us.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See above, p. 7 n. 27, for allusions to Ps. 34 in this letter.

<sup>66</sup> Ps. 119:103, Spicq, *Epîtres*: 'The accent is on the verb "to taste" which signified at the same time "to savour" (Heb. 6:4–5) and "to swallow, to assimilate" with a nuance of certitude and personal possession (Luke 9:27) (p. 81). See Ezek. 3:3.

of the Old Testament, the temple as the house of God.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah speaks the word of the Lord against the princes of Jerusalem who foolishly suppose that their city is secure against the threat of invasion. They speak as though they had a treaty with death and hell so that the lethal waters of the abyss could never sweep over them. God declares that their pride is no refuge, their covenant with death no security. Only one edifice can stand against the storm of destruction: God's building, established upon one sure foundation stone.

It is this figure that Jesus used when he said to Peter that the gates of hell could not prevail against his church.<sup>3</sup> In the word of Jesus, he was himself the builder and Peter an apostolic rock of foundation; in the figure that Peter takes from Isaiah, Christ is the *precious* and tested *cornerstone*. In the building technique from which the figure is drawn, the cornerstone of the foundation would be the first stone to be put in place. Since both the angle of the walls and the level of the stone courses would be extended from it, the cornerstone must be square and true. Large and precious stones were cut for the foundation of Solomon's temple.<sup>4</sup>

The passage Peter quotes had already been seen to be messianic: some Greek versions of Isaiah had translated, 'He that believeth on him shall by no means be ashamed' (adding the words 'on him').<sup>5</sup> Peter identifies the cornerstone with Christ. He calls him a *living Stone*; he would not have us think of his Lord as inert marble! Christ is the living Stone, however, not just because he is a living person, but because he is alive from the dead as the risen Lord. God set his cornerstone in place by the resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

Christ the foundation stone fulfils the image of the temple as God's house. God sets him in place in spite of his rejection by the builders. Peter knew well the passage from Psalm 118:22 that he quotes in verse 7. He had been troubled to hear Jesus cite that scripture after his parable about the wicked tenants (Matt. 21:33ff.). What could Jesus mean? He spoke of

<sup>2</sup> See E. P. Clowney, 'The Final Temple', in *WTJ* 35.2, pp. 156-189.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 18 sets 'the cords of Sheol' in parallel with 'the floods of Belial' and 'the cords [or 'waves'] of death' (lv. 4-5, ASV mg.). David praises God his Rock for drawing him from the waters. See [Isa. 2.2, 6. The Qumran psalmist uses this Old Testament figure. As a drowning man in a storm sinking down into the gates of death, he is delivered by God and set on a rock (IQH 3.17; 6.24, in *DSS*).

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kgs 5:17. A foundation stone is precious because it is labour-intensive in selection and preparation. The foundational cornerstone is to be distinguished from an ornamental capstone on the coping of a building or surmounting columns (Zech. 4:7).

<sup>5</sup> The Masoretic Hebrew text lacks the 'on him'. The Targum of Isaiah 28:16 and of Ps. 118:22ff. refer the stone to the king as Messiah. See Elliott, *Elect*, pp. 27f.

<sup>6</sup> See Elliott, *Elect*, p. 37 n. 6. Perhaps Peter thinks also of Christ the Rock as the source of living water. See Appendix B below, and Spicq, *Épîtres*, pp. 81f.

## 1 Peter 2:4-10

### 4. Live as the people of God I: The life of the spiritual temple

#### 1. The building of the temple in Christ

In the first chapter Peter showed the wonder of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. Now he wants to show the status that Christians have as the true people of God, so that he may encourage us to live before the world with that awareness.

He intends to emphasize the humility and submission to which Christians are called. That humility, however, is not slavish subjection to others. Rather, it is modelled on the humility of the Lord. It is the free and willing service of a royal people. Jesus willingly endured humiliation, but God has exalted him. God indeed calls us to humility, but he has already joined us to Christ's exaltation. In Christ we are God's people, God's temple, his kingdom and priesthood.

As you come to him, the *living Stone* - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him . . . As always, Peter begins with the Lord. The status of Christians depends upon the status of Christ, for they are joined to him. How striking it is that Peter names Christ the *Stone!* Peter's given name was Simon. It was Jesus who named him Cephas (in Greek, Peter), the 'rock'.<sup>1</sup> Peter gratefully used the name Jesus gave him as an apostle (1:1). But Peter points us, not to himself, but to Christ as our Rock.

Peter draws this name for Christ from Isaiah 28:16, a passage that he proceeds to quote. Isaiah's prophecy alludes to one of the master figures

<sup>1</sup> John 1:42; Matt. 16:18.

the leaders of Israel killing the Son sent by God to receive from them his due. 'Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit' (Matt. 21:43). As for the *builders* who *rejected* God's cornerstone, Jesus had said, 'Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed' (Matt. 21:44).

After the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter understood the words of Jesus. He confronted those very 'builders' and boldly challenged them with the words of the psalm, adding, 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:11–12). Now, in his letter, Peter refers to the same Old Testament passages he had heard from the lips of Jesus. Peter had learned that the death of Christ was not an unthinkable defeat for the Son of God and the kingdom of God. Rather, by the cross and the resurrection God's eternal purpose of salvation had been fulfilled. Those who had crucified Jesus had accomplished what God's 'power and will had decided beforehand should happen' (Acts 4:28). In their rejection of Christ, the builders, in spite of themselves, served to put God's Stone in place.

Salvation is in no other; there is no other Son of God, no other atoning cross, no other resurrection life. Peter's message begins and ends in the purpose of God; God has set in place his chosen cornerstone; God has determined, too, the rejection and doom of the builders.<sup>7</sup>

It is not merely the leaders of Israel who have rejected Christ. The living Stone has been *rejected* by people more generally (4). 'Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed' (Acts 4:27). The severity of God's judgment falls not only on the builders who had rejected God's chosen Stone, but on all unbelievers. Peter repeats the solemn warning of Jesus (Luke 20:18). Those who stumble at the word of the gospel are broken in their unbelief. The term *cornerstone* in 2:7 is, literally, 'the head of the corner' and refers to the same foundational cornerstone.<sup>8</sup> This is the stone over which people trip when they refuse to hear the word of God.

<sup>7</sup> The verb for the 'laying' of the cornerstone in verse 6 is the same as the verb for the 'appointing' (NIV *destined*) of God's reprobation in verse 8.

<sup>8</sup> R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 198ff. The 'head' here means the first stone in the course, from which the other foundation stones proceed.

The Stone that people have rejected is the Stone that God has *chosen* (4). Peter stresses God's choosing and honouring of Christ as the precious cornerstone of his holy temple. He does so not only to rejoice in the person and work of Christ, but also to show the holy and honoured place that Christians have, united to their Lord. In 2:4–5 Peter summarizes this argument. Then, in 2:6–10 he gives the basis in Scripture for his affirmations. Verses 6–8 are quotations from the Old Testament; verses 9–10 are a series of descriptive epithets drawn from the Old Testament.

Peter makes the same contrast that we find in Isaiah 28, that between the foolish pride of human beings and the sure work of the Lord. God's choice of his precious cornerstone rebukes human arrogance. The term *precious*, used in Isaiah, can be applied to gemstones as well as to the value of a great cornerstone.<sup>9</sup> Peter has just said that the Lord is good.<sup>10</sup> How good he is, the Father has shown; he has chosen him as precious beyond describing. Peter could bear witness to the voice from heaven, 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased' (Mark 1:11). The Father's words concerning his Son reflect his prophetic words concerning his Servant: 'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him' (Isa. 42:1). Consider the intensity of the Father's love for his only Son as he took the role of a servant, accepted the Father's will in Gethsemane and accomplished his task on Calvary.<sup>11</sup> The delight of the Father in the finished work of his Son is seen in 'the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him' (3:21–22).

Peter now spells out the wonder of God's salvation: the delight that the Father has in his Son is given to us. As Christ is precious to the Father, so are we made precious (7).<sup>12</sup> As Christ is the cornerstone of God's temple,

<sup>9</sup> Eg. 2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Kgs 10:2, 10–11. KB gives the translation 'meeting' for *yiqrah* (Isa. 28:16), yielding the meaning 'the corner where the foundation walls meet'. However, under *eben*, 'stone', KB also cites Isa. 28:16 with the translation 'costly stones'. In view of 1 Kgs 5:17 (5:31 in Hebrew), this translation is to be preferred. For *bôhan* ('chosen') KB gives 'schist-gneiss', a kind of granite, assuming that it is a loanword from Egyptian. E. J. Young points to a difficulty with the transcription from Egyptian to Hebrew on this assumption (*The Book of Isaiah, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2 [Eerdmans, 1969], p. 287 n. 30). It is better to translate 'tested' as the Septuagint does, from the frequently used Hebrew verb *bôhan*.

<sup>10</sup> Verse 3. In Greek the phrase is *chrestos ho kyrios*, suggesting *christos ho kyrios*, 'Christ the Lord'.

<sup>11</sup> Isa. 53:10–22; John 10:17.

<sup>12</sup> Literally, 'To you that believe is the honour'. The word is *timê*, related to *entimon* in verse 6. The use of the article emphasizes a particular honour or value, if the reference is to Christ's honour, the NIV translation is good. But if the contrast is with the shame mentioned at the end of verse 6, the honour is like that of 1:7. This fits the purpose of the whole passage, to show the new status of believers. See Spicq, *Épîtres*, p. 88.