

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

# THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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## “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit”

Matthew's record of Jesus' "sermon on the mount" begins with the statement "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (**Matt. 5:3**). Like each of the "beatitudes," this statement shows the stark contrast between those who seem blessed in the eyes of the world and those who are truly the most blessed according to God.

Thayer's definition of the word translated "*poor*" in **Matthew 5:3** includes "*destitute of wealth, influence, position, honour*" and "*helpless, powerless to accomplish an end*" (see G4434). When we consider these definitions, it helps us understand that the one who is poor in spirit recognizes his or her *hopelessness* without God.

Those who are truly blessed do not claim to be spiritually "independent" or "self-sufficient," but claim the very opposite of this. To be poor in spirit means to realize we are *dependent on God*. Without God, our lives lack deep meaning and purpose, and we are doomed for eternal punishment.

The tax collector of **Luke 18:10-14** recognized this. Unlike the Pharisee who boasted about how great he was and treated God as though God were fortunate to have him, the tax collector "*would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner*" (**verse 13**). While the Pharisee thought he was high and mighty, the tax collector recognized that without God's mercy, he would be nothing more than an utterly destitute slave of sin.

The Bible is full of examples of men who had a heart more like that of the Pharisee, and were proven foolish for such an attitude.

When Moses was sent by God to tell Pharaoh to release Israel from bondage, Pharaoh responded "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go*" (**Exod. 5:2**). Pharaoh thought *he* was high and mighty, and may have seemed so in the eyes of the people. He was proven a fool by God though when the ten plagues came upon Egypt.

Pharaoh's pride led to his downfall, while the meekest man on earth led Israel out of bondage (cf. **Num. 12:3**). Such "turning of the tables" is common in Scripture. God repeatedly humbles those who exalt themselves, and exalts those who humble themselves.

Those who are faithful citizens in God's kingdom are not the "self-sufficient" Pharaohs, but those who share the mindset exemplified by David when he said, "*Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy*" (**Psalms 86:1**).

None of us would have *anything* we need without God. Those too proud to acknowledge this will be brought low on the Day of Judgment. The poor in spirit acknowledge their helplessness without God, and thus humbly surrender to His will.

Being poor in spirit leads to far greater blessings than being among the wealthiest, healthiest, most prestigious, most liked, most famous individuals on earth, for Jesus said of the poor in spirit, "*theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

## “Be Zealous”

Among the seven churches who the book of Revelation was directly addressed to (**Rev. 1:4, 11**), only the church at Laodicea received no commendation from the Lord.

What was their chief error addressed by the Lord? False doctrine? Division? Sexual immorality? While any of these sins might have existed there (and, if so, would also need to be corrected), the sin of theirs highlighted by the Lord is *lukewarmness*.

Notice **Revelation 3:15-16**: *I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth.*

The Christians at Laodicea were spiritually apathetic. They lacked fire, enthusiasm, and passion for the Lord. In other words, they were omitting the positive virtue of *zeal*.

*Misdirected* zeal can cause harm rather than good (**Rom. 10:2-3**; **Phil. 3:6**). This is reason for caution, but it doesn't excuse omitting *properly directed* zeal. Knowledge without zeal is no better than zeal without knowledge.

Properly directed zeal is summarized in **Titus 2:14**. Speaking of “*our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*” (**verse 13**), the Holy Spirit says “*who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.*”

If our zeal is directed toward what God

defines as “*good works,*” it will please Him. To know what God defines as a good work, we need only look to inspired Scripture (cf. **2 Tim. 3:16-17**). More specifically, we must look to what the New Testament authorizes as a good work (cf. **Col. 2:14**).

For instance, Scripture shows that studying God's Word is a good work (cf. **Acts 17:11**). We should be zealous for this. Such zeal is alluded to in the command, “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby*” (**1 Pet. 2:2**). Christians must have a strong spiritual appetite.

As we zealously feast on the spiritual nourishment God provides through His Word, we should be zealous to examine ourselves by it (**2 Cor. 13:5**). When we see something in our lives that does not measure up to His standard, we should zealously correct it (cf. **2 Cor. 7:9-11**).

We should each be zealously devoted to prayer (**Eph. 6:18**). We should be zealous to edify brethren (**1 Thes. 5:11**), and help others (**Gal. 6:10**).

Zeal for good works such as these is a must for God's children. If we are lukewarm like the Christians in Laodicea, the same rebuke given to them could be given to us.

Moreover, the same *solution* given to them applies to any Christian living in spiritual apathy. **Revelation 3:19**: *As many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent.*

-**Michael Hickox (both articles)**

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