

The Living Word

1 Peter 1:22-25

Joy in Suffering (1 Peter Series)
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“The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.”
~ D. L. Moody

Melted Ring

Melted down ring illustration – Jill and I just celebrated 20 years of marriage. At our 10 year anniversary I decided to make her a custom anniversary ring. I had no money, so I gathered all the gold around the house. I also had one diamond. A friend of mine, Miles Crouse gave me two diamonds that his wife had.

I gave all that to the jeweler and he melted it down and made a beautiful custom anniversary ring for Jill. That jeweler did an amazing job. I gave him a bunch of random pieces and he turned it into a beautiful ring through the furnace. He melted it down and transformed it.

That’s how God’s word is. God melts our hearts through his Word and transforms us!

Outline

How can God’s Word do this? How come it can transform us so effectively. Peter gives us the answer in 1 Peter 1:22-25.

- God’s Word is **powerful** (22)
- God’s Word is **alive** (23)
- God’s Word is **lasting** (24-25)

That's what this message is all about. God's Word is alive! Let’s stand as we read **1 Peter 1:22-25**.

Scripture

1 Peter 1:22-25, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”

I. God's Word is **powerful**, vs. 22.

1 Peter 1:22, "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

The whole premise of verse 23 is that you have been born again. There is power in the Word of God!

Proof in the evidence that you been born again Peter says is in three things:

- Power for **purity**,
- power to **obey**, and
- power to **love**

The Word of God is powerful! **Hebrews 4:12**, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Power for Purity

1 Peter 1:22, "Having **purified** your souls ... since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

- Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (**Jn 17:17**).
- Paul says we are "washed by the water of the word" (**Eph 5:26**).
- David says, "as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (**Psalms 103:12**).

It is the Word of God that Peter says purifies our souls! When you are born again, your soul is purified.

You Can't Cleanse Yourself

You believe the Word that Jesus gave from the cross, "It is finished." You are clean! It's by his Word. Let that word of cleansing wash over you.

You can't work your way to it. You don't work your way into God's favor. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). You are fully accepted. Yes, Jn 1:5, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." That's true. So we think, I must not be accepted, because I am so unholy. I've believed, but I've backslidden.

Listen, God's word to you is this: It is finished. Christ's righteousness is upon you. Repent of your selfish living and turn back to God. There is no period of penance. Yes you must repent. You must see your sin as God sees it. You must hate your sin and your old life as God hates it. But then you are immediately restored. Your soul is cleansed by the blood of Jesus. It is finished. Believe it!

Power for Obedience

1 Peter 1:22, "Having purified your souls by your **obedience to the truth**..."

David said, "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might now sin against you" (**Psa 119:11**).

If you are lacking in obedience, then you need to get God's Word in your heart.

Someone said wisely, “Either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.”

Get Up and Walk

Put the Word in your heart and power will explode, if it is accepted by faith. If you lack power, then search your heart for sin. The first word in the Gospel is *repent*.

Stretch Forth Your Hand

But if you come by faith, **the Word gives you power to obey**. The Word of God gives you now the power to obey. You believe Christ, and his word to you is get up and walk! His word to you is “Lazarus, come forth.” Don’t stay in that grave a moment longer. You are alive! The Word of God is living and active. Rise up and walk! Stretch forth that dead hand because it can now function. God’s Word give you a heart to obey.

God’s Word Works from the Inside Out

Ezekiel 36:25-27 says that God takes out your old, dead heart of stone. He puts in a tender living heart of flesh. He gives you his Spirit and he causes you “to walk in his statutes and to keep his judgements.”

In other words, you now as a Christian have the power and the impulse to obey. When you are in the flesh, you are weak and unable to obey God. If you feel that way right now, believe and receive his Word. Obey saint of God. The Spirit in you will do the work. Surrender to the Spirit and He will make you his instrument.

Power for Loving Your Brothers & Sisters

1 Peter 1:22, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”

Peter says another effect of the Word of God is you love the brothers. Verse 22 says you’ve obeyed the truth of God’s Word that it is finished and Christ has paid it all, and then we see the result: love. Your faith works itself out “for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”

Love Sincerely

This is the command: “love one another.” How? Sincerely. Don’t put on an act. Love one another. Let me make a couple of distinctions. This is Agape love. It’s not the love of feeling that is constantly in flux. It is not the love of passion or romance that can change from day to day. This is the constant love of choice. It is a God kind of love. It is the love of sacrifice and choice, not based on whether the person is loveable, but because they are in Christ.

Cornhole – Beanbag toss

Love means to be sincere – you can’t fake it until you make it. In beanbag toss, you might be a total newby. I’m scared to play beginners. They always win. They fake it. They just aim, and somehow that beanbag goes into the hole. You can fake it in cornhole, but you cannot fake it in the Christian life.

Love Earnestly

The word “earnestly” or **fervently** (*ektenōs*) is a physiological term meaning to stretch to the furthest limit of a muscle’s capacity.¹ It’s a supernatural love that goes beyond human capacity.

Love Purely

People are so messed up. I’m messed up. How can we love purely when there’s so many warts? You’ve gotta see what Jesus did for you!

Jesus’ Evangelism Tool: Pure Love for the Brothers

1 John 5:1, “Everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” This isn’t humanly manufactured but divine. Human love is always mixed with selfish motives. But divine love is pure and **unconditional**. This is the blazing center of our evangelism. **John 13:35** says, “By this shall all people know you are my disciples, that you love one another.” This is the evangelism tool that Jesus says is authentic. I’m glad for the literature we have. I’m glad for the web site we have. But that’s not the key to evangelism.

What Loving Purely Looks Like

John 17:22-23, “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so **that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.**”

You cannot love one another until you know the love of God yourself.

1 John 3:16-18, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

The world will know that God has sent Jesus by our love for one another. What does that mean?

- Do you know someone in the Body of Christ who is hurting?
- Are they sick? Are they lonely? Minister to them!
- Do you know a brother or a sister in need? Provide for them!
- Is there a believer who has gone astray? Go after them and don’t judge them. Show them the unconditional love of Calvary.

Are you slipping in your love for the brothers? Get back into the Word of God. It will empower you to love.

The Body of Christ’s Love is Physical Manifestation of Christ on Earth

The brothers are the physical manifestation of Christ in the earth.

Saul of Tarsus – Remember when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church? Jesus said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?”

Jesus says in **Matthew 25:40**, “Truly, I say to you, as much as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2004). *1 Peter* (p. 90). Chicago: Moody Publishers.

You are God's Temple

Remember the temple in the Old Testament? The people of Israel believed the Temple to be indestructible at the time of Christ. Why? Because it was the physical manifestation of God's presence.

You my brothers and sisters are God's presence in this earth. He lives in you by His Spirit. You are His Temple. Just as Jesus walked in this world and blessed people, so you are now the Body of Christ in this world. As He loved, so you should love.

II. God's Word is **alive**, vs. 23.

1 Peter 1:23, "since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

Martin Luther said, "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me. It has feet, it runs after me. It has hands, it lays hold of me."

God's Word is alive in three ways: like a **birth**, a **seed**, and a **roommate**.

God's Word is Alive like a **Birth**

Monergistic – The new birth is monergistic; it is a work solely of the Holy Spirit. Sinners do not cooperate in their spiritual births (cf. Eph. 2:1–10) any more than infants cooperate in their natural births. Jesus told Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8; cf. John 1:12–13; Eph. 2:4–5; Phil. 2:13).²

Nature Change – God's Word has caused you to be born again. What does that mean? Essentially, it is a nature change. You used to never have power to obey God. You used to be not only powerless to obey, but powerless to get clean. But something new happened to you. You were born again by believing and trusting the Word of God.

The Bible says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." The Word of God came to him, and he trusted God. Now it was an infantile trust. Jesus said, "if you have the faith of a mustard seed, you can move a mountain." We don't have fully developed faith immediately, just the faith of a mustard seed. But it's so powerful it can move mountains.

The greatest mountain is your old nature that is dead in trespasses and sins. You can't love God because you love sin so much. God comes in through the Word of God and kills your old self. You are crucified with Christ.

God's Word is Alive like a **Seed**

God's Word is like seed that gives imperishable fruit. There are many things we plant and they go bad.

Grapes that perish – We have a grape vine by our home. Concord grapes. I love them when I remember to pick them. Jill's made this amazing concord grape juice. It's that purple grape juice, so sweet! Sometime I get busy and forget to pick the grapes when they are ripe and they perish. They're no good. They have a shelf life. They have a limited life.

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2004). *1 Peter* (p. 92). Chicago: Moody Publishers.

God's Word is not that way. It's like a seed that gives imperishable fruit. Imagine the perfect apple tree. You plant it and every apple is perfect, and it's good after it's been on the vine ten years or a hundred years. Can you imagine? That's how God's Word is!

God's Word is alive! It never goes bad!

God's Word is Alive like a Roommate

I love the language Peter uses. He says it's a living Word that "abides" or literally "moves in." God promises to "never leave... or forsake you." He says "no one can pluck you out of my hand." He's moving in. When you were born again, God moved in to constantly remind you of his Word.

Socks on the Floor

Have you ever had a roommate? When I got married a room mate- socks on the floor. She doesn't really nag me – she is gentle. She doesn't say Matt you left your socks on the floor. But she does encourage me when I do not leave my socks on the floor.

Not just Pages in a Book

You see God's Word is not just pages in a book or words on a page. When God's Word enters your heart, it is like God moving in. That's why it's the living and abiding Word. It's God moving into your heart and revealing Himself to you.

A Person Showing You the Way

I love **Psalm 119:105**, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The Lord who dwells in you uses the Word to light the pathway of your life. Without the Word, you are lost in a forest without a light. You cannot see the right trail!

III. God's Word is lasting, vs. 24-25.

Here Peter contrasts our weak flesh with the powerful Word of God. What the flesh can accomplish is temporary. What the Word accomplishes is **lasting**.

1 Peter 1:24-25, "since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for [quoting Isaiah 40:6-8] "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever."

And this word is the good news that was preached to you."

The Flesh is Weak and Worthless

Your flesh is powerless to bring about lasting change. While God's Word may be eternal, our flesh is not. We are temporal. We are here today and gone tomorrow.³ Don't try to accomplish anything with a fleshly mindset. That mindset is like the grass or like flowers. It's not going to last.

³ Helm, D. R. (2008). *1 & 2 Peter and Jude: sharing christ's sufferings* (p. 68). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

1 Peter 1:24, “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

What we can do in our flesh will never last! We can’t change people. We can’t even change ourselves. If you want lasting change you need the Word.

Peter and Isaiah – This contrast is made throughout the Word of God. Peter is quoting **Isaiah 40:6-8**.

Jesus says in **John 6:63**, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

Paul says the same thing. He contrasts the flesh and the spirit. Let’s look at two places.

2 Corinthians 4:16, “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

Romans 8:6-8, “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

What are you investing in? Here we see the two sides of the human being. The outer man is like the flower of the field which is mortal and will pass away, whereas the inner man lives forever by the power of the living God.⁴

The Word is Powerful and Permanent

God's Word to you abides forever. It's “the good news that was preached to you.” The work that the Word does in you will bring fruit that lasts forever.

- You are forever born again into God’s family!
- Your sins are forever forgiven.
- You will be forever conformed to Jesus.
- You will forever be adopted into God’s family.
- You are forever an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ.

The grass and flowers of this life fade. You get various things in life – a home, a family, children perhaps. A career. Many things in this life. But they are all going to fade away like grass in a drought or a flower on a hot day.

Everything in this life is fading. But what God does in your heart by the Word – conforming you into the image of Christ – that lasts forever!

Conclusion

The Word of God is alive! God lives inside you! He will never leave you or forsake you!

⁴ Hilary of Arles. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTARY ON 1 PETER, from Bray, G. (2000). *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* (p. 81). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.