

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 1:23-25 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: God's Providing of Spiritual Regeneration Through His Word

READ: 1 Peter 1:23-25, with vv.18-19, 22 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - We true believers are to know, stay aware of, and be motivated by the priceless redemption that we have received through the perfect God-man Jesus Christ. (vv.18-19)
 - - The revealing of Christ Jesus and how He provide redemption about 2,000 years ago as recorded in the New Testament was and is for our benefit, serving to establish and increase our faith and hope in God. (vv.20-21)
 - - God has designed and intends that purifying ourselves is to result in us true believers living in holiness, serving God effectively, and possessing a deep sincere brotherly love for one another. (v.22)
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v.23 - READ

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe what is meant by "you have been born again".]

SECTION POINT: At the moment when a person is born again, God implements regeneration in that person, being made alive spiritually before God.

"For you have been born again,"

- - "Having been born again" - there are intrinsic characteristics within this phenomenon that enable and empower us to "love one another deeply, from the heart". (vv.23,22)
- - This is in addition to and similar to the phenomenon of "obeying the truth", which purifies us before God "so that [we] have sincere love for [our} brothers". (v.22)
- - Considering that verse 22 states that "sincere love for [our] brothers" is infused by God within us by means of us "purifying ourselves", and now in verse 23 is stated that "sincere love for [our] brothers" is infused by God within us when we became "born again", then obviously these two phenomena have in common the purpose of enhancing brotherly love, which God accomplishes by means of using His power to infuse believers in this regard in these two phenomena.
- - And an intriguing feature with these two phenomena is that being born again happens first and usually a long time before "purifying ourselves" happens, if ever.
- - Being "born again" is accomplished by God at the precise moment when we individually make the choice to place our faith in Jesus Christ, that He died on the cross to pay the ransom punishment for our own sins that we deserve, and that He rose from the dead on the third day.
- - Within the phenomenon of being "born again", we simply and solely respond to this gospel message about Jesus Christ by placing our faith in Him for our salvation from the eternal consequences for our sins - faith alone in Christ alone.

- - At that moment of being "born again", however, a main dynamic that God implements is our "regeneration", which can be defined as being made alive spiritually before God, wherein we were previously considered and judicially positioned as being spiritually dead in our sins before God. (Strong's #0313; Romans 6:1-11)

[Lesson Question: Analyze and then describe the qualities that are listed in verse 23 and the power that is need to accomplish these qualities.]

SECTION POINT: God sustains and presents His written word to humans during the ages, in order to regenerate and impact the hearts of humans spiritually and for eternity.

"not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

- - The gospel message is contained in the written "word of God", being dispensed or heralded or preached for people to hear and to respond to.
 - - The written "word of God" is "living", being infused with intelligent power by God and customized to actively impact hearers - individually, according to where each of them is at spiritually.
 - - The written "word of God" (and by extension the gospel) is "imperishable", meaning that God sustains its integrity through the millennia or ages so that it is in fact "incorruptible". (Strong's #0862)
 - - This implies that we have available to us the exact same Word of God and the exact same gospel that was available to people that lived approximately 2,000 years ago after the completion of the writing of the New Testament.
 - - God causes that the Word of God (and by extension the gospel) will always exist somewhere - it is "enduring" - it "remains", and it will always exist somewhere in a pure and uncorrupted state.
 - - The Word of God (and by implication the gospel) is a "seed", a message that contains and retains the real potential and powerful ability to spiritually regenerate any person - a small and short message that can sprout and grow exponentially and produce a monumental life-change in even the worst of sinners.
- Notice in verse 23 that all of these characteristics incorporate the use of extraordinary power:
- - - - power that intelligently and individually regenerates hearts of humans spiritually and for eternity;
 - - - - power that spans the ages, while never in any way diminishing or weakening or faltering;
 - - - - power that sustains and preserves through the millennia the integrity of written words in a book (the Holy Bible);
 - - - - power that causes that written book to remain and endure forever;
 - - - - power that accompanies and presents with that written book in a small encapsulated form like a "seed" but then expands forth in exponential impact when the requirements are correctly met to activated it;
 - - - - power that obviously far exceeds what any humans are capable of exerting.

- - The proper implied conclusion here in verse 23 is that this kind of power has its source in God - it is divine power from God that is being used to accomplish these qualities that are cited in verse 23.

vv.24-25 - READ

[Lesson Question: Analyze and then describe what the intent of the meaning of the similes is in verse 24, while taking into regard the context of verses 23 and 25.]

SECTION POINT: Due to their limited nature, all humans are not, nor will not ever be, capable of accomplishing spiritual regeneration in and of themselves, without God using His divine power.

"For, "All men are like grass... the grass withers""

- - In contrast to all of these divinely-powered qualities in verse 23 that God uses to regenerate and make alive the spiritually-dead hearts of sinful humans, now in verse 24 is cited the characteristics of "all men" - all humans.

- - First cited is the characteristic that all humans "are like grass", in context suggesting that all humans have a beginning in life, grow to maturity, live and function for a limited time, and then "wither" or "shrivel", "dry out thoroughly, almost like being lifeless, lacking animation". (Strong's #3583, *AHD* - 'dessicate')

- - The vivid implication here is that "for" or "because" all humans by their nature are very limited, thereby they are deficient and not capable of accomplishing in and of themselves any of the divinely-powered qualities that are cited in verse 23. (Strong's #1360)

- - In the context here in verses 23-24, in a sense all humans are 'perishable', in other words they come into existence and then function at their limited capacities for only a very short time, and then they 'wither' into significantly-reduced functioning, thereupon and thereafter in and of themselves lacking the cited qualities of the 'born again' regenerating, the 'imperishability', the 'living', and the 'enduring'.

"and all their glory is like the flowers of the field... and the flowers fall,"

- - The "glory", the splendor of us humans is evident in our coming into existence, living and functioning as intelligent beings, and accomplishing things that no other physical creature can accomplish. But that "glory" or splendor lasts only for a short time, and then "falls out" or "drops away" or "loses" that "glory" or splendor. (Strong's #1601)

- - It is important to note that in this pronouncement, "all" of our natural "glory" is declared by God to be short-lasting, short in the time that it retains its "glory" or splendor.

- - Without the infusion of divinely-powered spiritual "regeneration" when "being born again", unregenerated humans lose "all" of this natural "glory" or splendor for eternity when they physically die and then irrevocably enter eternal punishment for their sins. (v.23)

- - Within eternity for unregenerated humans, there is nothing of value or merit that remains of this natural "glory" or splendor, and therefore certainly there is likewise nothing in their natural "glory" or splendor that can assist or contribute to the unregenerated humans escaping this irrevocable eternal punishment for their sins.

-- So a proper conclusion is that despite their "glory" or splendor, all humans in and of themselves are completely deficient and incapable to merit or achieve avoidance or escape from the eternal consequences of not being "born again".

"but the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you."

-- "But" or in contrast to the short-term of full functioning and the short-lasting natural "glory" or splendor of unregenerated humans, "the word of the Lord" "stands" or "remains" "forever" - in "perpetuity". (Strong's #3306, #0165)

-- The Lord will not repeal what is written in His word, which thereby includes the various aspects that pertain to the unrelenting requirement of "being born again" in order to receive eternal pardon and eternal forgiveness of all of our own sins. (v.23)

-- For all persons who are not spiritually regenerated when they physically die, this means that there will never ever be any kind of escape from the horrific torture that they will experience and continue to experience throughout all of forever, because they are permanently locked into the eternal state of being punished for their own sins.

-- "And this is the word" or message or warning "that was preached" during the previous two millennia and is being preached "to you" - even right now.

BIG IDEA: During the ages, God has taken and continues to take steps to provide spiritual regeneration for us humans, who are by nature limited and entirely incapable of accomplishing this regeneration in and of ourselves.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

-- For those of you who are "born again", who have sincerely committed yourself to faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, are you taking seriously this obligation from God that because you are "born again", you are to be consistently having and maintaining a 'sincere and deep love for one another from the heart'? (v.23)

--- - - Would other people in this church (or ministry) say that indeed you have a sincere and deep love for all of the people that come to this church (or ministry)?

--- - - Or instead, do they see and perhaps hear you criticize and complain and grumble about other people in this church (or ministry)?

--- - - Or perhaps they see you "show favoritism", which in James 2:8-9 is declared as being a sin and the opposite of "loving your neighbor" or brothers.

-- Is the word of God alive and "living" in you, active and exerting significant influence on your thinking and behaviors? (1 Peter 1:23)

--- - - Or are you essentially ignoring the application of the word of God to your life, thereby effectively quenching what God is trying to accomplish in your life?

-- Is the word of God "enduring" in your life, remaining and continuing in its integrity of meaning? (v.23)

- - - Or instead, are you allowing the word of God to dissipate in your thinking, perhaps even within a few minutes after you leave from hearing a sermon or Bible lesson?
- - - Or, are you re-interpreting select verses of the Scriptures, distorting and corrupting their true meaning?
- - - Or, are you avoiding select verses of the Scriptures, perhaps because you willfully do not want to obey them? (v.22)

- - What are you doing with the word of God that is being "preached to you"? (v.25)

- - For those of you who are **not** "born again", think about what your existence will be thereafter you die.

- - You may have a distinct concept or hope regarding your next life, but consider that God exerts complete control over what your existence will be after this life, and here in verse 24 He is saying your existence will be substantially diminished from the "glory" that you have been experiencing in this life on the earth. All of the amenities, the enjoyments, the comforts, the lavish aspects of your life and lifestyle will be made "withered" and "fallen" - "like the grass and flowers of the field" (v.24).

- - Because "the word of the Lord is imperishable, enduring, and stands forever" (vv.23,25), then consider that in eternity **He will not ever change** what He says will happen to those persons who did not become "born again" or regenerated during this life. Therefore, in eternity **He will not ever make any exceptions or reductions** to the eternal punishment that you who are not "born again" will be suffering.

- - Consider that this "word that is being preached to you" right now is a serious warning from God about what irrevocably awaits you in the next life if you fail or refuse to be "born again" in this life. You have been warned!!

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- -The Word of God is described here in verse 23 as being "living" and "enduring". How can written words on paper be "living", and furthermore "endure" as living or stay living? Hint: see vv.25b with vv.11-12b.
- - Considering the "living" dynamic that or who is behind the Word of God (v.23) when it is preached (v.12b), what is being stated here as to the importance of the Word of God in its role through which "born again" comes (v.23)?

-- For those of you who are teaching or preaching how to be "born again", do you understand the elements and dynamics that are critical for "born again" to genuinely occur?

- - - Have you studied this thoroughly from God's Word - what the necessary elements and dynamics are? Or do you merely repeat what you have heard from someone?

- - - Are you sure you have correct all of the necessary elements, dynamics, and aspects of how to genuinely be "born again"?

- - - When you make a presentation for how to be "born again", what happens if you have omitted or altered a critical element, thereby assisting a person to erroneously think he or she has become born again when in reality God has not granted that to occur because a critical element was omitted or altered?

- - - Make sure you know what you are talking about before teaching how to be born again (1 Timothy 1:3,7). Available for free on my ministry website www.BelieverAssist.com is a good training resource for this, located on the "Counseling" web-page and entitled "Session 02 - Presenting The Gospel".]

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