

Text: 1 Pt 1.23-25

We are still working through Peter's thoughts on the command, "fervently love one another from the heart." (22)

Let's read the rest of the chapter, and as I read, you look on and listen – there is a theme I want you to notice in the following verses.

Read 1 Pt 1.22-25, text 23-25

What does our text repeat several times? The word, "word" — at least in the English version. There are two different words in the Gk., though the sense remains basically the same.

Last week, in v. 22, we saw:

1. Salvation came by our obedience to the truth (the gospel)
2. One purpose of salvation was so that we would love our brothers sincerely
3. Therefore, a command: "fervently love one another"

We are going to see something more about that change in us, brought about by salvation, that enables us to obey the command.

I. The new birth really means radical change (23)

- A. The translation gives a causal sense to the new birth "for you have been born again"
 1. The word "for" is not in the text
 2. Rather, a participle "having been born again"
 3. This describes your spiritual state (if indeed you are born again)
 4. To backtrack to the command
 - a. "Fervently love one another from the heart" (we celebrated this as a mark of the church)
 - b. "Fervently love one another from heart, having been born again..."
 - c. The new spiritual state provides a "cause" or "ground" of our obedience
 5. Thus, the causal sense is the meaning, hence the "for" in the translation

B. The new birth is really an entirely new creation

Gal 6.15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

2 Cor 5.17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

1. The cause of the new creation is a “sown seed” (*spora*)
 - a. This seed is not perishable
 - b. But imperishable (one of Peter’s favorite words)
2. A perishable seed brings a perishable life
 - a. Subject to weakness and disease
 - b. Subject to deterioration and decay
 - c. Subject to death
 - d. Subject to sin (this is the special problem of the perishable seed)

This is the life of Adam: Adam is the perishable seed

3. An imperishable seed brings an imperishable life
 - a. The perishable life cannot love fervently from the heart
 - b. The imperishable life can love fervently from the heart

C. The imperishable seed is the Word of God

1. The “living and enduring” word of God = “imperishable”
2. Of course, we are born again through Christ and his work, but another way of saying that is “the word of God”
3. The word of God = the gospel = the death, burial, resurrection, glorification, judgement of Christ

4. In other words, when we say the word of God is the gospel that saves us, we mean the whole concept of salvation that God spoke into the world through Christ

Heb 1.1-2 ¶ God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

II. The change agent really is enduring (24-25a)

- A. Peter quotes Isa 40.6-8 here

Isa 40.6-8 A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?"

All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.

1. In Isaiah, the word that stands forever is the word of restoration (after the Babylonian captivity)
2. The weak, wavering flesh of faithless Israel has the assurance of the sure word of God for the coming restoration
- B. In Peter, the promise of old describes the new change brought about by salvation
 1. The corruptible seed produces the grass of flesh
 2. No matter how glorious a man may come, he withers, his flower falls
 3. The Word of the Lord, however endures forever

The quotation reinforces the point of v. 23: anything produced by the word of God endures.

If you can't love sincerely from the heart (in your flesh); you can (in your spirit). Why? Your spirit is born again by the incorruptible seed.

III. The enduring word is what you heard (25b)

A. There is a little wordplay here

1. "Word" in v. 23 is *logos*
2. "word" in v. 25 is *rhema*
3. Likely Peter uses *rhema* because he is quoting the Septuagint in v. 25, so he uses it again in his own statement

B. The difference between *logos* and *rhema*

1. *Logos* is more "conceptual" – all the concept of ideas that inform the meaning of a word

So, when we talk about the *word of salvation*, we mean the whole gospel, everything that makes it up.

2. *Rhema* is the actual word as it is said (or written)

"*Logos* is more comprehensive and includes the thought as well as its expression. The term *rhēma*, 'utterance' or 'message,' pointedly designates the message spoken by the mouth of God; it is the divine revelation made known in the Christian gospel (cf. Heb. 1:1–2). The repetition of the term in the next phrase identifies that divine utterance with the gospel proclaimed to the readers. It is indeed 'the word of the Lord.'"¹

3. When you were born again, how was it? Was it the whole gospel (death, burial, resurrection; fully developed soteriology) that was spoken to you?
 - a. There was a preached word
 - b. Or a witnessed word (perhaps some individual came to you and told you about salvation)
 - c. Or a written word – a tract, a bit of the Bible that suddenly spoke to your heart

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 117.

The message you received is the living and enduring word of God.

It is interesting to know which bit of the word captures the heart.

For Jonathan Edwards, it was this verse:

¹ Tim 1.17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

For me, it was a Bible story book, the story of the crucifixion, and my father's patient witness.

- What word did you hear?

That word "is the word which was preached to you."

Conclusion:

It is in the hearing of the word of God that the spiritual life is formed.

First, in the new birth.

And then, in the process of sanctification.

When Peter calls us to love fervently, this is the word of the gospel.

He calls us *to* it because the enduring seed formed us *for* it.