

"THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER"

The Living And Abiding Word (1:22-2:3)

INTRODUCTION

1. As Christians, we are but pilgrims in this world; our lives are but a sojourn toward our true home which is in heaven
 - a. But as we travel through this life, we are not left without a "spiritual roadmap"
 - b. To guide us on our journey, God in His grace has given us His wonderful Word, contained in the pages of what we call the Bible
2. What is sad is the fact...
 - a. That many people go through their lives and never seriously consult this book which can direct them to heaven
 - b. That even many Christians go through life ignorant of much of its content!
3. I am hoping that in the course of this lesson...
 - a. I can awaken any such people to the value of the wonderful Word of God
 - b. And that I can impress upon you the importance and necessity of reading the Word of God on a daily basis

[In an effort to do so, I encourage you to open your Bibles to 1 Pe 1: 22-2:3, where we read of the nature of God's Word (read).

Within this passage of scripture, we can glean various attributes possessed by the Word of God that make it so wonderful. Consider, then...]

I. THE WONDER OF GOD'S WORD

A. IT LIVES AND ABIDES FOREVER

1. Verses 23-25 stress this point:
 - a. "not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible"
 - b. "which lives abides forever"
 - c. "the Word of the Lord endures forever"
2. Jesus has also spoken of the indestructibility of the Word of God - Mt 24:35
3. History has borne out the fact that despite man's efforts to destroy and do away with it, the Bible continues to endure forever
 - a. The efforts of Diocletian
 - 1) In 303 A.D. he proclaimed an edict requiring Christians and their sacred scriptures to be destroyed
 - 2) But within 25 years, the succeeding emperor ordered that 50 copies be made and distributed at government expense!
 - b. The claims of Voltaire, the French atheist (who died in 1778)
 - 1) He boasted that within 100 hundred years of his lifetime, Christianity would be swept from the earth
 - 2) But only fifty years after his death, his own printing press and house were being used by the Geneva Bible Society to produce stacks of Bibles!

4. How true, then, is the statement of Isaiah as quoted by Peter in 1 Pe 1:24-25

B. IT CAN CAUSE ONE TO BE BORN AGAIN

1. There is a law of science known as the Law of Biogenesis which states that "life begets life"
2. Because the Word of God is what it is, it is able to produce spiritual life! What is it?
 - a. It is "incorruptible" seed which "lives and abides forever" - 1 Pe 1:23
 - b. It is "living and powerful" - He 4:12
 - c. As Jesus said: "...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." - cf. Jn 6:63
3. When a person receives the Word of God and obeys it, he or she is truly born again! - cf. Ja 1:18

C. IT CAN PURIFY THE SOUL

1. Notice carefully: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." - 1 Pe 1:22
2. By obeying the truth (the Word of God), our souls are purified - cf. Jn 17:17
3. That is because the truth contains the gospel, which when believed and obeyed, results in the remission of sins by the blood of Christ!

D. IT CAN PRODUCE CONTINUAL GROWTH

1. "...desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," - 1 Pe 2:2
2. Spiritual growth as a Christian is totally dependent upon the Word of God!

[Do you see why the Word of God is too wonderful to neglect? There is no way you can destroy it, and if you desire to be born again and grow spiritually, it is impossible without the incorruptible seed of the Word of God!

Now if we desire to allow the Word of God produce in our lives its desired effect (spiritual life and spiritual growth), there are at least two things mentioned by Peter which are essential...]

II. GROWING BY THE WORD OF GOD

A. FIRST, WE MUST PREPARE THE SOIL OF OUR HEARTS

1. Just as when we prepare the ground for planting a garden
 - a. We cleanse the ground of all insects and weeds
 - b. So that seeds can grow unhindered
 2. Likewise, there are things Peter says we must lay aside...
 - a. MALICE - an evil disposition, malignant spirit, a desire to injure another
 - b. GUILLE - that is, craftiness
 - c. HYPOCRISY - deceptive and deceitful actions and attitudes
 - d. ENVY - feelings of unhappiness because another has that which one desires for oneself
 - e. EVIL SPEAKING - slanderous and defamatory statements about others
- For the Word of God to flourish in our lives, we must rid ourselves of these things

3. Note also that these attributes must be rid of, if we are to be able to "love one another fervently" (as commanded in 1 Pe 1:22)

B. SECOND, WE MUST HAVE THE PROPER DESIRE FOR THE WORD

1. Peter illustrates the proper desire...
 - a. We are to be like "newborn babes" who desire milk - 1 Pe 2:2-3
 - b. Just as babies "long" for milk, we are to "long" for the Word of God
2. Do our present attitudes toward the Word of God indicate such longing?
 - a. Do we demand regular feeding upon the Word of God?
 - b. If we feasted upon food as often as we feasted upon the Word of God, would we survive physically? - cf. Mt 4:4; Ps 119:165; Jer 15:16
3. Failure to have this longing for the Word of God is a main reason for the lack of spiritual growth in many today
 - a. It is why many do not overcome sin in their lives - cf. 1 Jn 2:14
 - b. It is why many never become the godly men and women you would expect of Christians who have been such for 5,10,15 years or more
4. A question I often raise:
 - a. If we do not read, study and meditate upon the Bible daily...
 - b. If we go year after year, failing to read through the Bible on a regular basis...
-- Can it be said that we have the proper desire for the Word of God?

CONCLUSION

1. The Word of God is too wonderful for Christians to neglect! Yet I dare to say that there has been a wholesale neglect of the Word of God among Christians in the Lord's church today
2. "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious", as Peter says, if you have been born again by the Word of God, then I plead with you to make Bible reading an intricate part of your daily life!

If you have not even obeyed the gospel, why not do so this very day? For the wonderful Word of which we have been speaking is contained within the gospel (cf. 1 Pe 1:25b; Mk 16:15-16).

Yes, be born again through obedience to the Word of God (cf. 1 Pe 1:22-23), and begin a life where you can continue to grow, feeding upon "The Living And Abiding Word!"