

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 28 July 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **The Eternal Word of God**

### **1 Peter 1:22-25**

I would like to begin this morning's message by posing a question to you. The question is this: **"Is there anything other than God that is eternal?"** Now, perhaps you are thinking, "All right, Pastor. I want to say, 'No, there is nothing other than God that is eternal'; but this seems a little too easy. Is this a trick question?" Well, this isn't really a "trick question," because the answer to this question is given to us in the Bible. The answer to this question is, "Yes." There *is* something other than God that is eternal!

Perhaps you are confused. If so, allow me to make my case from Scripture. This thing that has existed forever is something that proceeds forth from God Himself. (Jesus said so in **Matthew 4:4**.) It is something that has *always* been in the mind of God. It is so precious to God, that David said in **Psalms 138:2** that God exalts this thing above His own name! God associates this thing with Himself—so much so, that He even substitutes this thing for His own name (for example, in **Galatians 3:8**). The longest Psalm in the Bible (**Psalms 119**) is dedicated to glorifying this thing. In fact, God names His own Son after this "thing," in **John 1:1**, **John 1:14**, and in several other passages. This "thing" is inseparable from God Himself—so much so, that God commands men to place their *trust* in it. Furthermore, God will *judge us* by this thing one day. What is this thing that is eternal, like God Himself? It is **God's Word!**

In our humanistic society, God's Word is mocked and dragged through the mud. Go online and read the comments that people make on virtually any subject, and you will find hordes of comments from people who mock God's Word. However, regardless of how out of vogue God's Word may be, it will stand forever. It will never pass away! What's more, it will continue to transform lives to the end of time.

In our passage this morning, we are going to study about the amazing power of the Word of God. We shall see that the Word of God is **cleansing**; it is **life-giving**; it is **incorruptible**; and it is **eternal**. The title of this message is *The Eternal Word of God*.

**Read 1 Peter 1:22-25.**

#### **I. The Word of God is cleansing (v. 22).**

Many sinners down through history have been stunned when a friend or family member decided to repent of his sin, and to believe the Gospel. Countless people have watched in astonishment as an old friend, whose mouth was once filled with blasphemy and cursing, and with the songs of the world, suddenly began to *praise* God with his tongue, and to sing the songs of Zion. Many a lost man or woman has been shell-shocked when an old acquaintance suddenly stopped drinking, carousing, and going to pubs, movies, and dance halls; and instead began to read the Bible, attend a Bible-preaching church, and talk about Jesus all the time! What these people have witnessed is **the cleansing power of the Word of God**.

The cleansing power of God’s Word is what we are reading about in **verse 22**. In this verse, Peter gives Christians a command concerning a change that needed to take place in their lives. However, Peter first acknowledged the changes that had *already* taken place in their lives. He says, “***Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.***”

Now, these believers certainly were not perfect. They still had their struggles with sin, as every Christian does. Nonetheless, these believers were experiencing daily purification from sin. It was an ongoing process in their lives. The verb “***have purified***” is in the Greek perfect tense. This means that this purification was an action that had begun at a point in the past; and it continued to have an ongoing effect in the present. By using the perfect tense verb “***have purified,***” Peter is acknowledging that Christ had begun a “good work” in these Christians at a point in the past. On the day of their salvation, they were purified. However, the purification didn’t stop there. They were *still* being purified. This is the way it should be in *every* Christian’s life. A true child of God does not stay the same as he was before he was saved. The Bible says that “***if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new***” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Now, how, exactly, were these believers purified? Peter says that they were purified by “***obeying the truth.***” What “truth” is Peter talking about? To answer that questions, let’s look at the prayer that Jesus prayed for His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

#### **Read John 17:14-17.**

What did Jesus say sanctifies us? God’s “***word***”! It isn’t one *particular* truth in the Bible that cleanses us from sin; it is “***the Word***” that cleanses us from sin. The Greek word for “word” here in **John 17:17** is *logos*; and *logos* doesn’t refer merely to a single word, or a single statement. In the New Testament, the word *logos* refers to the *entire canon of Scripture*—to *everything* that God has written in His Book.

So, what is Jesus saying? He’s saying that the *entire* body of Scripture is “the Truth”; and God has given us the entire Scripture so that we might be cleansed from sin. The *entire* Bible is given to us for our sanctification. Even the Old Testament laws are given for our sanctification! Even though Christians are no longer bound by the Old Testament ceremonial laws (such as the Jewish *kosher* diet), those laws are still recorded in Scripture for our instruction. Even those “heavy” Old Testament passages, with all their numbers, chronologies, and regulations, have the power to strike us with conviction, and to show us our need of cleansing from sin. I can testify that many times I have been reading through one of those “heavy” Old Testament passages; and just when I was not expecting to find anything particularly relevant to my Christian life, I was suddenly “struck in the heart,” and convicted, by a little statement that was nestled right in the middle of a long list of names and numbers!

The Word of God cleanses from sin, because it brings *conviction* of sin. Peter also points out that it is “***through the Spirit***” that this conviction and cleansing takes place. The Spirit of God speaks to us through the Word of God, and shows us our need of cleansing. However, all that conviction does no good if we do not *pay heed* to the Spirit’s conviction, and *obey* the Word. That is why Peter says that these believers had purified their souls by “***obeying the truth.***”

#### **Read Psalm 119:9-11.**

In these verses, we find that David sought after God's Word, hid it in his heart, and obeyed it. He didn't merely *talk* about the beauty of God's Word; he *surrendered* to God's Word. Christian, don't fool yourself into thinking that because you've read your Bible schedule for the day, you are right with God. Merely reading your Bible does no good if you do not *submit* yourself to God's words. Sanctification doesn't happen "by default" because you've met your Bible reading quota! You must *surrender* your heart to God's commands, in love and humility. As you surrender your heart to the Word, the Spirit of God cleanses you from sin.

Now, let's get back to our passage. (**Read 1 Peter 1:22.**) Peter has just reminded his readers of how they had been *purified* from sin by obeying the Word. However, purification from sin is not all that they had experienced. They also had an "***unfeigned love of the brethren.***" The result of being cleansed from sin, and of having a pure heart, is that you are now able to love the brethren *unfeignedly*. That word "***unfeigned***" means "without pretence."

You know, the world has a certain kind of "love"; but it is often a pretentious love. Underlying selfish motives are usually mixed with their love. However, *God* is able to place His own pure, unselfish love in the hearts of believers, when they are purified from sin. God's love is free of pretence. **Romans 5:8** says, "***But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***" God's love compelled Him to wrap Himself in human flesh, and to die on a cross for selfish, unthankful, undeserving rebels; and *we* can have that same kind of love! Like our Saviour, we are able to love even our enemies—as long as we obey the truth! How much more, then, are we able to love the brethren? When you obey the truth, the end result is "***unfeigned love of the brethren.***"

Around Christmas time every year, atheists all over the world roll out their campaign against God. On buses and billboards, atheist groups plaster this slogan: "Why believe in God? Just be good for goodness' sake!" My friends, this foolishness! There *can be* no goodness without God. Even unbelievers are restrained from evil because of the influence of their God-given conscience, and because of the convicting influence of God's Holy Spirit. The more that people harden their hearts against God, the less "goodness" there will be! That is why we are seeing an explosion of sick, perverted crimes today. As our society is casting off the last restraints of God's laws, people are going insane, and doing incredibly fierce, cruel things.

### **Read Matthew 24:4-12.**

We can expect that as iniquity increases in our world, there will be less and less love of any kind! However, this principle applies not only in societies, but in the lives of God's people. Christian, the more sin you allow in your life, the less love you will have toward the brethren. On the other hand, the more you allow God to purify your heart from sin, the more enabled you will be to love your brothers and sisters in Christ without pretence.

Now, there is one more truth that I would like to point out from **verse 22**. (**Read verse 22 again.**) According to this verse, a Christian's love for the brethren should be ever *increasing*. Our love for the brethren should be moving on to new levels. Peter acknowledged that these believers had already obeyed the truth "***unto unfeigned love of the brethren***"; yet, Peter wasn't satisfied with this! He wanted to see even *more* godly love in their lives! Peter urged these Christians to "***see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.***" They had

already attained to an “*unfeigned*” love (a love that wasn’t fake); but now, he wanted them to love with a “*pure heart*” (in other words, with *no* impurity of sin). Also, he wanted them to love “*fervently*.” The word “*fervently*” means “intently.” It is based on the word *ektenes*, which means “without ceasing.” You see, Peter didn’t want them to have an “on-off” love. He didn’t want them to be overflowing with love toward the brethren one Sunday (when they were walking closely with God), but then be cold toward the brethren on the next Sunday, because there was some bitterness in their heart, which they were taking out on everyone around them, or because they were fighting with God in their hearts over something that they didn’t want to surrender to Him. Peter didn’t want their love for the brethren to be 20 carat gold, or 22 carat gold: he wanted their love to be moving toward pure, 24 carat gold!

### **Read 2 Corinthians 3:18.**

The Christian life should be a constant process of sanctification. As a Christian looks into the “*glass*” of Scripture, and as he beholds the glory of the Lord (in other words, as he sees Christ’s holy character in the pages of Scripture), he is changed into that same image (in other words, Christ’s image) from “*glory to glory*.” Simply put, a believer who reads God’s Word with a surrendered heart becomes like Christ, and moves from one level of holiness to another: and it is all by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. So it is with love. Every believer should be moving from one level of love to another: and it all starts with *purification from sin*.

The Word of God is amazing. It effects a radical change in a person’s life, as he surrenders to God. Christian, are you allowing the Word of God to cleanse you?

## **II. The Word of God Is life-giving (v. 23)**

The next truth that we find about the Word of God is that it is *life-giving*. God’s Word imparts the New Birth to sinners. (**Read verse 23 again.**) A sinner cannot even begin to experience the cleansing power of the Word of God in his life until he is first born again into God’s family; and the way this New Birth happens is through the hearing of the Word of God. (**See Romans 10:17.**) The need for the New Birth cannot be discovered through human philosophy. It can be known only through the written revelation that God has given to us.

Now, some Christians look at **verse 23** and assume that the “*word*” that is spoken of here is Jesus Christ Himself, since Jesus is often called “the Word.” However, in the context of this passage, “*the word of God*” refers to the *written* Word. The reason I know that Peter is talking about the actual written Word of God is that he backs up what he is saying by quoting **Isaiah 40:8**; and in **Isaiah 40:8** the “*word of God*” clearly refers to the Scriptures. For perspective, let’s compare these two passages.

### **Read 1 Peter 1:24-25.**

### **Read Isaiah 40:6-8.**

Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, is the one who saves us; however, we must hear Christ’s words, as recorded in *Scripture*, in order to be born again! It is the *written Word* that points us to the *living* Word, the Lord Jesus Christ! There could be no salvation without the written Word of God. That is how important the Bible is! That is why the brilliant, godly men who

translated our King James Version didn't merely make a "paraphrase" of God's Word, as the apostate translators of many modern-day versions feel free to do. The KJV translators directly *translated* the exact words of the Hebrew and Greek into the English language, as closely and literally as they possibly could. They did not change Hebrew and Greek figures of speech into something completely different, in order to make it "culturally relevant" to the modern reader. They carried over *every word* as faithfully as possible, because they believed that they were dealing with *God's* words. This King James Bible that you are holding in your hand is the Word of God in the English tongue; and it is absolutely necessary that you heed it!

Now, let's look at the verse again. Peter contrasts the "***incorruptible seed***" of God's Word to "***corruptible seed***." Now, what does Peter mean when he talks about the "***corruptible seed***"? He is talking about the biological "seed" which produces a child. The point Peter is making is this: the "corruptible" seed of man, which produces a baby in the womb of a mother, produces only a *natural* birth. In contrast, Jesus says that every man *must* be "born again" if he is going to see the Kingdom of God. One must be born *spiritually* into *God's* family by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His death, burial, and resurrection. This New Birth takes place when a person hears of his need of the New Birth from the Scriptures, and when that person *heeds* God's Word, and believes it with his heart! Christ Himself said, "***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life***" (John 3:16).

Have you received the "incorruptible seed" of God's Word into your heart? Have you been saved? It's not enough to *hear* the Word: you must *receive* it. You must *believe* it with all your heart. You must receive it into your heart, just as good ground receives a seed.

**Read Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23.**

Have you received the Word of God into good ground, and been saved? Have you believed the Gospel message that is found in God's Word?

### III. **The Word of God is incorruptible and eternal (vv. 24-25)**

**(Read verses 24-25 again.)** My friends, it is impossible to separate the incorruptibility of God's Word from the eternity of God's Word. If Satan were able to *corrupt* God's Word so completely that there were no pure copies of Scripture to be found, then the Word of God would not be eternal! It would mean that the pure Word of God *did, in fact*, pass away!

There are many Christians today who have bought into the lie that we do not have the complete, uncorrupted Word of God today. Now, the New Evangelical scholars assure us that even though the Scriptures have been corrupted, we don't need to be alarmed. They assure us that even though the Scriptures have been corrupted to an extent, those errors don't affect the essential teachings of Scripture. They say that we *basically* have the message.

But is this really the case? If there be no *pure*, uncorrupted copies of God's Word anymore, then how can I be sure of what part of Scripture is the Word of God, and what isn't? How would I know what to trust? New Evangelical scholars try to defend their position by saying, "Oh, but David said in **Psalm 119:89**, '***For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.***' God never promised to preserve every single one of His words perfectly here on *earth*; but we

can be sure that they are preserved in *heaven*.” This argument may sound good on the surface; but if we don’t have the pure, perfectly-preserved Word of God on earth, *what good is it?* The Bible is *God’s revelation* to us; but if His words have been corrupted and contaminated here on earth, and there be no pure copies in existence, how can we know what is *true*?

Now, *are* there corrupted copies of Scripture out there? Of course there are! Satan didn’t lose any time in trying to corrupt the Scriptures. While the Apostles were still living, there were already false teachers sending out forged letters! Paul had to address this problem in his second letter to the church of Thessalonica. In **2 Thessalonians 2**, Paul assured them that the person who had recently sent them a letter in his name, and who had troubled them by telling them that the Day of the Lord had begun, was a forger! Paul was *not* the one who wrote it!

Now, if Satan was bold enough to inspire false teachers to write bogus “scriptures” while the Apostles were still living, do you think that he would hesitate to corrupt the *real* Scriptures? Of course not! By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Alexandria, Egypt had become a hotbed of false “Christianity.” People there were heavily influenced by the writings of a heretic named Origen, who blended Gnosticism with “Christianity”; and apostate schools in Egypt were producing corrupted copies of Scripture in order to support his false doctrines. These texts contained thousands of additions, deletions, and changes of words. (In fact, these corrupted copies of the New Testament are 7% shorter than the true text!) These changes of Scripture were *not* accidental: they were deliberate. These changes weakened the Bible’s teaching on the Trinity; the deity of Christ; the virgin birth of Christ; the sinlessness of Christ; salvation by grace through faith; the necessity of the shed blood of Christ; and many other doctrines.

Meanwhile, the true, uncorrupted text of the New Testament continued to be copied by God’s people. By faith, true Christians received God’s Word, and denied the corrupted Alexandrian texts. Now, because these true copies of Scripture were constantly being handled and read by God’s people, they fell apart much faster than the corrupted Alexandrian copies did. For this reason, the oldest *uncorrupted* copies of the New Testament date no farther back than the 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, no matter how hard Satan tried to stamp out the true copies of Scripture, he couldn’t do it. Satan’s corrupt Alexandrian texts were eventually forgotten and laid aside, while the true copies of Scripture were re-copied, and re-copied, and re-copied.

Throughout the Middle Ages, countless men and women died at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church; and many of them were put to death for the “crime” of possessing copies of Scripture. Many true Christians (such as the Waldenses and the Albigenses) taught their young men biblical Greek, and continued to make copies of the New Testament in the original Greek, as well as translations into modern languages. Few Gentiles during those dark centuries knew Hebrew; but the Hebrew Old Testament continued to be copied faithfully, word-for-word, letter for letter, by the Jewish people. God continued to preserve His words right up until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the invention of the printing press made the copies of Scripture so numerous, that Satan’s kingdom was dealt a tremendous blow.

However, in the 1800’s, Satan found a useful servant. In 1843, and again in 1866, an apostate Protestant clergyman named Friederich Tischendorf travelled to the Vatican library to study the *Vaticanus* Manuscript of the New Testament (which was purported to be very ancient); and Tischendorf managed to convince the general public that this copy of the New Testament was one of the oldest in existence, and, therefore, the most accurate. Supposedly, this copy of

Scripture dated to the fourth century; but it was radically different from the Received Text, which God's people had been using for centuries. God's people had *always* rejected the Vaticanus manuscript. Not only is the Vaticanus text corrupt; but there is good reason to believe that the Vaticanus is a Roman Catholic *forgery*, dating only to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Now, Tischendorf also journeyed to the Sinai Peninsula, in 1844, to try to find ancient copies of the New Testament there; and while he was at the St. Catherine's Monastery, he found an ancient-looking Greek copy of the New Testament (which, according to him, the monks were just about to discard and burn). Tischendorf persuaded the monks to loan him this manuscript (which he never returned); and when he returned to Europe, he published it, and convinced the world that this was the oldest known copy of the New Testament. However, the Alexandrian Manuscript, just like the Vaticanus, is, most likely, a forgery! A Greek palaeographer named Constantine Simonides claimed to have penned this ancient-looking document in 1840, and to have left it a St. Catherine's Monastery; and to his dying day, he insisted that Tischendorf had stolen his document, and used it to make himself famous! Not surprisingly, most scholars believed Tischendorf, and called Simonides a liar. Why? Because most of apostate Christendom was very ready to believe that the Bible is full of errors!

Now, as I said, the Vaticanus and the Alexandrian manuscripts were both *supposedly* penned in the fourth century. However, regardless of when these documents were written, they both were corrupted texts; and the unbelieving apostates *loved* it! Two apostate Anglican priests named Westcott and Hort *really* loved it. They took these two corrupt documents (which didn't even agree with each other), and spliced them together into a Greek testament which came to be called "The Critical Text." This corrupt "Critical Text" was published in 1881, and was quickly accepted by most of professing Christendom; and it has been the basis of nearly every English version of the New Testament that has been translated since the 1800's.

Tragically, most pastors today (including many genuine Christians) are taught in the seminaries that the Critical Text is more accurate than the Received Text, because the Alexandrian and the Vaticanus are supposedly older, and therefore closer to the original. They are taught to despise the King James Version, and all other translations that are based upon the Received Text; and they are taught to despise the idea that God could have preserved His words without error. But what does *God* say about the "Received Text"? Let's take a look.

**Read Matthew 5:17-18.**

**Read John 17:6-8.**

What was Jesus talking about when He said that not one "*jot*" or "*tittle*" would pass from the Law? Well, the word "*jot*" comes from the Hebrew word *yod*; and *yod* is the name of the smallest Hebrew consonant. The word "*tittle*" is translated from the word *chirec*; and *chirec* is the name of the smallest vowel in the Hebrew language. (It is signified by single dot.) What Jesus is saying is that not even the smallest consonant or vowel of Scripture will ever be lost!

We who know Christ need to "receive" this promise of Jesus. That's why we call the true text of the New Testament "The Received Text." Jesus said of His disciples, "***I have given unto them the words which thou hast given me; and they have received them.***" True Christians should receive the God's words without question. True Christians should not doubt that God

is able to preserve His Word. True Christians can rest their faith on God's Word, because God says that His Word will never be destroyed. Are *you* fully persuaded of this, Christian?

**Conclusion:** The Word of God is the “anvil that has broken many hammers.” It will never be destroyed. What's more, it will continue to change lives. It is **cleansing**; it is **life-giving**; it is **incorruptible**; and it is **eternal**. Christian, you have been born again by the Word; but are you allowing the Word to cleanse you, and perfect you in love? **The other question I would ask is:** Do you know for sure that you are saved? Should you not be sure that your sins are forgiven, I would be more than happy to sit down and show you what God's Word says about salvation. Please don't put it off!