

# Birth and Growth Through the Word of God

## 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

**Introduction** – We greatly underestimate the power of the Book we are holding in our hands. But whenever the Spirit of God goes to war with unbelief, this is His weapon of choice. By faith, it is to be used to tear down strongholds, including those of your own heart. By faith and through the Spirit, the Word brings forth life and then nourishes that new life in Christ.

**Firstfruits: Fervent Love** (v22) – Jesus Christ has redeemed you and it changes your conduct here, not just in heaven. You are called to holiness, and to its firstfruits: love for one another (1 John 3:23). We believe and then we love one another.

**“You have purified your souls”** – We have talked about the passivity of our conversion, so what is this phrase doing here?

Remember, we act only in response to what God has done in us. His grace works in us and we work out that grace with faith – “*who through Him believe in God...*” (v21). The work is accomplished, not in our flesh, but ‘*through the Spirit*’.

**Love** – Our love is to be ‘*sincere*’ because it is by the Spirit. If we love God, we obviously must love His children (1 John 5:1). Our love is to be ‘*of the brethren*’. If we do not have a supernatural, affectionate care for brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not Christians (1 John 3:10-17). It is to be ‘*fervent*’ because there will be plenty of need to put it into practice (1 Pet 4:8). It is to be done ‘*from a pure heart*’, not with selfish motives.

**Born Again** (v23) – Our modern revivalism tactics have destroyed this phrase, with pictures of wild-eyed and frenzied late night meetings causing all sorts of sentimental swooning. We should be ashamed of such folly, but not of the phrase ‘born again’.

**The Contrast** – Having been born of a corruptible seed (nature), we were objects of wrath. But having been born again, we are no longer under the first Adam, our first birth, but a new birth – one which is incorruptible. And of course this means it cannot be corrupted. You cannot be lost.

**The Word and the Spirit** – Both were involved in the first creation. Both control your rebirth as well. It is ‘*through the Spirit*’ and ‘*through the Word of God*’. He speaks, and it is so. The Word brings life by the Spirit, and this is the only way new life is brought.

**The Illustration** (vv24-25a) – Isaiah comforted the people with the same contrast (Is 40:1-8). The Word of God proclaimed will be the instrument of deliverance and victory. Peter emphasizes that even ‘*the glory of man*’, that is, the very best he can accomplish, still fades like the grass. Salvation and eternal life only come because ‘*the mouth of the Lord has spoken*’ (Is 40:5).

**The Power of Preaching** (v25b) – God uses His infallible Word, preached by fallible men in fallible sermons as a means to accomplish His perfect, infallible ends. Therefore, preachers must take care that they are preaching the true gospel, and not producing ‘grass converts’. The church must see her calling as the instrument of proclamation to the world through preaching (Rom 10:17). And hearers should come prepared, expectant, with faith, and devoted to put into practice that which is taught.

**Dirty Garments Cast Aside** (2:1) – The power of the Word to bring life is the same power that will sustain life. In the believer, this means the works of the flesh are being laid aside. A man who sees that his sins are forgiven, and believes that to be an excuse to sin, demonstrates that he does not know God and is a stranger to His grace (Rom 6:1-2, 12-14). Peter lists some of the dirty clothes.

**Malice** – One who is spiteful, devouring of others. A good test for maliciousness is whether you would still be speaking of that person in the same manner if you all of a sudden discovered that he or she was standing right behind you.

**Deceit** – The words from your mouth are known by you to be true and you have no intent of playing word games to be misunderstood. You are not known for gossip, backbiting, or laying snares of contention among brothers.

**Hypocrisy** – This is a real temptation in a congregation that takes obedience seriously and exercises church discipline. If you know you need help, you may be tempted to act hypocritically.

**Envy** – Our culture lies, claiming you do have a right to your neighbor’s experiences. But you have no claim on anyone else’s stuff, talent, marriage situation, opportunities, wages, or anything else. We have all been treated much better than we deserve.

**All Evil Speaking** – Whatever you are saying, is it to the glory of God? Is it pure and gracious?

**Laying Them Aside** – A man who is striving against sins that he understands are forgiven, does so because his nature has been changed, his hope rests in Another, and because he believes God is there, by faith through His Word, to cause him to grow.

**Alive and Hungry** (vv2-3) – Because our modern evangelical system of evangelization produces so many fleshly conversions, our methods have to include teaching people how to be hungry. But a child who is born is naturally hungry, as the converts were at Pentecost (Acts 2:42). And just as an infant turns to the one who brought it life, so we are to turn to our source of life for nourishment.

**Not Hungry?** – Two possibilities exist. Either you are not hungry because you are not alive. You are dead in your sins. Or, just as a sick child may have lost his appetite, you may be sick in your unconfessed and unrepentant sins. There is medicine (1 John 1:9).

**Tasted That the Lord is Gracious** – A true and healthy Christian is motivated by his nature and his experience to turn to the Word of God and grow.

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