

“Word”

I Peter 1:23-25

The English language begins with 26 letters. Those 26 letters can be strung together in any number of combinations creating words which, according to Webster’s International unabridged dictionary, includes 470,000 entries. But even that may not be accurate. Language is always changing and so are the words that comprise it. Do you consider “dog” one word or two when it speaks both to a kind of animal as a noun or a verb that means to follow persistently? Do you include the French words we use when cooking or Japanese words when participating in martial arts or Latin words when speaking in medical or scientific terms? Or how about the use of tenses?

We drive

He drives

They drove

It’s really difficult to pin down the exact number of words in our language.

But consider also that you can take each individual word made up of any number of letters and string them into an array of sentences and paragraphs to form thoughts and ideas, true or fictional. From them we write descriptions about the beauty of a sunset or the enchantment of a walk on the beach or last night’s nail biter game. We use them to create poetry or captivate the senses through a novel.

They speak of history and science and well, any subject you deem important enough to write about.

Words can be scathing rebukes

Words can encourage

Words can malign or judge

Words can build up or express emotion

A number of years ago urban culture came up with a word that describes terms like truth, honesty, or integrity.

Anyone know what it was?

“Word”

That’s it. “Word”.

If you said “Word up” it meant you were serious or that you were in agreement or that you wanted the person to listen to what you said.

Turn to I Peter 1:23-25. What Peter has to say is “word” or “word up” when it comes to the message of the gospel. It is true and we must listen.

Through the Word we find salvation.

From the Word we find guidance for daily living.

In the Word we find peace, joy, comfort, and strength.

By the word we evangelize the world.

In our passage we see the power of God’s Word, the perpetuation of God’s Word, and the proclamation of God’s Word.

I. THE POWER OF GOD’S WORD

We begin by seeing the power for a new birth.

A. The Power For a New Birth

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (seed), through the living and enduring *word of God*.” (emphasis added)

We have been born again through the word of God. The first thing then I want us to see about the Word of God is that it saves.

Now before we go any further let me tell you that two different Greek words are used in this passage for “word”. We see it in v. 23 and again in v. 25. The first word is logos, which is used to denote an expression or thought. It’s also used as a title of Jesus Christ in John 1:1. Peter uses it as an expression of thought related to the gospel message. The second use in v. 25 is rhema which means a word that is spoken referring to the message of the gospel itself. It is not speaking of the whole Bible but rather an individual Scripture. (Ephesians 6:17)

So when we come to the first use of the word, word, we see that we are born again by the word of God which expresses His thoughts on how we are saved.

1. The Word saves

The best passage I know to see that the word of God saves would have to be Romans 1:16.

When Peter speaks of being born again by the word of God he is referring to the gospel.

Paul says that the gospel is the power of God to save and then he tells us what the gospel is in I Corinthians 15:3-4

Now in that passage we see that the gospel isn't just that Christ died, was buried and rose again. We see that Christ died for sins and if He died for our sins then it must be that He rose again for our salvation for if He died but did not rise again from the dead then He was only a man and His death was insufficient as a payment for our sin. We are then still in our sin and quite frankly so was Christ. But Christ did rise again and we know that not only from the testimonies in the gospel but also from the writer of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:3

In Romans 1:16 Paul tells us that the power of God alone is sufficient to save us from our sin and to give us eternal life. Salvation will come from no other word and in no other way. There isn't any language in the world that has the power to save us – only God's Word can.

Throughout Scripture we read about God's incredible power.

Power that delivers

Power that heals

Power that is sovereign

Power that is great

Power that is incorruptible

Power that does the impossible

Power to save

When we consider His unlimited, unfathomable, undeniable power, the greatest display of His power is to save the sinner. We think it an incredible display of power to create everything recorded in Genesis 1 from nothing. Yet that is nothing compared to the power to save a sinner and make Him a saint. His power transforms the sinner making him or her into a new creation.

We have been given a new nature

We have been given a new name

We have been given a new home

We have been given a new destination

We have been given a new purpose

II Corinthians 5:17 says that all things have become new because of being in Christ.

That is the power of God to save anyone, anytime, anywhere. It is when we believe the word of the gospel that we are born again. Remember the gospel is Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. We cannot forget the resurrection for that is when Christ forever broke the chains of the death and the grave.

John records for us the first time we hear about this phenomenal power to save from the words of Jesus Himself.

John 3:1-21

We can spend a lot of time speculating about why Nicodemus came at night.

He may not have wanted to fall out of favor with the rest of the Sanhedrin who were opposed to Jesus.

He may have wanted to avoid the impression that his coming was in some way sanctioned by them. It may be because nighttime would have given more uninterrupted opportunity to talk since both he and Jesus had greater demands on their time during the day.

At the end of the day it isn't important why he came at night. What is important is that he came at all. But remember that coming to Jesus doesn't mean a person is saved. There were plenty of people who

came to Jesus like the rich young ruler of Luke 18, who came to talk but went away sad never finding salvation.

Nicodemus came and respectfully addressed Jesus as a peer calling Him Rabbi or teacher. Others used the term of Jesus to mock Him. They had no respect for a self-proclaimed teacher, one who was not trained formally by the established or recognized schools.

I suppose it would be similar to those who mockingly call Mr. Trump president because he didn't come through the rank and file of the political machine.

But Nicodemus is respectful not hateful toward Jesus unlike many of the Sanhedrin. He is curious but cautious. He acknowledged that Jesus came from God because of the miracles He performed wondering if there was any connection to Jesus' miraculous power and the possibility of Him being the Messiah.

Jesus however went right to the heart of the matter. He wanted to see a transformation take place in Nicodemus that could only happen through genuine faith. Jesus told him how he could be saved. A person cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless He is born again.

That term literally means to be born from above. It is in the present tense meaning that it is a past action that has ongoing results into the present. There is security in that term for the person who believes and receives that salvation. I am secure in the promise of God that He will never change His mind about me or about the promise He made to give me eternal life. I don't have to wonder if I've been good enough or if I gave enough.

Jesus matter of factly says "you must be born again."

Someone once asked revivalist George Whitefield why he preached so much on being born again. He replied by saying because you must be born again.

John MacArthur describes what being born again means. He writes it "is the act of God by which He imparts eternal life to those who are 'dead in trespasses and sins.'"

Ephesians 2:1-9

Titus 3:5 says it is a rebirth. The Holy Spirit has washed away our sin and given us a new life. This shows the divine initiative in our salvation. Only through God are we reborn.

II Corinthians 5:17 describes it as being a new creation.

James 1:18 refers to it as "birth through the word of truth."

I Peter 1:3 calls it a new birth.

I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4, 18 say that we are born of God.

And I John 5:1 states that those who believe Jesus is the Christ are born of God.

The power of God for salvation is found in Jesus' words to Nicodemus that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that all who believe in Him will have eternal life. God did not send His Son to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.

Once again we come back to Romans 1:16 to be reminded that the Word of the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. It is also clear in James 1:18, 21.

The power of God's Word gives us a new birth and we become a new creation.

At that moment there is not only a new birth, there is also a new bond – we become God's children.

B. The Power For a New Bond

John 1:12-13

The right of a new family bond is preceded by the righteousness that comes from the new birth. We cannot become part of the family of God before we believe. "Receive" here is not an intellectual assent to something we know to be true, but a submission to Him in a personal way that establishes a relationship. In this case it actually means to take hold of, to get, or to grasp. To be saved we must accept all that Scripture teaches us about Christ. Once we receive Him as Savior then we are added to God's forever family. We are given the right to become His children and verse 13 makes it abundantly clear that this privilege, this right is only made possible by God. He supernaturally grants to us the power to become His children.

We are then able to sing that wonderful chorus:
 I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God –
 I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
 Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod;
 For I'm part of the family, the family of God.

And it is God's Spirit that bears testimony with our spirit that we are the children of God.
 Romans 8:14-17

J.I. Packer wrote "What is a Christian? The richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as his Father."

We are no longer slaves to sin, but free in Christ and a child of God. A new family bond has formed. The power of God's Word gives us a new birth and a new bond.

Second, we see the perpetuation of God's Word.

II. THE PERPETUATION OF GOD'S WORD

Perpetuate is a term that means to continue. When we consider the perpetuation of the Word of God we mean that the Word of God is living.

A. The Word of God is Living

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (seed), through the living and enduring word of God." (emphasis added)

Hebrews 4:12-13

Erwin Lutzer calls this passage the strongest on the power of God's Word. God's Word will accomplish its intended purpose.

Isaiah 55:11

The Word of God has the power of God because it comes from the authority of God.

The Word of God is not just words on a page. It is vastly different beyond comparison from any other words written in any book, greater than any other religious writing conceived by man because they are written by man. The Bible is the very words of God given to help us know how to have a personal relationship with Him through His Son, given that we might know how to conduct our lives here on earth, given that we know our destiny when we leave this world. The Word of God is active and has power. It converts the soul.

The Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword. The term is a surgical one meaning to cut. A scalpel is quite sharp, as is a razor. I saw on Youtube not too long ago a barber using an ax to shave a guy bald.

Most of you may remember some 30 years ago that knife they sold on TV that was never supposed to get dull. They would chop wood, concrete blocks, a pop can and then slice a tomato clean through.

The Word of God is sharper than the sharpest blade ever made. It is described as piercing going right to the heart of the matter. Erwin Lutzer in his book *Seven Reasons You Can Trust the Bible* says that "It lays you bear."

Greek scholar Vincent writes “The word penetrates to the inmost recesses of our spiritual being as a sword cuts through the joints and marrow of the body. The separation is not of one part from another, but operates in each department of the spiritual nature.”

It judges the thoughts and intentions of our motives sifting out and analyzing the evidence. Lutzer describes it this way: “The Word of God sits in judgment on all the activity of the soul and spirit. It separates base motives from noble ones; it distinguishes between that which is of the flesh and that which is of the spirit.”

If you have or have had a dog like our Hailey was, if she did something wrong all we had to do was give her the look and she knew she had been bad.

God’s Word reaches into the depth of our heart and convicts us with penetrating power. Many lives have been forever changed by the power of God’s Word working in a heart. We have a built in defense mechanism that thinks it can hide our true nature and intentions of the heart. But God’s Word exposes our sin as we see in Romans 7:7.

The Word of God accurately evaluates our lives. It has a standard based on the character of God that will never change. It has no sliding scale and shows no favoritism. It judges one person just the same as another. His Word lays us bare and exposes us for who we really are, but His Word also shows us how to take care of the things that are exposed.

When Dad had his recent elbow surgery, the doctor showed me three pictures. The first picture showed the elbow opened up exposing the problem with the nerve. The second picture showed the nerve exposed. The third picture showed how the problem was corrected.

Without God’s Word we would gladly justify our sinful actions and attitudes. God’s Word exposes

our sin and how we can take care of it and verse 16 says that we can approach the throne of grace to help in time of need.

Psalm 19:11 “By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

Jeremiah 23:29 “‘Is not My word like a fire,’ declares the Lord, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces.’”

From II Timothy 3:16-17 we read that God’s inspired Word teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us, and instructs or trains us in righteousness so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

There is a story of a man named Gordius who tied a complexity of knots that no one could untie. Alexander came and with one swing of his sword cut the knots out.

God’s Word is the sword that cuts out the complexity of sin in our lives. Erwin Lutzer adds “when we let the Word reign in our lives, we are letting God reign in our lives.”

God and His Word share like characteristics. Like God, His Word is light.

Psalm 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Like God, His Word is perfect.

Psalm 19:7 “The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.”

Like God, His Word is faithful.

Psalm 19:7 “The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy.”

Like God, His Word is righteous.

Psalm 19:8 “The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the soul.”

Like God, His Word is sure or truthful.

Psalm 19:9 “The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.”

The Word of God is living.

The Word of God is lasting.

B. The Word of God is Lasting

Once again lets return to our passage and see from I Peter 1:23-24 that the Word of God endures.

““For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (seed), through the living and *enduring* word of God. For, ‘All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the *Lord stands forever.*” (emphasis added)

We read that it is imperishable (everlasting) and then Peter quotes from Isaiah 40. From the most common thing like grass to the most exotic and beautiful flower, it all will eventually fade and wither and die off. We had a beautiful Easter lily for several weeks, but you notice that it is no longer here. The petals turned brown and began to fall off. It doesn’t last. But God’s Word is imperishable. Peter quotes Isaiah 40:8 which speaks of the everlasting nature of God’s Word that it stands forever.

Psalm 119:89 “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.”

I think that speaks not only to the lasting or eternal nature of God’s Word, but also to its promises being fulfilled.

The stability of God’s Word is seen in Psalm 1:3 where the one who meditates on it will be like a tree firmly planted by the river, a tree that is fruitful and steadfast.

We have seen the power of God’s Word in the new

birth and in the new bond – we are God’s creation, and God’s children.

Then we considered the perpetuation of God’s Word that it is both living and lasting.

The final thought from our passage shows us the proclamation of God’s Word.

III. THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD’S WORD

“And this is the word that was preached to you.”

A. Through God’s Word We Evangelize Our Neighbor

We have been given the mandate to proclaim the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. We are to take the good news everywhere and to everyone so that they have the opportunity to be transformed by the powerful Word of God which can save a soul. Where would we be if someone hadn’t proclaimed the message of sin and salvation? Peter reminds his audience that it was this message of the gospel that he preached to them. If we don’t who will?

Romans 10:14-17

Through God’s Word we evangelize our neighbor. Finally, through God’s Word we examine ourselves.

B. Through God’s Word We Examine Ourselves

I Corinthians 11:23-30

As we come to communion this morning this is where we take the mirror of God’s Word and use it to reveal things that need to be confessed through a time of self-examination. Spend a few moments quietly before the Lord. Open His Word and ask Him to show you what needs to be changed. Then confess and prepare your heart to meet Him.

Charles Spurgeon “Why, the Book has wrestled

with me; the Book has smitten me; the Book has comforted me; the Book has smiled on me; the Book has frowned on me; the Book has clasped my hand; the Book has warmed my heart. The Book weeps with me, and sings with me, and it preaches to me; it maps my way, and holds up my goings; it is the Young Man's Best companion, and is still my morning and evening Chaplain." The Word of God is powerful.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.