

**TITLE: Responding to the Word of Grace (Part 3)**

**PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1.23-25**

**THEME: The Believer's Response to the Word of God (the Gospel of Christ)**

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## Read Passage

### Sola Scriptura from Last time . . .

Last time I spoke (2 wks. ago) we began w/an extended intro. about t/meaning of t/doctrine of "Sola Scriptura" - a Latin phrase from the Reformation that means "Scripture Alone;" (Bible is final authority for the faith & practice of t/CH of JC & t/believer in JC).

In my doctoral studies which at present are focusing on t/history of t/Reformation I am reminded again and again of t/price t/Reformers paid in returning this precious truth to t/CH (a truth that must exist of t/Gospel is to be all that it is). W/O S.S. t/Gospel itself shrinks into t/shadows & is replaced by systems of works righteousness.

### On July 6, 1415

John Hus (whose name means "goose") was burned at t/stake for criticizing t/RC sale of indulgences. Just before he died, he is said to have declared ==>

"Today you are burning a goose; however a hundred years from now, you will be able to hear a swan sing; you will not burn it, you will have to listen to him."

The goose was indeed cooked. And 100 years later, a swan did sing as Hus himself predicted. That swan was Martin Luther.

Like Hus, Martin Luther was critical of t/CH's practice of selling indulgences (I's were "credits" - "redemptions" that were said to forgive t/sins of those who paid money for them).

## Several weeks ago I mentioned John Tetzel

Tetzel was a Priest of the Dominican order. He was also t/chief indulgence vendor of t/CH.

Tetzel would travel from town to town preaching t/forgiveness of sins for money. As soon as he finished his message, Tetzel would rush to t/large money box that traveled w/him and he would throw in a coin so that the loud rattle could be heard by all. Tetzel himself declared that, "as soon as the coin in the box rings a soul from purgatory springs." People were then exhorted to come with their money ready so that they may receive forgiveness for themselves or to release a deceased loved one from t/terrors of purgatory.

It was in response to this horrible doctrine of indulgences that Luther wrote is 99 Theses and posted them on the door of t/CH it Wittenberg.

## In response to Luther, Tetzel prepared his own theses

In doing so he enlisted t/help of one of the top theologians of the church: Conrad Wimpina. The theses were completed on January, 20, 1518.

About three hundred monks were present while Tetzel read the theses out loud. Among the declarations was, "whoever says that the soul does not escape out of purgatory so soon as the money tinkles in the chest, is in error."

## Tetzel also declared that ==>

4. We should teach Christians that the [Holy Father] alone has the right of deciding in all matters of Christian faith; that he alone and no one besides him has power to interpret the meaning of Scripture according to his own views, and to approve or condemn all the words or writings of other men.

5. We should teach Christians that the judgment of the [Holy Father] cannot err, in matters concerning the Christian faith, or which are necessary to the salvation of the human race.

17. We should teach Christians that there are many things which the Church regards as indisputable articles of universal truth, although they are not to be found in the canon of the Bible or in the writings of the ancient doctors.

After Tetzel read his response to Luther he had a pulpit & scaffold erected within t/marketplace of Frankfort. He then placed Luther's theses and sermon upon the scaffolding and proceeded to have them burned in effigy.

For his part - Luther maintained that his conscience was held captive by t/WOG - a word, he said, that Tetzel treated "as a sow treats a sack of oats."

In response, Luther quoted two sources. He quoted TAP in Gal. 1:8 {quote} & he cited Augustine who declared that ==>

"I have learned to render the canonical books [that is, the Bible] alone the honor of believing most firmly that none of them has erred; as for the others I do not believe in what they teach, simply because it is they who teach them."

**If I can rein this all back into the context of 1 Peter . . .**

We've been looking at what it means to ==>

### **I. Rightly Respond to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)**

I suppose that's a fancy way of saying this is how we are to respond to the Bible. You see, t/Bible demands our allegiance because it is the *viva vox Dei* (living word of God).

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

Principle way that we hear His voice is thru His Word. This is a passage that has everything to do with hearing and obeying the voice of God.

Like Luther we are to be those whose consciences are captive to t/WOG.

First Thing we saw in v. 22 ==>

## ***I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)***

*You are to ==>*

### ***A. Rekindle Your Love for the Brethren (22) "What is the Measure of my Love?"***

**Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love each other from a pure heart.**

{Sum up the context of verses 17-21}

In light of that {restate verse 22}

### ***B. Remember Your Response to the Word (23-25) "What is my Perspective on Scripture?"***

Remember your response to God's Word, the Gospel. Ask yourself, "What is my perspective, my belief, as it relates to t/Bible & t/message of t/Bible?" What did that message do for me?

There are three things we are to remember in this passage ==>

***1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)***

***2. Remember the Nature of the Word that Saved You (23b-25a)***

***3. Remember the Preaching of the Word that Saved You (25b)***

#### ***1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)***

**You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and abiding Word of God.**

##### ***a. Peter begins by reminding us of that fact of our salvation***

**You have been born again . . .**

This is saying t/same thing that t/beginning of v. 22 says ==>

**Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth . . .**

They're same thing. To purify your souls by obed. to t/truth is to have been B.A. & to be B.A. is to have P.Y.S.B.O.T.T. V. 22 emph.zes our response when we believed; V. 23 emphasizes God's work in causing that response.

## **b. God birthed us or brought us forth**

(1) ἀναγενναω – (γενναω - to birth or beget; ἀνα - again)

We saw this back in v. 3 (acc. to his great mercy he caused us to be B.A.). This is regeneration; It's t/work of salvation that God births by transforming our dead hearts into those that are alive to Him.

### *1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)*

### **2. Remember the Nature of that Word that Saved You (23b-25a)**

It's 1 thing to remember t/Word; another to ponder t/nature of that Word!

**You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and enduring Word of God.**

### **a. In this context the allusion to "seed" makes perfect sense**

After all, we're talking about birth, are we not?

Seed represents the source of life. Everything that comes to life in t/world begins w/seed. It is t/basic source that initiates plant & animal life.

But nothing in the material world has the power to produce spiritual and eternal life ==>

**You have been born again not out of perishable seed . . .**

(1) Not out of seed which is φθαρτῆς

Same word is used in v. 18 ==> φθαρτος - perishable, subject to decay. Word that always used in NT to refer to things which decay, deteriorate, wear out [so Grudem, 84].

Everyone is born of perishable seed. When a man and a woman come together and 23 chromosomes come together with 23 chromosomes you have t/birth or genesis of life. That seed and the life that comes from it is perishable/mortal/subject to decay and death.

This is Adamic. It's like Romans 5:12 ==>

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

### (a) Everyone born of perishable seed will die

BUT - those born of the imperishable seed will only die once. Why if a man is born only once (thru t/perishable seed), he will die twice (he will die physically, and also eternally). But if you are born twice (not only physically but also spiritually thru the imperishable seed) you will only die once. Physically. You will be spared t/eternal death of God's wrath.

### b. Spiritual life in Christ is eternal because the author of that life is eternal

If you're born through t/seed of sinful fallen men your lot will be one of sinful, fallen depravity. Fallen/finite men can only procreate after their kind.

But if God plants his spiritual seed into your heart and you're born again, then t/spiritual life that dwells w/i will have an enduring eternal quality to it. Spiritual birth to eternal life can only come through an eternal source; One who is perfect and powerful enough to grant that life.

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot (continue in) sin, because he is born of God.

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

This is why it's a sovereign work. Why it's what we call "monergistic." God is t/parent & He chose to have you! You didn't choose to birth yourself; no, He chose to birth you. That is truly "amazing grace".

Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

### c. The seed in this context is the Word of God

... **through the living and enduring Word of God.**

The Word is t/means by which, or thru which, we are B.A. Specifically, t/Gospel.

### (1) Why I said earlier that in this context - the WOG and the Gospel overlap in their meaning

EPH 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation . . . [the message of truth is the gospel of salvation]

COL 1:5 . . . the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, [the word of truth is t/gospel]

COL 4:3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ . . . [to open a door for God's Word is to speak the mystery of X or the gospel]

Same here ==>

**You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and enduring Word of God.**

It's God's Word in general; the Gospel in specific.

### (2) What's the Gospel?

Word is used nearly 100 x in NT. εὐαγγέλιον (εὖ = good; ἀγγελιον = message).

Certainly there's a sense in which all of the Bible is Gospel (you can find gospel in all of the Bible). Specifically, t/Gospel answers t/question ==> "How can a sinful man who is destined for God's wrath be forgiven and restored to peace with God so that he may worship and enjoy him forever?"

What's the answer? *It is only thru t/redemption provided by God in JC. I recognize my sinful condition; I agree w/God that I am sinful, separated from Him, deserving of his condemnation due his holiness. By his grace I see JC, Himself God, t/2d person of t/Trinity, who came to earth to live & die for me. I turn from my sin & trust in JC as my Lord and my Savior. I am B.A. T/Father placed my sin on a perfect, sinless X; T/father imputes or credits the righteousness of X to me.* Hey, that's not only good news. That's great news!

Where did that message, that gospel come from? Did I just make it up?

### (a) Romans 10:8-17

It's through God's Word that I hear about JC and God takes that living Word & implants it into my dead heart so that I believe & am born again.

James 1:18 **In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth . . .**

### (b) See same thing in Jesus' parable of the sower (Matthew 13)

The sower casts his seed, which in the parable is the Word/Gospel, & the soil represents t/different kinds of people who hear that word.

- \* Some hear it and are unmoved.
- \* Some hear it and respond w/temporary, non-saving faith.
- \* Others who hear it and it is implanted in their hearts unto salvation.

Puritan Archbishop of Glasgow in Scotland, Robert Leighton ==> "No matter how powerful a preacher is, all he can do is place the seed in the ear. He can do no more. The hearer, by paying attention, can convey the seed to his head. But it is the supreme Father and Teacher above who carries it into the heart, which is the only soil where it can live and bear fruit." [Leighton, 70]



That's the seed of 1 Peter 1:23 ==>

**You have been born again not out of perishable seed, but imperishable: through the living and enduring Word of God.**

### **(3) Three characteristics of this "imperishable seed"**

1) Living; 2) Enduring; 3) it's God's.

#### **(a) It's Living (this is the product of the Word)**

Hebrews 4:12 **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

Because it's living it can produce what? Life. To be B.A. is to be given what? Life.

#### **(b) It's Enduring (this is the permanence of the Word)**

It's a simple verb. It means that it "remains, lasts, persists, continues to live." It is eternal in nature.

Living points to the fact that the seed produces life; Enduring to the fact that the life, once begun, will never cease or die.

#### **(c) It's God's (this is the possessor of the Word)**

It's not any word. No, it's the ==>

**... living and enduring Word of God.**

It's God's Word. You can't separate God's Word from God himself. His Word speaks of his character // nature // attributes - who he is.

Listen - only reason it can be living // enduring – is because of whose Word it is. Can only eternally live // endure because God has authored it.

## 1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)

## 2. Remember the Nature of that Word that Saved You (23b-25a)

Imperishable; Living; Enduring; God's

### d. OT Illustration in verses 24 - 25

Peter further elaborates on the idea that God's Word is eternal seed as compared to the seed of men which is temporal.

#### (1) Verses 24-25 consist of a quote from Isaiah 40:6-8

Passage that Peter quotes from Isaiah this passage partly from the LXX & partly from t/Hebrew.

2d direct OT quote in 1 Peter (cf. 1:16). Peter regularly cites t/OT (see a lot of that in chapter 2).

#### (a) The Isaiah Passage in particular (don't have time to look at) speaks of the faithfulness of God's promises

People of OT Israel (Judah) was going to be attacked & taken captive by t/nation of Babylon. That happened in t/6th c.

Isaiah 40 begins by saying "comfort, comfort my people." IOW - God is faithful; he will restore them. He will keep his covenant with the people regardless of the nations of the world that seem strong; these nations are pawns in God's hands; they are like grass and the flower of the grass, which perish when the wind blows upon them.

Peter takes this passage in Isaiah & applies it to the faithfulness and nature of God's Word – the "imperishable seed" through which we live.

#### (2) Look at verse 24==>

**FOR ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS . . .**

**(a) "All flesh" = "all of humanity"**

And "all of humanity" is like grass." Grass in general, or hay. That which lasts for a season and then is gone.

... AND ALL OF HER GLORY IS LIKE A FLOWER OF GRASS. ...

**(b) "her glory" refers to the "glory of men"**

Success/prestige/power/celebrity status. All of that in God's eyes is like the flower of grass.

Some of us are plain old grass (hay), a few are flower (stand outs).

...THE GRASS WITHERS AND THE FLOWER FADES (*dies*)...

Whether it's grass (all men in general) or the flower (those men who are prominent/celebrities) they all alike wither and fade away.

One thinks of those taken in the prime of life, such as Princes Diana who died in 1997 or JFK, Jr. who died 2 yrs. later.

Even if God grants such men to live a long life, they still must face death. Even the most cocky and powerful men on earth who strut around like a proud roosters will come to nothing. There will come a day when they are humbled in sickness and death. Unavoidable.

I think of the 18th c. French infidel, Voltaire. A man who was one of the most talented and fertile writers of his time who used the power of his pen in an attempt to demolish Christianity.

Of Christ, Voltaire once declared: "Curse the wretch!" He boldly declared: "In 20 years Christianity will be no more. My single hand will destroy the edifice it took 12 Apostles to rear!"

God was not amused. In fact, in an ironic twist of divine providence, very house Voltaire used to churn out lit. against Xnty was used following his death by the Geneva Bible Society to print masses of Bibles.

After he died, the nurse that attended to him said, "I will never see another unbeliever die."

The doctor who attended to him during his final moments before coming face to face with the God whose existence he denied, recorded that his final words were==>

"I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me 6 months life. Then I shall go to hell; and you will go with me."

**FOR ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS AND ALL OF HER GLORY IS LIKE A FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS AND THE FLOWER FADES**

### **(c) This is humanity in miniature**

The life cycle of plants is relatively short and is more visible and obvious than the life cycle of humans. Cf. the leaves of the trees here. They bud in the spring, they unfold and bloom, reach full maturity in the summer. Then fall comes. They begin to wither (they get age spots). They turn brown and slowly but surely die. They fall off and are forever gone. The cycle beings in the spring with brand new leaves. That's a preview in miniature of what our lives are like.

Psalm 90:12 (Moses) **So teach us to number our days, hat we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.**

Psalm 39:4 (David) **Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the extent of my days, Let me know how transient I am.**

Job 14:1-2 **Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. "Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.**

James 4:14 **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.**

I see that with more clarity the older I get. Once you reach 40 you are old enough to have witnessed the death of many older relatives and friends. You are also old enough to witness the birth and growth of the children of relatives and friends. When I hit 30 I experienced something I had never seen before: I was able with adult eyes to see young girls turn into young women. Now that I have hit 40 I have seen those same young girls who have turned into young women now start to turn the corner where they are starting to show their age.

You realize that it's like we're all on a long conveyer belt. You start over here as a newbie. The belt slowly moves along & you look ahead to the end of the belt (the death of all men) and you witness your great-grandparent fall off the edge. Then your grandparents. Suddenly you're not at the beginning any more. Now there are new people, babies, children to this side of you. Then you watch your parents age & you realize that you are the age that they were when you were in High School. Oops. There goes my uncle. Oops, there goes my aunt. (every so often someone gets pushed off in the middle of the ride unexpectedly - they die young). You realize that some day soon, by God's grace, you will be over here. To your left are a whole bunch of young people (gee, I was over there not that long ago). To your right . . . there aren't many left.

I've said it before, I'll say it again. Death is a relentless foe who always captures its prey in the end.

1 Corinthians 15 - "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" . . . but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the connection here ==>

**THE GRASS WITHERS AND THE FLOWER FADES BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD REMAINS FOREVER.**

{note connection to our salvation in vv. 23, 25}

That's the connection.

## *I. Rightly Responding to the Word of Grace (1:22-2:3)*

### *B. Remember Your Response to the Word (23-25)*

#### *1. Remember the Word that Saved You (23a)*

#### *2. Remember the Nature of that Word that Saved You (23b-25a)*

It's not just the Word itself. Not the Bible in a vacuum. Not t/WOG tucked away somewhere that it has no effect. WOG that brought you new birth. That's the contrast! It's a contrast between the frailty of our flesh and the permanence of eternal life. Contrast between our temporal lives and eternal life! That's the context (going back to verse 22 - born again not by corruptible seed . . . ).

There's a third thing you need to remember

#### *3. Remember the Preaching of the Word that Saved You (25b)*

**. . . And this is the Word which was preached to you.**

What "Word?" The Word that {context...}

Augustine - begins his classic "Confessions" ==>

"Let me seek you, then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher." [Confessions, page 3]

Romans 10:14 . . .

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**More I want to say on this point . . .**

Save it for the introduction of next week . . .