

## Love Is a Good Investment (1 Peter 1:23–25)

So our Scripture today is 1 Peter 1:22–25. I'll give you a chance to turn there. This I think will be the last time that I ascend to this pulpit and say, "Turn to 1 Peter chapter 1." I'll never probably ever get to say turn to any other book, but at least we'll move to chapter 2. So today 1 Peter 1:22–25. For the kids, the word of the day is "word." So if you're counting, you just got two right there in that one thing I just said. If I do everything I plan to do, which I never do, but if I do what I plan to do, you'll have a lot of them. So you'll be busy with those tallies today. 1 Peter 1:22–25:

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a love of the brothers without hypocrisy, fervently love one another from the heart,

23 for you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off,

25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news. (1 Pet. 1:22–25 LSB)

So at first glance at that passage, what do you think it's about? What would you say is its main point? You can think about that. It's about love. There's a command to love in the middle of it. That's the main point. The passage is about love. There's a lot in there about God's Word, but the thrust of the passage is love. So Peter starts by asserting that his readers have a sincere love, or a love without hypocrisy, that their growth and sanctification has led them to have a love for one another that he can call sincere. The action and deed are consistent. It's sincere. It's without hypocrisy.

But then Peter issues the command. You see the command? The command to love better. "Fervently love one another from the heart" (v. 22). So what would it mean then to fervently love one another? Well if you remember back to August, the word *fervently*—which you don't—the word *fervently* means to extend to its limit, to stretch to its limit. We're to love one another to the fullest extent, to the greatest of our ability. And then "from the heart." And what would that mean? Well, the heart is all of the immaterial part of the person. All the internal faculties of the person are involved in this love. It's a comprehensive love. It's decisive. It's a love of the mind and of the emotions.

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It's resolved. It's determined. It's reasoned. It's unbreakable. It's an entire consistency, a comprehensive consistency. It would be apparent and practical.

And that's where we ended the last time I preached, with those two points. We have “in obedience to the truth, purified [our] souls for a love of the brothers without hypocrisy” (v. 22). And then there's the command to go further: “fervently love one another from the heart” (v. 22). We made progress in sanctification to the point that our love is sincere. Now we're commanded to continue to increase that love.

But it's possible you could ask why. That's a lot to ask. Why should we do that? Well, first of all, it's a command, and of course that's enough. But Peter doesn't leave us there. He gives us a reason. He gives us a benefit associated with this kind of fervent love for one another. And today we're going to see that rationale in verses 23–25 with a couple of points that would stand on their own as doctrinal truths, but we're going to put those together and then put them with the application to love so we get the full meaning and significance of the passage. And the two points are these: Simply put, your spiritual life comes from God's Word. Your spiritual life comes from God's Word, specifically God's promise in the gospel. And two, the Word of God is perfectly reliable. It endures forever. Those are our two points.

So the first point for that rationale to love, and we'll see how those form a rationale to love, but the first point is found in verse 23: “For you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.” And it's given some clarity and specificity in verse 25: “This is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news.”

The second point that enforces the first, that's found in verse 23. The word of God, the seed of your eternal life, said to be the seed of your eternal life, is incorruptible, living, and enduring. And then it's supported by the quotation from Isaiah 40; that's in verses 24 and 25. That quotation ends with “The word of the Lord endures forever.”

And so we have those two points. One, you've been born again of a seed. That seed is the Word of God, which was proclaimed to you as good news. That's the first point. And the second point is that that seed, the Word of God, endures forever. Now, I'm going to give you the whole sermon here in a few sentences. Those two points together form a rationale for the kind of love that Peter commands in the prior verse. How? Think about it. If the source of your eternal life is the promise of God, and if the promise of God, God's Word, endures forever, that implies you can have absolute assurance that you are

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also eternal. You live forever, and so do your brothers and sisters in Christ. And so fervent love for one another here makes sense, doesn't it? The rewards of that, the benefits of that, the relationships that you form are eternal. And so that's a rationale for love. In other words, love is a good investment. So that's the end at the beginning.

Now we're going to reason through this more carefully together. So we see in verse 23, again look at verse 23, the source of our regeneration, the source of our new birth in Christ, is not something that is corruptible, but it's something that is incorruptible, and that incorruptible seed is the living and enduring Word of God. The first word of the verse in the original language of verse 23 that's translated as—I think I read the LSB—it's translated as “for you have been born again.” That is *anagennao*, *ana* meaning “again,” and *gennao* meaning to either “give birth” or “to be born.” So it refers to regeneration, the second birth, the spiritual birth, being made alive when we were spiritually dead.

Now, if you look in your Bibles up a few verses to 1 Peter 1:3–5, Peter attributes our rebirth to

3 the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to obtain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in heaven for you,

5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (LSB)

So God has caused us to be born again. In verse 23, we learn that He did this through the means of a seed. Now, almost everything alive in this world is born from a seed of one kind or another. If you think of plants and animals, they're born of seeds. So either a seed is formed in the plant, the seed is planted in the ground, brings forth new life, or the natural course of conception in men and animals, the seed is implanted in the female, and new life forms from that union. In all cases, physical life begins with that seed. Spiritual life in Christ has that in common with physical life. Our spiritual life begins with the seed, a spiritual seed.

Now, in the case of natural life, biological life, the seed is corruptible, perishable. The word translated “corruptible” means “subject to destruction or decomposition,” something that doesn't last, as all plants and animals do. They all die. Everything that

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lives physically dies physically. It decomposes. It ceases to be what it was. It disintegrates. And that's especially true of the seed. If you think about when you plant a seed in a pot or in your garden, what do you do to it? You bury it. You drown it. You're hoping for it to rot so that new life can spring forth from it. All seeds are perishable. All physical seeds are perishable. They're all corruptible. They all decompose. And they pass on that character to the life that they form. The life formed from a perishable seed is perishable. But that's not the case for the source of our eternal life. It says it's incorruptible. You might have "imperishable." It's never dying, never decomposing, never deteriorating, never fading, never diminishing, ever alive, always enduring. The seed, the source for our eternal life, is said to be here "the living and enduring word of God." It's the Word of God.

I think it's reasonable to ask here, What does Peter mean by the Word of God? Is it a reference to Christ? Is it a reference to the Bible or to some portion of the Scriptures? We know that Christ is Himself called the Word in John's writings. He's the *Logos*. He bears the name "the word of God" in Revelation. So if Peter is referring to Christ here, it would be correct to say that our eternal life certainly comes from Him, right? From His righteousness, from His death on the cross, especially from His resurrection. We just saw that in 1 Peter 1:3. It reminds us our eternal life has its source in the resurrection of Christ. We saw that. But most often in Scripture, and as far as I can tell, always in Peter's speech and in his writing, the Word of God refers to God's self-revelation, that which God speaks or writes or inspires. And this is the meaning here. We see evidence of that in verse 25. If you look at verse 25: "This is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news." The living and enduring Word of God, that seed, that is what the readers had heard proclaimed to them, specifically that portion of God's Word which was proclaimed to them as good news. So what would that be? What part of God's Word would be the good news? Well, the gospel. This is a reminder then of the fact that we were regenerated through the biblical gospel. Whether you read it, someone read it to you, someone explained it to you, ultimately the saving power of God is transmitted through the proclamation of His Word, and especially the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

So while we've jumped to verse 25, you see it ends with "And this is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news." "Was proclaimed to you as good news" there, it translates a form of the word *euangelizo*. You may have heard that word. It sounds like *evangelism* or the *evangel*. It means good news, to proclaim good news. It's the only verb in that particular sentence. So if you are being very literal, instead of "this is the

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word which was proclaimed to you as good news,” you'd get “this now is the word having been ‘gospelled’ to you.” That's the only verb in the sentence.

So it tells us something. Verse 23 tells us we've been regenerated through the living and enduring Word of God, the Scriptures, and specifically the gospel contained therein. Now, let's think about some of the implications of that. Think about implications for your evangelism. Implications for your evangelism. If it is the Word of God that has caused us to be born again, that's the means God has used, if that's what the Spirit uses to regenerate, then it is the gospel shared biblically that has the power to regenerate.

What about other things? What about apologetics, classical evidential apologetics? And by that I mean logical arguments that don't depend on the truth of the Word of God necessarily. So you might say, “Well, observe the creation. That implies there's a Creator.” That's a logical argument. It's a good argument. You might say, “Look at the behavior of the disciples after Christ's death and resurrection. That demonstrates that the resurrection was a real thing.” It's a logical argument. It makes sense. Those are logical arguments, they don't necessarily depend on the truth of Scripture, and they don't have the power to save. They don't have the power to convert. The power to convert is in the biblical gospel shared biblically—law, gospel.

What about the implications for how we do church, how we conduct ourselves in the household of God? How could the fact that the power to convert and to sanctify resides in God's word impact our philosophy of ministry? Well, we wouldn't call ourselves a seeker-friendly church for a lot of reasons. One is there's no such thing as a seeker in that sense (Rom. 3:11). Another is that the power for salvation and sanctification doesn't reside within us. It's not in our persuasiveness, our attractiveness. It's not in how fun we are, how cool we are. “Oh, the world will think we're cool and then they'll think Jesus is cool.” That's not how it works. The power to save resides in this incorruptible seed, the source of spiritual life and godliness. It's the living and enduring Word of God. So we as a church are not interested in or supportive of teaching or outreach ministries or activities of the local church that are intended for those purposes and that don't recognize this fact. Those things, if they're not Bible-centered, we don't support them. Now it doesn't mean we can't just gather together to have fun. That's for a different purpose, right? But if we're seeking to save or seeking to sanctify, then we must rely on the Word of God.

God's Word is said to be living in verse 23. So in this context, it's an emphasis on the power of the Word of God to transmit life, that seed of eternal life. It's ever living and

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yet able to transmit life, unlike the physical seed. This seed can transmit life after life after life after life and it never diminishes. It never dies. It's always the source of eternal life. It's said to be enduring or abiding. We see that in verses 23 and 25. That means "to remain, to stay, to be unmoved." The Word of God endures, it stands. We sang a song that may have been new to a lot of you today: "The Bible Stands." It may have been very old to others of you. I asked Josh, "Do we sing the Bible stands?" And he said no. And then Mel said, "No, we have sung 'The Bible Stands.'" So he knew it. I thought, "This is a good song for us today." The Bible stands; that's what it means to endure, or abide, depending on what translation you have. It means to stand, to stay. The Bible stands. The Word of God endures forever.

Peter doesn't quote "The Bible Stands" for a few reasons. He quotes Isaiah 40:6–8. That's the Old Testament quotation. "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Pet. 1:24–25). Cornel read Isaiah 40 today. He read that whole chapter. And I thought that was very important. We need to understand the context of this Old Testament quotation. This is amazing, beautiful. You heard as it was read. This glorifies the Lord. This is one of those self-revelations where God says, "Behold your God." It extols the glory of God. The power of God is permanent.

I'm just going to go through it quickly, a few quotes. You don't need to follow along here. You can try if you want. In Isaiah 40, Isaiah contrasts the majesty of God with other things that people might think are powerful. He ridicules idol worship. Here's what he says about nations and rulers:

Isaiah 40:15: "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are counted as a speck of dust on the scales."

Isaiah 40:17: "All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are counted by Him as non-existent and utterly formless."

From His perspective, the inhabitants of the earth "are like grasshoppers" (Isa. 40:22). He "reduces rulers to nothing" (Isa. 40:23).

God asks some devastating questions through Isaiah:

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and encompassed the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales?

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13 Who has encompassed the Spirit of Yahweh, or as His counselor has informed Him?

14 With whom did He take counsel and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and made Him know the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:12–14 LSB)

God asked twice in the chapter, “To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal?” (vv. 18, 25) Sarcastic and biting. “To whom would you liken Me?”

He says, “Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His vigor and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing” (v. 26). He does not become weary or tired, but He says He gives that power to those who trust Him. “Those youths grow weary and tired, and choice young men stumble badly, yet those who hope in Yahweh will gain new power; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not get tired; they will walk and not become weary” (vv. 30–31). He's willing to share His life and His vigor. You see the connection to the passage.

Isaiah 40 is a “behold your God” passage. We get that command multiple times And if you don't do anything else this morning, *behold your God*. This is the God who regenerates you by His living and enduring Word. This is the all-powerful God to whom nothing can compare. It's absolute blasphemy to compare Him to anything unless He makes that comparison Himself.

In Isaiah 40 alone we see this: He is glorious, He is true, eternal, strong, just, caring, gentle, immense, incomprehensible, wise, all-knowing, never learning, needing nothing, without image or form, Creator of everything, comprehensively sovereign, without equal, incomparable, loving, vigorous, never tiring, never weary, and willing to share His strength and life with those who love Him. *Behold your God*. Behold your God. Behold the power and glory of the God of mercy and grace. This is the God who cares for you as a shepherd with his sheep. He's willing to share His life and power and vigor with those who hope in Him. Behold.

That's the self-revelation, that's the context where we get this quote that Peter uses. We've been born again by an incorruptible seed. It's the very Word of God. The communication of God to you. And listen, it is that Word on which you depend. That's Peter's point. Remember, 1 Peter is written to people who are struggling and suffering under persecution. This is the Word on which you can depend. You can trust His word to

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the fullest extent of His own trustworthiness. Can His Word be trusted? Could He ever fail to keep His Word? Listen, think about it. “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off” (1 Pet. 1:24–25). Could it be that the Word of God is like mere flesh? Could it be like the flower of grass? Could it wither and die? Could it come to nothing? Could the seed that gave us our spiritual life be like that seed of the field? It just dries up and blows away, brief and temporary?

What if—could God's Word one day be revised? Could it be corrected? Could it be superseded? Could the worldly wise one day find an actual contradiction? Could it fail? Could God's promise, could His promise of eternal life in the gospel, could it turn out to be untrue? Could it be expired, forgotten, mistaken, outdated, irrelevant?

“But the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Pet. 1:25). Remember the context from Isaiah 40. Remember the God who gave you this Word. Behold Him. Can that Word fail? Could God's promise fail? Only if God Himself could fail. And He can't. Let's think about that for a minute. I had a long section here about this, about how God can't fail, and it was basically borrowed out of *God Doesn't Try*, the book that we're working on. So I can't do as full of a look at this question as is done in the book. So you're probably all getting a free copy of it anyway. Jim's autograph I think is \$50, but the book itself I think will be free to all of you guys. So I hope you all read it. Well, especially Jim's kids. I think he's kind of a little bit hurt about the fact that they haven't all read all of his books. Is that still true? Yeah, OK. But I'm going to try to do a little summary of the arguments there.

Why can God not fail? The name of that book is *God Doesn't Try*. God doesn't try because *try* implies failure. God's not capable of failure. How could He fail? Let's think about it. How could God fail? Could He fail because something's too hard for Him, because He lacks ability? You say no, God is omnipotent. His absolute power prohibits failure because He has no lack of ability, He has no lack of power. Psalm 115:3 says, “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.” Psalm 135:6: “Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” Ezekiel 12:25: “For I, Yahweh, will speak, and whatever word I speak will be done.” God's absolutely able. There's nothing that's too hard for Him. He can't fail because of a lack of power.

Could He fail because He makes a mistake? Could He fail because of a lack of knowledge? Maybe He doesn't know some crucial detail that He overlooks and so He goes down a path of action that He later regrets. So could He fail to keep a promise

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because He lacks knowledge? No. You say no, God is omniscient. God knows everything. He has perfect knowledge of Himself, all things outside of Himself, all things actual and potential. He knows all of that in one eternal and simple act, meaning He doesn't learn. He doesn't have to count the grains of sand on the seashore. He just knows how many there are. First John 3:20: "God is greater than our heart and knows all things." John 21:17: Peter—*Peter*—confessed to the Lord, "Lord, You know all things." So then how could He fail to keep His promise?

If it's not because of an inability, a lack of power, and if it's not because of a mistake, a lack of knowledge, it's impossible for Him to fail to keep any promise He intends to keep. So the only possibility is that He might fail to keep a promise He didn't intend to keep. In other words, that He lies. His promise could fail, His Word could fail, if God could lie, but He can't lie. It's outside of the realm of possibility. God is always true. Titus 1: "Paul, a slave of God"—and the point of this little passage, this verse I'm going to read to you, is very close to our passage in 1 Peter. So listen to this.

1 Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and the full knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

2 [here it is] in the hope of eternal life, which the God who cannot lie promised from all eternity,

3 but at the proper time manifested His word in preaching, with which I was entrusted according to the command of God our Savior. (Titus 1:1–3 LSB)

God cannot fail, He cannot lie, and so we can rest with complete confidence in His promise. His gospel, that Word which was proclaimed to you as good news, that which is the source of your eternal life, it began an unstoppable process that has led to your repentance, it has led to your conversion, it gives you your faith, it is working through your sanctification, and one day will accomplish your glorification. This is the gospel, this is the Word of God that endures forever. And it endures forever because the One who gave it endures forever. Right? Behold, again, your God.

The gospel is as good as God. It is as powerful as God, as trustworthy as God, as wise as God, and so your faith is certain. Your hope is secure. The promise of the gospel, your hope of eternal salvation, is made by Him who can never fail to keep that promise. All flesh is like grass; it withers and falls off. All flesh is like that; it's temporal, corruptible, decaying. Really anything in which you might place your hope other than the hope of eternal life is a vain hope. It is a dying hope. It's a decomposing hope. It is a hope that

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will disappoint. It will fail. The only hope that will not fail is the promise made by a God who cannot fail. He never makes a mistake. He never learns. He never fails. He never changes.

Now you know about all of the—there's been many, many modern and ancient attempts to deny the authority, the reliability of God's Word. There's so many that it would be pointless to try to list them halfway through a sermon—about halfway through a sermon. So let me just kind of characterize them. We've seen foolish nitwits of all stripes who wanted to deny parts of Scripture, wanted to put parts of Scripture under the authority of their limited intellectual ramblings. We've seen popes and prophets and pastors and professors, all just pretenders, intentionally or ignorantly following the model of their demon master who started all of this questioning of God's Word in the garden. So when I hear about apostates, “exvangelicals,” those who deconstruct their faith—they claim to have been Christians, and they've left the faith because their superior powers of reason and intellect have led them to understand God's Word is unreliable. You're struck by the weakness of those arguments. They're childish, vacuous rehashings of the limp and tired whinings of heretics past. The church has dealt with all of these things decisively. Sometimes long ago they've dealt with these things. These people walk “in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their mind, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart” (Eph. 4:17–18).

So just let me remind you: the Bible stands. The Word of the Lord endures forever. All of the challenges have been met. I tell my Sunday school classes that any questions that you hear, any of the accusations against God and His Word, they've been asked and answered. It's very easy to look them up. You'll see the answers. Answers in Genesis has put out multiple volumes about the supposed contradictions in the Bible. They've all been dealt with. There just isn't anything new under the sun. So if you are newer in the faith, you don't have anything to fear. You don't have anything to fear from honest inquiry into the Word of God. You don't have anything to fear from honest scientific discovery. You have nothing to fear even from these vain and transparent, stupid ramblings, these attempts to cast doubt on the enduring authority of the Word of God.

“The Bible stands every test we give it, for its Author is divine” (Lillenas, “The Bible Stands”). The Word of the Lord endures forever. If you have doubts, you're confused by some new article, something on the History Channel, you're, you know, enticed to question God's Word by these pseudointellectual arguments or by sin, by the allure of

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sin, this is a call to remember whose Word this is. That's all. Go back to it, learn from it, listen to trusted saints who've been devoted to it. If you have questions, you need clarity, ask the questions. That's OK. Ask questions of the text. Don't—we don't fear that. The Word of the Lord endures forever. Get the clarity you need. If you need help, ask a seasoned saint. Ask one of your elders. And look to good resources. You're—I don't know how to say this. Your question is not a new one, OK? You didn't—you're not the first person to think of it. It's been dealt with. The temptation you might be facing is not new. It's not unique to you. There are answers. There is assurance. And it's found in the Word of God. The power resides in the living and enduring Word of God because it is God's Word. That's where to go.

There's a quotation in R. C. Sproul's commentary on this passage, and I tried to find the original source, but I couldn't. It's "Hammer away, ye hostile hands, your hammers break, God's anvil stands." It's true throughout history. We sang today, "The Bible stands like a rock undaunted 'mid the raging storms of time" (Lillenas, "The Bible Stands"). We sang, "Standing on the promises that cannot fail. When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, by the living Word of God I shall prevail" (Carter, "Standing on the Promises").

Better than a poem or a song, we read from God's inspired Word, "The Word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Pet. 1:25). Let that echo in your brain. So now we've understood the rationale for the command to love. I'm going to kind of put this together as a whole. So go back to verse 22 with me: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a love of the brothers without hypocrisy, fervently love one another from the heart." So there's an assertion there and a command. See that? There's an assertion that "you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a love of the brothers without hypocrisy." You have, through your obedience to the truth, through your learning the Word of God and living in obedience to it, you have grown in sanctification to the point where you can be said to have a sincere love for one another.

And then there's a command. The command is to "fervently love one another from the heart," to love even more, to love more deeply and more comprehensively, more sacrificially, to make that investment. And it is an investment. If you're approaching that kind of love, you know it's a sacrifice. I know some of you recently have sacrificed for others in the church in significant ways. And I know there's many of you that do it in ways that I'll never know about. Maybe someday I'll know about it if your life gets broadcast in Heaven. But on this side I won't. And I know there's a lot of that that goes

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on. We are making sacrifices for one another. It's an investment. There's no denying that.

And then we're given a reason for making that investment in verse 23: "For you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Then we get this Old Testament quote, which supports the fact that God's Word is living and enduring because of His power, His eternal nature, His trustworthiness. Then we get the clarification: "The word which was proclaimed to you as good news," that's the Word (v. 25).

So let's look through the chain of reasoning quickly. The source of your spiritual life then is God's Word. It's the gospel particularly in this passage, but it's God's Word. And it's eternal and endures forever. It's always valid. The promise will be kept because God—it reflects His character, the character of God. It endures forever because He endures forever. He's not going to nullify this. So because the source of your spiritual life—because the spiritual seed that gave you life is itself enduring, that means your eternal life is truly eternal. It's enduring. And so is that of all of your brothers and sisters in Christ. So then this fervent love makes sense. It's an investment that makes sense. Why? Because it has eternal returns, right?

Imagine an investment that paid a certain amount of money for sure forever. You get so much a month forever. And this went on not only for your entire life, but for all eternity. And you could somehow enjoy it in eternity. It's impossible; work with me. That asset would be worth a lot of money, wouldn't it? It would be a valuable asset. It would be worth a great investment. If you're going to buy a car, you look at a car that's got 250,000 miles on it, a similar car with 2,500, which one's worth more? Well, the one with fewer miles. Why? Because it's expected to last longer. The investment that you make in love for one another has returns that last forever. And it's almost the only thing that that can be said about. Obedience to Christ in general, but in particular love for one another. It has returns that last forever. So that's the rationale to love.

So what about love expressed to a reprobate person? Does that have eternal rewards? Yeah. It's living in obedience to Christ, glorifying God. That has eternal rewards as well. But that's not of the character that Peter's talking about here. He's talking about investing in love for one another because you get to be with one another forever. This is a scary thought, but I will probably get to spend about ten thousand years individually with each one of you. And then start the cycle over again. We were talking about it today in Sunday school. I'm going to learn to play the piano. I don't know how to play

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the piano. I'm going to learn how to play the piano. Someday—we were talking to Josiah. Josiah is always going to be better than me at the piano, but I'll be better than Josiah is right now. We just will be able to spend that much time together. So it's worth the investment here and now.

Lastly, before we go to prayer, I have to make a point. This passage is written to Christians. First Peter is not an intentionally evangelistic work. But you can't read through it and not see that it's entirely gospel-saturated. And even here, the gospel is the specific Word of God to which Peter eludes in the passage. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the source of our eternal life. So if you have never encountered the gospel, or if you've encountered it so many times that it's lost its cutting edge and you haven't responded, well, I pray that today would be a day when the gospel cuts you deeply. I am praying that your willful spirit will be crushed to death today in favor of the eternal life that comes through this seed of the gospel. I pray that you would embrace the love of God today offered to you in this eternal gospel rather than continue to deepen the wrath of God against you.

God saves sinners. That's good news for you because you are a sinner. You, like all of us, and I'm speaking to those who've never put their faith in Christ, but like all of us, you've broken God's laws. You've lied, you've stolen, you've lusted, you've coveted, you've hated, you've dishonored, you've done all of it. And He's rightly angry with you. So apart from Christ, He is going to kill you and He's going to send you to Hell. And then He's going to resurrect you. He's going to prepare your body in such a way that it can suffer eternal torment and burning forever and ever and ever. And then He's going to cast you in a lake of fire so that you can suffer forever. And that lake of fire is a feature of the New Heaven and New Earth. It's a place that we'll be able to, I think, know about at least, maybe even see as a reminder of the greatness of the gospel. That's a place where you are headed apart from Christ.

And that's the right thing for Him to do. Absolutely the right thing for Him to do. Not because your sins are so great, but because the One against whom you sin is so great. You, a mere creature of dust, have shaken your fist at the God of the universe, the only God. And you've knowingly disobeyed Him. That's not gospel. I don't know what the word would be for bad news, but that's bad news.

Well, what's the good news? In love, Jesus Christ, God in human flesh—He was born of a virgin. He lived a perfect, sinless life. He died on a cross for the sins of any who would repent of their sins and put their faith in Him. And He rose again, having overcome the

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debt of sin for all who would ever be His. And so He offers—right now—He offers an eternal Heaven. He offers forgiveness of sins. He offers His perfect righteousness if you'll simply agree with Him about your sin, believe in what He has done, repent of your sins, trust in Him for your eternal destiny.

I'm looking forward to hopefully not dying before—well, no, I can't say that's true. I wouldn't mind dying before this. But it'll be many years, put it this way, before I get to 1 Peter 3:18, but I love this verse. It is the gospel in one verse. “For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

So I can say now that good news has been proclaimed to you. It is as good and as trustworthy as the God who gave it. So again, if you've never put your faith in Christ, join us. Why don't you join us? Join us for the first time. You haven't; you're not of us. Why don't you join us in repentance toward sin and faith in Christ? Join our fellowship with one another, in our union with Christ and with the Father. That's more than a good investment. That is trading nothing but wrath and sin and eternal damnation for eternal joy.

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