

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 22:6:2008

Reading: 1 Peter 2:22-2:3

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

5. LIVING IN THE WORD

It is said that when the famous missionary Dr. David Livingstone started his trek across Africa he had 73 books, in three packs weighing 180 pounds. After the party had gone 300 miles Livingstone was obliged to throw away some of the books because of the fatigue of those carrying his baggage. As he continued on his journey his library grew less and less until he had but one book left, the Bible. ***Why keep the Bible?*** Because the Bible is fundamental, essential, and vital in the believers life. Dean Haun said the Bible is,

- **A Library:** an inspired library of 66 books written originally in 3 languages over a period of 1600 years by some 36-40 writers.
- **A Landscape:** that views the panorama of God's dealings with man.
- **A Letter:** addressed to mankind by the God of the universe.
- **A Listening Post:** where we go to hear the voice of God.
- **A Law:** that teaches the way of righteousness.
- **A Light:** that gives guidance in the midst of the perplexities of life

- **A Lifeline:** a rope to which sinners may be pulled to eternal safety through Christ.

A love for and a delight in God's Word always marks those who are truly saved. Christ said, "*If ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*" (Jn 8:31-32) The Old Testament saints expressed a strong desire for the Word of God. Job declared "*I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*" (Job 23:12) The opening psalm declares that the godly man has "*his delight in the law of the Lord.*" (Ps 1:2) Indeed is this not the dominant theme in the longest chapter of the Bible ? In Psalm 119 the psalmist says, "*Oh, how I love thy law it is my meditation all the day long.*" (Ps 119:97) Now I want to talk to you this about "**Living in the Word.**" It's interesting to discover how folk approach the Bible. Some study the *Bible Traditionally:* they have been taught you ought to read the Bible and so they get out their Bible and do their daily reading.

Others approach the *Bible Superstitiously:* you know the lucky dip method don't you ? Still others read the *Bible Educationally:* they know that to be an educated person you ought to read the Word. Still others approach the *Word Denominationally:* in other words they are trying to prove the point of their particular theology, they are trying to bolster their denominations distinctives. Some folk read the *Bible Inquisitively:* you know they are just kind of interested. But, do you how you ought to read your Bible ? You ought to read your Bible like a baby

who has just come into the world who is screaming out for the milk. Now if you do that you'll discover three things. You'll discover something of,

(1) THE SAVING POWER OF GOD'S WORD

You see, **the Word of God saves.** Look if you will at (1:23) There is a story of E. V. Rieu when he was translating the New Testament. His son remarked, "*It will be interesting to see what Dad makes of the Gospels, but it will be more interesting to see what the New Testament makes of him.*" After his work was finished the translator stated, "***my work on the New Testament has changed me.***" I heard about them opening up an Egyptian pyramid and in there was a vase that had in it some seed that was thousands of years old. And they took that seed, they planted it in the ground and a few days later it sprang to life. A seed looks dead, it looks small, it looks insignificant and yet there is something life giving about it. Peter says that's the way the Bible is. You can take this seed of the Word of God and just drop it in a human heart, and something life producing begins to take place.

You see, the instrument used to produce the new birth is the Word of God. James puts it like this, "*Of his own will begat He us with the Word of truth.*" (James 1:18) you see, the Word of God is the instrument that God uses to bring about the miracle of the new birth. (1) Now it's interesting to notice the four expressions used to describe the Word of God. Notice Peter talks about,

(a) ***THE VERACITY OF THE BIBLE:***

For in (1:22) he refers to it as "*the truth.*" Now the truth is synonymous in this context with "*the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*" (1:25) It is the "*Word of the Lord.*" The prophets foretold it, the Apostles preached it and angels desire to know more about its saving content. (1:10-12) Do you recall the Saviour's great high priestly prayer ? "*Sanctify them through thy truth Thy Word is truth.*" (Jn 17:17) William Ramsay sought to disprove the veracity of the books of Luke and Acts. He went to Greece and Asia Minor in order to accomplish this. He became convinced of the truth and was gloriously saved. His writing on behalf of Christianity became a classic. (a)

(b) ***THE VITALITY OF THE BIBLE:***

For he refers to it as "*incorruptible seed.*" (1:23) Peter uses this word "*incorruptible,*" more than once in this chapter. In (1:4) he speaks of an "*incorruptible inheritance,*" in (1:18) he talks about an "*incorruptible redemption,*" and here he speaks of an "*incorruptible Word.*" The Word of God is living. Do you recall what the writer to the Hebrews says ? "*The Word of God is quick (living) and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and is a discerner of the thought and intents of the heart.*" (Heb 4:12) Spurgeon once said that if you cut this book into a thousand pieces every piece would grow and live. My ... this book literally pulsates with life. There is something living about this book, the Word

of God. There is something so living about this book that you and I come into this building Sunday after Sunday. We study the same book and read from the same book and dig into the same book and it's just as fresh as the first day we read it. There is no other book that could be dealt with on a weekly, daily basis, and maintain its freshness and life as can the Word of God. ***Do you recall King Josiah ?*** Josiah was a godly young man and one day they brought to him the scroll of the book that was perhaps a thousand years old when it was read to him ? Yet when that scroll was read to Josiah he tore his clothes and his heart was greatly burdened. It was as if God had spoken like a thunderbolt from the sky. (2 Kings 22:11) And a word that was a thousand years old was as fresh and as up to date as it had been written that day. Do you know what that it is ? That is the ***Vitality*** of the Word of God. (a) (b)

(c) THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE:

Look if you will at (1:23) Peter himself makes a classic statement on inspiration in his second letter. He says “ *knowing this first that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.* ” Do you see what he is saying ? Peter is saying that no part of Scripture was of any private origin. No Scripture came out of a man's mind. “ *But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* ” (2 Pet 1:21) The word “ *moved,* ” speaks of being carried along by the Holy Spirit, as a ship is carried by the wind. My the writers of Scripture “ ***were carried along, borne along, under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit. They wrote as the Spirit***

directed them to write. They were borne along by Him so that what they wrote was exactly what the Holy Spirit intended should be there. What they wrote was, in a very real sense, not their words, it was the very Word of God.” Let me affirm where I stand this ! When I speak of the Bible as the Word of God I do not mean only that it contains the Word of God, but that it is the Word of God.

(d) THE ETERNITY OF THE BIBLE:

For how superior this Word is to all that pertains to man. Do you see the contrast that Peter draws between the physical life and the Word of God ? He is quoting here from (Is 40:6-8) and what he is saying is this, our bodies are perishable but not this Book. All of a man's athletic achievements, all of his financial achievements, all of his educational achievements, everything that a man can do. All of the glory that man can accrue is just like a flower that is passing away. But in a world that is dying this Word is enduring, in a world that is passing away this Word is living, in a world that it is transient this Word is permanent. *Listen, down through the ages this Bible has been banned, banished, burned, blasphemed, belittled, and yet it abides, it lives, it endures because it's the indestructible Word of the Living God.* (1)

(2) THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF GOD'S WORD

Look if you will at (1:22) You see, the Bible is presented here as the sanctifying cleansing agent. Do you

recall the Saviour's words in the Upper Room ? “ *Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.* ” (15:3) There is something sanctifying and cleansing about the Word of God. The Bible is the best bar of soap I know. You can take the Word and read it and apply it to your life and it has that sanctifying, cleansing power about it. Now in dealing with this matter of how the Word sanctifies us, Peter approaches it,

(a) POSITIVELY:

Look at (1:23) Now notice the process here. (1) You hear the Truth. The Word of God is the truth. (2) You obey the truth. (3) You are purified by obeying the truth. (4) That produces in your heart a genuine sincere love of the brethren. Two Greek words are used predominantly in the New Testament to describe love, and Peter uses them both of them here. One is *philos* which generally refers to a brotherly love or the love of a friend. That is the word he uses for “ *love of the brethren.* ” The other is *agape* a higher form of love, a more divine type of love, which is the word he uses for “ *love one another.* ” Here were believers who already loved one another and yet Peter exhorts them “ *see that ye love another with a pure heart fervently.* ” (1:22) Why ? Because there is plenty of the philadelphia brotherly love among the saints but too little of the “ *agape,* ” divine love, a love that is sincere and fervent. Before Andrew Jackson became the seventh president of the United States he served as a major general in the Tennessee militia.

During the War of 1812 his troops reached an all time

low in morale. As a result they began arguing, bickering, and fighting among themselves. It is reported that Jackson called them all together on one occasion when tensions were at their worst and said, “ *Gentlemen ! Let's remember the enemy is over **there.*** ” What an appropriate word for the church today. Do you ever wonder if the Lord sometimes looks down at us and says with a sigh, “ *Christians, your Enemy is over there. Stop your infighting. Pull for one another. Support one another. Care for one another. Pray for one another. Love one another.* ” One of the most profound comments made regarding the Early Church came from the lips of a man named Aristides, sent by the Emperor Hadrian to spy on the believers. Having seen them in action, Aristides returned with a mixed report. But his immortal words to the Emperor have echoed down through history, “ *Behold how they love one another.* ”

Do you ever wonder what the lost in this community are saying of us ? “ *Behold how they hurt one another,* ” “ *Behold how they judge one another,* ” “ *Behold how they fight with one another.* ” Are you engaging in the shameful practice of brother bashing and sister smashing ? Have you forgotten the words of your Lord ? “ *A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love another.* ” (Jn 13:34) Christ's love is a forgiving love, is yours ? His love is a sacrificial love, is yours, the Saviour's love is a longsuffering love, what about yours ? This is what the Word can do when you allow it to fill and flood your heart. But as you move into (Ch 2) Peter talks about this subject,

(b) NEGATIVELY:

For he says, “ *Wherefore laying aside*,” Now let me show you what happens when you saturate your soul with the Word. Positively, it puts God's love in your heart and negatively it shows you some things in your life that ought not to be there. Now the phrase “ *laying aside,*” has to do with taking off clothing. Here is a man and he comes home at the end of the day, and he is tired, he's worn out and he just rips off his clothes and sets them aside. *Is this not what we are to do with the anti-social sins that mar fellowship with God's people.* The word “ **malice,**” means ill will. It means a vicious disposition that wants to hurt someone else. It is the attitude of deep seated anger in your heart against someone. Is there someone you hate ? Is there someone today you are angry with ? How can you have the love of the Lord in your heart if there is malice there ? Get rid of it. Get it out of your life. Then he uses the word “ **All guile.**” The Greek word means “ *deception, two-faced ness, trickery.*” In its earliest form it meant “ *to catch with bait.*” It refers to a deception that is aimed at attaining one's end, a hidden agenda.

Then the word “ **hypocrisies,**” is the word play actors, to appear to be someone else. This is what happens when we try to be someone or something we are not. God says get rid of the hypocrisy in your life. Then Peter talks about “ **envies,**” and that is the word jealousy. In other words, someone has something you don't have and you long to have it yourself. You see, as you saturate yourself in the Word, the Lord shows you these things in your life,

so that you can get rid of them. Peter concludes like this “ **and all evil speakings.**” (2:2) This occurs most often when the victim is not there to offer a defence, or set the record straight. It's the picture of talking behind someone's back. Somebody you don't like and you are all smiles to their face but when you get behind them you are talking. Peter commands us to “ *strip off,*” these five outdated garments that once belonged to our old natures. The trouble is, of course like all junk food this garbage tastes good. We've acquired a real taste for it, and it's hard to break the habit. Yet as we delight ourselves in the law of the Lord, we will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to rid ourselves of these dispositions that ought not to be there. You see, if the cause of spiritual malnutrition are these social sins then the cure for spiritual malnutrition is the Word of God. So Peter talks not only about (1) (2)

(3) THE SUSTAINING POWER OF GOD'S WORD

You see, God's Word has life, gives life, sustains life. So Peter says, “ *As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby.*” (2:2) Now he has told us that the Bible is like a seed that produces life, now Peter says the Bible is like milk that sustains life. The Bible produces life and then the Bible nourishes life. Do you see here,

(a) THE DESIGN OF THE WORD:

What is the Word of God designed to do ? Enable us to grow. Have you ever seen something or someone that didn't grow ? Is it not so sad to see someone forty years

of age with the mind of a baby and still in nappies ? Because of brain damage or some other disorder these folk don't just develop. Their bodies may grow to some extent, but they remain virtual infants as far as the rest of their growth and maturity is concerned. Something almost as disheartening is to see Christians who don't develop. Spiritually they remain retarded, stunted, never becoming what the Lord intended for them to be. Do you know why they don't grow ? Because they don't feed themselves on the milk and meat of the Word. They come along with their little thimbles and fill them up and spill them on the ground as they leave. They complain about the services, ***"I don't get much out of the services, I would like a praise group to sing away my blues, I would like a band to wake me up, tune me up."***

Do you ever see them when it comes to do anything for the Lord ? Do you ever hear them being exercised at the Lord's Table ? Do you ever say "Amen," to their prayers ? No, because they are never here. They are weak and run down, they lack the pep to do anything for the Lord. They are living on spiritual junk food and they never grow. Is this you ? Or are you feeding on the unadulterated, uncontaminated milk of the Word ? I am told that there are some birds that can live nine days without food. That dogs can live about 20 days without food. Turtles 50 days. Some snakes can live 800 days without food. Some fish can live 1000 days without food. I just wonder what kind of believer are you ? Can you go 7 days without the milk of the Word ? Can you go 20 days without feeding on the Word of God ? Could it be that a 100 days have passed, maybe a whole year and

you've never fed on the Word. Now wonder you are not growing as a believer. No wonder you are not developing and maturing. Peter says, *"Desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby."* Get into the book. Study the Word. Day by day let your life be regulated by the Word of God. Peter talks about (a) And then about,

(b) THE DESIRE FOR THE WORD:

"Desire the sincere milk of the Word," (2:2) You see, Peter is not concerned about the spiritual **age** of professing Christians, he is concerned with the spiritual **appetite** of professing Christians. Now this word is an interesting word. It means to long for. It means to greatly desire. It is the same word that is used in the Hebrew psalms. Do you recall (Ps 42) ? *"As the hart or deer panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee O God."* I mean it is a picture of an earnest intense desire for the Word of God. Now an appetite is one of the signs of health. If you start losing your appetite it's a sign is it not that something is wrong ? You mothers take your little baby to the Doctor and tell the Doctor that your little one does not reach out for the milk as it once did. The Doctor knows that this is a sign of sickness. That is something is wrong with that baby. Tell me, have you lost your appetite for the Word of God ? If you have, then it's a sure sign that there is spiritual sickness in your life.

We ought to desire the Word. Now Peter paints a graphic picture here, which shows us how we are to approach the Word. He says *"As newborn babes desire,"* Now that word *"newborn,"* is a Greek word (*artigennata*) which

means “*just now.*” What he is literally saying is “*as just now born babes desire the pure milk of the Word.*” Do you get the picture ? He is talking about a baby that has just been born. Have you ever seen a just now born baby ? Have you ever seen that new born baby go for the milk ? I mean they are born with an instinct for milk. You don’t have to teach a baby to drink milk. You see, when a baby is born you don’t need to go the blackboard and say “*now baby I want you to look right up here for this is what you need to do.*” A baby knows what to do. A baby is single minded. Do you know what’s on that baby’s mind ? **Milk.** That baby is born and before long, you will know they want the milk. Do you have that same intense longing for the Word ? Peter says, “*Presuming you have tasted the goodness of the Lord.*” Have you experienced the goodness of the Lord in your life ? If you have you should desire more of that goodness and sweetness through feeding on His Word. (1) (2) (3) **Living in the Word.** Are you ?

When Elizabeth Barrett became the wife of Robert Browning, her parents disowned her because they disapproved of the marriage. The daughter, however, wrote almost every week, telling them that she loved them and longed for a reconciliation. After ten years she received a high box in the mail that contained all the letters she wrote. Not one of them had been opened. Although these “*love letters,*” have become an invaluable part of classical English literature, its really pathetic to think that they were never read by Elizabeth’s Barrett’s parents. Had they looked at just one, the broken relationship with their daughter might have been healed.

My God has given us His Word. We must open it, read it, study it. It is His love letter to us. Are you living in it ? Is this your daily prayer ?

**Oh, may these hallowed pages be
My ever dear delight
And still new beauties may I see
And still increasing light**

**Divine Instructor, gracious Lord
Be Thou for ever near
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word
And view my Saviour here**