

## Pure *Living*

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

1 Peter 1:22-25

Where do we begin as we attempt to enter God’s presence? Under the Old Covenant God’s people took methodically careful steps before approaching God’s presence. By Jesus’ time, ablutions or ceremonial washings become commonplace even when not prescribed by the Law directly. The word for pure in the phrase “purify your souls” is uncommon in the New Testament. When Jesus speaks of being “pure of heart”, he uses a different word entirely—one that denotes a clean heart. Peter uses a word for purify that is used for ceremonial purity. It is the same word for purifying when Paul enters the temple with other Jews to perform a ceremonial ritual to enter God’s presence in a special way (Acts 21:24, 26). So how do we enter God’s presence? The wording points to moral or ethical purity as the means to receive salvation.

Pure living begins with obeying the truth. Both phrases, “purifying your souls” and “have been born again,” refer to previous action that carry the ongoing properties of purifying and being born again. While not in the immediate context, this appears to be an allusion to baptism—obeying the truth. As Peter puts it in the verse previous, we “are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory” so our “faith and hope are in God”. Literally “in God” is “into God” suggesting an active committal of believing into God. Pure living occurs only in obedience of the truth for only God’s words create and give life. To really live (i.e., to possess forever life), his word must penetrate to the very core of who and what we are so we can stand with God, knowing his Word and his Word alone can purify our souls.

We are born again by the living and staying word of God. It is a living word in that by it and in it we live—more importantly, it is the life-giving force. It is staying word in that it is here to stay—his word is not going anywhere. It is unchanging and everlasting. His word is so perfect that it is unaffected by time or change—it always remains the same (cf. Hebrews 13:8). So far the discussion has focused on the participles of the sentence. The verb is an imperative (a command)—“from the heart love each other fervently.” The word fervent does not denote warmth but a commitment to full intensity, literally to love “at a full stretch” or “in all out manner”. This new life is communicated through the word, and we are made to possess this new life through the active ministry of the word.

The transitory nature of creation stands in direct contrast to the living, never out-of-day word of God. His word needs no improvement, no change, no tweaking for it alone endures and only it perfects giving pure live. God’s word is the origin and sustainer of life. It is a life-giving word intended to do us good—not extract joy from living. Humanity’s best efforts from the pyramids to space travel will not endure. We are like grass, but the *good news* is that God has given us something permanent—a beginning that allows us for permanent living. If his word is in us—living in us, then we will know genuine, pure, everlasting life. “*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it*” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

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