

Word of God Endures Forever

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Word of God; Baptism; Perish; Seed / 1 Peter 1:17–25

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Resurrected King of Glory. Amen.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything. When you've been rescued from a lethal situation or restored to health, there's a sense of new life. *"I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy."* The Psalmist delights in the Lord because *"When I was brought low, he saved me."* The Resurrection of Jesus changes everything. It brings new clarity, new joy, new life to even our darkest days. And yes, even now we are living in dark days. Yet, we can proclaim, "I am rescued! I am baptized! I will live forever!" The resurrection of Jesus shows that even the Word Endures forever.

In today's Epistle, Peter revels in the kindness of the Father. He rescued us from our dire predicament. Not only did he pour out his Son's blood to ransom us, but he raised him from the dead, changing everything for us.

Peter proclaims: The Resurrected Jesus Makes You Eternally Free.

You and I were born of perishable seed. Peter writes,

you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers,

Since the human genome has been mapped, we've been learning about the design of our genetic code. Your hair color, eyes color, and potential height and intellect were established at conception. Sadly, with all the good we inherited, we also inherited some profoundly serious and troubling birth defects: a sinful nature and a countdown clock. Peter calls our inheritance "futile ways" and "perishable seed." Futility is part of our genetic code since Adam's fall.

Futility abounds! We're quick to repeat the same mistake or evil thought. We're quick to excuse our sins and keep track of others' sins. Relationships crumble all around. We can't stop illnesses and boy do we know that now. That's why we aren't meeting because of the blasted Coronavirus. And look around, even with people at home you

are still hearing of pointless violence. Look to the shooting Canada. There's needless pain, ugly addictions, rampant selfishness, and false gods that abound. It's all because of this infection we caught from our forefathers. We're never going to stop all crime, cure all diseases, and protect all from violence. We're never going to end death. You and I can't do that. Unless our Lord returns first, these bodies will fail us. We will die. Peter quotes Isaiah:

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

There are those people in your life that just bring smiles to your faces and joy to your days. The phone rings and you see that person calling. You get a card in the mail. You get an email that brings joy to your life. But the tragic fact is that all the flowers of mankind will wither. We're born to futility and death. That's what it means that we are born of perishable seed.

With all the death, disease, and destruction around us. That is not what sustains. It can't! Peter tells us that you were ransomed by the blood of Jesus. Peter proclaims, *you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

Ransomed is such a beautiful word when it comes to the saving work of Jesus for you. Jesus even used this word in Mark 10:

45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Ransomed means "set free," the word for purchasing a slave's freedom, a useful image for winning our release eternal futility and death. By what were you purchased from the infection of perishable seed?

not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

If perishable money could have ransomed us, we might have been able to pay it ourselves! But it requires a holy, powerful currency: the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Ponder this for a moment: When you look at the death of Jesus from man's view, doesn't it look like the most futile thing ever. A bloody crucifixion. Not one person, without the aid of the Spirit, looked at the dead body of Jesus hanging on the cross as anything but futility. A dead body doesn't really promise anyone anything. Where is his kingdom? How can the death of this beautiful flower who healed the sick, opened blind eyes, brought hearing to the deaf, made the lame to walk, raised the dead, preached the good news, brought forgiveness to sinners, comfort to the troubled, and life to the dying—how can the falling of Jesus be good? This was all part of the Father's plan for your rescue, for your ransom. Jesus Christ, the only conceived person to ever be free of the perishable seed, took on your wilting and mine. He, the innocent Lamb of God, had poured out on him the wrath of God for all rebellion, the punishment for all evil, and the wages of our sin poured out in full. All so that God's only begotten Son could pour his blood for you on the cross. Jesus is the full payment for your freedom from futility and death. Jesus redeemed you with his blood.

And then at Easter God changed everything...he made the Word remain forever and raised Jesus from the dead.

This is the beating heart of today's Epistle, of this joyful season, and of every Sunday. **Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!** The resurrection from the dead is the opposite of futility. Death has now become futile. For what can death do to you and me? Scare us? Concern us? Stalk us? It can do those things. Death is all around us in this world. But in Jesus Christ death can never harm us. It must release us, just as it released our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus's death was not just the withering of another blade of grass. That's what the Emmaus Road disciples thought in our Gospel reading. They too thought death had won the day. Jesus' death was the brilliant, saving plan of your heavenly Father to rescue all fallen mankind. Jesus appeared to be the weakest plant set before the relentless combine of death. But death had no right to claim him; he was the completely innocent Son of God, the sinless Son of Man. Jesus destroyed death from the inside. Death died. It had to release your Savior. And yes, the Emmaus road disciples learned that when their Savior opened their eyes to who he was! The grave is empty and so will yours be some day. Death's designs, Satan's strategies, and all the machinations of men against Christ Jesus and His Holy Church are futile. They will all fail. You see Satan trying his hardest right now to tear down the Church of God. I can tell you; he will not succeed. They will all wither for your good. God raised Jesus from the dead. You who believe in the resurrection of Jesus are declared innocent, declared free. You are free, even when you feel locked up. Even more, sin's infection, which still

lingers in your mortal body, will soon be completely eradicated! Death is kaput. Jesus lives! God raised him from the dead for you.

You're set free by the good news of Jesus! *"This Word is the good news that was preached to you."*

Of ourselves, we are frail and flighty, but the Gospel of Jesus, this seemingly small, futile-to-our-world Word, reaches into us and plants imperishable life in us. Luther beautifully comments on the preached Gospel:

Luther's Works, Volume 30 *That Word is the Good News Which Was Preached to You.*

To be sure, it is quickly spoken and heard; but when it enters the heart, it cannot die or pass away. Nor does it let you die. It holds you as long as you cling to it. Thus when I hear that Jesus Christ died, took away my sin, gained heaven for me, and gave me all that He has, I am hearing the Gospel. The Word is soon gone when it is preached; but when it falls into the heart and is grasped by faith, it can never slip away. No creature can invalidate this truth. The depths of hell can do nothing against it; and even if I am already in the jaws of the devil, I must come out and remain where the Word remains, if I can take hold of it. Therefore St. Peter says with good reason that you need not look for anything else than what we have preached.

Yes,

*"All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
25 but the word of the Lord remains forever."*

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

This eternal-life fortified Word heard by you and planted in you makes you as eternal as that Word. The Word of the Lord remains forever, even when everything else seems to be falling away and changing. The Word remains forever. The Word of the Lord endures forever, so therefore you will endure forever. This Word of God proclaims Jesus' ransoming blood and saving resurrection, so your freedom and new life in Christ cannot fail. You are set free by the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

And born to new life in loving service by this imperishable seed:

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Before, you and I were trapped because of inherited sinfulness of the perishable seed, but now, in Holy Baptism, you've been born again by imperishable seed. The name of God was planted in you, sin was washed away, and Jesus' eternal life became your own. Now you're free. You are free from futility and unending death. You are set free and sent by Your Heavenly Father to live your life here in loving service to your neighbor...and right now that means to be apart, but it could also mean the phone call or card in the mail or even a wave as you walk by. Your risen Savior empowers you with his love to love—not to earn your salvation...that's impossible. But freed from total selfishness, his love has its way with you as you serve one another in his love.

Thank God that Jesus lives for you! Thank God you were born of imperishable seed! Thank God that amidst an ever-changing world, where every physical thing fails and falls, the Word of God Remains and endures forever!

In Jesus Name. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Living Lord and Savior. Amen.