

FERVENT LOVE FROM A PURE HEART

1 Peter 1:22-25

Intro: As we come again today to the first epistle of Peter who was an apostle of Jesus Christ (as he reminded his readers at the very beginning of this letter), let me encourage you again to be reading through this epistle as often as you can. And you will find your reading the most profitable if you read all five chapters at one sitting. Reading it over and over helps us to see how the various parts of Peter's letter fit together, and that is what is most important in the study of God's Word. It is always a blessing to memorize single verses of Scripture, but it is equally important to realize that the meaning of any verse in the Bible is brought out more clearly and forcibly if we notice the verses which lead up to a particular verse, and then the verses which follow.

And this is what makes expository preaching so valuable, where we begin at the beginning of any book of the Bible, and go verse by verse to the end, seeking to explain and apply each verse as we go along.

Today we come to the end of chapter 1, so we are really only getting a good start. But up to this point we have seen the strong emphasis that the Apostle Peter made on the Gospel. He mentioned being born again in verse 3. He called it salvation in verses 5, and again in verses 9 and 10. And he referred to the preaching of the Gospel in verse 12. So he was addressing people who had trusted in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls.

Thinking of Christ, he spoke of the blood of Christ in verse 2. Then he spoke of the resurrection of Christ in verse 3. In verse 7 he was looking ahead as he spoke of the appearing of Jesus Christ. In verse 11 he called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of Christ" because it is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to speak of Christ and to exalt Him, and then before ending verse 11 Peter mentioned "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." In verse 13 he spoke of the second coming of Christ. In verse 19 we read of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish."

So coming up to our text for today, which begins with verse 22 and goes on to the end of the chapter, Peter has had much to say about Christ. In fact, if you take Christ out of this chapter, you hardly have anything left. Christ is the subject of the Gospel. There could be no Gospel without Christ. Peter showed by his writing that he was truly "an apostle of Jesus Christ" as he wrote in verse 1.

The people to whom he was writing were very familiar with the Bible's teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. They had trusted Him as their Savior. They had been born again (verse 3). They were redeemed (verses 18 and 19). *Consequently, beginning with verse 13 and continuing right on down to the end of the chapter, Peter was exhorting them to be a holy people. (See verses 15 and 16.)*

Now in order to be a holy people, so far we have seen that the Apostle Peter emphasized two things that they must do. In verses 13 through 16 it is that they should "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 13). This means that they were to live in the certain expectation that Jesus Christ was coming back again. And to be prepared for that event, they were to be holy in their character and holy in their behavior, waiting expectantly for the Lord's return. *And we saw from that passage that it is important that we do the same thing.*

Going on to the next paragraph, verses 17 through 21, we saw that the main commandment in that paragraph was that we are to "pass the time of" our "sojourning here" in this world "in fear" – the fear of God! And fearing God means that we fear lest we disobey Him, or that we fail to do what the Bible declares that we should do.

Today we come to the third paragraph in this practical section in chapter 1, and again we find that there is one statement upon which the last four verses of this chapter are built. And that statement, again, a command, is "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." You will see that at the end of verse 22.

So in the first statement in verse 13 we are to be looking for the Lord, and this calls for holy living. In the second statement we are to live in the fear of God. And that statement is in verse 17. Now in the third statement in verse 22, we are to see to it that we love one another with pure hearts fervently.

Do you see the order? First, we are looking for Christ. Second, we are to be living to please God. And third, we are to love one another fervently with pure hearts. And the use of the word "pure" emphasizes again that we are to be a holy people. As holy people we are looking for the Lord. And as holy people it is our main desire to live so as to please God. And finally in this chapter, as holy people, we are to love each other *fervently!*

Now let us notice, first, in coming to verse 22:

I. THE BASIS OF THIS THIRD APPEAL TO HIS READERS

(1 Pet. 1:22a).

It was that they had already purified their souls “in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren” By this statement the Apostle Peter was indicating that he was writing, as he had been from the beginning of chapter 1, to those who were already trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

They had “purified their souls.” The soul, the inner man, is where man’s problem is. All people are sinners, and all people have been corrupted by their sins. And it is this corruption which makes us unacceptable to God. Not only are we unacceptable, but we are under the judgment of God. And unless people have their souls purified, they will be lost and doomed eternally. The reason we do the wrong things, things that are displeasing to God, and the reason that we cannot do the things that are pleasing to Him, is because we are defiled by sin in our souls.

But Paul was writing to a people who were different from the masses of humanity. They were purified. They had been cleansed. Their sins had been forgiven. They had a new life, a life from God, which enabled them to please God, and which gave them that desire in the way they lived. And it was because of this change that had taken place in their lives that Peter was making this third appeal to them.

But surely someone listening to what I am saying, and reading what Peter wrote here in verse 22, would say something like this, “But Pastor, I have heard you say time and time again that we can’t save ourselves, that only God can save us. Wasn’t Peter teaching a false Gospel here when he said to them that they had purified their own souls? The Apostle Paul taught that it is by grace we are saved, and that it is not of ourselves, nor of our own works that we are saved. Were Peter and Paul teaching two different ways of salvation? Well, let’s examine this verse and see.

Peter said, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren.”

First notice the expression, “in obeying the truth.” What is the truth that the Apostle Peter was speaking about? Obviously it is “the Gospel.” See verse 12. What is the Gospel? It is the message that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, but that He rose again from the dead, and is now seated in heaven at God’s right hand. But are people saved just because Christ died for sinners? No! When the Philippians jailor asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, did the Apostle Paul, “You don’t have to do anything”? No! What did he say? He said, “Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” So when we preach the Gospel we tell people that they must believe in Christ, they must receive Him as Savior, they must trust Christ for their salvation.

Now let me ask you a question. If that Philippian jailor was told by Paul that he had to believe in Christ, what was that Philippian jailor doing when he believed in Christ. *He was obeying the Gospel. He was doing what Peter said that they people had done, he was obeying the truth. The message of the Gospel must be obeyed if we are to be saved, and we obey it by believing in Christ.*

Now before you are ready to burn me at the stake for being a heretic, let me ask you to turn to the book of Romans where we will see that the Apostle Paul used the same language. Let me read to you Rom. 1:1-6:

- 1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
- 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
- 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:
- 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
- 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-6).

So when a sinner is told that he must believe in Christ in order to be saved, and he believes, he is being obedient to the truth of the Gospel, and his soul is purified. He is cleansed, forgiven of his sins, and made a child of the living God.

But now just a minute! There is another statement in this verse which we need to notice, and it is the phrase, “through the Spirit.” These people had obeyed the truth of the Gospel “through the Spirit.” Now this takes what I have been saying out of the realm of a work that we do, and we see that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This phrase is omitted in some of the recent translations, but it belongs here. Faith is a gift from God. It comes to us through the Spirit. But look also at the verses we had last week, especially verses 18-21, especially the last part of verse 20 and the beginning of verse 21. Notice that statement, speaking of Christ, “Who by Him do believe in God.”

So our faith comes from God, and from Christ, and from the Holy Spirit!

And when anyone believes in Christ, it is only because faith has been given to them, the faith to obey the truth of the Gospel.

But look at the last of this first part of verse 22, and the words: “Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” Who are the brethren? They are those who members of God’s family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And what does “unfeigned” mean, “unfeigned love”? It means that when any person is saved, one big change that comes about in his life is that he had in his heart, not just a pretending that he loves the people of God, but that he has a sincere, genuine love for God’s people. Before you were saved, Christians were the last people in the world that you wanted to have anything to do with, but after you are saved, they are the people that you want to be with more than anybody else. If you don’t love the people of God, and want to be with them, you probably aren’t saved. The Apostle John showed how much he agreed with the Apostle Peter when he, John, wrote,
We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

We have seen the basis of Peter’s appeal, that he was writing to those who had trusted Christ, now let us notice:

II. THE APPEAL ITSELF (1 Pet. 22b).

“See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” First, Peter said that we are to be looking for the Lord’s return. Second, that we are to live here on earth in the fear of God. Now third, we are to love one another with “a pure heart fervently.”

This last point actually means that, although we were born into God’s family with a love for other believers in Christ, we are to see to it that our love for each other is continually growing. But in order to be pleasing to God, it must be love out of “a pure heart.” So here we are brought back to Peter’s words in verses 15 and 16 that we are to be holy because God is holy. Only holy people have pure hearts.

Therefore, if our love is to grow, we must grow in holiness. Love among believers is most clearly seen where believers are growing in holiness, in likeness to Christ. The object of Christ’s death was not just that we might be forgiven, but that we might become a holy people. So if we are to cultivate a greater love for the Lord’s people, we must seek by God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, to be more holy.

But what did Peter mean by the word “fervently”? This means that our

love for each other should be intense and continuous. And the “love” to which Peter referred is a love which we manifest toward those who are precious, precious to us, but especially precious to God.

This leads to a third point.

III. THE POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH LOVE CAN BE ATTAINED (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

There are two reasons we can be assured that it is possible for us to love each other the way the Lord wants us to love each other. One, because of the change that the Gospel has made in us. Two, because of the unique character of God’s Word.

A. Because we have been born again (vv. 23-24).

When we were born the first time, it was a “corruptible seed.” Our parents pass on to us a corrupted nature, a sinful nature. We were born in sin like David said that he was. And that has been true of every person since Adam and Eve. And no person can change his nature which is the result of that corruptible seed. And so the only hope for holiness, the only hope that we can be pleasing to God, the only hope that we can be set free from the dominion of sin, is for us to be born again, a second time, not entering again into our mother’s womb, but to be born of that incorruptible seed, the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever.”

It is because of verse 23 here in 1 Peter 1 that I have said many times that no person is ever truly saved apart from the Word of God. And that is the reason that whenever we are talking to anyone about salvation, we need to make good use of the Word of God. It is “the power of God unto salvation.

By way of contrast, verse 24 gives us a picture of man, and this is placed along side of the character of the Word of God in verse 25. These verses are a quotation from Isa.40:6-8:

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Man himself is like grass, and his glory is like the flower of grass. The

grass withers, and the flower falls away, but God's Word abides forever.

When Peter spoke of man's glory, he was speaking of his physical appearance and strength, his intelligence and his achievements. It all fades, and man finally dies, dies in his sin, dies without hope, dies to face the judgment of God.

But in contrast the Word of God endures forever. Through the Word there is life and hope and blessing without end.

God does not seek to repair the old nature, but He gives us new life, with new desires, and new powers, and an eternal hope where there was no true hope before. And this comes through the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.

Concl: After reading a passage like this we need to ask ourselves, "Do I have this new life from God? Do I understand my true need in my relationship to God? And do I see that I need to seek from God Himself the faith to trust in the work which our Lord did when He died on the Cross? The answer is all right here in this passage, and there is no other hope for forgiveness and acceptance with God except through Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for sinners when He died on the Cross. If Christ is not your Savior, then purify your heart today by putting your faith in Him for the forgiveness of your sins.

For those of us who know the Lord, our goal is to be holy as the Lord is holy. Peter would tell us that the way of holiness is to live with our hopes set on the return of the Lord. And that in the meantime we are to live in the fear of God, fearing lest we grieve Him by our sinful disobedience. And, as we have seen today, we need to seek from God an ever increasing love for each other, which means that we need to seek to be the kind of people that other believers will love because of what they see of Christ in us. And it is only the Holy Spirit that can do this for us, prompting us to be obedient to the Word of the Lord.

Such living as Peter has set before us, will not only enable us to live to the glory of God, but it will also open the way to the enjoyment of greater and greater blessings from the Lord.