

Loving God's family 1 Peter 1v22-2v3

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[0 : 00] Thanks very much, Connor. We'll have your Bibles open to 1 Peter while I sit up here. Thank you, Connor, for leading.

Just to say that on the table at the back as you came in, there's a little container. It says the Court Kerry Project, and in your news sheet as well, there's a little notice about that.

And so we made last week and this week an opportunity to give to that work. If you still want to be able to do that and you weren't able to do it last week, then please avail of that opportunity today.

Well, we've already prayed, so let's look at this section in 1 Peter, chapter 1. The true story of Jonathan and Alistair Brownlee has captured the minds and hearts of thousands of people.

For those who don't know, Jonathan and Alistair Brownlee are brothers who race and compete against each other in the triathlon. In their most recent race, Jonathan, the younger brother, was leading.

[1 : 50] And as the race was reaching its conclusion, it was obvious that no one was going to catch him. But with about 100 metres to go, Jonathan was overcome with exhaustion.

He could barely stand, never mind run, wobbling from side to side. Coming in second was his brother Alistair.

Alistair. But instead of running past him to claim first spot, he stopped. He put his arm around his brother. And while another competitor ran past, he literally hauled his brother to the finish and pushed him over the line.

Alistair sacrificed himself to help his brother finish the race. That's brotherly love.

Now, if we are Christians, we are to show this same brotherly love to one another. Look at verse 22. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for your brothers and sisters, love one another deeply from the heart.

[3 : 13] You see, the big theme of 1 Peter is that to live as a Christian in this world is really tough.

It's like we're strangers, outsiders, unwanted, pushed out, ostracised. If we speak Christian truth, if we stand for Christian values, it means we will face opposition and at times persecution.

And when we face that kind of pressure, the temptation is to just give up for an easier kind of life.

That's why we need the support and the encouragement of brotherly love. The church, God's family, is that strong supporting arm that carries us along when life gets tough.

It is the support that we need that will get us from this life to our eternal life. So let's see how we are to love God's family.

[4 : 26] First, we are set apart to love each other. Set apart to love each other. Verse 22. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth.

Purified in this context is to be made clean for a purpose. When Kirsty and I travelled through Central America years ago, we had to take with us little puri tabs.

You might have had to do the same if you've been overseas. Because the water is so dirty, you just drop in a couple of puri tabs and it cleanses the water.

Tastes like bleach, but it's still clean. It becomes purposeful again. You could drink it. You could cook with it. Now if we're Christians, followers of the Lord Jesus, we are made pure.

Look at verse 22. By obeying the truth. The gospel is dropped into our lives as the purifying agent.

[5 : 35] So as we turn to Jesus, as we trust in Jesus, we are made clean by God. And here's the purpose.

Look at verse 22. So that you have sincere love for your brothers and sisters. We've been purified. We've been purified. We've been set apart by God so that we can love the family of God.

Because love is the mark of authentication for the Christian community. It is the stamp that is on us. It is the stamp that is on us. That sets us apart.

That lets the world know that we are Christians because of our sincere love for one another. We are purified for the purpose of loving each other.

Now, this isn't something that we can achieve by ourselves. This is something that God does in us. It is a miraculous work of God that goes on in our life.

[6 : 45] It happens in two ways. First, by the living word. Look at verse 23. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

If you know somebody who has an exceptional talent, you might say this about them. You would say they were born to run or born to dance, born to write.

Their talent is part of their DNA. It's who they are. It's a natural gifting that just overflows from them.

Well, if we are Christians, we are born again to love by the living word. Born again to love by the living word.

Look at how the structure goes. If you look at the very last line of verse 22. Love one another deeply from the heart for or because you have been born again.

[8 : 03] Let me explain what he's getting at here. You think the birth of a baby is something really quite extraordinary. The seed from the father fertilizes the egg from the mother and a life begins.

But that life, as in all life, will come to an end. It will die. That's what he's saying here in verse 23. It's a perishable seed.

It will not last. But in contrast to that, when God gives us new life by his living word, it's imperishable.

When the living word, the truth of Jesus Christ, takes effect in our lives, we are born again to a new and eternal life. A new life that is a life filled with love.

Our spiritual DNA, when we are, if you like, birthed by God, is to love God's family. So as people look at us and as we look at our own lives, when God has taken effect in our lives, it's like we're saying we have been born to love one another.

[9 : 18] It's a natural gift that God has given to us to be able to love one another. This living word at work within our lives producing a life of love.

So this setting apart to love each other happens by the living word and second, by the eternal word. Look at verse 24.

Again, we're giving another explanation. If we take the end of verse 22, love one another deeply from the heart. Verse 24. For or because all men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever. Now, to us, this is just kind of like an odd verse that's kind of inserted and it's hard to make the connection about love.

Well, this is a quote that comes from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 40. So keep your finger in 1 Peter and let's jump back to the prophet Isaiah and chapter 40.

[10 : 32] So keep your finger in 1 Peter and then jump back to chapter 40. Chapter 40 is a turning point in the book.

It's like the centerpiece of the book. Chapters 1 to 39 is all about God's judgment on Israel for their rebellion against God. And as he goes through chapter after chapter, it seems like everything is at a loss for these people.

There's no hope of change. They've set their lives in a rebellious course and it's going to end in judgment. There's no hope of change for these people. And then we get to chapter 40.

And we read verse 1. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for.

All of a sudden, there's a shift towards hope. God is saying, there's going to be comfort. Your sin has been paid for.

[11 : 45] So what is the response to all of this? Well, look down to verse 6 and here's where the quote comes. A voice says, cry out. And I said, what shall I cry out?

What's my response to what God is going to do? All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, the flowers fall because the breath of the Lord blows on them.

Surely the people are grass. When we are left to our own devices, there is nothing that we can do to change ourselves.

All we can do is die like the grass or the flowers of the field. That is what our lives are like without God at work within us.

We cannot change our lives. We can't make ourselves love people. All we'll do is wither and die. Our end will come. But, look at verse 8 of chapter 40.

[12 : 47] The grass withers and the flowers fall, just like we do. But, the word of our God stands forever.

The word of God, which promises salvation and restoration. The word which brings about new life. The word which changes and transforms lives and hearts is not going to fail and will do a work in people's life.

And that's the point that Peter is getting to us by quoting from Isaiah 40. So, go back to 1 Peter. Peter is saying to us, left to our own devices, we cannot love each other.

We can't change our sinful lives. Before, we didn't have the capacity to love one another. Our hearts meant that we actually ran past our brother and sister.

And we didn't care about them. But the eternal work of God, the eternal word at work in our life, changes our hearts, transforms our life, and forms a family of love.

[13 : 55] So, we have been set apart by God. We've been given new life by the living word. We've been given a changed life by the eternal word.

So, that we have sincere love for our brothers and sisters. It is a radical transformation that God brings about for those who trust in him.

So, first, we are set apart to love each other. Second, we are called to love each other deeply.

Let's read 1 Peter 1, verse 22 again together. Now that you've purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for your brothers and sisters, love one another deeply.

What will it mean for you and for I to love each other deeply? What will it mean for you to love deeply the person who's sitting next door to you or the person in front of you?

[15 : 05] Well, we need to clear out all the unlove in our lives. Look at verse 25. The end of verse 25.

And this is the word that was preached to you. So, the living word, the eternal word that took effect in your life and set you apart to love one another.

Because of that, chapter 2, verse 1. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and all hypocrisy and all envy and all slander of every kind.

There's a program on television called Hoarders. And I just want you to know that I just don't watch daytime television. I've just seen it sometime.

TV Hoarders. I'm sure you've seen it yourself. It's all about people who can't throw away things. They hoard everything. The one that I saw was about a man who lived in a house, two-story house.

[16 : 13] His house was so bad that the only space left was the entrance in the doorway and access to one sink in the whole house.

He had to use public toilets because that was all full of rubbish. Where he slept was like a few inches from the ceiling in the living room because he was lying on top of all his rubbish.

It was an absolute mess. Now, while we've been set apart for love, the problem is we can store up an awful lot of sinful junk and rubbish in our own hearts.

Where we cannot function as we should as God's people. So we've got to be ruthless to clear it out. Look at verse 1, chapter 2. Therefore, rid yourselves.

Clear out all the sinful junk and all that rubbish that has got stored up in our hearts. You see, everything that's listed here in verse 1 is opposite to love.

[17 : 22] Malice is intentionally causing harm to another brother or sister by the things we say. Deceit is saying things like, oh, I'm going to pray for you, but having no intention whatsoever of doing so.

Hypocrisy is demanding that people overlook the sin in your life while you remember everybody else's sin. Envy is not giving praise or thanks or acknowledgement to somebody else because you're jealous of their gifts.

Slander is quietly saying to someone, I wouldn't tell everybody this, but did you hear about? None of these things actually help or support your brother or sister.

In fact, it crushes them. This kind of behaviour is like running past your brother or sister, ignoring them so that you get ahead. It's sinful junk that stops us loving people as we should.

So, let me ask us all this question. What is it that stops you loving your brother or sister? Maybe there's somebody you find it hard to love.

[18 : 48] What is it that will stop you from loving them? What's the sin in our heart? What's that junk that's getting in the way of us loving?

Well, the command is to us all, repent. Get rid of. Clear out all the unlove. Ask God to show you in your life what it is that needs to be rooted out so that we can love one another.

You see, that is. Dealing with sin, it's when we think about loving each other, it's got to start with our heart. It's a loving action to deal with the sin in our hearts because we get rid of it.

Then we are free to love one another. So, how do we love each other deeply? Well, we clear out all the unlove in our life through repentance.

And we crave the word together. Look at verse 2. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

[20 : 06] When we repent, when we clear out all that sinful junk and clutter in our hearts, it needs to be filled and replaced with something good and pure and beautiful.

We are to crave pure spiritual milk. Now, he changes his metaphors here from clearing out something to drinking in pure spiritual milk.

But have that idea of getting rid of something and replacing it and filling it with something else. A newborn baby craves and longs for pure milk from her mother's breast.

The cries of a little baby is only satisfied when they begin to feed. Because the natural instinct of the little baby kicks in and tells them that they need their mother's milk.

And if they don't get that milk, they're going to die. They're not going to survive. And they long for it. They crave. They cry out for it. Now, look at verse 2.

[21 : 13] We are to be like newborn babies that crave pure spiritual milk. We are to long for that living word.

That eternal word. That word that changes us and transforms us so that, middle of verse 2, that we may grow up in our salvation.

That we would, just like a little baby, gets the milk and grows up physically, as we take in of that pure spiritual milk, we will grow up and mature. It's the living word that gives us new life.

It's the eternal word that will change us and transform us. It's the word, that pure spiritual work, word, what am I saying? The pure spiritual word at work in our life is going to change us so that we love one another.

In fact, this craving is an act of brotherly love because it is something that we do together.

[22 : 19] Peter's writing here not just to individuals but to a church, to a gathered group of people. It's plural, verse 2, like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you together may grow up.

So, by craving pure spiritual milk is something that we do together as God's people and that is an act of love.

So, what does that mean in practice? Well, if you know somebody within the church family who's struggling to live life as a Christian in this world, they're up against it and it's hard.

Or maybe somebody's finding it really tough because they've been standing up for Christian values and they're getting knocked for it at work or in their college or school. The greatest act of brotherly love is to get alongside that person, put your arm around them and read God's word with them.

Because helping somebody to read the word is helping them to grow strong so that they get to the finish line. Jump to chapter 4, verse 8.

[23 : 40] He gives us a little example of this. Chapter 4, verse 8. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins.

And then he gives some examples. But look at verse 11. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

To love one another deeply is to speak the truth of God's word to one another. It is passing on to each other the pure spiritual milk that will sustain them and grow them and nourish them and get them across the finish line.

That is true love. That is an act of brotherly love. So, how do we love each other deeply? We deal, we repent of the sinful junk, the unlove in our lives, we clear it out and we fill ourselves with the pure nourishing word of God so that we can encourage and support one another.

So, we are set apart to love each other, we are called to love each other deeply, and then last, we are to love each other from the heart.

[25 : 12] Verse 22, again, 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 22. 2 Peter chapter 2. 2 Peter chapter 2. 2 Peter chapter 2. Now that you've purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for your brothers and sisters, love one another deeply from the heart or from a pure heart.

Now, when we think of heart, we just think of that organ inside our bodies that's pumping blood around our body. But in the Bible, when the Bible uses the word heart, it's biblical language for saying the heart is actually the control centre of our personality.

It's the control centre of our personality. So, whatever's going on in our hearts will mean or affect how we live and behave.

So, whatever captivates our hearts shapes our behaviour, it controls our desires and drives our emotions. In other words, the heart affects how we act, how we think and how we feel.

Now, if our hearts have been captivated by God, that means from the overflow of our hearts we're going to love each other. Let me show you how this works.

[26 : 40] As we drink in the pure spiritual milk of God's word, so we're reminded of how good the Lord is. Look at chapter 2, verse 2.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. Verse 3, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

You see, as we taste that pure spiritual milk, that living and enduring word of God, it sets off our spiritual taste buds and reminds us, wow, God is good.

In other words, as we read God's word, so our hearts are being captivated by the amazing goodness of God towards us. we're reminding ourselves, as Peter has been doing, that in love we have been chosen to be God's people.

That in his love he has given us new birth and new life into a living hope. In his love he's given us an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade and it's being kept for you and you are being kept for it.

[27 : 57] In his love he has given us a loving church family. All of this is ours because in love God gave of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our true older brother who not only walks with us but who actually gave his life for us.

When Jesus died on the cross with his arms stretched out wide it is as if Jesus is putting his arm around us removing every barrier of sin and death so that we can reach the finish line.

As we engage with God's word, as we listen to it, we are reminded of how good the Lord is. As we look again and see what Jesus has done, our hearts are filled with the goodness of God and from the overflow of our hearts comes a love for one another.

You see, as the word works in our hearts, so we begin to respond to the needs of others. Rather than be a people who are looking out for number one, we actually stop what we are doing in our lives.

We begin to sacrifice all our wants and desires. We put our arm around our struggling brother and sister. We walk with them through the fiery trials that they're in.

[29 : 26] We bring them back to the goodness of God and we help them taste and see that the Lord is good and their hearts are filled with the goodness of God and they are led to be people of love.

Life as a Christian in this world is going to be tough. If you speak out Christian truth, if you stand up for Christian values, you will be hit.

It will be a struggle. But the good news is we have got one another. We have the love of God's family to support us, to put that arm around us, to speak truth into our lives, to bring us to that finishing line.

Thank God for one another. Thank God for the person beside you. Thank God for the family that God has placed you in to give you that loving support.

Let's do that now, as we thank God for his love.