

Love One Another

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[0 : 00] Well, if you would turn to 1 Peter chapter 1, 22 through 25. We'll finish up the chapter today. Peter writing to several groups of churches that are about to go under persecution, some of them going through persecution.

He's writing to encourage them so that they would know how to live in these times, that they might know the true grace of God, he says in chapter 5. And these truths and these commands that he gives, they are to shape them for what is to come.

So beginning in verse 22, the text reads this way. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart since you've been born again.

Not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living abiding word of God. For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.

And this word is the good news that was preached to you. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the clarity of your word. We thank you for the power of your word.

[1 : 25] And we pray that even now as we begin to try to understand what this passage means, that you would, by your spirit, illuminate our minds and empower us both to believe and to act according to what your word says.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So third grade was difficult. I got the report card and I had to go home and show my dad and my grades were great.

Academically, I was fine. It was that little thing over there called citizenship and conduct. I just couldn't stop talking.

And so the teacher wrote on there, finishes work early, distracts other students, does not know how to use time wisely and all the other things.

And my dad was basically, listen, you've got to do better. You have got to do better because it doesn't matter how smart you are if you don't know how to treat people. And so listening to that, I just was so frustrated because, well, I mean, it's boring.

[2 : 35] You know, what am I supposed to do? I finish everything early, so how am I supposed to? And it became this frustrating thing for me because I didn't understand what I needed to do.

I didn't understand how I was going to do it. And sometimes I fear that when we hear commandments from Scripture, we're going to act like my third grade self and be frustrated because we don't understand what it is we're really being asked to do nor how it is we're going to do it.

And in this section, Peter's been lining out these different commands. We saw three of them back a couple of weeks ago. And here's a fourth command. And there's a fifth one following this one.

And this commandment is to love one another. And that seems like a pretty straightforward kind of command. But I don't want you to be in the place where you're frustrated wondering, well, what does that look like and how am I supposed to do it?

So that's what I want to preach about this morning. What does that look like and how do you do it? In other words, what's the way of loving one another and what's the power of loving one another? What are the things we're to do that would tell us this is loving one another?

[3 : 41] And then where does the power come from to be able to actually do it? Because any time we take a commandment from Scripture and we do it in our own strength and power, that's being a Pharisee.

We need to do it in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what we need to do. So I want us to look at these two things, the way to love one another and the power to love one another. Let's talk about

the way to love one another.

That's the command. You see it right there in verse 22. He says to love one another and it is a command. It's in the command structure in the Greek, which means it's not optional.

It's not something that's for super saints, but for the rest of us, we don't have to do it. It's for everybody who says that they are a Christian. And you probably recognize this commandment. I hope. If not, love one another comes from Jesus. The night that he was with his disciples, as he was teaching them that last night, he did this thing and told them, love one another.

[4 : 47] The thing that he did was this thing that we know about called the washing of their feet. And I don't know if you understand the circumstance of that, but they all would recline on couches, basically kind of leaning on their left arm to some degree like this with all the food out here in the middle.

And people lined around this either circle or like a square or something like that, their feet out behind them. And the lowest slave in the house would come along and would wash your feet. You wear sandals and you walk down dusty roads. There's no sidewalks or anything like that. No crushed granite. And so your feet get nasty. So somebody comes along, the lowest slave in the house, and washes your feet.

Jesus got up that night and he took off his outer cloak. He put a towel around his waist and he went behind all of his disciples and washed their feet. And the end result of that and the teaching that he gave them was love one another.

And this commandment is a commandment that we are supposed to do. It's a commandment that carries with it the idea of becoming a slave to one another, serving one another, doing good for one another.

[5 : 59] The second thing about this is that it's to be a community of love. And I've never heard anybody really talk about this, but here's what Peter's expecting.

Peter's expecting this, that this person is going to love this person within the body of Christ, and that person is going to reciprocate and love back. In other words, it's not just a one-way street.

It's not just this person loving this person. You've got to be sure you're doing that, but they don't have to. It's a community of love. And what we mean by that is that it's not about everybody in the church needs to love one person.

And you see that in a lot of churches. As they practice their love for one another, it almost seems like they're just loving one person. It could be a pastor. It could be a favorite deacon. It could be some older saint in the faith that's been there for a long time that shows great wisdom.

And a lot of people have a commitment to this person, and they love that person. But the problem is that it's supposed to be the whole church coming to love each other.

[7 : 05] And you can see this because a lot of times people come and join a church because of a person. Sometimes it's a parent. Sometimes it's a grandparent. Sometimes it's a friend.

Sometimes it's a co-worker. Sometimes it's a pastor. And what happens, and you can tell that people have not really grown in love for one another because when that single person is gone, people scatter.

It's not supposed to be that way. You're supposed to love one another. And it's great that somebody brought you in, but now you have to learn to love those who are here.

It's not about that deacon who's really great at making contact with everybody, and he's the only one required to do so.

No, it's everyone. We're to love one another. And then he goes on to say it's to be from a pure heart.

[8 : 07] From a pure heart. It's interesting. It's interesting. This word for pure here is where we get our English word cathartic.

It's to cleanse. It's a heart that's been cleansed. All the impurities, all the things that weigh it down have been moved out, cleaned up, taken away.

It's this idea that our heart is shaped like God's heart. That our love is like God's love. It's pure, without evil, without selfishness, without double-mindedness.

So we're to love one another with no strings attached. We're to love one another. Without evil intent or manipulative desires.

We're to love one another. And when we begin to put that to the test, and we say, would you be willing to love one another? Oftentimes, you know, one of the things that comes to my mind, maybe

it's not to your mind, but I think to myself, sure, I'd love these people.

[9 : 14] You know, I would take a bullet for anybody in here. I mean, if somebody were to come in, you know, there's things that happen that none of us want to think about. I'd gladly jump in the pathway of that for any of you. But I feel like that that's not really indicative of how much I love you.

I think it would be more so is would I be willing to give up my free time for you? Would I be willing to give up my vacation for you?

Would I be willing to give up my preferences for you? There's a pastor recently who had to have a family talk with their church.

The church is about 200, 250 in size. And they have two groups of people in their church by and large. They got more than that. But these two groups needed to be talked to that morning. One group were the older saints, right?

The older saints. They've been there for a long time. Many of them have grown hard of hearing a little bit. And then there was another group, young families with little kids. And they would bring their little kids into worship with them.

[10 : 21] And sometimes the little kids are running around and screaming. And it was making it difficult for the older saints to hear what was going on. And some of these older saints had some really dirty looks at the young families, wanting them to get their kids quiet.

It's like, you better take that kid out and spank that kid. Like, you know, whatever. And the problem was is that there was this preference idea on both sides. They both have preferences. The pastor did a marvelous job of talking to both groups as he got up.

And he said, listen, you need to understand. Some of these older saints in here cannot hear. And if you just let your child run loose and loud without any correction of that, you're not showing any love for them because they're having trouble listening.

And then he said, and you, you need to understand. Don't you remember what it's like to have little ones? And here they are. They're here. They're not at the lake. They could be at the lake letting their kids run screaming, but they've brought their kids here.

Don't you want to see them here? Don't you recognize that listening to little children in the service means that there's life for this church down the road? So bear patiently with them as they are trying to deal with their kids.

[11 : 35] And you bear patiently with them as they are trying to hear and understand. You need to not lean so hard into your preferences. Would you be willing to give up your own preferences in order to love one another?

Loving one another is not an easy task, but I'm going to tell you this. It is never going to happen unless you know each other. And you're never going to know each other unless you spend time with each other.

So challenge. Challenge. I want you to look around. Look to your left.

Okay, come on. Look to your left. Some of you are going like, don't look to the left. Look to your right. Maybe look over your shoulder. You see families in here. There are families that you know, and there are families that you have eaten a meal with and you've visited with.

But here's the challenge. Before Christmas. Before Christmas. I want you to find one family in here that you've not had a meal with.

[12 : 48] That you've not shared a cup of coffee with. And I want you to invite them for coffee, for a meal or something. It can be at your house.

You can go out to eat somewhere. Whatever. Just find someone. And do something with them. Before Christmas. Because the more that you do that, the more you know each other.

The easier it is to love one another. Because we know each other. And we'll never, we'll never be able to love each other. So long as we never spend time with one another.

And I understand that life is busy. And that's where I would say that life is probably too busy. And we need to get some things out so that we can love each other. But that's what it is to love each other.

Is to spend that time with each other. To give up those preferences and that free time and those vacations. To serve one another. To do the best for one another. Well, where does the power for that come from?

[13 : 50] Because, I mean, let's just face it. Some of you are difficult to love. According to Michelle.

I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. Here's the way I see the text. He starts out in verse 21 giving kind of the first sort of power, if you will.

The first motivation. Then he gives the command. Followed by the second power motivation thing. And I didn't really know what to call this. I'm not sure power is the right word. Motivation. It's this thing that's necessary to be there in order for you to love.

And so, I want you to look at these two things. One is a purified heart. The other is the new birth. Let's talk about the purified heart. He says, having purified your souls.

Having purified your souls. Now, let me just. I'm not going to go in depth in this. But I've got to say this. Because we've just got to dispel wrong theology for just a second. Your soul. What is your soul?

[14:56] Every human being, you have two parts. Not three. You have two. You have an inner man and an outer man. You are an embodied soul.

Right? And you can't look at the triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To look at yourself to determine how man is made up. Because God is other than us.

Right? The soul and the spirit are the inner man. Those are the same reality. Your soul is your spirit. Your spirit is your soul. Look at Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1. As Mary is singing a praise to God. She says, my soul magnifies the Lord.

That's in verse 46. Verse 47 says, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. She's using soul and spirit interchangeably. Now, we could go on and on and on.

[15:54] Because the evidence from scripture is overwhelming. I decided not to tell you all of that information. If you would like to know more, I'd be glad to help you. But here's the point.

The point is, is that the inner man needs this purification. Our soul, our spirits, our heart, it needs this purification.

And what Peter is saying is that since it has been purified. Since the inside of you has been purified. Been made holy is the word purified.

It has been done so by your obedience to the truth. You have been purified by your obedience to the truth. Now, Peter is not at all saying you have become holy.

And you have won heaven. And you have received your salvation because you've been obedient to the law. He is not saying that. What he is saying is that as we obey the truth of God, we grow in holiness.

[16:56] And the only way we can obey God is that he gives us the power. It's by the spirit of God that we're able to obey. What the scriptures are getting at is this.

Is that you cannot grow in holiness. You cannot grow in righteousness unless the truth of God is in your life and you are following and obeying it.

You see, when we were lost, when we were lost, we were this hard-hearted, black-hearted sinner who hated God. And we trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

And the Father declared us righteous. He covered us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We were not really righteous because we were still hard-hearted.

But we were covered in the righteousness of Jesus. And now, through sanctification, through the process of growth and maturing in the Christian life, we become conformed to that righteousness which never finishes in this age but once we go to be with the Lord.

[18:07] And the way that we are conformed to that is by obedience to the Word of God. You're not going to conform to the image of God just because you wear a Christian t-shirt.

You're not going to conform to the image of God just because you listen to Christian radio. You're not going to conform to the image of God and to the righteousness of Christ because you're nice.

It's going to happen by the Word of God. Your personal reading, the preaching of the Word, and Bible study. If you're not reading the Word, under the preaching of the Word, doing Bible study, you are not growing in holiness and therefore you cannot truly love one another.

Without the truth of God, without knowing it, without listening to it and living it out, you cannot grow in holiness.

And without holiness, you cannot love one another. And this is not speaking about a perfection of holiness. He's not looking to see, have you finally arrived?

[19:27] Because perfection and holiness happens when we go on to be with the Lord in heaven. It's not here and now. But it's all about, are you moving in that direction? Not perfection.

Think about it this way. My wife and I, we love each other. We've been married for 34 years. And not only are we husband and wife, but we're brother and sister in Christ. And yes, the Scripture tells me as a husband to love your wife as Christ loved the church. But it also tells me as a Christian to love one another. To bear with one another. To forgive one another. To encourage one another. To admonish one another. There's like 34 different one another's throughout Scripture. And I'm supposed to live that out towards her. I cannot do that without the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to empower and help me to do that.

[20 : 31] That's what we're talking about. That's where the power comes from. It comes from knowing the Word of God, being obedient to it, and doing what He says.

But the second power is this new birth. That's verse 23 through 25. And as Peter talks about this new birth, he's basically putting forward three big truths that I just want to hit real quick. One is that being born again is something we have no control over. Being born again is something that we have no control over. We see that because the verb here is passive, right? It's having been born again. Something was done to you. You didn't make yourself become born. As a matter of fact, the song that we sang tells us right from the Scriptures that He caused us to be born again.

It's by His work. In other words, there's nothing that we can do because we're spiritually dead as sinners. And let me just see if I can help you with this and illustrate what I'm talking about.

[21 : 34] A lot of people, when they go train for evangelism, they use this illustration. And they say, lost people are out there in the sea of lostness. And you're on the ship of salvation. And throw a life preserver out there so they can grab it and you can pull them to salvation.

And the only problem with that illustration is that the people out there seem to still be alive. But in reality, we are dead in our trespasses and sins.

And when you are dead, you cannot respond. You are face down, lungs full of water, without hope. And salvation is not you gurgling up water and grabbing a life preserver.

But salvation is someone coming along and pulling you out of the water, emptying your lungs and putting life back into you. That's salvation. We were dead in our trespasses and sins.

And this new birth is not something we get to control, but it comes by the mercy of God. But it also, he says, happens by the powerful word of God.

[22 : 40] He says, notice, he says it's not of perishable seed, but imperishable. A kind of seed that can never fade away. A kind of seed that can never die.

Something that's powerful. Then he quotes from Isaiah. Right? Beautiful quote from Isaiah. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of God lives and abides forever.

Telling us, he's leaning on the Old Testament truth about God's word, that it is powerful. And that's what he's saying, is that our new birth is caused by God and by his powerful word.

Think to yourself of the word that said, let there be light. Did light have anything to say about it? Or did it just come into existence? It just came into existence. Think about the word of God that raised the dry bones into an army.

[23 : 39] Think about the word of God that raised Lazarus from the dead. And think about that for just a second. There's Lazarus dead in the tomb. Perfect illustration. Perfect illustration.

What was it that caused that new birth? The powerful word of Christ that said, Lazarus. And now he's awake.

Now there's life there. And how does that life come to us? He goes on in verse 5 and he says, and this is that word, the good news or the gospel that was preached to you.

In other words, the new birth comes because you'll have someone like me standing here with the word of God, preaching about the truths of the gospel, preaching about the idea that we're lost and without Christ we have no hope.

But God in his great love sent his son to die upon the cross to pay for our sin. And we're talking about all the things that are involved in all that and say to you, you need to turn from your sin and trust in Christ.

[24 : 40] It is that right there, that gospel message that the Holy Spirit of God uses. And there's a powerful word of God that speaks through that and takes deadened sinners and makes them alive, calls them out of the tomb so that they can trust and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that's the new birth, but that wasn't the point. The point is, love one another since you've been born again.

Why is Peter saying this? Peter's telling us that if we've been saved, basically, right? If we've been rescued, if we've been redeemed, if we've been justified, it's because God found us on the sea of lostness, dead in our sins, and he made us alive together.

With Christ. And he says that since that's happened, love one another. The point is, is that without that new birth, we can't love the way he commands us to love at all.

Back in verse 3 of 1 Peter, he talks about that birth again. Let's just go back there real quick.

[26 : 15] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

So which is it? Is it through the resurrection or through the powerful word? Yes. Right? So, in other words, I can love you as I should because the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that changed my heart.

It's the same power that continues to work in me as a Christian so that I can love my spouse in spite of maybe seriously wicked things that they've done.

Because the love is not built upon them and me, but built upon him and his power.

So, the power to love someone who's hurt me, the power to love someone who's betrayed me, the power to love someone who's offended me, the power to love someone who has sinned against me, or maybe even the power to love someone who's annoying to me, the power to love someone who I think is beneath me, the power to love someone who I think is so different from me that I can't stand them the power to love someone who votes opposite of me comes not because I can pull myself up by my bootstraps but because I have been given a new heart by the preaching of the word in the gospel and it's the same power that raised Jesus from the dead I don't have that in myself if you wait for me to love you based upon just me I'm never gonna love you because I don't really want to because I'm super selfish and the truth is so are you but because he's changed us because we have a new heart because the power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that is in us you and I as Christians should never utter the words if you're truly a Christian you've truly been saved you should never ever ever utter the words

[28 : 55] I just can't love that person because if that's true then you're not a Christian and if you are a Christian then you can do it the only problem is your desire you don't want to you have everything you need in the new birth by the resurrection of Christ we're just choosing to be angry and unforgiving and I know what that's like I had a friend I thought he was a close friend he was a good friend it convinced me to leave the church that I was serving and come serve with him where he was pastor and we even had times where as pastors we'd get together and we'd dream about you know the dynamic duo the dream team you know what could God do with us if we just got together and he lied about me and he got me fired

I'd been there for 18 months for about 10 years if he had showed up at my door I probably would have just punched him I couldn't love him I just didn't want to and somewhere a couple years ago a couple two three years ago the Lord just convicted me that that was wrong and I went to the Lord I even wrote him a letter and said please forgive me for holding on to a grudge and being angry and all these sort of things because I just needed to let it go I mean it was eating me and the Lord is funny and the Lord is I went to a conference a couple of months ago and I walked right into him face to face and I you know there's a part of me that's like dude you lied about me you got me fired and I had five kids and I had no place to go and I have mortgage and I have all these things like you know there's reasons why you would go like well I'm just you know

I'm never going to talk to this person again and I did not want to talk to him in that moment and he said Brady how you doing and I was like okay Lord listen Lord I can't do this I cannot do this in my own strength and power and I said I'm fine how are you and we had a talk for probably about 20 minutes and checked up on his family and I walked away going like Lord thank you I do I wish him well I pray for him and want the Lord to do good for him I don't have to be his best bud now but the point is is that all of that was gone and by God's grace I know what it's like to have somebody it's so hard to love them because of what they've done to you but you'll never be able to pull that up by the bootstraps you're not going to work that up through some sort of psyching yourself out it's only going to come by the power of the Holy Spirit through the new birth and I would say that if you find yourself going like you know

I really want to love that way that's good news that's good news about the work of God and you but if you find yourself kind of going like well I'd never love anybody that way no they do me wrong that's it then like can I challenge you are you really a Christian if that's the way you think maybe you need the new birth maybe you need the new birth may God give us to be able to love one another he's given us all the power that we need we just need to love let's pray Thank you.