

## **Love One Another**

### **1 Peter 1:22-25**

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So I want you to follow me as I read the text. I'm going to begin in verse 22 of 1 Peter. Peter says in chapter 1, verse 22, "Seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren..."—he says—"...see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord..."—verse 25—"...endures forever. And this is the word by which the gospel was preached unto you."

Peter is still seeking to encourage and strengthen the suffering saints that were scattered. I want you to go back to verse 1 of chapter 1 where he says that he is writing "to the strangers that are scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia," modern Turkey. Now these people that he was writing to were believers, obviously. They were strangers who were scattered. And they were being persecuted. It was the beginning of persecution. So because they were scattered and they were battered and they were beaten and they were persecuted, Peter's writing this epistle to encourage them and to strengthen them. And the first thing he does in chapter 1, he reminds them of their great salvation.

So in chapter 1, verse 2 all the way down to 12, it's all about our salvation. He reminds them of how God chose them. I want you to notice it with me in verse 2. He says they were chosen by "the Father," they were sanctified by "the Spirit" and they are washed in "the blood of Jesus Christ." How great is that salvation! God the Father chose you, the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." God the Holy Spirit sanctified you or set you apart, and God the Son died on the cross and shed His blood so that you can be forgiven. That's how their salvation started.

And then Peter goes on to say, in verse 3, that you are born for "a living hope." And then, verse 5, that you are being "kept by the power of God." This salvation is so great that, in verse 10, that the prophets predicted it in the Old Testament. He said in verse 12 that the Apostles preached it, and then in verse 12, as well, the angels pondered it. So this great salvation, elected by God, sanctified by the Spirit, washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and that we're born for glory; we're being kept for glory. The prophets in the Old Testament—they prophesied about it. And the Apostles proclaimed it or preached it. And we read that even the angels ponder it; they look into your salvation. And they marvel and wonder how God can be so gracious and merciful to save sinners like us.

And beginning in chapter 1, verse 13, Peter called them and us to respond to this great salvation by living lives of holiness. And he gave them some incentives to living holy lives. I want to remind you of them. Verse 13, the incentive of the coming again of Jesus Christ. The Lord's coming again, therefore live holy, godly lives. And then in verse 14 to 16, the fact that

God is holy. God says, "Be ye holy, even as I am holy," says the Lord. And then in verse 17 of chapter 1, he reminded them that they are to pass the time in their sojourning here on earth with a reverential fear of God. So that's a motive for holiness: that we reverence God and fear God. And then in verse 18 to 21, bringing us up to our text, we have the redemptive work of Christ. And we looked at it last Sunday. Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. We're not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Now here's the change. Beginning in verse 22, Peter moves from holy living to holy loving. And I want you to note the command in verse 22. Peter said in verse 22, "Love one another." "Love one another." That's the theme of this passage, verse 22 to 25. Peter is saying this one thing: I want you, who are scattered and persecuted, that are marvelously saved by the blood of Jesus Christ—I want you believers to learn to love one another. And He's commanding us to do that.

Now interesting connection between holiness and love. And I'll try to be brief; I've been going too long on this all morning. And it is third service, I'm tired and hungry and you want to get going; right? There's so much in these verses that it's hard to not just get stuck in all the truths that are there. Holiness and love. Why does he go from holiness to love? I believe that the two are inseparable. I think to live in holiness is to love people. And to love people is to be holy. I think the essence of sin is selfishness. Satan is the first person recorded in the Bible that began to sin, as far as we know. "I will exalt myself above God. I will be like God. I will set my throne above God." The five "I wills" of Satan. Isaiah chapter 14. Right? "I will, I will, I will, I will." I don't know if that was five of them, but he had five of them. Five times I will, I will. The essence of sin is "I will." Not "Thy will" but "I will." Not "God, I want Your will. I want to glorify You," but "My will. I'll do this, and I don't care what anyone else says. I'll do this, and I don't care what God's will is. I'm going to do this. I don't care how it affects my marriage, my wife, my kids, the church. I will. I will. I will." That's the most unloving thing you could ever do.

And when you sin, you do not sin alone. Your sin affects others. If no one else you can think about, I'll tell you one that it does affect. It affects God. Amen? And it grieves God's heart. And it breaks the heart of God when we sin and we rebel against Him. Our sin affects others. I can't sin but what it breaks the heart of God. I can't sin but what it affects my wife. And if I love her, I don't want to sin and hurt her. I can't sin but what it affects my children, or it affects this congregation. And I don't want my sin to affect others. Why? Because I love them. So if I have the love of God in my heart, and I'm being a channel of God's love, I'm not going to want to do anything to hurt God or to hurt any other people. So I want to walk in holiness, because I have a heart of love. So the passage moves from holy living to holy loving.

Now Peter is giving us a command. In verse 22, "Love one another" is an imperative. That means it's commanding us to love. Now this is the thing you need to understand. We think of love as being an emotion. We think of love as simply being a feeling or a sentiment. And you cannot command that. If a guy walks up to a girl and says, "I command you to love me!" What's going to happen? Bam! She's going to hit him with her purse. Right? "I command you to bug off!"

You can't command someone to love you. But love is not just an emotion. And the reason God can command us to love is because the Greek word "love one another" in verse 22 is the Greek word "agape" or "agopa." Now that's not "eros," where we get our word "erotic," which is a self-centered love. That's not "phileho." That's in the passage, as well; I'll point it out in a minute. Brother---, star gay—it's not a family love. This is agopa, agape love. It's a love that is sacrificial. It's a love that's self denied. It's a love that gives. It's a love that seeks the highest good of the object loved.

How many times I've met with married couples. "I don't love her anymore." "Well, you could choose to love her. You could be obediently loving her. Because God commands you to love, even your enemies. If you consider her your enemy, you can love her." "Love your neighbor as yourself. Love your enemies. Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind." Love is not a passing emotion; it's a continual devotion. And trust me, as you get older in your marriage, the feelings aren't always there. After 30, 40 years of marriage, you don't wake up every morning saying, "I love you!" But you make a choice to love that person. You make a decision. It's a matter of the will to seek the highest good of the object loved. Not to think of yourself, but to think of others. Read Philippians, chapter 2. The mind of Christ. It's considering others more important than yourselves. It's considering other's interests more important than yours. And to humble yourself, and to become a servant to others. That's what it means to love them. So we're commanded, verse 22—there's our theme—to "love one another." We can't be right with God and at the same time, wrong with others. And he uses the Greek word "agape" or "agopa."

Now, I believe love is the birthmark of the Christian. John 13:34-35. Jesus says it like this: He says, "A new commandment I give unto you." Or literally in the Greek, it's a "renewed commandment I give unto you." It's not new as far as time; it's new in quality. It goes all the way back to the book of Leviticus where we are to love our neighbor as ourself. So it's not new in time; it's new in quality. He says, "A renewed commandment I give unto you..."—what?—"...that you love one another." There it is. So we get it from Peter's pen, and we get it from the lips of Jesus. "Love one another." Over and over through the New Testament, we have the "love one another." "Love one another." "Love one another." And then Jesus qualifies the kind of love that we're to have for one another: "As I have loved you." So He tells us what to do: love each other. And then He tells us how to do it: "As I have loved you." How did He love us? He gave Himself for us. He died on the cross for us. Amen? What could be a greater demonstration or display of the love of God than the cross of Jesus Christ? The cross is not only a work where He died for our sins, it's a word, where God is speaking and saying, "I love you." He displayed, He demonstrated His love. What a marvelous truth that is. So we are to love one another as He loves us.

And then He makes this statement—this is amazing. "By this shall all men know that you are..."—what?—"...my disciples." You guys are all going to get Fs on your lesson this morning. You're like, "Ooh." Shame on you. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples." That's the birthmark. Not a bumper sticker, not a haircut, it's not your clothes, it's not a cross around your neck. It's your love. You love the way Jesus loved. It's the birthmark of the believer.

Now, in the text, as we break this text down, it's going to answer four questions about the supernatural love that we are commanded to have. If you are taking notes, write them down. Questions number 1: When were we as believers enabled to love with God's agape love? When were we enabled to love with God's agape love? And the answer is verse 22. Look at it with me in your Bible. "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth." "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth." The New Living Translation renders that "You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth." Now Peter is talking about, I believe, our conversion or our salvation. I believe that Peter is saying that you have purified your souls, because notice the key words "obeyed the truth." The word "obeyed" is a synonym for "believed." The word is a synonym for "faith" or "trust." And the Bible uses those different words for when we trust in Jesus, believe in Jesus, receive Jesus, obeyed the gospel.

Now some people are confused when they read that statement in verse 22. "You have purified your souls." "Doesn't God purify us? How can we purify ourselves?" What's He saying here? Is He saying we can cleanse ourselves? No. What He's talking about is we surrendered in obedience, that we put our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ and God cleanses our soul. Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. You got that? That's why all praise, all glory, all honor goes to God. If you're saved, to Him be praise, to Him be glory and be honor. You can't take credit for it. But God's not going to drag you into heaven against your will. I believe you can resist God's grace. You can harden your heart against God. Now there's a mystery involved. The word of God convicts you, and God brings circumstances into your life and He draws you. But you can harden your heart, you can resist the work of God. If you're here this morning, you're not a Christian, God's convicting you of your sin and your need for Jesus. If you're hardening your heart against that, you're only forestalling the good work that God wants to do in your life. Open your heart. Let Jesus come in. Don't put it off any longer. But Peter is emphasizing the fact here that they obeyed. They trusted. They received. They put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Now notice he mentions in the very next verse—and we'll get there in a moment—that they were "born again..."—verse 23—"...not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever." Actually it's "having been born again." So I believe he first describes it in verse 22, that "you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." And that brought you the ability to love with an "unfeigned love." Then he exhorts them to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." And then he reminds them that they had been "born again." So he starts with regeneration, and he ends with regeneration. It brings you a new capacity. It brings to you an ability to love others.

You know, before I got converted and before I got saved—and that doesn't mean that I don't still struggle with it—all I thought about was me. I was 19. 19-year-olds think about themselves. That's all I want to do. "I want to do what I want to do, how I want to do it and nobody's going to tell me what to do." And then I get saved. I really love God. I want to serve God. And now I want to be used by God. "Now Lord, I want to be a blessing to others. And Lord, I don't want to go where I want to go and do what I want to do and say what I want to say. Lord, I want You to have Your way in my life." What a transformation happened!

And that's why it comes at the end of this passage. And we're just going to touch on it. And I want to back up into this passage next week as we go into chapter 2. Because when you were born again, something happened to you; you had a supernatural experience. You were given a new capacity and a new ability to love others. If you're here today, and you're not a Christian, Jesus can come into your heart, purify it and He can give you the ability to love Him and others. What a marvelous truth that is. So they received by faith.

When were we enabled to love others? When we were born again or when we purified our souls by obedience. In Romans 5:5—we got it Wednesday night in our study of the book of Romans. Paul says that when we were justified, “The love of God was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us.” Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit brings that ability and capacity to love others. God would never command you to love without giving you the power to do it. And in my King James Translation, notice in verse 22, it says, “through the Spirit.” Now some of the modern translations have omitted that because of the text that they draw from. But I believe that the Spirit comes to live inside of us, and He enables us to love others.

And then what does He produce? Galatians 5:22-23. It's called the “fruit of the Spirit.” Saw a bumper sticker once years ago. I love it. Only saw one; never saw it again. It says, “God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.” And that's cool. You know the greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life is fruit? It's not gifts. I believe in the gifts of the Spirit, and I'm all for the gifts of the Spirit, but the gifts must be operating in love. I can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I don't have love, I'm a “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” I give my body to be burned or feed the poor, if I don't have love, I am nothing; right? I Corinthians 13.

So the greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life is fruit. It's not gifts. Not how high you jump when the Spirit touches you in a service on Sunday morning. It's how straight you walk when you hit the ground. Anyone can get, “Oh, hallelujah, praise Jesus,” you know, and jump up and down in a meeting, but what about Monday morning; right? What about after the service today when you go to leave the parking lot and you're waiting in line to get out of the driveway? As a matter of fact, when that happens today, don't forget the sermon was on love; okay? “Love one another. Love one another. Praise God! Praise God!” You know the lines trying to get out of the parking lot, and you're “Okay, okay. Your sermon was on love. Love one another.” And we need to love one another. But that comes from the Spirit's fruit. I believe the Spirit brings love. And love's strength is joy, love's security is peace, love's endurance is patience, love's conduct is kindness, love's character is goodness, love's confidence is faithfulness, love's humility—I love this—is gentleness and love's victory is self-control. That's the fruit of the Spirit. It manifests in these different ways. In your marriage, in your family, in your church and on the job and at work. So, when were we enabled to love? When we believed in Jesus, our souls were purified. We received the Holy Spirit. We have the ability to love.

Let me ask the second question. The second question is, who are we to love? And I've already hinted at it, but it's in the text. Who are we to love? “The brethren.” You see that? Now that includes the “sistren” too; okay? We're to love the brethren and the “sistren.” As a matter of

fact, the word “love the brethren” there is one word in the Greek. It’s the Greek word “philadelphia,” which means “brotherly love.” It’s so that we love our fellow Christians. You know what the world was saying about the early Christians? They were saying, “Look at how they love each other!” Today I wonder if they don’t say, “Look how they fight with each other. Look how they bicker with each other. Look how they divide amongst each other.” The mark of the believer is love. And God help us to have love one for another. The context here is that we love the brothers and the sisters in the new family that we were born into, the family of God. True Christians actually love other Christians.

And before I became a Christian, I didn’t like Christians. They were creepy. I grew up in church. I grew up in church, but like, “These people are weird and they’re stupid and they’re dumb. I’m cool and they’re not and I want to go hang out with my cool friends,” and all that stuff. And I just thought they were weird; they smiled, they sang and they even looked clean; you know? Christians just creeped me out. And then I became one! I got saved. And I went to a little Pentecostal church. The youngest person in that church I first went to was about 69 years old. And I’m like 20, 21. I’m a hippy, you know. And I come to the church and, “Yes, God saved a hippy! God, you brought one to our church. Oh, hallelujah!” You know. But I fell in love with those people. Many of them are still dear friends to me. I didn’t care what their age was. I didn’t care what they looked like. I didn’t care about their social status or their education or the color of their skin. We were family. We were brothers and sisters in Christ. And that was way back before church was cool. I mean, you guys are privileged to be a part of this scene today where church is fun and exciting. And back then it was just like, you know, “Who goes to church? A bunch of weird old people.” I can say that because I’m old right now; okay? But what happened was I found out the things I used to hate, I now love. And the things that I used to love, I now hate. God’s changed my heart. You found that to be true in your life? When you come to know Jesus, He changes your heart, because He’s given you that new nature. So who are we to love? The brethren. And you might add “your neighbor as yourself.” And then you might add to that list also your enemies. I don’t like that. “Love your enemies.” It’s in the Bible.

But let’s ask the third question. It’s answered again in verse 22. How are we to love? When did we get the ability to love? When we were born again. Who are we to love? The brothers and sisters in Christ. How are we to love? I want you to notice in verse 22. Sincerely, sacrificially and fervently. Notice he says in the King James Bible—it says, “unfeigned love.” That is sincere love. The word “unfeigned,” verse 22, could be translated “without hypocrisy.” “Without hypocrisy.” Don’t be phony; be genuine, be real. Let your love be without hypocrisy. Now the time this was written in the Greek culture, they were big on theater. They were big on acting. And the Greek actors would actually use masks to portray a character. They had a mask on a little stick, and they could have two masks, in each hand. One stick with a little mask. And they come out on the stage and put this little mask over their face, and they’d speak from under their mask. And they could take that mask down, and they could put up another mask. And they would speak from under their mask, and they would act on the stage. They were known as “hupocrites.” And the word then became “hypocrites.” The word literally means to “speak from under,” because they would speak from under a mask.

The sad thing is that actors are fine on the stage or in Hollywood, but not in the church. And yet people will do that; they'll put on a Sunday-go-to-meetin' mask. Pull in the church parking lot, open the, you know, glove box of their car, find the mask for Sunday-morning service. "Okay, here it is." Put it on. It's got a Holy Ghost smile on it. "Hallelujah. Praise God! Isn't Jesus good? I love the Lord. Hallelujah. Praise Jesus!" They got that mask on. And then service is over, they take it off. Monday morning, they put on their heathen-go-to-work mask. Friday night, they put on their party mask. "It's Friday night! Party mask!" And it's like they're speaking from under. That's called "living in duplicity." You're living your life in different compartments. It depends on the day of the week and who you're with on who you are. There's no integrity. The opposite of duplicity is integrity. You're one; there's wholeness. There's not duplicity. There's no phony-baloney, so to speak. You're real; you're genuine. If there's anything God wants, He wants us to be sincere in our love one for another. Don't try to put on your love to serve selfish purposes.

Then secondly, notice in verse 22, we're to love sacrificially. Say, "Well, I don't see that in the text. Where do you get that?" In the Greek word "agape." Agape is a giving, sacrificial love. So if the Bible says love, or agape, one another, it means we are to love sacrificially. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He..."—did what?—"...gave." That's the word I'm looking for. God so loved He gave. Agape gives. What are you giving? I found that as I studied this passage the thing that really challenged me is, what am I doing to demonstrate God's love? What am I really giving? What am I really doing? What am I giving sacrificially?

I'm to love sincerely and sacrificially and then there's a third category for my love: I'm to love fervently. Notice verse 22, "with a pure heart," or could be rendered "wholeheartedly." Interesting word. The word literally means, physiologically—it means "to stretch a muscle to the furthest limits of its capacity." It means to stretch your muscles as far as they will go. Or if you're an athlete, and you're running a race, you're stretching and straining, you're giving it everything you've got. So if we were to rephrase the word, the word would mean "give it all you've got." "Put everything into it." So we're to love fervently. It means to do it with our whole heart. We're to go all out. We're to be full-on in our love. How important that is.

Turn with me real quickly to 1 Peter 4:8. Peter's not done telling us to have this kind of fervent love. He says, "Above all things have..."—here it is—"...fervent love among yourselves..."—why?—"...for love will cover a multitude of sins." Show hospitality, practically, to one another. Have this fervent love for one another.

Now go back with me to chapter 1. I would throw in as well—not from this text in Peter, but based on Ephesians 4:32—that we love forgivingly. Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." How can we say we love, if we're not willing to forgive one another?

And then we love practically. Practically. Remember John 13 when Jesus went into the upper room and before He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and crucified? And in John 13 it tells us that Jesus was there, about ready to have the Passover meal with His disciples. He

got up from the table, He took off His coat, and He went over and He took a towel, and He tied it around His waist. That was the badge of a slave. And He took the water in a basin and He got on His knees and He went and started doing what? Washing the disciples' feet. Judas' too, I might add. I'd told Judas, "Wash your own stinking feet!" As a matter of fact, I don't touch other people's feet. I don't do feet. I think they're creepy. I do think we have to serve each other, but I'm sorry; if you have a foot-washing ceremony, I'm not coming, because I don't touch other people's feet. But Jesus comes to the end of that episode, and He says to His disciples, "If I, your Lord and your Master, have washed your feet, what should you do?" Wash one another's feet. Not literally. You can do that if you want, but, you know, it's like me. "I don't wash any stinking feet. I ain't doing that!" You know, if it's not real, if it's not genuine. He's not actually instituting a foot-washing ceremony for the church. I think the only thing instituted for the church as far as ceremonies is concerned is baptism and the Lord's Supper. And we observe that. If you want to have a foot-washing ceremony, have fun. I don't touch feet.

But I do believe that Jesus is telling us—all of us universally—that we must roll up our sleeves, we must be willing to serve, to wash feet, to help out other people. If they need a meal, we cook a meal. If they need their lawn mowed, we mow their lawn. If they need a place to stay, they can stay at our house. If they're hungry, they need money—maybe God has blessed you with some extra money. Have you ever had that happen? Someone comes up. I've had this happen. "Pastor John, just pray. We need \$100, and we're just kind of down this month. We need a—Will you pray the Lord provide it?" And I'm like, "I can't believe this is happening to me!" You want to know why? Because I just got an unexpected \$100. And it's in my wallet right now. And they want me to pray they have \$100. So "Lord, just give them \$100 right now. Lord, just provide the money they need." And I can hear the Lord saying to me, "John, it's in your wallet." "No, it's not! Rebuke you, Devil! I bind you, Satan!" How many times it's like, "Aah, the money they need is in my wallet. I should have left my wallet home today." Aah, preachers don't get 100 bucks very often. And that's happened to me so many times. The Lord's saying, "John, you don't even need to pray right now. You can answer the prayer. Just give them the money." And I have to stop and go, "Look, no need to pray. The Lord just provided. Here's \$100."

Who're you sacrificing for? What love do you show? Let us "love in deed and in truth." John says if you see a brother or sister have a need, and you say, "God bless you. Be filled. Be warm. Be happy. See you at church next Sunday," and you leave them, and you don't take care of their need when you have the ability to meet that, how can you say the love of God dwells in you? You can't. God is not only light, so we walk in holiness; God is love, so we walk in love. And if we're born of God, and we're the children of God, our lives should be marked by that love: Practically, forgivingly, fervently, sacrificially. We ought to be loving and forgiving and helping others.

But there's one last and fourth question I want to ask. The answer is in verse 23 to 25. And, as I said, we'll look at it next Sunday. We'll just touch on it. But here's the question. Why should we love? And Peter comes back, in verse 23, to the answer. Because you have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides

for ever.” You have a new nature. You were born again. That’s why you should show love. You were born and given a new nature. And then he illustrates it in verse 24 by saying not the old nature, which is like “grass, and the glory of man as the flower” of the field. “The grass withers and the flower fails,” but it’s like the Word of God, which was the instrument that brought salvation. The Word of the Lord, which endures forever. So in verse 24, it’s an illustration of mankind in his corruptible state as a corruptible seed. And in verse 25, it’s an illustration of the living, active, incorruptible seed, the Word of God, that’s been placed in your heart, which gives you the capacity to believe. Notice he refers to the “word which was preached by the gospel unto you.” So I said all that to basically say, that in verse 23 to 25, Peter is saying you’ve been born again. You have a new nature. Now this new nature is spiritual. And it’s a spiritual birth. It’s not corruptible, verse 23. It is incorruptible, verse 23, “by the word of God.” So this change in their lives would not die, because it took place through God’s incorruptible Word.

You know, when you were born the first time—physically born the first time, it took two things. It took an egg and it took a seed. And the two came together, and there was conception. You know that when you were born the second time—your second birth, which is a spiritual birth—there were two things involved, the Spirit of God and the Word of God. No one is truly converted without the Spirit of God and the Word of God. It takes the seed of the Word of God, and it germinates in our heart and we’re born, and God gives us new life.

You see, when you are born again—this is going to sound super basic, but it’s actually super important and super profound—something actually happened to you. Too many times in Christianity, we get this idea that when I got saved, I accepted salvation. And since I accepted salvation, I can kind of give salvation back; I receive it, I just give it back. Well, that would be true if that’s all that happened. It’s not true, because something happened to you when you were born again. The theological term is “regenerated.” God gave you a new nature. You were born again. It’s like the incorruptible seed. Not the corruptible seed. And by the way, verse 24—he’s quoting from Isaiah 40:6-8. I believe this rebirth is instantaneous; it’s not a process. I believe this rebirth is irreversible. And I believe this new birth makes you a new creation in Christ. “Old things pass away, and all things become brand new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17. Right? “If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation.” Something happened to you; you were a new creation. “Old things pass away, all things become new.” And now that you’re a new creation, you have a new life, you have a new nature, you have a new hope—a living hope—and you have a new love. A supernatural love. God’s love, seen at the cross, proven at the cross, is now dwelling in you. The love of God poured into your heart. You have a new nature. You belong to a new family. You have a new hope. And you find that you now have the capacity to love.

How he opens with that, verse 22, and he comes back and he closes with that. The grass is like your first birth. It’s a picture of how temporal and transient and passing it is. It withers and fades away. But your second birth, your new birth, is eternal. It’ll never grow old, it’ll never wear out, it’ll never pass away. When you accept Jesus Christ, something actually happens to you. Now here’s my question. Has it happened to you? Have you been born again? Have you experienced that rebirth? Have you had a new nature? Do you have a new capacity to love?

Do you find that Jesus Christ is in your heart? Do you have the hope of heaven? Do you find you're loving people you never thought you'd love before? Hanging out with people you never thought you'd hang out with before? And if you come to church and you're uncomfortable, it may be you're not truly a Christian. "Oh, the singing's creepy. Oooh. Come on, preacher boy, get the sermon over with! I want to go home." I know; I've been there. I used to hang on to the pew. "Just a couple minutes, and it'll be over. Couple minutes, and it'll be over. I can go home and be a wicked, vile sinner again. Just get through the service. Don't open your heart." Oh, how I fought the Holy Spirit.

Have you been born again? And if you're here this morning, and you've never been born again, you've never received Jesus Christ as your Savior, I want to give you an opportunity right now. There's no reason for anyone to leave here without knowing that if you die, you'd go to heaven. There's no reason for anyone to leave here without knowing that your sins are forgiven and that you have eternal life, that you are a child of God. Jesus died on the cross, and He paid the full penalty for your sins. It's paid in full. But you must believe in Him. You must receive Him. You must obey Him. You must trust Him. And when you do, He'll purify your soul. And you'll find a new capacity to be able to love other people. He'll put a new song in your heart. He'll put new love in your heart. What a joy it is to know that when we die, we'll go to heaven. We have the hope of heaven, and we have heaven in our heart right now. But before we leave here this morning, I want to give you an opportunity. If you've never trusted Jesus Christ, to say, "Jesus, I want You to come into my heart. I want you to forgive my sins. I want to know that I'm a child of God. I want to know that if I die, I'm going to go to heaven." If that's your prayer and that's your desire, you can trust Him right now and be saved.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.