

Love One Another

1 Peter 1:22-25

Pastor John Miller

Let's read the text, 1 Peter 1:22. Peter says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren,"—here it is—"see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23 Being born again,"—in the Greek it would actually be, 'having been born again'—"not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Peter says, verse 24, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Peter is still writing to suffering saints. I just want to remind you of this. I don't want to get too bogged down in rehearsing what we've covered for the last three weeks, but Peter, verse 1, is writing to the saints which are scattered. That was the concept of the Jews being scattered in what's called the diaspora. These are most likely Jewish Christians who are being doubly persecuted for being Jewish and being believers, and they were living outside of the land of Israel, so they were scattered like seed, they were of the diaspora, so they were suffering. The first thing Peter does for them, and for us who suffer as we follow the Lord, is by reminding them of the glory of their true salvation. That ran from verses 2-12. We see in verse 2 that we are chosen by the Father, we are sanctified by the Spirit, and we are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. We spent a lot of time going in depth about our salvation—chosen, sanctified, and washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Peter 1:3, I'm just getting kind of a running start to verse 22, we were born, " . . . unto a lively hope," which is heaven. We are, " . . . kept by the power of God," so this is the hope of the believer, that we have heaven before us and the power of God surrounding us. Now, he breaks down this great salvation. In verse 10, the prophets predicted it; in verse 12, the apostle preached it and the angels pondered it. Then, beginning with verse 13, Peter calls them and us to respond to this great salvation by living lives of holy behavior. He wants us to live, in light of our salvation, a holy life. He gave them some incentives to keep them living in holiness. I'm still rehearsing, by the way, in verse 13 Jesus is coming again. Do you believe Jesus is coming back? I believe He's coming back. No matter what happens in the world around us, the stage is set for the coming of Jesus Christ, and it's going to get darker no matter what—the world will get darker, yet our hope shines brighter.

In verses 14-16, Peter gave us the fact that God is holy. We should live holy lives because Christ is coming back and holy lives because God is holy, he said, " . . . so be ye holy," also. In verse 17, we're to pass our days here on earth in our sojourning with a reverential fear or respect for God. Then, the redemption work of Christ, verses 18-21, is all motivation for us to follow in that righteous path.

Peter moves from holy living to holy loving. I want you to see it in verse 22, " . . . love one

another,” that is a command in the Greek. It’s an imperative, “ . . . love one another.” Our salvation brings us into the family of God and we are brothers and sisters and God is our Father and we should love one another, verse 22. Now, you can’t be right with God and at the same time wrong with others. This has especially great application in your marriage relationship. As we get to 1 Peter 3, he talks about, “ . . . husbands,” that we’re to “dwell with,” our wives, “according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life,” then he makes this amazing statement, husbands, “that your prayers be not hindered.” If you’re out of sync with your wife, and you’re not loving her the way you should, God will not answer your prayers.

It’s interesting, the Bible actually says one of the direct reasons God does not answer prayer is that we’re not showing love to others, and in that context, a husband loving his wife. You can’t be out of fellowship with a person and in fellowship with God. We have to have hearts that are showing love.

Peter is giving us a command in verse 22. It’s what’s called an imperative, so it’s not an option. You can’t say, “I’m a Christian, and I like to worship, I like to study the Bible, and I even like to pray and go to church, but I don’t like this ‘love’ stuff. I’m not one of those loving Christians.” That’s not going to work. It’s a command. It’s an imperative. Peter is giving us a command, and we must obey.

Now, how can he command us to love. Have you ever thought about that? That love cannot really be commanded, but in reality the word ‘love’ here is the Greek word *agapá* ⚭ When it that says there, “ . . . love one another,” it is the Greek word *agapá* ⚭ I want to make it clear, you’ve heard me say it before, but this is not a passing emotion. This is not a feeling. You can’t command someone to have the feeling of love. If you ladies had a guy come up to you and say, “I command you to love me.” What would you do? You’d smack him with your purse, probably, “Get outta here.” You can’t command someone to love you. So, how is it that in the Bible here that Peter commands us to love? As I said, it’s the word *agapá* ⚭ It’s not a feeling.

I love what Warren Wiersbe said. He said, “Love is not a passing emotion, it’s a continual devotion,” and behind that devotion is a purposeful decision to show love to that person. What it means is that you seek the highest good of the object loved. You may not feel the emotion of love, but what you do is you love them seeking their highest good. You *agapá* ⚭ them. It’s a matter of the will, thus it can be commanded. It carries the sense of urgency in the very phrase that we should let our love operate in its fullness, that we should make that a priority of our Christian lives that we love, and we’ll break it down, the brethren. Peter wants the believers to let God’s love flow through them to others in the family of God and even beyond the church to people outside the church. Love is the birthmark of the true believer.

I want you to write this down, John 13:34-35. Jesus speaking said, “A new commandment I give unto you,” now it’s only new in its depth or its character, it’s not new in chronological order, even back in the book of Leviticus God said, “Love your enemies,” but he said, “I want to give you a renewed commandment, a new dimension of love. I want to give unto you this new

commandment,” and he says, “That ye love one another,” exact same statement we read here in Peter’s epistle, “. . . love one another,” and then he qualifies it, “as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Then he said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” He said, “This would be the birthmark of the believer,” not a cross around your neck, not a Revival bumper sticker on your car, not a Christian haircut, not Christian clothes, but the love that you show will be the mark of the believer. This is actually a birthmark of the believer. If you read John’s first epistle, the apostle of love, how can we say we love God but we’ve never seen Him, but we don’t love our brothers or sisters who we have seen? How can you say the love of God dwells in you if you say to your brother, ‘Eat, drink, and be warm,’ but you don’t give them the things that they need? You’re not demonstrating or showing love. So, it is the birthmark of the true believer.

What I want to do in this text, and we won’t be long, is I want to ask and answer four questions. Now, if you’re taking notes, I want you to write them down—four questions about this supernatural love that we are commanded to have. The first question is, when were we as believers given the ability to love the brethren or to have this agape love? The answer is in verse 22. Notice he says, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth,” basically what he’s saying there is that you have been born again, you have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and that’s what constitutes being a Christian, and that thus gives you the capacity, the ability, to be able to love the brethren.

You know before you’re a Christian, you don’t necessarily love Christians. I grew up in the church, and I mentioned Sunday that I was a prodigal for a few years during my high school, teenage years. For a while there I even stopped going to church. My parents didn’t force me to go to church. I didn’t go to church. Whenever I would go to church, you know, the Christians, they were weird. Of course, they weren’t, I was weird. I thought I was cool and they were weird, and I couldn’t relate, so I didn’t want to be at church. They even looked clean. They smiled and said, “Praise the Lord,” and things like that. They were just funny-looking. But when I got born again, and we’re going to break it down in this passage, I found out that I actually loved Christians, and I was just become a part of them. The things I used to hate, I now love; and the things I used to love, I now hate. That’s what he’s describing, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.” The New Living Translation has, “You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth.”

Peter is talking about our conversion. Remember he’s talking about the glories of our salvation. He’s talking here about the moment you were born again that you were saved, that you were regenerated, and those are all kind of synonymous terms to describe the beginning of your Christian life, that you were given an ability and the capacity to love. But why did Peter say, “. . . ye have purified your souls,” doesn’t God purify our souls? The answer is yes. He uses this figure of speech to describe that we put our faith in Christ—we believed, we repented and trusted Christ, and we were born again—but it’s God who purifies, it’s God who justifies, it’s God who saves us.

I believe that salvation is of the Lord. You cannot do anything to save yourself. Even your faith

is not a work. When you believe in Jesus Christ and you trust in Jesus Christ, you don't get an award button, you have nothing to boast about. That's like someone drowning in the ocean and they're going under for the last time, and the lifeguard charges in and rescues them, pulls them up on the beach, and when they get on the beach they start strutting around like, "Did you see me save myself?" You're thinking, Dude, you're crazy. I just saw you drowning. The lifeguard saved you.

I've seen big, strong guys come out of the ocean who had to be rescued by the lifeguard so embarrassed that they wanted to hide when they came up on the beach, "I can't believe I had to be rescued by a lifeguard." They're humbled. That's what salvation is. We don't strut around like, "Man, did you see me let that lifeguard save me? Aren't I awesome?" No, you were drowning and God came and rescued you. Amen? It's totally of the Lord. Salvation is all of grace, but don't let that throw you for a curve to forget the fact that we still can resist God's grace, we can say, "No," to God's Spirit; so we must believe, we must receive, we must trust in Jesus. That's why he uses the expression of " . . . obeying the truth." That phrase would be synonymous saying, "Believed in Christ," or "Received Christ," or "Trusted Christ." He substitutes faith for " . . . obeying the truth." Now, when you did that, again, this is how you were saved or regenerated, so Peter is talking about our conversion at the moment of our salvation.

Just a little footnote, and I don't want to again get sidetracked. I don't believe that faith is something that you have because God gave it to you by regenerating you in order for you to believe. I don't believe that regeneration, and that's the theological technical term for being saved, happens before faith. I believe that it happens the moment of faith, and it's a mystery and it's something we can't fully comprehend, but you believe in Jesus Christ, and the moment you do, God regenerates you. I hear over and over and over again people, even pastors, and some that I respect, quoting Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest any man should boast." Then, they go back into the text and say that faith is the gift of God. That's not what the passage is saying.

Salvation is the gift from God, " . . . by grace you have been saved,"—it came—"through faith,"—but it's—"not of yourselves," that is, salvation is not of yourself, not your faith. It's a gift. What is a gift? Salvation, not your faith. But, again, there's a mystery there involved, and I just wanted to share that with you. Some of you serious Bible students will perhaps understand why I'm emphasizing that in that is that I don't believe that regeneration precedes faith, I believe it happens the moment of faith; and that's what he's describing in verse 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth," you were saved, you were forgiven, you were washed in the blood, you were regenerated, you were born again, as he's going to actually say at verse 23, the moment you obeyed the truth or put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. So, God purifies, but we obey. It's so very important. We must exercise faith in obeying the truth, and when we do, we receive cleansing, we are forgiven, and verse 23, we are born again. So, when we are saved, we are now enabled to love.

I don't know about you, but before I got saved I lived for me. I did what I want to, when I want,

how I want. It was all about me. I didn't care about anyone else. I was living in sin and selfish. By the way, sin, in its essence, is selfishness. It's rebelling against God, it does damage to you and others, and you're not thinking of anyone else.

Write down Romans 5:5. It says that when we were justified, same idea, “. . . the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts”—poured into our hearts—“by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” The moment you were saved, justified, God poured His Spirit into your heart bringing you the capacity to now love others. Christians have the power to love because Christians have the Holy Spirit. God would never command you to love without giving you the power to do it, so it's actually through the Spirit.

Look at verse 22, and notice that phrase, “. . . through the Spirit,” so we have reference to the Word of God to being born again and the Holy Spirit all working together to bring us the love of the Spirit, which, by the way, is the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

Years ago I ran into this breakdown of those phrases as we look at the love which comes from the Spirit and the idea that the fruit of the Spirit is singular, it's love. But love is the security of love, it's love's peace; and then endurance is love's patience; kindness is love's conduct; goodness is love's character; faithfulness is love's confidence; gentleness is love's humility; self-control is love's victory. Again, maybe I have the marriage retreat on my mind for this weekend. Wouldn't you love to have that stuff in your marriage? Wouldn't it be great if that described your marriage? So, yield to the Holy Spirit. Let Him fill you and produce the fruit of His Spirit in your life, which is love.

Here's question two, who are we to love? Glad you asked the question. It's in verse 22, “. . . the brethren.” This, by the way, would include the sistren, okay? The brethren means the brothers and sisters, the believers in the family of God. Now we have an interesting Greek phrase, “. . . love of the brethren,” and it's the Greek phrase *philadelphía* which means to love the brethren. So, we're to love the brethren. It's Christian fellowship, loving the believers.

In the early church they were amazed as the world looked on them. They said, “See how they love one another.” It's a witness to the world. True Christians love other Christians. They want to be with other Christians. You know, if you're a Christian, and you don't have any desire to be with Christians or to be in fellowship with Christians, then I doubt you're really a Christian. If you're really a child of God, you want to be with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

When Covid hit years ago and people stayed home and didn't come back to church, there are still people today watching church online and haven't come back to fellowship. That breaks my heart. The Bible says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.” How do you, “. . . love one another,” if there's no “others” to love? “Man, I'm an awesome Christian. I'm a dynamic Christian. I'm a powerful Christian. I'm a mature Christian. I don't know any other Christians, I don't get around Christians, I don't like Christians, but I'm one. I'm really a loving Christian even though there is no one around me to love.” It doesn't

make sense, so we need to love the brethren, philadelphía. It's so very important. It's a witness to the watching world. True Christians love other Christians. We're also to love our neighbor as ourself and love your enemies.

I've had husbands or wives say, "I just can't love my wife," or "I can't love my husband." The Bible says you are to love your enemies. If you can love your enemies, you can love your spouse, right? It's so very important.

Here's question three, how are we to love? Verse 22. The first mark of Christian love is sincerely. There are five characteristics I want to give to you of love. It should be sincere. Now, my King James Bible has "unfeigned love," verse 22. That word "unfeigned" means without hypocrisy. It means there's no phoniness. It's genuine. It's authentic. It's real. You know, the word "hypocrite" comes from a Greek word *hupōkritō*. The word literally means to speak from under, and it came from the Greek stage where the actors held a little stick with a mask on it. They would play role by holding the mask over their face and they could pull that one down and put another mask over their face and play another role. They would put a mask over their face and speak from under the mask. They were called *hupōkritōi*. We call them actors. Acting is okay in Hollywood but not in the church. It's to be genuine. It's to be authentic. It's to be real. We don't want to put on a show.

Sometimes when you come to church, you park your car in the parking lot perhaps. You reach over and get out of the glovebox your Sunday morning, "It's church go to meet'n" mask, and you put it on. It's kind of (big smile), "Hey, praise God! Jesus is good, isn't He? Hallelujah!" (with a southern drawl) It's my Sunday morning, "I'm at church" mask. Then, when you get back out in the parking lot, you take it off and put it in, and you put your "heathen" mask back on. You honk at people, yell at people, scream at people, and then you put your Monday morning, "go to work" mask on. All that is supposed to be gone. Amen? No hypocrisy. Love sincerely. Be authentic and genuine. It doesn't use other people, it serves other people.

The second characteristic is to be sacrificial love—sincere love and sacrificial love. The Greek word *agapáō* has the idea of sacrificially giving yourself to others. John 3:16, "For God so"—agaped—"the world, that he gave"—a great communion verse. He sacrificially gave, so we're to be sincere and sacrificially giving in our love. "Husbands," Ephesians 5:25, are to, "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," that is, the church. Jesus said in John 13:34, ". . . as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In Philippians 2, the same attitude that was found in Christ is to be in us, that we serve others.

The third characteristic of this agape love is we are to love fervently. It says in verse 22, ". . . with a pure heart," or wholeheartedly. So, it's sincere, it's authentic, and it's to be wholehearted, not halfhearted. It's so very important. He uses the same word and exhorts us to love in 1 Peter 4:8.

Fourthly, write it down, we are to love one another forgivingly. This is not in my text, but I couldn't help but include it. It's found in Ephesians 4:32 where Paul says, "And be ye kind one

to another . . . forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," another great marriage verse. "And be ye kind . . . forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

If we're going to take the Lord's supper tonight, guess what? You're going to have to forgive people who sinned against you. How can you take the bread and partake? How can you take the cup and drink, the picture of Christ's sacrificial love on the cross and His forgiving you, and yet you will not forgive someone else. This is one of the reasons why this is an ordinance of the church because when we gather to have communion, it forces us to come to the foot of the cross and be forgiven and to stay at the foot of the cross to be forgiving toward others. If you're here tonight as a married couple, that's to be commendable. Husbands and wives, you need to forgive as Christ has forgiven you. You need to be kind. You need to be tenderhearted, forgiving one another. If you're going to partake of the Lord's supper, you have to forgive those who have sinned against you, if you expect God to forgive you.

Fifthly, practically we are to show love. John 13:1, ". . . when Jesus knew that his hour was come . . . He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself," the badge of a slave. He got on His knees, ". . . and began to wash the disciples' feet." I don't know about you, but I don't want to touch anybody's feet. Feet are kind of gross. If you have a foot-washing ceremony, I'm not coming because I'm not going to touch your feet. But I think what he's saying here is that we should serve others. He's not saying we literally have to wash their feet, but he's saying that we should serve other people. We should have a servant's heart. Jesus put the towel around His waist, it was the badge of the lowest servant. The lowest servant in the household had the towel around his loins, and he would wash the feet of those who came into the house. He even washed Judas' feet. Think about that love. I would never have done that. I would've said, "Wash your own feet, you traitor." But He showed that love, serving others. In Luke, we'll get the story of the good Samaritan who showed love.

What do you do to show your love for others in a practical, tangible way? Here's the fourth, and the question is, why should we love? Verses 23-25, now you say, "Well, if you spent that much time on verse 22, we'll never get out of here tonight." There's one thing we're going to focus on from verses 23-25, and that's why we should love. The answer is because we have been born again. We have a new nature.

What does it mean to be born again? What's the new birth? Write these down. It's a spiritual birth. Notice in verse 23 he says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed,"—this is speaking about our physical birth and the seed was corruptible, but we were born again in God's family of a seed that's incorruptible, "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24 For all flesh is as grass"—that's corruptible—"and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord"—which actually is the instrument of the seed that brings regeneration—"endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

What is the new birth? It's a spiritual birth. It's not "corruptible seed" which is our human birth,

but the contrast is it's, "incorruptible,"—seed—"by the word of God." So, the second birth has two parents like the first physical birth—the Spirit of God and the Word of God. You've heard me say this before, it's so important, you cannot be born again, you cannot be regenerated apart from the Spirit of God and the Word of God. God uses His Spirit through His Word to bring about regeneration. He's contrasting our physical birth, which is a "corruptible seed"... and, by the way, "corruptible seed," the physical life that it produces, has the same quality as the seed from which it sprang. If the seed is corruptible, and we're produced by that seed, then our bodies are corruptible, they're like grass that withers and dies and falls away.

But our rebirth, this is a contrast between our physical birth and our rebirth, our spiritual rebirth, when we were born again, verse 22 as we opened up the passage, is "incorruptible seed." It's the Spirit of God and the Word of God, so it's an incorruptible life that will never fade or never pass away.

John 3:6, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," so the contrast, verse 24, notice it's corruptible seed, and he's quoting from Isaiah 40:6-8. So, Isaiah is quoted in verse 24 of our text, "For all flesh is as grass,"—that's describing your physical body—"and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away;" but your second birth, your spiritual birth, your regeneration by the Holy Spirit through the Word is enduring forever. It's incorruptible. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever," why? Because it's "incorruptible seed." It endures forever. "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." What a contrast between our spiritual birth and our physical birth.

The spiritual birth is instantaneous. You know, when you were born again, it didn't take six weeks or three hours, you were born immediately, regenerated, given new life. You don't try to become a Christian, you get saved and you're born and you are given new life immediately. By the way, the term "regenerate" means to be given new life.

I also believe that it's irreversible. It's a supernatural event—the Spirit of God using the Word of God which endures forever—so your spiritual rebirth cannot be reversed or taken away or changed. Again, I don't want to get sidetracked, but I'm convinced that if you're born again, if you have been regenerated, if you have been saved, you can never be unsaved. You can be carnal, you can lose reward, you can be living in the flesh, but God alone—listen to me very carefully—God alone can give you new life.

When you got saved, you just didn't receive a gift of salvation, something actually happened to you. You were given a new nature. You were given a new life. Nothing that you can do can change that. It's the Word of the Lord that endures forever. It's eternal by God's work. You can't unregenerate yourself—you can't regenerate yourself; you can't unregenerate yourself. Some people say, "Well, you can just give your salvation back." I don't know how you give back regeneration. How do you unregenerate yourself—take yourself out of Christ and put yourself back into Adam. There's no way biblically speaking you can do that.

Underneath this passage is this implication here, it's the eternal Word, the eternal Spirit of God using the Word of God, and it's something that does not corrupt. It's "incorruptible seed," verse 23, by which you were born again and regenerated. So, you become a new creation in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and you're in Christ, you're a new creation. You have a new hope, and you have a new love. It's a supernatural love, and the love of God, as I read in Romans 5:5, is poured into your heart by the Holy Spirit, and God's love is seen at the cross. God proved His love for us, " . . . in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

As we break the bread tonight, and we drink the cup, it's a reminder of God's sacrificial love for us by which we are born again by incorruptible seed, " . . . which liveth and abideth for ever." Let's pray.