

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Loving the Brethren 1 Peter 1:22-25 Part One

Hopefully everyone of you are seriously considering how you can positively impact your community for Christ. This morning we will be sharing with you the word of God one of the most powerful witnesses that we can bear to world around us of the genuineness of our faith.

In VV. 1-12 of First Peter we considered the greatness of our salvation. Beginning in V. 13 we have begun to consider how we are to respond to our salvation. In VV. 13-21 we saw how we should respond to God in light of our salvation. We are to fix our hope on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, we are as obedient children live obedient lives, and we are to lives in reverential fear.

But we are now transitioning again and this morning we will be considering a proper response to others in light of our salvation. And what is that proper response? Let us read **1 Peter 1:22-25**. The proper response to our salvation in respect to others is to “love one another.”

The verb “to love” is the Greek verb AGAPAO. It is an unconditional love. Not the love of feeling but rather the love of choice. It is a love that is able to respond to command. It is with this kind of love that we are to love one another. OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS WE WILL BE SEEKING TO ANSWER SOME VERY BASIC QUESTIONS CONCERNING THIS KIND OF LOVE BASED ON THE TEXT THAT WE HAVE READ. THE VERY FIRST QUESTION WE WANT TO ASK IS

WHEN WERE WE ABLE TO LOVE IN THIS WAY?

Have we always been able to love in this way? This may seem like a dumb question, but the fact of the matter is that before we were redeemed by Christ and bought back from the bondage of sin we were incapable of love as we have defined it.

What does the Bible tell us is in the heart of man? What does **Jer. 17:9** say, “**The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.....**” How sick were we? Consider the Lord’s description of the condition of mankind in **Romans 3:10-18** “**there is none righteous, not even one; (11) there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; (12) all have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, there is not even one.” (13) Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips; (14) Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (15) Their feet are swift to shed blood, (16) Destruction and misery are in their paths (17) and the path of peace they have not known (18) there is no fear of God before their eyes.” Does this sound as if we are able to love with the love of choice based in command? Of course not. When push would come to shove we would serve our lusts and our pleasures.**

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If you don't think that is true of every individual person that was ever born into this world you are in contradiction with what the Bible teaches. Don't deceive yourself into believing the lie that man is good. Or you are good. Or I am good. This is not the truth. The truth is that our heart is sick.

This very pitiful human condition does not have to remain this way. The readers Paul is addressing have come to the place in their lives where they have a capacity to love by choice in response to command. How was this possible?

Look at V. 22 **“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love”** They had purified themselves. When had these readers done this? Look at V. 23 **“For you have been born again.”** It appears that the time of their purification corresponds to their new birth. Both of these events are clearly identified as being in the past in terms of the readers experience and I believe they in fact are describing the same event OUR SALVATION. Let us look more closely at purification.

The word “purified” is in the active voice. The readers themselves are seen as involved in their purification. This could be very confusing for us. It might lead us to believe that they were directly involved in the purging and this would be inaccurate.

The purification of our souls is in fact the work of God. In **Heb. 1:1-3** the author says the following, **“God after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, (2) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (3) And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”** It is Jesus who is alone responsible for our purification.

Then why does it say you have purified your soul? Though the purification that occurs at salvation is all the work of God it is never apart from the will of the sinner. We repeatedly see the Scriptures calling for the lost to take an active part in their salvation by responding to an invitation. In **Isaiah 55:6,7** Isaiah cries out to the people and says, **“Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. (7) Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”** We are not saved against our desire. We are not washed against our desire. We are not purified against our desire. God the Spirit moves on our desire and upon our will so that we will come to the Lord willingly to be saved, to be washed, to be purified. God had moved on the desires of these readers sometime in their past in such a way that they came to the Lord for purification. They had purified themselves by submitting themselves to purification!!! In other words they were not directly involved in their purification but rather only indirectly involved. (* God is directly responsible and the believer is only indirectly responsible).

If we have in fact been purified why do we still sin? BECAUSE PURIFICATION IS A PROCESS. Hopefully many of you are familiar with the story of Christ washing the disciples feet in **John 13**. When Jesus came to Peter the passage tells us that Peter said, **“Lord, do you wash my feet?”**

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Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.” (8) Peter said to Him. “Never shall you wash my feet! Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” (9) Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” (10) Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean.....” When we come to Christ by faith, trusting in him as our Lord and savior we are born again Christ purifies us and we become perfectly clean. But even though we have been completely washed and are given a new capacity to love it does not mean that we will not get our feet dirty or in other words that are expectation would be that we would no longer sin. We will sin. But when we do so again the blood of Jesus Christ will be applied to us so that we might again be fully clean. At salvation there was a total washing, but there is a continuing need to have our feet washed. This is why **1John 1:7** says, “**But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin.**” (* Purification begins with a once for all washing and continues with periodic cleansings).

WHAT IS THE CATALYST FOR THIS PURIFICATION? THIS TOTAL WASHING WITH ITS SUBSEQUENT CLEANSINGS. Let us look again at **V. 22** “**Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls ...**” The catalyst for this purification was “obedience to the truth.” This might be surprising for us who are familiar with the Scriptures. What would we have more likely expected? I believe that what we might have expected to see as the catalyst would have been “faith.” Isn’t this what the Scriptures repeatedly identify as that which leads to salvation. But what we need to understand is the fact that “obedience to the truth” is “faith.” Faith is not simply mental assent to the gospel. It is in fact active obedience. Jesus on the basis of His person and His work is extending an invitation to come to Him to be purified from our sins. If we respond to this invitation obediently we will place our trust in Him as Savior and we will place our trust in Him as our Lord. And as we do this we will in fact be saved. We will in fact be purified from our sins. We will be given a new capacity to love. With a “sincere” love. A real genuine love . Not hypocritical or fake.

So let us again ask the first question. WHEN DID WE BECOME ABLE TO LOVE? WE BECAME ABLE TO LOVE WHEN WE PURIFIED OUR SOULS OR IN OTHER WORDS WHEN WE WERE SAVED. The next question we want to ask is:

WHO ARE WE TO LOVE?

Certainly we are to love everyone. The Scriptures clearly teaches us that, however this is not the focus in this passage. Look at **V.22** again “**Since you have in obedience to the truth (the gospel) purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren.**” The focus of our love in the context of this passage is the “brethren.”

When we were saved God did not only give us a new love to express but also a new family to express it too. And that is the church.

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We are family. We are family because having been joined to Christ we have the same Father and we are all sons. This is why we are able to call one another “brother” and “sister.”

Our love for one another is to exceed even our love for our earthly families. There is a very interesting story that we find in **Matt. 12:46-50** that brings this point home. **“While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. (47) And someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers and standing outside seeking to speak to you.”(48) But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”** (Or in other words who are those who are really close to me?) **(49) And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold, My mother and My brothers!” (50) “For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”**

If the love for the brethren is this significant then it would seem that when push would come to shove in respect to who we would serve it would seem that we would serve the brethren before the world if it actually boiled down to a choice and this is exactly what we see in the Scriptures. In **Gal. 6:10** **“So then, while we have opportunity let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”** (Or in other words the brethren) Another very graphic illustration of how our love for the brethren will take precedent over our love for those who are not brethren in Christ is found in **1 Cor. 10**.

I would like to give a little background to this passage before I read for you the verses. In the time in which Paul is writing, meat sacrifices were being offered in pagan temples. Some of the sacrifices were consumed on these pagan altars but not all of it. The meat that had been offered which was not consumed would then be sold. The question of whether or not a Christian had the freedom to eat meat sacrificed to pagan idols was a very hot issue in the time of Paul. So now let me read to **VV.23-29** **“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. (24) Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. Paul having said this now applies it.” (25) Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience sake; (26) for the earth is the Lord’s and all it contains.** (In other words you are free to eat the meat so don’t make it an issue. Paul goes on and builds on this basic truth) **(27)“If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience sake.”** (Again we see the same application as we saw in **V. 26** you are free to eat the meat so don’t make it an issue. **BUT NOW PAUL CHANGES THE EQUATION. (28) “But if anyone should say to you, “This is meat sacrificed to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience sake.”** Who would be the person would make a statement like the one we just read. It would most likely be made by someone who had a struggle with eating meat sacrificed to idols. And who would that person be? It most likely be a relatively new believer who would not understand there new freedoms in Christ. And who are you to defer to in this situation. The unbelieving host or to the struggling brother. We are yield to the struggling brother.

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Someone might however say if in fact we live our lives in this way giving preference to brothers in Christ over and against the unbelieving world. We might think that this would be a turn-off to the unbelieving community. That somehow all this would damage our testimony. This just is not so!!! In fact it only enhances our testimony before the world. **John 13:35 “By this shall all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**

CONCLUSION

When we come to Christ we are purified and the natural result of that is a sincere love..... a sincere love of the brethren. A love of choice based on command.

How are you loving the brethren? Do you seek them out, do you share yourself and your resources with them out of a heart of deep affection. Are you willing to make sacrifices for them? Is the love you are expressing to the brethren so dynamic that the world is able to see it and know that you are a disciple of Christ and a member of His family?