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

If we are going to be seen as genuinely Christian it will be largely determined by our love of the brethren. **John 13:34-35** says, **‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another, (35) By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’** There are those who would like to think of themselves as Christian, but who have little interest in giving themselves in service to other professing believers, have little interest in sharing their resources with other professing believers, have very little interest in spending time with other professing believers.

In fact there are some professing Christians who find the company of the unsaved world more preferable. This is not the way it should be. This is not acceptable behavior for a truly born again believer. Let us read **1 Peter 1:22-25** **“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, (23) for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. (24) For, all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off (25) But the word of the Lord abides forever,” And this is the word which was preached to you.”**

Clearly the emphasis of this passage is bound up in the phrase “love one another.” Everything else in the passage supports this principle. The word translated “love” is the greek word “AGAPAO.” It is an unconditional love. A love of choice, which can be based in command. In light of greatness of our salvation we are to love one another with this kind of Love.

In order to help us understand this privilege and responsibility to love in this way we have been asking several different questions.

When did we become capable of this kind of Love? We became capable of this kind of love when we purified our souls or in other words when we were born again. Who are we to love? In the context of this passage we are to love the brethren with kind of love fervently from the heart.

This morning we want to go further in our study and ask several more questions.

HOW ARE WE TO LOVE?

In **Luke 10:27**, Jesus shared with a certain Jewish lawyer two very basic commands. The first command was **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.....”** Then Jesus shared the second command, **“(You shall love) your neighbor as yourself.”** Making sure that this Jewish lawyer did not misunderstand his words Jesus went on to share the parable of the “Good Samaritan.” In this particular parable a certain man had been mugged by some robbers, stripped of his clothes and left by the roadside near death. A Jewish priest passing by and seeing the man crossed to the other side of the road and went on his way not wanting to be bothered. After this a Levite did the very same thing.

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But after this came a despised Samaritan. But this despised Samaritan had compassion on this man and he ministered to him as he himself would have wanted to have been ministered to.

Wouldn't we all agree that this standard of measure is very difficult to achieve in respect to our neighbors, or in other words those people who God sovereignly brings into our lives. It is not an easy thing to take the time and expend the energy to treat them with this level of care. But if you think this standard it difficult to obtain in respect to our neighbor consider for a moment the standard that should govern our love for the brethren.

Let us go again to **V. 22** **“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.”** We are to fervently love and we are to fervently love from the heart.

(1) First of all we see that we are to, **“fervently love.”** This same thought is repeated in **1 Pet. 4:8** **“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.....”** Anytime we see an author repeating a thought we are alerted to the importance of what he is trying to say.

The word translated “fervent” is the Greek word “EKTENOS.” It literally means “strained or stretched.” This is a very graphic word. Metaphorically it means to go all out, to stretch out as far as we can reach.

We find this word used in **Luke 22:44** to describe the effort Jesus expended in prayer. Most of you are very familiar with this particular incident. Jesus had entered into the Garden of Gethsemane to prepare himself for the cross through prayer and it says, **“And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.”** Now this is “fervent” (EKTENOS) praying. He was extremely extended or stretched out in this matter of praying. There was no more that he could give of himself to this effort.

This is the standard that is set for us by Peter in this passage. It is not simply putting before us the standard of loving as we would love ourselves. But it is a standard of love that goes beyond, even to the point of fervency. Stretching out as far as we can reach and continuing to stretch.

I believe that we see a glimpse of this kind of fervent love in the very earliest days of the early church. In **Acts 2:43-45** it says, **“And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. (44) And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; (45) and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”** Certainly the early church was seeking to love their neighbors but they were going to extraordinary lengths in order to meet the needs of the brethren. They were stretching themselves. In other words they were loving each other “fervently.”

This is how I want to love you. Hopefully this is how you would want to love me. Hopefully this is how we want to love each other. This is a powerful witness to the power of the gospel. But this expression of fervent love should not be forced. Not only are we to love the brethren fervently, but we are to love them from the heart.

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2) “..... **from the heart.**” The expression of this kind of love should not be done grudgingly, but rather from the heart or in other words willingly. It is a wonderful thing to want to give of ourselves sacrificially for the welfare and benefit of others without regret.

It is not a good thing for us to express “love” for the brethren if we are grumbling in our spirit. This is not honoring the Lord and it has no eternal value in and of itself because the effort is in the strength of our own flesh and not in the power of the Spirit of God. These kinds of grudging acts done in the flesh will simply be burned up in the judgment of our works.

When are we able to love? When we purify our souls or in other words when we are saved. Who are we to love? We are to love, in the context of this passage, “the brethren.” How are we to love the brethren? We are to love the brethren “fervently from the heart.”

WHY ARE WE TO LOVE LIKE THIS?

Let us look at **V. 23** “**For you have been born again.....**” To love the brethren fervently from the heart is consistent with our new birth.

1 John 3:14 says “**We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.**” Isn’t this clear? When we pass out of death and into life and have established a personal relationship with God through Christ we will as a by-product of this transformation love the brethren. It is such a natural consequence of our new birth it becomes a mark of the Christian . It becomes a way by which we can examine ourselves to see whether or not we truly are a part of God’s family.

1 John 5:1 explains for us to some degree why this is so. “**Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.**” Every grandparent will understand perfectly the truth of what I have just read. Because they love their child they will quite naturally love the child of their child. If we love the father we will love His children. It is just natural.

When we place our faith and trust in Christ and our joined to Him we are born again. We become a child of God and because we love the Father we will love in a very special way all our other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Notice how this birth was accomplished. It was accomplished through an imperishable seed. Let us again look at **V. 23** “**for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable....**” And what exactly is this imperishable seed? “..... **it is through the living and abiding word of God.**” The imperishable seed is God’s Word. More specifically it would be the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ for the Scriptures clearly teaches us that it is through the gospel that we are born again or in other words saved. Paul tells us in **Rom. 1:17** “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**”

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And what exactly is the gospel? The gospel or good news is simply this: that God was so moved by our desperate condition that he sent His Son Jesus into this world in order to die for sins. After being resurrected He ascended to the right hand of the throne of God and is offering to anyone who would place their faith and trust in Him the gift of life. This is the truth. **THIS IS THE LIVING AND ABIDING WORD OF GOD AND IT IS THROUGH THIS IMPERISHABLE SEED THAT WE ARE BORN AGAIN.**

The gospel is living and it is enduring. The gospel that brought life to Paul is the same gospel that has brought life to me. and it is the same gospel that will bring life to anyone who places their faith in Christ. We may come and go but God's word and it's power to accomplish the purposes for which it has been sent will continue on.

In order to drive this point home even further Paul quotes from **Isaiah 40:6-8**. Let us read **VV. 24-25** **“For, All flesh is like grass, and all it's glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off (25) But the word of the Lord abides forever.”** All that is of the flesh dies whether it is common such as grass or spectacular such as the flowers. Generations of people come and generations of people go. This is true of all of mankind whether they are “special” or not. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. The dust of Caesar is no more regal than the dust of the beggar. This thought is repeated over and over and over again in the Scriptures. We find it **Ps. 39:4, Ps. 103:14, Job 14:1-2 and James 4:14.**

Understanding the brevity of our life in the flesh irregardless to our social standing and understanding the enduring and abiding power of God's word to bring about a spiritual birth it behooves us to respond..... If we would do so several things will happen.

We will be given the gift of eternal life. When a good friend of Jesus had died named Lazarus Jesus said the following to his sister Martha. **“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies. (26) And everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26).**

But not just life but abundant life. And a part of that abundant living is the capacity and inclination to love the brethren.

CONCLUSION

When are we able to love with AGAPOA or an unconditional love? When we have purified our souls or in other words when we are born again. Who are we love? In the context of this specific passage we are to love the brethren fervently and from the heart. Why are we to love the brethren? For we have been born again through the living and abiding Word of God or in other words the gospel and it is the natural outflow of the new birth.

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Where are we in light of the truths we have considered this morning? We were not saved to live for ourselves. We were saved in order to live for the Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us. He is calling us as those who have purified our souls for a sincere love of the brethren to fervently love one another from the heart. WHAT WILL WE DO?