

1 Peter 1:22 - 25 – Part QQ

1Pe 1:22 (NKJV) **Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³ having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, ²⁴ because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, ²⁵ but the word of the LORD endures forever."** Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

In beginning this passage, there is an important theological issue surrounding these verses that is really fairly critical relative to how someone can approach the passage. There are two distinct views that differ from another. The first view says that Peter is talking about the initial work of God at salvation and the second view says that Peter is talking about the believer's sanctification after salvation. Without going into all of the detail, I am convinced that v22 is referring to what took place in the believer's life at their salvation. The key verb in the passage is the command to **"love one another fervently with a pure heart"**. The verb **"love"** in v22 is in the very unusual grammatical structure of being an aurist imperative verb. The aurist imperative carries a stronger sense, a more compelling sense than a normal imperative tense verb. An aurist imperative verb is always viewed as the strongest verb in the sentence which means that all of the other verbs or participles simply complement and reinforce this particular verb.

The aurist imperative has four specific aspects. The first aspect is a specific focus on a change of behavior. In this verse, it is the idea that believers need to change a specific aspect of our behavior to reflect the exhortation. The second aspect is that the verb carries a sense of urgency, and therefore a sense of forcefulness in the text. Because of this sense of urgency, the verb becomes the primary verb in the section. The third aspect is that the verb focuses on the believer carrying the action to completion. So, the verb **"love"** is Peter's way of conveying to his readers a forceful resolve to orient their focus on this particular action and to work it out as a way of life. The last aspect is that it emphasizes the action being performed over and over again. When the aurist imperative is used in a passage, it governs and controls the other verbs or participles that are connected to it. I.e., the interpretation must reflect the intensity and forcefulness of the aurist imperative.

When the other verbs or participles in the passage are analyzed, we find that Peter will address how the believer's soul is purified. It is through the truth. He will address how someone is **"born again"** – by the **"incorruptible seed"** of the **"word of God"**. Then lastly, he will communicate that God's Word endures forever. Now, each of those truths and principles are incredibly important and vital to living the Christian life. However, overriding and prevailing over each of those spiritual realities is the imperative command to **"love one another fervently with a pure heart"**. Peter says that the reason that believers are to love one another with a deep passion is because they have been **"born again"**. It would be spiritually ridiculous for someone to think that even though they are a Christian that they can just casually and indifferently dismiss other believers as unimportant. Jesus said this in [John 13:35](#),

Jn 13:35 (NKJV) **By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

One of the most obvious evidences of genuine salvation is a believer's affection and love for other believers. By the same token, one of the worst testimonies that a believer can have is to display disdain and contempt for other genuine believers.

So the question that we have to address is “when” was the believer enabled to love like this, to love supernaturally? When could someone even respond to a command like this? The obvious answer is that the believer received this capacity at the time their soul was purified, and he says that time was when the believer obeyed the truth. Peter is speaking specifically about the moment of conversion in the individual’s life – that moment when they were actually saved. The phrase “**have purified**” is a perfect tense verb which means that it is something that took place in the past, but is still having an impact on the present. The moment of salvation is that event that gives the believer the capacity to do what God wants them to do – to obey the truth, to love other believers. This is what theologians call positional sanctification. Every believer was purified by God at salvation and given the capacity to do what God wants them to do. To confirm this even more, v23 talks about “**having been born again**” – a direct reference to the new birth. At conversion, the believer is spiritually purged and cleansed of every sin they have committed and every sin that they will commit, and they are given the capacity to live a life that honors Christ.¹

So, what does Peter indicate is critical to understand about the issue of loving other believers? Well, the first thing that he says is that the believer’s soul was and continues to be purified as they are obedient to the truth. The NASB reverses the order in v22.

1Pe 1:22 (NASB) 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,

You will also notice in that translation that it omits the phrase “**through the Spirit**” which occurs in the KJV and the NKJV. The phrase “**through the Spirit**” is consistently omitted in most all of the translations. I use two Greek Interlinears to study from and one has the phrase and the other does not. The one that has it does identify that it is an issue in question in some of the transcripts. However, the main issue is determining what it means for a believer to have their soul “**purified**”, as well as to what the phrase “**in obedience to the truth**” is actually referring. No matter if the phrase “**through the Spirit**” is or is not included, it is still spiritually obvious that every work of God in a believer’s life needs to be under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit.

At first glance when reading these two phrases in English, it would seem that the believer purifies their soul as they obey the truth. No matter how the phrases are actually interpreted, it is certainly a valid perspective that obedience to the truth will always have a purifying impact on a believer’s life. However, what we cannot lose sight of is that there are two kinds of sanctification – positional and practical. Positional sanctification happens at salvation (v22) and practical sanctification happens for the rest of our lives. Normally, whenever the Scriptures speak of sanctification, it is doing so in reference to the lifelong process that always includes obedience to the truth. In fact, it would be reasonable to say that obedience to the truth is always one of the primary goals of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. On the other side of the coin, it can be assumed that if a believer is not obedient to the truth, there will be many parts of their life that become defiled with physical, moral, and spiritual impurities. Disobedience to the Scriptures always produces a degenerative and ungodly lifestyle. No one, whether a Christian or a non-Christian, is exempt from God’s spiritual law of sowing and reaping. A person always reaps what they sow. [Galatians 5](#) is clear that if the individual sows to the Spirit, that they will reap “**life**”. If they sow to their flesh with all of its ungodly impulses, then they will reap what Galatians calls “**corruption**”. No one – Christian or non-Christian, is exempt from this spiritual law that governs all of life.

The Greek word for “**have purified**” is “*hagnizo*” and it simply means to make something clean.² It is a perfect tense participle which means that the tense is describing an action that occurred in the past, but which produced a state of being or a result that exists in the present. The emphasis of the perfect tense is twofold - past action and present results.³ One cannot be divorced from the other. Think of it this way. What someone spiritually determined to do in the past, no matter how good their intentions may have been, is of no meaningful value if it has not actually impacted how they are living today. For instance, a person could have made an emotional decision 10 years ago that they were going to carefully guard their speech. However, that decision would have no value to them or anyone else if 10 years later they are still constantly cursing, always saying very derogatory things about other people, and always complaining about everything that does not go their way.

However, what it is not readily apparent with this particular word is that it has within it the underlying idea of consecrating oneself to God.⁴ When the idea of consecration is used in the Scriptures, it is always speaking of believers intentionally dedicating themselves to God, of intentionally setting themselves apart so that they can be used by God. Becoming useful to God is not an accident. It does not just happen, and it does not happen overnight. It is something that matures over a period of time because the individual actually commits and devotes their life to Christ. It requires discipline, patience, hard work. It requires a high level of resolve and determination. It requires a level of meaningful sacrifice. It requires time, but it has to begin with an initial decision that the person is going to live a life of spiritual and moral purity. Whenever God draws a person, that person will always have a desire to come to Christ – always. God never drags a person into His kingdom. He works in their life, speaks to their mind and heart, draws them by His Spirit and His Word, and the individual simply has a deep desire to come to Christ. When they come, they are purified. That is positional sanctification.

ENDNOTES

¹ MacArthur, *1 Peter 1:22*, ep.

² Strong, 910.

³ Logos, *purified*, ep.

⁴ Zodhiates, 72.

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