

## 1 Peter 1:22 - 25 – Part RR

**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, <sup>23</sup> having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, <sup>24</sup> 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, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.**

In our previous study, we looked at one of the theological issues surrounding this verse, specifically that the verb to “**love**” the brethren fervently was in the aorist imperative. We also asked the question as to “when” was having this kind of love actually possible for the believer, and the conclusion was that the ability to love this way was at the moment of salvation. We also saw that the verb for “**have purified**” was in the perfect tense which meant that it happened in the past, but was having an impact in the present. That led us into the discussion of the differences of what theologians call “positional sanctification” which happens at salvation, and “practical sanctification” which happens after salvation for the remainder of the believer’s life. Every believer was purified by God at salvation and given the capacity to do what God wants them to do.

So, after salvation what is needed is practical sanctification. The Greek word for “**have purified**” is “*hagnizo*” and it simply means to make something clean. The reason that things have to be cleaned is because they have become dirty. We would never think of eating off of dirty plates. Could you imagine going to someone’s home for a meal and the plates and utensils that were set on the table had been previously used, but not washed? I am sure that none of us would eat off of those plates or use those forks. We wash our clothes after we wear them. Why? It is because they are dirty. We take showers every day because we get dirty. The point is simple. If we refuse to eat off of dirty plates, or use dirty forks, or to wear dirty clothes, why would we think that God would ever be inclined to use someone when their life was spiritually and morally impure?

So, one major area that Peter is dealing with is the idea that in every believer’s life that there is the potential for there being things in their life that defile them and ultimately render them unuseful to God. The NKJV, NASB, and AMP all begin the sentence with the word “**Since...**” We might say “Because you have been saved...” However, the very best translation is the ESV which says,

**1Pe 1:22 (ESV) Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,**

The Greek Interlinear does not actually have the word “**since**”, but the translators have added it because of the perfect tense of the verb – something that happened in the past that is still having an impact on the present. It is because we are Christians, it is because our souls have been “**purified**” that we now have the capacity and the spiritual faculty and ability to honor Christ with our life. So, because of that spiritual reality, it is important to understand that God does not use individuals whose lives are spiritually impure. Every believer has areas of their life in which they struggle. That is a given. However, there are very foundational attributes of the Christian life that must be integrated into the believer’s life if they are going to be used by God in a meaningful way. Intimacy always requires purity.

At this point it is very important to make a critical observation. It must be appreciated that spiritual purity is not a human virtue. We must understand that reality. As believers, we had to be “**purified**”. Spiritual purity is a divine attribute, and it requires a divine work of God in a person’s life to become a practical reality. Having a purified soul was not something that believers initially had or could have. It was totally a work of God - a part of the initial work of God at salvation. However, after salvation God provides the believer both the desire and the power to develop and cultivate practical purity in their life. After initial salvation, living a life of purity becomes **a learned virtue** that is grounded in personal choices. From a biblical perspective, what purity in a person’s life indicates is the kind of relationship they have with God. If someone’s life is consistently marked by ongoing and habitual spiritual and moral impurity, then that individual has no meaningful relationship with God (**1 John 3**). If, on the other hand, a believer’s life is in fact characterized by purity, it generally indicates that they do have a meaningful relationship with God. The Scriptures do not allow believers to divorce their relationship with God from personal virtue.

So, the question that has to be asked is how does an individual develop meaningful purity in their life? Well, what Peter says is that their positional purification came from “**obeying the truth**”. In the Greek text, this phrase in the NKJV is actually translated as “**obedience to the truth**”. It is that way in the NASB, ESV, AMP, ASV, and RSV. I.e., the word “**obedience**” is a noun, and not a verb. Peter indicates that the believer’s soul WAS initially purified at salvation through “**obedience to the truth**” regarding the gospel. However, from the side of practical sanctification after salvation, purity is cultivated the same way – through “**obedience to the truth**”. The obvious deduction is that the greater the obedience, the greater the practical purification that occurs. Conversely, the more a believer’s soul is purified, the greater will be their obedience.<sup>1</sup> At a personal level, I do not believe that there is anything much more damaging to a person’s faith or their testimony than moral impurity in their life.

Obedience is a very critical message in the New Testament. The Bible always indicates that continued and ongoing habitual disobedience to the word of God is a sign of unbelief and is characteristic of those who are not saved. The Christian life demands “**obedience to the truth**”. The problem, however, is that people are constantly redefining truth to fit their lifestyle, their sinful value system, and their personal preferences. None of that is biblical. God’s truth is absolute, and once people begin redefining biblical truth to suit their own personal whims and fancies, at that moment they have created a god that cannot save. To redefine the truth only reiterates fallen man’s fundamental hostility to God Himself. Men do not want truth to be absolute. Men want truth to be something that is fluid, changeable, adaptable, and adjustable. Once men remove and change the objective and absolute nature of God’s Word, at that moment they have disconnected themselves from the only thing that can save them.

It is not enough to simply hear the truth. It is not enough to simply know the truth. It is not enough to simply affirm agreement with the truth. The only thing that spiritually matters is a person’s willingness to obey the truth and to commit their life to the absolute spiritual realities of God’s truth. There is no truth outside of the eternal God of Scripture. Any notion of truth different from biblical truth is a damning lie. It seems that the church age in which we live has become caught up in a very strong desire to find ways to relate to a culture that continues to immunize and inoculate itself to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> This is the curse of the Emergent Church movement. The church seems to be constantly looking for creative ways to relate to a culture that does not want to have anything to do with God. If the culture does choose

to have something to do with God, it wants that involvement to be on its terms. The culture is not satisfied unless it redefines the meaning of Christianity, and in the process it develops a very shallow and superficial association and affiliation with religion that has no saving value whatsoever.

Here is what the Emergent Church has done. It has asked the lost how they want to be saved, what they want church to be like, how they want to worship, how long the services should be, what kind of music the church should have, how they want to dress, when they want to meet, what kind of words they do not like to hear, and what kind of sermons they do want to hear. So, the Emergent Church movement, in order to accommodate these fallacious ideas, has restructured itself to address the whims and fancies of the lost and tailors what it does to fit the preferences of the lost. If I can say it this way, the church is for the saved and the gospel is for the lost. I have often seen a certain prompt on my computer that says “Fatal Error”. If I proceed and ignore the prompt, then my computer will crash and I will lose everything on which I have been working. Well, what I have just described is a “Fatal Error” for the church – to try and restructure itself to make the church a meaningful place for lost people. That is not in any way to say that the church is to be indifferent, uncaring, unconcerned, or unresponsive to those who are without Christ. Not at all. It is to say, however, that the church does not have the freedom to redefine its mission or the methods to complete that mission. As a pastor, God has not called me to make the message attractive to the believer or to the unbeliever. No church has the right to redefine God’s mission or how God has chosen to work in completing that mission. The Bible actually provides a very clear strategy for evangelizing the lost. God’s strategy is a mission minded church that faithfully declares the Word of God and the gospel and never compromises the truth to become culturally relevant.

Okay, we need to shift gears for a while. As Peter develops this section, one major characteristic that he will address is the absolute necessity for those who are a part of God’s church to have a deep love and affection for one another. He calls it “**in sincere love of the brethren**”. We come together for many different reasons, but ultimately we come together on a very regular basis because God has commanded that we do so. Believers come together and meet as a church for mutual support, to be edified, to be built up in their faith, and to be encouraged in their walk with Christ. Believers meet to demonstrate Christ’s love for other people. When any church meets there should be an extraordinary love for one another and for those who are in our midst who may be lost.

This is certainly not the last time that Peter will talk about Christians having a sincere love for one another. He says the same thing in [1 Peter 2:17](#), [1 Peter 3:8](#), and [1 Peter 4:8](#).

1Pe 2:17 (NKJV) **Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

1Pe 3:8 (NKJV) **Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;**

1Pe 4:8 (NKJV) **And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."**

Obviously, the idea of loving and caring for other believers is not something new for Peter. Most all of the New Testament writers speak of this kind of love as well. [John 15:12](#) says,

Jn 15:12 (NKJV) **This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

**Romans 12:10** says,

Ro 12:10 (NKJV) ***Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;**

**Ephesians 5:2**,

Eph 5:2 (NKJV) **And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**

**Philippians 2:1-4** says,

Php 2:1 (NKJV) **Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**

**1 Thessalonians 3:12**,

1Th 3:12 (NKJV) **And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you,**

**1 Thessalonians 4:9**,

1Th 4:9 (NKJV) **But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;**

**Hebrews 13:1** simply says,

Heb 13:1 (NKJV) **Let brotherly love continue.**

**1 John 3:11** says,

1Jn 3:11 (NKJV) **For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,**

**1 John 3:23**,

1Jn 3:23 (NKJV) **And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.**

**1 John 4:7**,

1Jn 4:7 (NKJV) **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.**

**1 John 4:11**,

1Jn 4:11 (NKJV) **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

The verb for “love” that Peter uses in **1 Peter 1:22** is the Greek “*agapao*”. It is the biblical word that represents the kind of love that God has for the believer. What is crucial about understanding this

amazing biblical word, however, is that it is not a word of emotion. When we think of love, we generally think of it in terms of having a deep affection for someone, of having a relationship with someone that is built on deep emotions and feelings. However, this particular Greek word has a much different connotation than simply having a deep affection towards someone. The “*agape*” love that God wants the believer to demonstrate in their life is a love that chooses, that wills to love someone. This is much different than emotion. Emotions and feelings come and go every day. Emotions are fickle and fluctuate all the time. People fall in love, have deep emotions towards one another, and get married. However, something happens in the marriage and their emotions are changed and rather than loving someone, they actually now hate the person and cannot stand to be with them. So, they get a divorce.

So, what Peter describes is the kind of love that God wants believers to have for one another. He provides three distinct adjectives to make his point. A believer’s love for other believers is to be “**sincere**”, it is to be “**fervent**”, and it is to be “**pure**”. We will address all of these in the next study.

### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Sproul, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Sproul, 51.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Sproul, R.C. *1-2 Peter*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011.