

1 Peter 1:22 – Part UU

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,

As we conclude the study on [1 Peter 1:22](#), we have been defining what is the “*agape*” love of God and how very different it is between how we love and how God loves. The “*agape*” love of God is a love that chooses to embrace people and care for them when they do not merit or deserve that kind of love. It wills to love, it chooses to love. It is willing to be sacrificial for those that do not deserve love. We have seen that the love that Peter is identifying is specifically addressing a believer’s love for other believers – what Peter calls “**one another**”. We saw in [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) that the “**love of Christ compels us**”, or “**constrains us**” and because it is a present tense verb it means that Christ is always pressing us and constraining us to love the way that He loves. We have identified some areas that hinder us and prevent the kind of love that God has from flowing through us. Unfortunately, we place all kinds of limitations on how we love other believers – time constraints, personality differences, social distinctions, educational variations, inconveniences, and sometimes just plain indifference and apathy. We can be very cold with other believers. I always hate it when I hear someone say that they went to a church and the people were just cold to them. If there is any place where someone should feel welcomed and warmed by God’s presence and love, it has to be in the local church. The local church is not a place where a believer’s love for Christ or other believers can be hidden under a bushel. We are the body of Christ. We represent Christ and are His ambassadors. We are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and are compelled by Christ to “**love one another**”.

What so often makes other believers seem incompatible with us personally is that they are “different” than we are. They may have a completely different theological perspective than our personal beliefs. They may have a personality that grates on us, or they may have certain character qualities that we do not enjoy. They may come from a different social class than we did. It could be anything, but for whatever reason we simply do not really like them that much and so we never display any affection or emotion for them. Under those circumstances, what so often happens is that we put on our make-believe mask. We really do not enjoy the person, but when we are with them, we act as if we do. We just accommodate them and put up with them, and so in reality, our love for them is insincere and hypocritical. In our last study, we saw that God’s love is to be a “**sincere love**” ([1 Peter 1:22](#)) – “*anypokritos*”, to be without hypocrisy, to not pretend, to not fake, to not wear a mask.

Now, no matter how someone may want to define that kind of scenario (which obviously has the potential for happening quite often), it is NOT the kind of love that Peter is talking about in this passage. In fact, it could not really be defined as love at all. Maybe we could call it a fake love, a counterfeit love, a phony love, or maybe just pretending, just kidding. Maybe a better description of what so often happens would be that we just “tolerate”, or “endure” someone, but it is not God’s love. Now, if you are a discerning individual, and I hope that you are, then it is critical to understand that God brings other Christians into our life that irritate us and exasperate us to simply reveal how very little we actually do love people like God loves them. We are quickly prone to be indifferent, impatient, and unconcerned for those people. We make our personal evaluation of their life and how they may have treated us or the

lack of potential benefit they will have for our life, and we mark them off of our favorite people list and move on.

Right now, if you can think of someone like this in your life, I want you to see that person as God sent and as God ordained. They become our spiritual acid test to let us know exactly how little we may actually love like God loves. If God had loved us the way we often love other believers, none of us would ever have been saved. This “*agape*” love of God that Peter is addressing is the kind of love that God demonstrates for every sinner that He saves. God chose to love people who were completely undeserving, completely unworthy, and completely unfit for His love. For instance, [Romans 5:6](#) says,

Ro 5:6 (NKJV) For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

The word for “**ungodly**” is the Greek word “*asebes*”. It is a compound word with the negative prefix “*a*” and the word “*sebomai*” which means to be devout, to be reverent. So, “*asebes*” literally means to be irreverent, to be wicked, and specifically to be without reverence for God, to act in utter disregard towards God’s commands.¹ It carries the idea of being totally godless and living without any fear of God or any reverence for God. It is characterized by immoral, ungodly behavior, and an utter contempt for God.²

We see this all of the time with people that use God’s name in vain, that mock the Christian faith as being deplorable, infantile, and backwards, and who display an actual hatred for God. This word encapsulates the deplorable immorality and incredulous displays of rancid impurity that characterizes so much of the modern culture. The amazing reality, however, is that the “**ungodly**” person is the exact kind of person for whom the “*agape*” love of God was displayed when Christ was crucified - the very target and the objective of God’s love. This is no small matter simply because we as believers are indwelt by the very Spirit of Christ and have no right to love any differently. To somehow think that we are the exception to demonstrating this kind of love in our life to other believers is a tragic misunderstanding, maybe even a willful and intentional misapprehending of this kind of love. The goal of this exhortation is not to condemn us for our often lack of love for other believers, but rather to compel us, to constrain us towards this kind of love, to push us in this direction.

[Romans 5:8](#) says,

Ro 5:8 (NKJV) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This love for the “**ungodly**” and the “**sinner**” is the kind of love that Peter is defining, and the lack of this kind of love is something that impacts every believer. If our love for other “unappealing” believers is something that we just endure or something that we just tolerate, then in essence we have no idea whatsoever of what God’s “*agape*” love is even about. These adjectives that describe God’s love are very convicting words. They do not let us off the hook, but demand that we take a very serious look at our own personal Christian life. They constantly cross-examine and probe and question the kind of love that we really have and demonstrate for others. So often it seems so easy to just completely miss the mark in this area of life. With almost no effort, we find ourselves quickly irritated and exasperated with someone for something relatively minor and insignificant. Now, without missing the point, the more that the believer allows God to develop His kind of love into their life, the more Christlike they become,

and ultimately the more that God can use them to impact the people that He brings into their life. The kind of decision that a believer makes regarding how they are going to love people that they may not like is really the acid test as to how serious they really are about their Christian life.

The next adjective that Peter uses is the word “**pure**”. In the NKJV translation, it is given as the third in the series of adjectives – “**love one another fervently with a pure heart...**” However, in the Greek text [1 Peter 1:22](#) reads “**from a pure heart love one another fervently...**” Personally, it seems that this word “order” is important simply because it will be difficult to love someone “**fervently**” if a believer has an impure heart. Unfortunately, most of the major translations have the phrase order the same as the NKJV. The KJV has the Greek order correct and says “**see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently**”. The Greek word for “**pure**” is “*katharos*” and simply means clean, clear, pure.³ It is the same word that is used in [Matthew 5:8](#),

Mt 5:8 (NKJV) **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**

[1 Timothy 1:5](#) declares,

1Ti 1:5 (NKJV) **Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,**

In very simple terms, it is obedience to the truth that God uses to develop a “**pure heart**” in a believer. That is one of the primary purposes of keeping and obeying the “**commandments**” of the New Testament – to help develop a “**pure heart**” in the believer’s life. A life of disobedience is a life that leads to both moral and spiritual impurity, and a life that destroys a man’s conscience and his personal faith in Christ. It is a contradiction to say that we love God, but are not willing to keep His commandments. Jesus said in [John 14:15](#),

Jn 14:15 (NKJV) **“If you love Me, keep My commandments.**

John wrote in [1 John 2:4](#),

1Jn 2:4 (NKJV) **He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

[Titus 1:15](#) gives some additional insight into the word “**pure**” when it says,

Tit 1:15 (NKJV) **To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.**

What Titus is saying is that a person is impure because their life is “**defiled and unbelieving**” and that “**even their mind and conscience are defiled**”. They both think and do impure things and when their conscience reminds them of that fallacy in their character, they are completely satisfied to just ignore it. It is impossible to love someone the way that Peter is describing when the believer’s mind and conscience are defiled. Both uses of the word “**defiled**” mean to be morally contaminated, and both verbs are in the perfect tense which means that this personal defilement and moral pollution has remained unchecked for some time. The perfect tense clearly defines that this is not just a momentary lapse of integrity, but rather an ongoing propensity that has been continuing unchecked in a person’s life.

So, what is the result of that reality? Well, it is quite simple. The result is that the individual has difficulty loving other believers sincerely and purely. The kind of love that God desires for a believer

to develop in their life is His “*agape*” love, and it is a love that necessitates a “**pure heart**”, a clean heart. We have already studied in v22 that the heart is purified through obedience – “**Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...**”, so God’s way of maturing our love for other believers is simply through personal obedience to the truth. Spiritual obedience creates an atmosphere for biblical love to develop. This is an area on which every believer has to work and concentrate. No believer, not even the most mature Christian, is exempt from the need to grow in obedience to God’s Word.

The third word that Peter uses to describe our love for “**one another**” is the word “**fervently**”. It is the Greek word “*ektenōs*” and means intently, earnestly.⁴ This is the same word that was used of Jesus’ prayer in the garden in [Luke 22:44](#) when it said,

Lk 22:44 (NKJV) And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

This is a word of intensity, of concentration, and of passion. It is a word that demands more than just a casual hello and goodbye, more than just a nonchalant response to someone. It is a term that provides expression and vocalization. At a personal level, I communicate to my wife every day that I love her. I communicate to my children that I love them deeply. I try to communicate the same to all of the believers that God has brought into my life. I text other pastors regularly and let them know that I love them and am praying for God’s grace and strength to saturate their life. Just a casual “How do you do?” is not what Peter is addressing with the use of this word. To the contrary, believers are to love one another fervently, earnestly, sacrificially, and with great intentionality.

So, these three words are the words that Peter uses to describe how we are to love one another – sincerely, purely, and fervently. The greatest benefit to these words and what they signify to a serious believer is that they are not only the spiritual indicators of our love for other believers, but ultimately of how much we truly love God. It is a grievous spiritual misconception to think that we really love God, but have no meaningful care and concern for those believers that God has brought into our life. [1 John 4:20-21](#) sums it up clearly this way when it says,

1Jn 4:20 (NKJV) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

Before leaving this verse, it seems vital to appreciate the reality and significance of what Peter is really saying in v22. The spiritual life of every local church and every believer in that fellowship is bound up in these words. There is no escaping the need for this kind of love being developed in a believer’s life. Listen to how Paul expressed the necessity for having a spiritual mindset dominated by God’s “*agape*” love in [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#),

1Co 13:1 (NKJV) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

It simply does not matter how theologically correct we may be or how dedicated we are to the local church. If in the exercise of all of our various spiritual activities we fail to genuinely and sincerely love and deeply value those believers that surround us, then everything that we are doing loses its ultimate significance and value. I am sure that each of us have heard the expression that “*people do not really care what you know until they know that you care*”. I think that is very true. People all around us are hurting. It could be anything really. It could be marital problems, financial issues, emotional instability, rebellious children, spiritual indifference, physical illnesses. Really, it could be anything – a bad day at the office, an argument with your spouse, continued impatience, lingering unkindness.

Everybody we meet needs God’s love to be demonstrated to them. Just verbally express to people that you actually love them. They may not appreciate it at first, and they may not even like your verbal expressions of that love for them. As they say in Zimbabwe – “*It’s all right, it’s okay.*” It is perfectly acceptable for our interjection of God’s love into a person’s life to be misunderstood and even unappreciated. Why? It is because [1 Corinthians 13:8](#) declares that “**Love never fails**”. Just do not stop loving the unlovable. This may sound utterly ridiculous, but it is okay if you hurt me. Why? It is because it is God’s way of giving me the opportunity to love you with His love. [1 Peter 2:21-23](#) reveals this yet another way when it says,

1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² “*Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth*”; ²³ **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**

If you are willing to invest your life into other people with a God-constrained love for them, then two things will happen. First of all your personal life will be deeply impacted. You will become more and more conformed to the image of Christ and you will begin to see God use you in ways that you have not seen before. Secondly, the people into whom you infuse and impart God’s love, eventually they will be deeply impacted. The impact may not be immediate, and that is perfectly okay, but it will happen. They will see Christ in you. They will see Christ, and He will change their life. Just stay the course. Just trust that God’s “*agape*” love is much more powerful than we could ever imagine, and watch Christ change people’s lives through your willingness to love them with God’s everlasting love.

ENDNOTES

¹ Strong, 992-993.

² Zodhiates, 270.

³ Strong, 1156.

⁴ Zodhiates, 556.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Strong, James. *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.