

Studies in 1 Peter-06 1 Peter 1:22-25

by Dwight Pentecost

The sermon emphasizes the command to love one another as a reflection of our new birth through the incorruptible Word of God.

Duration: 34:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, John 3:36, Acts 17:30, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:22-25

Topics: "Christian Love", "Regeneration"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of showing love and care for others, especially within the family of God. He compares this to a man who faithfully goes to work every day to provide for his family, not because it brings him excitement, but out of a sense of responsibility and concern. The basis for this command to love others is the fact that believers have been born again through the word of God. The preacher also highlights the need to love with a pure heart, genuinely caring for others and being interested in their well-being.

Transcript

Faith in Jesus Christ, one becomes a child of God. And when one becomes a child of God, it means that God is his Father. And since God is his Father, God has certain parental rights over his children.

Not only certain rights, but also certain responsibilities. Just as it is the responsibility of the earthly father to oversee and to guide the life of his growing child, so it is the responsibility as well as the prerogative of God our Father to oversee the spiritual development of his children. You guide your child by telling your child there are certain things you can do, and certain things that you cannot do.

Certain things that are permitted in the home, and certain things that are not permitted in the home. This is the responsibility of the Father as the head of the home. And in the spiritual household of faith, God has the responsibility of directing the members of his household to tell them what they can do and what they cannot do.

And so, in the New Testament, we find that God is our Father, gives a number of commands. These are the commands not of the law of Moses, the commands of grace. And one major area of these commands is in the area of our affection.

For instance, in 1 John 2 we have a prohibition, love not the world. That prohibition is as strong as any prohibition given under the Mosaic law, but it is a prohibition of grace. On the positive side, in that portion of the scriptures to which we direct your attention this morning in 1 Peter 1 verses 22 to 25, we have the positive aspect stated.

At the end of verse 22, we have these words, Love one another with a pure heart fervently. Love one another with a pure heart fervently. This is a commandment.

It is that which a father put before his children, not as something that they may take or leave, something in which they have freedom of will to choose whether they will or will not. This is a commandment of God. It is a commandment that is laid upon us because, in verse 18 of this same chapter, we have been redeemed.

In verse 14 of this same chapter, we were made children, and this relationship of a child to the Father came because we were born into God's family by faith in Jesus Christ. The Apostle tells us in verse 22 of 1 Peter 1 that we have obeyed the truth through the Spirit, with the obligation resting upon us, love one another. Now, this obligation, this commandment, rests upon a basic assumption.

The Apostle is not talking to natural men, because it is utterly pointless to go up to a man who has never been born again and say to him, You love so-and-so. Well, you know that even as believers it's hard enough for you to fulfill the commandment of the Word of God and love me. Think of trying to tell an unsaved man to do that.

I appreciate your agreement. I wish it weren't just quite so forceful. And the commandments of God are not addressed to unbelievers, that as unbelievers you love one another and you love the family of the household of God, and somehow by loving one another you will endear yourself to God and God will love you in return.

The commandment to love one another with a pure heart fervently rests upon a basic assumption given to us in verse 22, seeing he have purified your souls. The heart of man needs to be changed before man can fulfill this command of God, because the natural man is not characterized by love. The natural man is characterized by selfishness, that is, self-love, and it is impossible to be totally occupied with another when we are totally occupied with ourselves.

And the natural man, by his basic nature received by tradition from his fathers, is a selfish nature, a nature that is concerned with himself and his own things. And before one can fulfill the command of God, it is necessary for that whole attitude, that whole nature, to be changed. And so the apostle says, I can relay to you this command that I have received of God, because ye have purified your souls.

And the soul here is in reference to the entire immaterial part of man that was under the domination of the old sin nature, but now is under control of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit operates on the new nature imparted at the time of a man's new birth by faith in Jesus Christ. Now, this old nature that knew only hatred and that knew only selfish love, can now turn away from self to be occupied with another, because through Jesus Christ, by faith in Jesus Christ, ye have purified your souls. Now, this purification of your souls rests on two things in verse 22.

First of all, ye have obeyed the truth, and second, ye have purified yourselves through the Spirit. And here the Spirit and the truth, or the Word of God, are brought together as the two things that were instrumental

in bringing about the new birth of the individual sinner. Ye obeyed the truth through the Spirit.

Our Lord, in dealing with Nicodemus in the third chapter of John's Gospel, made it very clear that man does not and cannot originate his own salvation. Man is viewed as a spiritual corpse, dead and devoid of life, incapable of exercising himself toward God. But the Holy Spirit comes upon that one who is dead and trespasses and sins, and energizes that one so that that one may respond to the invitation that God presents to every man.

Ye were purified through the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, who moved upon one dead in trespasses and sins, characterized by selfishness, with the result that as after the Spirit has accomplished the new birth, ye may love one another. But along with the divine side, that is, the operation of the Spirit, Peter emphasizes the human response. You obeyed the truth.

The obedience to the truth is mentioned in several instances in our Lord's teachings. I go, for instance, back to the Gospel of John in chapter 6, and there in verse 27, we read our Lord's words, "Labor not, or do not work for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed." Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom God hath sent." And faith in Jesus Christ is viewed here as a response, divinely enabled as it is, to that presentation of the cross, that presentation of the Gospel, that presentation of the person of Christ that the apostles had given. This is the work of God that ye believe.

I find again Paul emphasizes this fact in Acts chapter 17 and verse 30, where in his message he says, "The times of this ignorant God-wicked act are overlooked," now these words, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. He commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Christ is died, this is a fact.

Men are commanded to respond to that fact, and the fact to which they are expected to respond is that Christ died, and that Christ offers himself as a Savior to sinners, and that if one accepts Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior, he will be born into the family of God.' Now, when I turn back to 1 Peter and verse 22, they have purified their souls, first of all by the operation of the Holy Spirit, but they have also obeyed the truth, the truth of the word, that Christ died for sinful men. Now, this is not viewed as a work that wins them salvation, this is a response to the presentation of the Gospel that is made by those who are evangelists, or who present Christ as the Savior of man. The Holy Spirit of God takes the work and convicts a man of his need of a Savior, and then when Christ says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,' they hear his command, and by the Spirit's enablement respond in obedience to the command to believe, and they purify their souls." Now, because of this basic assumption, they have purified their souls because of the work of the Spirit, and because of obedience to the truth, this command is given to them to love one another with a pure heart, fervently.

The love referred to here is not the love of emotion, where one suddenly becomes attractive to us in all of his person. The love commanded of the child of God has to do with watchful care, a consideration for the good of another, and attention to his needs. It's in the realm of the will, rather than in the realm of the emotion.

I dare say that when you put your hands in dishwater again, or to modernize it, when you put the dishes in the dishwasher, you feel no fluttering of emotion for your family when you do it. But you do it, why? Because you have a loving care for the needs of your family. You mothers have to change a soiled diaper for the umpteenth time.

You feel no particular stirring of emotion for that baby, but you do give careful attention to the baby's needs. The man who day after day after day goes to the same desk in the same office does it because he loves to provide for his family, not because he experiences an exhilarating emotional thrill when he sees that desk again, but because he gives careful, anxious attention to the need of his family. Now, that is what Peter is commanding here, because you have been delivered from the basic selfishness of your own nature because of the Spirit's work, and because you obeyed the truth.

Now you therefore exercise a care, and a concern, and a consideration for those who are in the family of God together with you. Now, when we move on into verses 23 to 25, we find that this command has its basis. We have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.

For all flesh is his grass, and all the glory of man is the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And the Apostle Peter has a basis for the command that has been given to them, love one another, remind them in this explanation of the seed by which they have been born into God's family.

The Apostle is here contrasting the fact of a natural birth with the fact of a supernatural birth. We were born through the activity of a natural seed. That natural seed was corrupted by Adam's disobedience, by Adam's lawlessness and rebellion against the command of God, and the child born of corruptible seed is a corruptible individual.

Thus, we were born into this world. In contrast to that corruption that attached itself to natural seed, the Apostle reminds us we were born into God's family through the work of an incorruptible seed. He is contrasting your natural father with God as the father of the believer in Jesus Christ, and he is contrasting natural seed, get it, with the incorruptible word of God.

And when you were born into this world through corruptible seed, you were born corruptible, you were born a sinner. But when God our Father used the incorruptible word of God as the agent to bring us to new birth by faith in Jesus Christ, that which was thus born into God's family was delivered from the corruption of this natural birth. Now, see what he says, "'You love one another,' verse 23, "'because you were born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible.' And referring to the word of God, the agent that the Spirit used to bring us to faith in Christ, the Apostle has three things to say about that word.

First of all, it is incorruptible. Second, it is the word of God, and third, it is eternal. It liveth and abideth forever.

Consider these briefly. Not of corruptible seed. As we have already emphasized, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and always will be fleshly.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So, our Lord is contrasting here two progenitors, each one begetting himself in his own nature in that which he begets. The natural father begets that which is in his likeness, sinful, selfish, hateful by nature.

God, through the Holy Spirit, begets a child in his own image, and God will manifest his image in his son. Since God is unselfish, God is love, and God exercises a care and a concern for the object of his affection, so we, born in his image by the word of God of uncorruptible seed, should manifest that uncorrupted nature, unselfishly concerned for the needs of those in the family of God. We were born by the word of

God, and here he is implying a contrast between the word of God and the word of man.

Peter, at this point in his epistle, does not argue for the inspiration of the scriptures as he will do later. He simply states the fact that this word as we have it is the word of God and not the word of man. It is only the word of God that can be living, because man can produce only that which is dead.

The word of God is powerful, the word of man is powerless. The word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, but the word of man is dull, devoid of any ability to penetrate to the depth to which the word of God can penetrate. We have the word of God, and since the word of God reveals to us an incorruptible God, then we have a responsibility to conform to our Father who has begotten us through this incorruptible word.

The third thing he says about the word is that it is eternal, it liveth and abideth forever. Once again, he is contrasting the temporary character of man with the permanence of the word of God, and the scripture often likens the life of man to the life of grass. It grows up, it flourishes for a short season, and then it withers away and is gone, such is the life of natural man.

But the word of God is not likened to the temporary life of grass. The word of God is eternal, it is permanent. He says in verse 23, it liveth and abideth forever.

The word of the Lord, verse 25, endureth forever. How many of you can remember the books that were on the bestseller list a year ago, or five years ago, or more? They're gone because they're the word of man of only temporary value. But the word of God, because it is a revelation of the eternal, God is eternal, and the eternal word, the incorruptible word, the word of God, is that instrument that the Holy Spirit has used to bring us to faith in Jesus.

The Apostle Paul, writing to Romans, makes the connection between knowledge and faith very clear when he says in Romans chapter 10 and verse 17, "...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." May we emphasize again the divine principle? A man cannot believe and therefore respond to a fact of which he is totally ignorant. A man can believe only what he has been told or knows. And so, the word of God is the foundation of faith, for the word of God reveals the Father, the word of God reveals the Son, the word of God reveals the truth of the gospel, and when men are told the word of God, they are given something to believe.

No man can be saved without being given something to believe, and so, on the basis of that principle that Paul enunciated in Romans 10, 17, Peter builds his proposition that the word of God, the incorruptible word of God, the eternal word of God, has been presented to these men. They have been commanded to believe, and because of what they have been told, they have responded in obedience to the command of God. They have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and because they have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, they have been born into God's family.

They have been given a new divine nature. Now, instead of a selfish manifestation of selfish love and selfish concern, they are commanded to show an anxious, careful, watchful care for those who are in the family of God. Well, we return to the original command given to us in verse 22.

See that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently. And when the Apostle says, see that ye love one another, he is reaching out to include the entire body of believers. He didn't say, love all members of Grace Bible Church who are in good and regular standing.

He said, love one another. This is the universality of the command of God, and when we think of the command that is given to us to love one another, we only need remind ourselves of the simple gospel stated in John 3.16, that God so loved the world. The entire world was the object of his affection.

He loved them, and the evidence of his love was that, in watchful care, he provided a savior for the world, and then commands the world to repent, to believe. May I say to you that God presents to you this morning a fact. The fact is true whether you accept it or not.

Christ died for your sins. That's a fact. Now, God commands you to do something about that fact.

He commands you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you refuse to obey God's command and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be condemned forever because you are repeating the sin of Adam, the sin of disobedience, the rebellion against the one command that God has put before you. Christ died the fact. Now, God says you believe it, that you might be born into God's family.

We are to love one another. The second thing about this love, we are to love with a pure heart. The pure heart here does not involve the problem of immorality.

That's left entirely outside of the scope of the concept that Peter has in mind. When he says you love with a pure heart, he is talking about a heart that has been purified from all its natural selfish affections, because you know a child of God can be just as selfish in his interests and his care and concern as an unsafe person. When he operates apart from the Spirit by the old nature, then he manifests a selfish love.

And if the child of God is to fulfill the command of God to love one another, his heart must be purified from that selfishness that gives him a care and concern only for himself. His own little circle prevents him from going outside to fulfill the command to love one another, love purely. When God loved with a pure heart, he didn't love those who loved him, who were nice to him, who were so attractive in his sight he couldn't resist loving them.

God loves sinners. You do likewise. And the third thing is that we're to love one another with a pure heart, fervently.

The word fervently is related to the idea of a fire that is burning feverishly or burning brightly, not a fire that has been banked and put to rest, but a fire under which the bellows are blowing to fan that fire into flame. Peter says, you as believers in Jesus Christ should have a heart that is aflame by the Spirit, the breath of God, so that the breath of God kindles and ignites those coals into a burning fire. Hereby shall all men know ye are my disciples.

We have love one for another, a love purified from selfish interest and attention, a love that reaches out to the whole body of believers, and a love that actively seeks the good, the benefit, the ministry to the care, the burden, the concern of those who are in the family of God. You know, it seems to me that even the world recognizes some obligation like this, because when we greet one another, just as natural men, not as believers, what is the natural, the formal, the socially accepted way of greeting somebody? Hello, how are you? What are we saying by that question, how are you? We profess to be showing a genuine interest and concern about their welfare and well-being, but what hypocrites we are when we say, how are you? Because the most boring thing in the world is to have somebody answer that and begin to tell you how they are. It's all sham.

To become socially acceptable to manifest interest in someone, and even the whirling does it. We follow in the pattern of the whirling, and profess to love with a fervent love of Christ, but have no interest or care or concern about somebody else. How little interest, Mr. Businessman, you actually have in that fellow believing businessman who sits next to you.

You have enough business problems of your own, you don't want to share any of his with him. How little interest we have in one another's joy, and if God brings some blessing, and we try to share that joy with somebody else, then we find ourselves cut off. Well, why did you get that and I didn't? Don't tell me about it.

How little care and concern with somebody else's heartache. What a tragedy it is that when some burden comes to a member of the family of God, we're often so hard put to find somebody whom we can ask to share that burden with us, and yet we profess to love one another. Somebody comes into a congregation and feels repelled or rebuffed or is given the cold shoulders.

We're saying, yes, I've received the love of God, but don't expect me to manifest the of God to you and be interested in you. After all, I'm interested in more important things myself. Have you been born into God's family? Do you know that? Then will you hear this command of God? Now, repeat it.

This command, love one another or be watchfully conserved with the needs of one another, with a pure heart, fervently. This is the truth of the gospel. We pray, our Father, that God the Holy Spirit, who has given us this word for our admonition and exhortation, may actively work to purify our love from selfish cares and concerns to concerns with the needs, the joys, the burdens, the sorrows of others.

May we love fervently, which we do not wait to be asked to do something, but we actively seek ways of showing the love of Christ to others. May the word of God do its work of bringing to faith in Christ someone who knows him not, and do its work of conforming us who know Christ to the Father who's used the word to bring us into his own family by the miracle of new birth. Let the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace rest upon us.

We pray in Jesus' name.

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