

“Fervently Love One Another from the Heart”  
(1 Peter 1:22-25)

Introduction: There was a day in the life of our Savior, when He came out of the Temple in Jerusalem and His disciples, being overwhelmed by the beauty of the buildings, were telling Him about them. Jesus said, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down” (Matt. 24:2). His disciples were curious about this. And they asked Him, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (v. 3). And as you know, Jesus went on to answer their question. He told them that many would come claiming to be the Christ. There would be wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes. But this would only be the beginning. The disciples would be delivered up to tribulation and would be hated by all the nations. Many professing Christians would fall away from the faith and would hand over their brethren to be executed and would hate one another. Many false prophets would arise and mislead many people. “And,” Jesus said, “because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold” (v. 12). When did Jesus say that this was going to happen? Some believe that He was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., some that He was talking about the future, and others that Jesus was telling us about both. But one thing is certain. In any age, when lawlessness increases, people’s love will grow cold. That is, whenever sin increases, it is because the fruits of God’s Spirit are decreasing, both His restraining of sin and His promoting of righteousness. This seems to be the case today.

Now I did not bring this up to begin a series on the last days. Rather, I wanted to point you to the importance of love, that your heart would not be hardened. The command which Peter gives to us this morning through the Holy Spirit reminds us that we must be on our guard, so that our hearts would not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and cause us to stop loving one another. The greatest commandment in the Scripture, the one which should control our relationship with God and with one another, is that of love. When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, He said, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31). This is what I want you to see this morning. And what the Spirit says to you through His Word is that,

*As God’s children you are to earnestly love one another from your heart.*

First, I want you to see this command of your Lord, and then show you what He has done to enable you to keep it.

**I. First, Peter Gives Us the Command, “Fervently love one another from the heart.”**

**A. What He Says We Are to Do Is Love.**

1. Love is the greatest power for good in the whole universe.

- a. Love is that which motivates parents to patiently bear up with the weaknesses of their children day after day and year after year. The lack of it produces child abuse.
  - b. Love is that which causes two people, a man and a woman, to make a covenant of marriage to keep themselves for one another and to cherish one another for a life-time. The lack of that love destroys the marriage.
  - c. Love is that which motivated God to choose out of the mass of fallen man a multitude of people to save. It moved Him to send His most beloved Son to save them. And it also moved Him to give these people whom He foreloved and saved to His Son as the reward of His sacrifice.
  - d. Love is that which motivated Christ to obey the Father and to give Himself up for us.
  - e. Love has influenced more persons for good than anything else in the universe. The lack of love can have serious consequences on individual lives and on whole nations.
2. Since love is the most prominent characteristic of God, and since we are the children of God, God calls us to love as He loved.
- a. That love which the Father and the Son has for us is the same love that motivates us to love Him and each other.
  - b. John writes, “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). And again, “God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16).
  - c. We are God’s children, if we love. And if we love, it is only because God has first loved us.
  - d. This does not mean that everyone who loves anyone is a Christian and on their way to heaven. There are those who teach this.
  - e. But it does mean that those who love God and the children of God, because they are made in His image, are on their way to heaven.
  - f. God wants us to show Him and others that we are His children. He wants your life and mine to be characterized by love.
- B. And That Brings Us to the Second Point in Our Text. Those Whom Peter Says We Are to Love Are One Another.
1. Peter is saying that we should especially love our brethren in the church, those in the covenant community.
    - a. It is true that God commands us to love everyone. But if we are to love everyone, how much more true is it that we should love those men, women and children who have been renewed into the image of our Savior?
    - b. It is their being made new creatures in Christ that makes them truly lovely and praiseworthy.
    - c. Before men are born again, they bear the image of the devil, at least morally. They have his malignant and cruel nature, even though God retrains most of their evil.
    - d. By nature, therefore, they are ugly to you. And it is not easy to love that which you find repulsive.

- e. Are you attracted by snakes and scorpions? Do you find cancer appealing? No. Why not? It is because of the evil nature of these things. They are vicious and malignant things.
  - f. So is the heart of the unbeliever.
  - g. But when a man receives the grace of Christ so as to be born again, he is given a new nature, a heavenly nature, the nature of Christ. Now there is something truly beautiful in his heart, the image of Christ. He has become a partaker of the divine nature.
  - h. It is so much easier to love that which is really lovely. It is so much easier to love a Christian, than a non-Christian.
2. For the unbeliever, on the other hand, it is just the opposite.
- a. He also loves that which is attractive to him. And what attracts him is wickedness.
  - b. The unbeliever does not love the Christian, because he bears the image of Jesus his Lord, and Jesus is holy. Jesus said, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).
  - c. And because the unbeliever doesn't love the Christian, he will also not love the One whose image he bears. John writes, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).
  - d. But that is not the case with you who are believers in Christ. You love the Lord, therefore, you will also love His children.
- C. But Peter Says More. He Says the Way We Are to Love Our Brethren Is Fervently, from the Heart.
1. Our love for one another is not to be a half-hearted kind of love, but a earnest love, an eager love, a zealous love.
- a. When someone offers food to you that you really don't like, you eat it half-heartedly. When someone asks you to do something that you really don't enjoy, you do it half-heartedly.
  - b. But if someone offers you your favorite dish, or asks you to do what you love the most to do, you jump at the chance.
  - c. In the same way, you are to jump at the chance to love your brothers and sisters in Christ. Your whole heart must be engaged. You must eagerly and fervently love them in the Lord.
  - d. If Jesus loves His children in this way, and you have His nature, you will also love in this way.
  - e. If you love Jesus fervently, and His children bear His image, you will also love them fervently.
2. But love like this only comes from the heart.
- a. Fervent love does not come from the head, it comes from the heart.
  - b. It is true that love is a decision. It is true that you are to show love even when you don't "feel" like it.

- c. But fervent love can only come from a heart full of affection. It can only come from a heart that is stirred up with the love of God.
- d. Love is a feeling. It is an emotion. Don't ever think that you can divorce emotion from love. Don't even try. Christianity is primarily a religion of the heart, not the head.
- e. Peter is telling us that we are to love and care for our brethren with all our hearts.
- f. Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you love what you see of your Lord in them? Do your actions and words towards them show that you do?
- g. True faith is that which works by love (Gal. 5:6). Love is that which keeps the body of Christ together. Paul writes, "And beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col. 3:14).
- h. With this love, the church will prosper and bear witness to Christ; without it, it will wither and fall.
- i. The Spirit of Jesus says to you this morning, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

## **II. Having Shown You What the Commandment Is, I Would Like to Show You Next Where the Power to Love Like This Comes From.**

- A. Peter Says It Comes from Obedience to the Truth, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren."
  - 1. First, it is obedience to the truth that purifies the soul.
    - a. It is not exactly clear what Peter means by this. It could be one of two things.
    - b. Either he is saying that it is by believing in Christ that your souls are purified, or he is saying that it is by obeying God's Word that they are. Both are true.
    - c. The only way that you or anyone else can truly purify your souls is by believing on Christ.
      - (i) The Gospel exhorts you to turn from your sins and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
      - (ii) When you do, the blood of Christ, that blood which was shed for sinners on the cross of Calvary, is applied to your sins. It washes them all away.
      - (iii) When you do, Christ's perfect obedience is also put on your record, so that you appear before God as one who has done all things right.
      - (iv) This is the true and perfect purification and cleansing of the soul, without which no one will be able to stand before God.
  - d. But it is also true that obedience to God's commandments has a purifying effect on the soul.
    - (i) Sin pollutes and hardens the soul. But obedience purifies and softens it.
    - (ii) In Christ, by the power of His Spirit, you have the ability to obey righteousness and turn away from sin (Rom. 8:13).
    - (iii) And the more you put to death your sins, and the more you put Christ on, the more you will be purified and sanctified.

- (iv) Both are true. Peter may be referring to one or both.
2. But what he is saying is that this purification brings with it a greater ability to sincerely love your brothers and sisters in Christ.
    - a. As I quoted before, Jesus said as long as you are of the world, you will hate those who are like Him.
      - (i) You must first obey the Gospel before your heart will be changed.
      - (ii) Paul hated Christ and Christians until his heart was transformed by Christ on the road to Damascus. Then he began to love both.
    - b. But it is also true that the more you become conformed to the image of Christ through the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new, the more you will love those who are made in the image of Christ.
    - c. And so first, you must obey the truth before you can sincerely love Christ and His people. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then that which is hypocritical and phony will be taken away and your heart will be filled with a love which is genuine and sincere.
- B. But Peter Also Tells Us Where This Obedience to the Truth Comes From. It Comes Through the New Birth, “For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and abiding word of God.”
1. It takes more than a natural birth to give you the ability to obey the Gospel, it requires a supernatural birth, a rebirth.
    - a. God says that when you come into the world, you enter with a heart that is destitute of the love of Christ.
    - b. And not only is it empty of all love for Him, it is full of positive hatred, because of the Fall.
    - c. But God has not left all men to perish in their sins. He has offered to us a Savior, Christ the Lord, and life in His name.
    - d. But knowing that no one would receive Christ unless their hearts were changed, He also sends forth His Spirit to renew hearts in the new birth.
    - e. Christ Jesus earned eternal life, and He earned the gift of the Spirit to make His people willing to come.
    - f. You must have this new birth, if you are to believe in Christ and by believing to purify your souls.
  2. And the way in which God brings about this new birth is through the preaching of His Word.
    - a. Peter says, “For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and abiding word of God.”
    - b. God scatters His seed by means of a preacher. The preacher sows the Word of God. It is the Word that is living and abiding, and through the blessing of the Spirit, able to bring about the new birth.
    - c. It is completely different than any earthly seed.
      - (i) It is not like that seed which was sown to produce your earthly body.

- (ii) That human seed produced a life which is only temporary. It will one day perish.
  - (iii) But God's seed is imperishable. It produces spiritual life, a life which remains forever. It implants a spark of grace within the soul which will never be put out.
  - (iv) Peter compares the two in verses 24-25. He says, "For, 'all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever.'"
  - (v) Your natural life is as temporary as the grass in the fields. You sprout up quickly. Your best accomplishments are like little flowers. But soon those flowers fade and fall off, and your life withers and vanishes away.
  - (vi) But the Word of the Lord is not like that. It is seed which continues to live. It will endure forever. And so will those who are renewed by it.
3. Has your soul been purified by your obedience to the Gospel? Has it been sanctified through obedience to His Word? And does your life show that it is through your love to God's people?
- a. If so then the love of God is upon you. He has had mercy on you. He has sown your heart with the imperishable seed of His Word and has caused you to be born again from above by His Spirit. You will never perish, but live forever because of Christ. Rejoice in this and take comfort.
  - b. But He also exhorts you through this passage this morning to let that love abound more and more. He has placed the fountain of the Spirit in your soul, a fountain which flows with love and the fruits of love (Gal. 5:22-23). Do not block up its opening with sin. Let it flow! Let it pour out in loving thoughts, in words of encouragement, and in acts of charity.
  - c. Fervently love one another, and continually seek to perfect the unity of God's people in the service of Christ.
  - d. But if that fountain of the Spirit has been blocked with sin, then remove that barricade. Confess your sins of bitterness, anger and hatred to God. Confess your sins to those whom you have offended and seek their forgiveness. Repent of them all and turn to the Lord. And then cultivate the fruits of love that God may be glorified in you, and turn away His disciplining hand from you.
  - e. But if your heart has never been purified through faith in Christ, if you are a stranger to the grace of God, if your life is void of the love of Christ, then come to Him. Believe on Him. Ask Him to cleanse your heart and to put the fire of His Spirit within you. God is merciful, He is merciful to all who call upon Him in truth. He will do all that He offers. He will take away your sins and give you a new heart and eternal life. All who believe on Him will not be disappointed. Amen.