

1 Peter—Purified and Born to Love—1 Peter 1:22-25  
College Baptist Church  
March 7, 2021

I invite you to turn with me to the book of 1 Peter, chapter 1. 1 Peter can be found toward the end of the New Testament, just after the book of James. If you didn't bring a Bible, there are Bibles in the pew racks; I believe you will find 1 Peter 1 on p. 1014. Today's sermon text is also printed in the bulletin along with space for taking notes.

As you turn there, let me offer a brief summary of our study last week. In my opening grammar lesson, I explained that indicatives drive imperatives. That indicative realities lead to imperative commands. And we saw in 1 Peter 1:13-21 that the indicative reality of our gracious, future salvation drives Christians to obey the commands to hope fully, be holy, and behave fearfully in the present. Or to put it another way, eschatology fuels ethics. Knowing where you are headed in the future, determines how you act in the present.

In today's passage we will see once again that indicatives drive imperatives. But instead of future realities, Peter focuses in verses 22-25 on our present realities—specifically the indicatives of our present identity as people who are “purified” and “born” by the word of God. And these indicatives of identity call us to “love one another.” Today's passage is kind of a “love sandwich” if you will. The imperative to love is sandwiched between the indicatives of our status as people who are “purified” and “born” by the word of God.

Also, before we look closely at what it means to be purified and born to love, I'd like to say that the words “truth” (in v. 22), “word” (in vv. 23 & 25) and “good news” in v. 25 are essentially synonymous—they all refer generally to the overarching message of God to humanity, which finds its summary in the climactic “good news” about Jesus the Savior who died and rose again for the forgiveness of our sins. So, truth, word, and good news are basically three different ways to say the same thing. With all of this in mind by way of introduction, please follow along as I read 1 Peter 1:22-25.

<sup>22</sup> *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, **love one another** earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for*

*“All flesh is like grass*

*and all its glory like the flower of grass.*

*The grass withers,*

*and the flower falls,*

*<sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever.”*

*And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

### **Purified by Obedience to the Truth**

In verse 22, Peter points out that Christians are “*purified by obedience to the truth.*” That is the first indicative of identity that he brings to our attention. It’s a bit unfortunate that the ESV translates this word “purified,” because it could be translated “made holy.” And that would clue us in to the fact that this word is built on the same root as the command “be holy” in the previous passage. So, there is a sense in which Christians are commanded to “be holy,” but at the same time there is a sense in which Christians already are holy. The text says that Christians have been purified. Stating that Christians have been purified suggests a past action with continuing effect. So, that state of purity or holiness is not something that can be lost.

I don’t know if they are very popular anymore, but not so long ago it was quite common for people to have water filter pitchers in their refrigerator. I’m thinking of the pitchers manufactured by companies like Brita and Pur. You know, the ones that you fill with tap water. The water passes through a special filter that purifies the water from all sorts of contaminants, like lead. And then the water—having been purified—can be chilled in the pitcher in the fridge and enjoyed on demand. The water was purified in the past, but it remains pure in the present. Peter says the same is true about Christians being purified in v. 22—“*having purified your souls by obedience to the truth.*”

Surely Peter does not mean being purified from lead poisoning. He means that Christians have been purified from the stain of sin. They have been cleansed, made holy once-and-for-all—sanctified by the Spirit and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus as we saw way back in verse 2. And this purification took place “*by obedience to the truth.*”

So, let me explain what I believe Peter means by “*obedience to the truth.*” If the truth is essentially synonymous with the good news about Jesus as I said earlier, then obedience to the truth is obedience to the Gospel, the good news. So, how does one “obey the Gospel?” Well, one obeys the Gospel by responding rightly to it—and the only right response to the Gospel is to repent and believe, to turn and trust.

The truth of the Gospel is that Jesus died on the cross in the place of sinners like you and me—taking the just penalty that we deserved and enduring the righteous wrath of God. But he did not remain in the grave—he rose again in victory over sin and death and hell. And as the resurrected Lord, he extends forgiveness—purification of sins—to all those, but only those, who repent and believe. Have you obeyed the truth—repented of your sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you experienced the joy of being purified from sin once-and-for-all? If not, I sincerely beg you to obey the truth today!

And for those of you, who have “obeyed the truth” of the Gospel, let me remind you that your souls are pure. That because of Christ’s atoning work at the cross of Calvary and the ongoing sanctification of the Spirit, you are pure and holy in the sight of your holy, heavenly Father. Purified!—that is the indicative identity of a true Christian. And there is a purpose for your purity—love. Notice how verse 22 continues—“for a sincere brotherly love.” We are purified for love. But before we talk about love. Let’s talk about the other indicative identity of the Christian described in verses 23 through 25.

## **Born Again through the Word of God**

Verse 23 says that “*you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.*” Peter says that Christians have been born again. And in describing this new life, he uses the image of a seed.

A couple years ago, I tossed some wildflower seeds in the barren ditch bank across from my driveway. There were a few wildflowers last summer and I am hoping that the seeds released naturally last fall will make for an even more beautiful crop of flowers this year. But right now, the ditch bank is ugly. Why? Because those seeds and the plants that they produce are perishable. Even though they are technically perennials, they die every year. Here’s the reality, germination of perishable flower seeds always leads to death.

And in verse 24, Peter quotes from Isaiah 40 to remind his readers that human flesh—that is, our physical bodies are just like the grasses and wildflowers. We are perishable. It’s a sobering reminder of the reality of death. All flesh—all humanity—wITHERS and falls—whether by cancer or COVID. Whether at the ripe old age of 114 or in a tragic accident at age 14. As Hebrews 9:27 puts it, “*it is appointed for man to die.*” This has been the case ever since Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden of Eden—even though the LORD warned Adam in Genesis 2:17 that, “*of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*” From the day of their disobedience, death became the inescapable plight of humanity. To put it more starkly, as joyous and appropriate as it is to celebrate with an expectant couple the conception of a child, we know that the physical life within the womb will one day come to an end. Our first birth—that is, our physical birth—is born of perishable seed.

But that is not the case when we are born again as Christians. We have been conceived of an imperishable seed. We have been begotten anew by a seed that is living and abiding. And that seed is the word of God, which remains forever. And those who are born of this seed are born into an eternal family—the eternal family of God himself. Peter is reminding Christians—who are experiencing hardship and persecution, maybe even facing martyrdom—that their identity as children born into God’s eternal family cannot be taken away. By faith in the imperishable seed of God’s Word they have been born into God’s family and have an imperishable inheritance—as we heard in verse 4.

And because of these indicative identities—having been purified and born again by the word of God, we are called to love one another. That’s the meat in the middle of this sandwich at the end of verse 22. *Since* you have been born again and *because* you have been purified, love one another. So, what does this love look like? Peter describes it in three ways.

## **Love One Another**

First of all, it is a family love. We see this in verse 22, where Peter says that the purpose of our purification is “*sincere brotherly love.*” So, this is a specific command to love fellow Christians—those who are in the family of faith, those who have been purified and born into God’s family by the word of God. Elsewhere in the Bible, we are taught to love our neighbors and even our enemies—but here the focus is on loving our family.

I suspect that Peter reminds them to love their brothers and sisters in Christ because of the fact that they are being persecuted from the outside, pagan world. And when you are facing pressure from the outside, it is easy to turn on one another. Couples know this—stresses from the job result in bickering with one another. Sports teams know this—when your opponent has you down, you throw your hands up in exasperation against your own teammate when he makes a mistake. And Peter is saying that can't be the case in the church—we need to love one another especially since we are fellow sojourners and exiles living in pagan society.

And brotherly love ought to be sincere—no hypocrisy. When you are at home with those you love and those who love you, there should be no masks, only authenticity and vulnerability. And the same should be true in the church. Brotherly love is more than friendship; brotherly love is being part of the same family. It's about a common relationship with Christ and a common commitment to love one another sincerely whether or not you share the same socioeconomic status or ethnic background or recreational interests.

Second of all, it is a foundational love. Peter says this kind of love comes from a “*pure heart*.” Now when we hear the word heart as Americans we quickly think emotion. Maybe you think of romance. Maybe you think of “loving” a picture on social media or a text thread with a little heart emoji. But that's not what Peter has in mind here. To love from a “*pure heart*” is to love from the very core of your being, in a foundational sort of way. One commentator says it this way, “*The love Peter has in view is neither a warm fuzzy feeling nor friendships around a coffee pot after worship, though love as Peter defines it may involve both. Rather it refers to righteous relationships with one another that are based on God's character, which Christian behavior reflects.*” So, our love for one another has to be grounded in each of our hearts, which have been purified and made holy by the love of God for us. If you attempt to love out of your emotion you will fail, but if you love from the foundation of a heart purified by God you will succeed.

And third of all, it is a fervent love. Peter says to “*love one another earnestly.*” To love earnestly or fervently doesn't necessarily speak to the intensity of love, but rather the intentionality and initiative of Christian love. It actually can be relatively easy to put on a nice face and *pretend* like you love one another on Sundays; but it is much more difficult to go out of your way to love one another intentionally outside of these four walls. Maybe by calling a brother or sister you haven't seen in church in a while OR inviting another family over for dinner—whether you think you'll really “hit it off” or not OR being generous with time or money to someone in need OR extending love to someone with whom you disagree on peripheral issues (like masks, for instance) OR even loving someone enough to warn them about unrepentant sin. One of the greatest lies of our age is the lie that love equals affirmation. To the contrary, there are times when the *most* loving thing you can do for a fellow Christian is *not* affirm his thoughts or behaviors or speech that clearly contradict Scripture—even at the risk of losing the relationship. That's fervent love—a love that serves with unwavering intentionality for the good of your family and for the glory of God, our Father.

College Baptist—as people who have been purified and born by the Word of God, may we love one another as family from the foundation of a pure heart with intentional fervency, just as God in Christ has loved us.

**Benediction—1 Peter 5:10-11**

[May] the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, ...restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.