

I PETER

Obedience-Purity-Love

November 11, 2012

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. **I Peter 1:22-25** . . . Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, [23] for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. [24] For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, [25] but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you.
 - B. Pray
- II. Purifying our life leads to the natural expression of godly qualities, such as self-giving love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - A. **1:22a**: Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren –
 1. Notice the first three words: "**Since you have.**" God is speaking to us as if we have done our part, or at least as if we are diligently doing our part and making worthy progress in the right direction of obeying the truth – with the outcome being that of gaining a purified life (i.e., a pure heart, single mindedness, and godly desires, choices and behavior).
 - a. We see this same kind of "you have already done it" inference in:
 - (1) **Galatians 5:24** . . . Now those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.
 - (2) **Colossians 3:9-10** . . . Do not lie to one another, **since you laid aside the old self** with its evil practices, [10] **and have put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.
 - (3) Now however we decide to explain these words, or even explain them away, these are God's words to us and that alone ought to be sufficient reason to carefully ponder them until God makes it clear what He means.
 - b. So again, the first three words of verse 22 are: "**Since you have.**" And this raises the question of how are we to understand these words. I believe they are to be understood the same way we understand the words, "I am married."

- (1) Now those of us who are married know that the marriage ceremony or the first year of marriage, or even the first five years of marriage does not mean there isn't more work to be done in order to arrive at God's intended state of marital bliss for both spouses.
 - (2) Yet the fact that we are married (*and I am speaking of Christians here who are committed to living in accordance with the mind of Christ and God's Holy Scriptures*) is a clear indication that we are fully and intentionally committed to working out our marriage relationship until we reach the goal of God's intentions for marriage.
- c. This is a vital point, because until we make a firm commitment to being holy in all our behavior with a holiness like unto God's holiness, we will not do what it takes to make commendable progress toward a purified life (i.e., heart, mind, desires, choices, and behavior).
 - d. And as in a marriage, so it is in our relationship to God. We are making a two part commitment – **first**, to value our spouse so much that we are eager to love him or her as God would have us love them, and **second**, to diligently and fully do our part in becoming the partner we ought to be regardless of what anyone else does.
 - e. Therefore, the words "**Since you have**" implies that you treasure God so much that you have fully entered into the task of purifying yourself for His sake, and that you will do what is necessary to make worthy progress toward the completion of that goal.
 - f. Again, let me affirm that this does not mean we can grow in godliness and become new creatures in Christ Jesus on our own. Without question, even though salvation is all God's doing, working out our salvation by growing in godliness is the combined effort of God doing His part and you and I doing our part.
2. God goes on to say, "Since you have in obedience to the truth. . . ." Which raises the question: "What is this truth referred to here?"
 - a. Though we might at first think it is obedience to the truth concerning salvation, the context tells us it is the truth concerning how we are to live as born again ones day by day – from the first day of repentance to our dying breath. And as Peter says here, this truth includes a clear exhortation to purify our life (i.e., heart, mind, desires, choices, and behavior). John affirms this view of

the word truth in his third letter when he says: “For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. [4] I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth” (**3 John 1:3-4**).

b. Let me give you just two of the many examples of the truth that God expects us to obey in regard to living a holy life in all our behavior now that we are born again:

(1) **I John 3:2-3** . . . Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. [3] And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

(2) **Colossians 3:5-10, 12-14** . . . Therefore put to death the members of your earthly body: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. [6] For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, [7] and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. [8] But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, [10] and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him . . . [12] And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; [13] bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. [14] Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

3. Taking a larger look at that first part of **verse 22**, we read: “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls.”

a. Notice the order of words: A firm commitment leads to obedience which produces a purified life. This order represents a truth that is vital to our spiritual growth. The way to a purified life, that is, a pure heart, single-mindedness, and godly desires, choices, and behavior, is through a **committed** and then **growing** obedience to the revealed truth of God.

(1) I am calling it a **committed obedience** because we have repented of our rebellion against God and have started down

the narrow path with a firm, intentional commitment to obey God's will and word from then on. In essence, our commitment to obedience is the anchor that keeps us focused and determined to obey from the beginning of our faith in God to the end of our days here on the earth.

- (2) I am calling it a **growing obedience** because our ability to see just how rebelliously disobedient, selfish, and sinful we are is limited by our current understanding of God, His word, and ourselves, which is limited by our level of earthly maturity and the length of time we have been a Christian.
 - (3) Therefore, we have entered into a **growing obedience** because as we do our part to bring more and more of our life into obedience to God's truth, we are progressively transformed, more and more, into the likeness of Christ.
 - b. One common problem here is our human tendency to want God to change us by some magic formula or set of prayers or through a special work of the Holy Spirit or through what is known as the second work of grace. However, nothing will accomplish the purifying of our lives like submitting to God's will and obeying God's word.
 - c. In fact, the greater our effort and the longer we persevere at purifying our life, the further we will go in becoming holy in all our behavior. In other words, your growth in holiness and gaining a purified life will be equal to the sustained effort you put forth.
 - d. And just to remind us again, doing our part is essential to growing in holiness, but it is only effective when accompanied by God's gracious assistance and empowerment.
4. Returning to the first half of **verse 22**, we read: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren." There are two important points to make here:
- a. **First**, the intentional pursuit of a purified life, through a maturing growth in obedience to the will and word of God, has as one of its natural outcomes a growing love for your brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - b. **Second**, sincere love is the opposite of hypocritical love or faked love masquerading as if it were real love. And that is one of the obvious reasons why the purifying process must come first and this love to follow, for only a heart and mind that is being purified can produce sincere love – free of hypocrisy.

- B. **1:22b**: Fervently love one another from the heart!
1. The second half of **verse 22** is God's exhortation to us based on having arrived at the place of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ with a sincere, unhypocritical love.
 2. And to get the most from what God is saying here, there is one word and one phrase that we must pay attention to.
 - a. **First**, there is the word "**fervently**," which means ardently, intensely, eagerly, and zealously. These descriptive words describe attitudes and actions that are easily observed by those around us, and so should our love for one another.
 - (1) Jesus spoke of fervent love's outward manifestations when he told His disciples that the world would know they were His disciples, if they had this kind of love for one another (**John 13:35**).
 - (2) The point here is that fervent love cannot be hidden, because its fervency makes it obvious.
 - b. **Second**, the phrase, "Love from the heart."
 - (1) This phrase is important because the first mention of love here in verse 22 – a love that is an outcome of purifying our lives – comes from the Greek word "philadelphia" and is commonly translated as brotherly love, or as the NASB puts it, love of the brethren.
 - (2) The second use of the word love here in verse 22 – a love which we are exhorted to pursue after gaining brotherly love – comes from the Greek word "agapao" and speaks of self-giving or self-sacrificial love. God speaks of this kind of love for one another in **I John 3:16** . . . "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This is self-giving love.
 - (3) The point here is simple. Our love for one another is to grow beyond the family kind of love to the kind of love with which Christ loves us – a gracious self-giving, self-sacrificial love.
 - (a) Now you may be wondering why God exhorts us to progress from brotherly love to self-giving love. I believe the answer is this: If we love everyone in this room according to how they love us, our love will be the love of reciprocity – giving as we get. And though this may be the common practice in brotherly love, it is a form of love that is still too concerned with me and not enough with God and others.

- (b) It is only when we willingly and intentionally love everyone in this room according to the way Christ loves us, that our love becomes the love of gracious self-giving, regardless of what we get. And though the love of reciprocity might work well in some situations, in the Church, the love of gracious self-giving, for God's sake and the sake of those receiving the benefits of our love, is what works best.
 - 3. Before moving to verse 23, let me point out that even our love for our fellow Christians is spoken of as a progressively growing love – a love that begins at the brotherly love level and is to rise to the gracious self-giving level. And here again, the principle of spiritual growth holds true – we will only rise as high in our love for one another as we rise in our purity of life, for it is the impurities in our life that diminish or hold back our love from rising to the level of Christ's love for us.
- C. **1:23:** For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.
- 1. God is once again providing a motivating reason to press on toward holiness in all our behavior. This time, the motivating reason is the value we place on God's word to us in the Holy Scriptures.
 - 2. What makes God's word so valuable? Like Jesus – who is the Living Word, it is imperishable, it is alive, and it endures forever. Note:
 - a. The Word of God is living and active, convicting us while bringing God's truth to the depths of our being (**Hebrews 4:12**).
 - b. The Word of God imparts life to us and transforms us by teaching us, reproving us, correcting us, and training us in the ways of righteousness (**I Thess. 2:13; II Timothy 3:16-17**).
 - c. The word of God cleans us up from the dirt and vileness of sin (**John 15:3; John 17:17; Ephesians 5:25-27**).
 - d. The Word of God provides light for our way (**Psalms 119:105**).
 - e. The Word of God gives us supernatural power against temptation (**Luke 4:1-13**).
 - f. And the word of God leads us to God.
 - 3. We can take great comfort in the fact that the word of God never needs any corrections, or any additions, or even any deletions. It may need to be explained to some of us in order for us to better understand it, but it is not our explanations alone that bring clarity to God's word,

for the Holy Spirit is the One who works in the one explaining and the one learning to bring the clarity needed.

4. What other book is able to do all this? This is why we ought to:
 - a. Read and study and ponder God's word
 - b. Memorize and meditate on specific portions of God's word
 - c. Measure our thoughts, words, and deeds by God's word
 - d. And use God's word in our evangelism
 5. One of the mysteries of God is that both Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures are the living and enduring word of God. Added to that is the fact that the Holy Spirit both reveals Jesus Christ to us (**John 16:14**) and illuminates God's word to us (**John 16:13; I John 2:27**).
 6. Which brings us to **I Peter 1:24-25**.
- D. **1:24-25**: For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, [25] but the word of the Lord endures forever." And it is this living and enduring word which was preached to you.
1. And to us.
 2. Oh that we would feast on God's word and receive its rich truths as an anchor for our faith and directions for our behavior, for God's Holy Scriptures is like living manna that comes down from Heaven to feed us and transform us and prepare us for what lies ahead.

III. Conclusion

- A. In summary: God exhorts us to purify our lives through the process of submitting to and obeying – more and more – God's will and word. As we gain greater purity, we gain a growing love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. And though this love begins as a brotherly kind of love, God exhorts us to press forward into a love for each other that is graciously self-giving, just like Christ's love for us.
- B. Finally, being holy as God is holy in all our behavior is a big task. Peter breaks that task down into smaller parts by giving us examples of where and how to be holy. The first two areas addressed are the fear of God and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to encourage each of us to give proper attention to these two areas, because they are foundational to many other areas where we can and ought to grow in holiness.