

Loving Your Neighbor: Beyond Human Ability

1 Peter 1:22

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

Peter here lays great stress on love among brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and encourages the believers to do so fervently. But he also gives us the only way that this process can be accomplished.

* “This is one of the strongest statements of brotherly love in the New Testament, for it virtually makes brotherly love the goal of our conversion.” Life Application Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Peter & Jude

I am persuaded That we do not often think of it that way. We think that getting to heaven is the goal of our conversion. But think for a moment. If our sin kept us from doing what God wanted and then God saves us, don't you think that the two greatest commandments would be what God is working toward in all of this.

God makes us able to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And only He can enable us to love one's neighbor as ourself.

Peter understood the natural condition. He knew what it meant to be self-centered, arrogant, and proud. He also knew that it was only by God's grace, a work of God, that he came to be the apostle that he was.

*In temporal affairs, however, one may do differently. You may learn from the carpenter, or teach yourself, how to construct a building; from a painter you may learn to paint; from a shoemaker, to make shoes; from a scribe, to write. But how to serve God, how all works become good, this you must learn, not from man, but from God. God teaches you to believe in him and to love your neighbor, in all your works. Martin Luther

So in this passage this morning, Peter gives us the secret of being able to love our neighbor. Let us consider it.

- I. Since you have
 - A. God works through us not on us
 - 1. In the process of salvation the sinner who co-operates with God.
 - 2. It is not as though we were in surgery, on conscience as God did his work.
 - 3. Rather God makes us a participant in this process.
 - 4. So although it is not something we can do of ourselves, yet we must work with God.
 - B. God uses means to accomplish this in us as we will see.
 - 1. Primarily the word of God, and the Spirit of God.

2. But also from Romans Chapter 10 we learned that one cannot believe without a messenger.
3. That is where you and I come in.
4. We a responsibility to be God's messengers to those who have never purified their hearts through the Spirit in obeying the truth.

II. Purified your souls

- A. "The souls of Christians must be purified before they can so much as love one another unfeignedly. There are such lusts and partialities in man's nature that without divine grace we can neither love God nor one another as we ought to do; there is no charity but out of a pure heart." MHC
- B. This tells us that our souls are not naturally pure.
 1. This is one of the first things that we need to realize.
 2. We often hear phrases such as he was good at heart.
 3. Man was created upright or pure but he fell from that estate.
- C. The purity of our souls is indispensable to the Christian life.
 1. We cannot live as God would wish without it.
 2. Without this purity our minds would always focus on earthly things.
 3. Without this purity we not only would be in the world but of the world.

III. In obeying the truth

- A. Truth is indispensable to this process.
 1. Notice what Jesus said in John 17; Joh 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 19 "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."
 2. That is why the word of God is so important.
- B. The word of God is what the Holy Spirit uses to save us.
 1. Ro 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
 2. Jas 1:18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.
 3. 1Pe 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.
 4. 2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

- C. And it is God's Word that cleanses us.
 - 1. Eph 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
 - 2. As we read in John 17, sanctify them through thy truth thy word is truth

IV. Through the Spirit

- A. But we noticed the agency that God uses to accomplish this.
- B. The word of God without the Spirit of God will not accomplish the work of God.
- C. The word of God is a great tool but without the Spirit of God it becomes an academic exercise.
- D. Simply making up our mind to love our neighbor as ourselves will never work.
 - 1. In the realm of spiritual accomplishment God has locked us into Himself.
 - 2. That's why I suggested praying for your neighbor as we talked about last week.
 - 3. Because it is only as you seek the power of God that you will be able to accomplish the will of God.
 - 4. It's a humbling experience to realize that you're powerless to do the will of God on your own.
 - 5. But it is the first step on the road to success.

V. In sincere love of the brethren,

- A. The result will be a sincere love of the brethren.
 - 1. As the quote that we used earlier in the message says Peter makes us so important that it seems that love for the brethren is the goal of our salvation.
 - 2. Jesus did say by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, by your love for one another.
 - 3. Sad isn't it, that that is not what we are known for.
- B. We might think that the end of spiritual maturity would be a great mind.
 - 1. As one fellow said some Christians are so spiritually minded their of no earthly good.
 - 2. True spirituality will work its way out in actions toward others.
- C. We might think that spiritual greatness means some great position.
 - 1. True piety will bring us closer to God but it will also bring us closer to His

children.

2. Jesus was the greatest spiritual character on God's stage, but you cannot see Him without seeing his love for others.

D. A Peter tells us that spiritual purity leads to a sincere love of the brethren.

1. The word sincere here means without hypocrisy.
2. The old King James word was unfeigned love.
3. It means to be without pretense.
4. But we are so good at pretense.
5. We put a smile on her face and shake hands with little grudges and our heart.
6. That's why there's so much trouble in churches.

VI. Love one another fervently

- A. *Fervently*; or, vehemently, and intensely, strongly. The word seems to be a metaphor taken from a bow, which the more it is bent, with the greater force it sends forth the arrow; so love, the more fervent and strong it is, the more abundantly it puts forth itself for the benefit of others. Poole
- B. Another writer said that this word referred to strength and corresponds to the greatest to the greatest commandment to love the Lord with all our strength.

VII. With a pure heart

- A. A pure heart has no other agenda.
- B. A pure heart has a single focus.
- C. A pure heart has no other motive.
- D. A pure heart comes only from God.

Do you have a pure heart today? It only comes from God you know. Try as you may you will never be able to put others before yourself unless God works in you.

Go to Lord. Ask Him to purify your soul, to give you a love for the brethren without hypocrisy. And He will do it.

1Th 4:9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

Other Notes

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Author: Barton, Bruce B., D. Min.; Fackler, Mark, Ph.D.; Taylor, Linda K.; Veerman, Dave, M. Div.

The Greek word for “deeply” is an athletic term meaning “with every muscle straining.” Despite our differences and disagreements, we can have genuine affection for one another, and as we grow in holiness, we can learn to love one another deeply because of the Holy Spirit within us.

Such love is not possible in the world at large, for it doesn't understand the love that results when people's sins are forgiven and their souls are purified. This experience brings together even very different believers on the common ground of forgiveness in Christ and requires them to love one another as Christ loved them. Peter no doubt remembered Jesus' words to him and the other disciples at their last supper together: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35)

3. Love with a pure heart (v. 22). Men speak romantically about loving from the heart, but God speaks realistically about loving from a pure heart. The Proverb asks the question, “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin’” (Prov. 20:9). The answer is that no one can cleanse or purify himself or herself from sin. As Peter has just reminded us, only Christ can do that (vv. 19-20).

Cedar, P. A., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1984). Vol. 34: The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 34 : James / 1 & 2 Peter / Jude. Formerly The Communicator's Commentary. The Preacher's Commentary

II. He exhorts them to brotherly love.

1. He supposes that the gospel had already had such an effect upon them as to purify their souls while they obeyed it through the Spirit, and that it had produced at least an unfeigned love of the brethren; and thence he argues with them to proceed to a higher degree of affection, to love one another with a pure heart fervently, #1Pe 1:22. Learn,

(1.) It is not to be doubted but that every sincere Christian purifies his soul. The apostle takes this for granted: Seeing you have, &c. To purify the soul supposes some great uncleanness and defilement which had polluted it, and that this defilement is removed. Neither the Levitical purifications under the law, nor the hypocritical purifications of the outward man, can effect this.

(2.) The word of God is the great instrument of a sinner's purification: Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth. The gospel is called truth, in opposition to types and shadows, to error and falsehood. This truth is effectual to purify the soul, if it be obeyed, #Joh 17:17. Many hear the truth, but are never purified by it, because they will not submit to it nor obey it.

(3.) The Spirit of God is the great agent in the purification of man's soul. The Spirit convicts the soul of its impurities, furnishes those virtues and graces that both adorn and purify, such as faith (#Ac 15:9), hope (#1Jo 3:3), the fear of God (#Ps 34:9), and the love of Jesus Christ. The

Spirit excites our endeavours, and makes them successful. The aid of the Spirit does not supersede our own industry; these people purified their own souls, but it was through the Spirit.

(4.)

(5.) It is the duty of all Christians sincerely and fervently to love one another. Our affection to one another must be sincere and real, and it must be fervent, constant, and extensive. MHC

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

2Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

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

Jas 2:15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

Jas 2:16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

1Jo 3:14 ¶ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Loving your neighbor is something positive. It is something that results in action. You cannot love someone and do nothing toward them. Love is not simply the absence of hate.

Love: not an emotional affection, but, like God's love, a principle of active benevolence.

Love works: the principle personified, as in 1 Cor. 13. It moves us to beneficent activity, and thus keeps us from doing harm. But this is the purpose of the above commands.

1 Tim 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

1:6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

But, since this great commandment is altogether beyond our power to obey, it is virtually a promise that God will Himself breathe into us the love He requires: a promise fulfilled in those who believe it. Consequently this commandment, which at once secures the homage of our moral sense, is to us no longer law but a part of the Gospel. It has been buried in the grave of Christ, and

with Him has risen into new life. Beet's New Testament Commentary

14. "For the law has been fulfilled in one word; in this, i.e., thou shalt love thy neighbor with Divine love as thyself." God alone can give the agapee, which is His own nature. Hence, if you love your neighbor with Divine love as yourself it is prima facie evidence you love the Lord with all your heart. Perfect love fulfills the law because it confers the disposition to keep the law perfect, and God looks at the heart, taking the will for the deed. Perfect love gives us the disposition of Christ, who has satisfied the law for us. Hence, Christian perfection is perfect love and not perfect worth. Godbey Commentary

How will you fare with God if you do not love your neighbor? Feeling this commandment written within your heart, your conscience will condemn you. Your whole conduct will be an example witnessing against you, testifying to your failure to do unto others as the natural instinct of your being, more forcibly than all the examples of the saints, has taught you to do. Martin Luther

If hell be a fiction, say so, amid honestly play the infidel; but if it be real, and you believe it, wake up, you that so believe, and leave no stone unturned, no means untried, by which through the power of the Holy Spirit sinners may be saved. Pledge yourselves this night, as with your hands upon the horns of the altar; pledge yourselves as you sit in the place where God has often met with you, that from this hour you will seek, God helping you, to love your neighbor as yourself, and prove your love by pitying earnestness in seeking his salvation. That truth seems to be written clearly enough in letters of fire in the midst of the smoke that cometh up from the desolation of lost souls. Spurgeon

By the word neighbor we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, nae or near, (near) and buer, (to dwell) persons residing, or being near us, and if anyone in the world is near us he is our neighbor. Spurgeon

Do not neglect them; and when thou goest, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes, not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction; but go to thy brother as if thou were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due, and sit by his side, and talk to him; and if he be one that hath a high spirit, give him not thy charity as a charity, give it to him in some other way, lest thou break his head with the very box of ointment with which thou hadst intended to have anointed him. Spurgeon

Christ did not turn — when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when they crucified him,

and nailed him to the tree, he cried, "Father, forgive them." Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in thy bosom, love which many waters cannot quench, love which the floods cannot drown. Love thy neighbors. Spurgeon