

“Equipped for Passionate Unhypocritical Love”

REVIEW

Peter wrote to a group of Christians struggling to live the Christian life in an unfriendly environment; at times even hostile. Our culture today becomes increasingly hostile to Christianity every day. Every other belief system enjoys tolerance except Christianity. In addition to the hostility toward our beliefs, we live in a world that is severely broken. Life can be difficult. Peter acknowledged his reader's struggle with various trials. In spite of their trials, they maintained their love for and trust in Christ.

Living well in a broken ungodly world.

Peter's whole letter provided the foundation and specifics of how Christians should live out their faith in a difficult environment.

I. Realize your heritage as children of God 1:3-12

Peter first laid the foundation of living well in a broken ungodly world. In order to live different one must become different at the core of their being. Everybody enters this world connected to a heritage passed down from our ancestors. That heritage includes physical appearance, propensities, emotional and mental capacities, spiritual disconnect, moral deviance, relational disconnect.

Peter referred to this negative heritage several times through his letter.

Passions of you FORMER ignorance 1:14

Futile ways inherited from your forefathers 1:18

Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander 2:1

Soul destroying fleshly passions 2:11

Living for the flesh rather than God 4:2

Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4:3

Paul put it this way to the Ephesians.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Ephesians 2:1-3

Peter called the readers to focus on a new heritage made possible through Jesus. Just as our first birth came with negative traits, our NEW birth comes with amazing traits and benefits. He called on the readers to bless God for having caused us to be born again. Our spiritual birth into God's family provides an ongoing confidence for life. Our spiritual birth promises a future secure inheritance that not only includes personal transformation until we become like Jesus, but a place to live in our Heavenly Father's house and unhindered connection to the Trinity. It is an inheritance reserved in heaven for us that is unfading, undefiled, and imperishable. Not only is our inheritance protected but we are protected by the power of God. This new birth brings about changes to the very core of our being.

This truth inspired great joy among the struggling Christians in spite of their circumstances. This new birth made possible through the horrendous suffering of Christ and subsequent glorious resurrection was predicted by the Spirit-inspired ancient prophets and proclaimed by the Spirit-inspired preachers of Peter's time. This amazing new birth has been the continual fascination of angelic beings.

Peter will make frequent reference to this new heritage, this new connection to God as our Father as the motivation to live differently in a broken ungodly world.

Live different because you are different!

The rest of the letter specifies how we are to live in a broken world.

He began generally and then addresses specific struggles we all face in life.

II. Live Your heritage as children of God 1:13-5:11

A. Continually live holy as Your heavenly father is holy 1:13-21

The model for living is God Himself. We are His kids so we are to act like His kids.

We have His DNA so we are to demonstrate His character in all our behavior.

How are we to do this?

- Focus our thinking on eternal things. (Having girded up the lions of your mind)
- Clearing our thinking of earthly things. (Continually being sober minded)
- Resist allowing yourself to be conformed to the old way of life; the old heritage.
- Become holy in every area of your life.
- Conduct yourselves in reverent fear during you stay on the earth.

KNOWING that you were ransomed (made new, rescued) with a high price.

What was the price?

It was Jesus who paid the price with His very life. It is the same Jesus who existed from before the world began but came to earth to give His life for us on the cross and was gloriously raised again by the Father. His suffering and subsequent glory was fulfilled during His time on the earth. It is through Him that we put our trust in God and have confidence in the future.

That brings us to our present passage.

B. Passionately Love un-hypocritically 1:22-25

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:22-25

1. What?

The main command in this passage does not appear at the beginning.

The main command is “Love one another”.

Love one another with a fervent love.

Love one another from a pure heart.

Peter uses the word “agape” for love.

The Greeks had four different words for love.

Eros – feeling love based on mutual good feelings

Storge – family love based on mutual family connection

Philos – friendship love based on mutual warmth and companionship

Agape – foundational love based on a decision of the will to connect to others.

God loves us with “agape” love based on a decision coming out of His own character to connect with us apart from our worthiness or merit. Peter intensifies this basic idea of love with a fervency and a purity.

“Fervent” means to stretch to its limit or potential. To be fully extended without undue let up. Love with intense strain.

It was used to describe the intensity of prayer by the church for Peter in prison.

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Acts 12:5

Peter used it again in chapter 4:8

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

We are to love fervently. We are to love one another from a pure or clean heart. The term is found several places in the New Testament.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. John 15:3

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1:5

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:22

The kind of love Peter calls every born again Christian to demonstrate is thoroughly described in 1 Corinthians 13. It is very convicting list of characteristics. Paul found it necessary to remind that church who had fallen into self-serving behavior what genuine love looks like in real life.

Jesus said genuine love would distinguish his followers.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

It is the dominant mark of genuine connection to Jesus.

And live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:2

Peter called for such love for one another again in 3:8 and 4:8.

Since everyone enters this world with a selfish bent, what enables the demonstration of genuine love for others?

2. How?

Peter provided here two factors related to the ability to passionately love one another from a pure heart.

a. Having Purified your souls by obedience to the Word of God

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love,

God pours His love into us by the Spirit so that we can pour it into others.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:38-39
This love is like refreshing life giving water. It is the first trait mentioned of one directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

This love is most effective when it comes from a purified heart. Otherwise it carries pollutants. Ever try to drink water from a container that once held with gasoline. It taints the water. Before God’s love can flow through us, there must be a thorough cleaning of the container; our heart. Peter says this cleansing happened at the time we trusted Christ. It happened when we decided to obey the truth. This is the third time Peter used this term “obedience”.

To the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 1 Peter 1:2

As children of obedience, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 1 Peter 1:14

Scripture considers this action as almost synonymous with faith in Christ. You cannot have true faith without obedience. To embrace Christ without obeying Christ is impossible. Paul was appointed to bring about OBEDIENCE.

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, Romans 1:5

For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, Romans 15:18

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:17-18

The idea of RECEIVING Christ is one thing. The concept of obedience is quite another. We are saved by faith, but I think that obedience is inherent in the faith that saves. Peter used a perfect tense participle. Having had our hearts purified by obedience to the truth at a point in time and they are still purified. What was the purpose of our hearts begin purified? To demonstrate an un-hypocritical brotherly love. Interesting that Peter employed both terms for love in this passage. Both terms showed up in a conversation between Peter and Jesus in John 21.

The term translated “sincere” come from the Greek theater where actors pretended to be something other than their real self – hypocrites.

The cleansing of our heart enables a love that is genuine. If we are enabled to love without hypocrisy assumes that there is a hypocritical love. Paul urged the Romans to love without hypocrisy.

Let love be unhypocritical.

Paul followed that command with a whole list of things that characterize unhypocritical love.

Abhorring what is evil.

Clinging to what is good.

Loving with warm fondness

Outdoing one another in showing honor

Not being slothful but fervent in your service to the Lord and one another.

Rejoicing in hope

Being long-suffering in tribulation

Being constant in prayer

Contributing to the needs of the saints

Showing hospitality

Blessing those who persecute you without cursing them

Rejoicing with those who rejoice

Weeping with those who weep

Living in harmony with one another

Associating with the lowly without being proud

Not being wise in your own eyes

Not repaying evil for evil

Doing what is honorable

Living peaceable with all men

Not taking vengeance

Overcoming evil with good

Too often our actions are tainted with selfish self-protective motives. The number ONE challenge of living in a broken ungodly world is to love.

Love fervently.

Love from the heart.

Love sincerely.

We can do it because God makes it possible through a cleansed heart.

This kind of love is possible because God cleanses our heart at conversion. Such love is possible because it flows out of our NEW core.

b. Having been born again through the Word of God

Having been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God 1 Peter 1:22-23

Peter again used a perfect tense verb. Love because you have been born again at a moment in time and you still are! It came about through obedience to the continually active and eternal word of God.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:11-12

I will have more to say about the Word of God next week but here Peter contrasts the enduring quality of God's word with man's fleeting fleshly nature.

for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:24-25

It is obedience to the Word of God that brings about the new birth which births a new core. Again the idea is to live differently because we ARE different.

The disciples knew the wonder and power of the Words of truth.

So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Joh 6:67-69

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

Yes Jesus clearly told His disciples that they would be known to be His disciples by their love. To be like Jesus is to love like Jesus.

Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:4-6

By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 1 John 3:10-11

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 1 John 3:14

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:17-18

And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 1 John 3:23

What does it look like to live like Jesus in a broken ungodly environment?

Love one another.

Love fervently.

Love from a pure heart.

Love unhyprocritically.

It seems impossible. There are so many hard to love people in the world; even in our families.

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? Matthew 5:44-46

If it were easy we wouldn't need Jesus. Everyone could do it. It would grab anyone's attention.

We can do it because God has poured His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We can do it because God has purified our hearts for an unhyprocritical love.

We can do it because we have been born again with ability to love like Jesus.

We can do it by living by the direction and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle John wrote...

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also

ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 1 John 4:7-13

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1 Peter 1:22-23