

I am going to read the entire thought connected with **1:22** so we can keep things in context; and we will get to the rest of the passage next week, but tonight we are limiting our study to just one verse.

1 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, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring 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 word that was preached to you.

So far, the Spirit has been pounding us with the truth of who we are to God arguing that this truth should cause a shift in our perspective on this life. He desires us to live as aliens who do not belong to this world but have been sent here on a mission from God. What we learned last week about the way Jesus always interposes His blood between the Father's judgment and our works was simply phenomenal, amazing, and fantastic. Then add to it what He said about the worthlessness of the way of life we have inherited from our forefathers, and the Spirit gave us some very powerful reasons why we can live like the aliens that we are. And with that as our foundation, the Spirit now begins to put some meat on the bones, so to speak, and give real solid definition as to what it practically

means to live like an alien. And as we should expect by now, He starts off with our relationships detailing how we should, as fellow aliens, deal with each other.

The first part of this passage adds a dimension to our salvation experience that you might not be totally aware of since it is not usually included in the normal discussion regarding accepting Christ. Most of us accepted Jesus in to our lives thinking about what He did for us and what He will do for us—the whole thing tends to be a very “me” oriented approach to a relationship with Christ (and for many that is how it remains). But that was never the Spirit’s intention. Sadly, most of us did not get educated about the rest of the story in terms of the “why” – why He did what He did for us. The truth is, He saved you for many purposes, but one specific purpose is that you were saved to love: to love those whose make their abode in this world and to love one another—to love those who live to do the will of the Father and are not part of this world.

Let’s start with the interesting little phrase: “In obedience to the truth.” The Greek is literally: “in the obedience of the truth.” You see, “obedience” is not a verb; thus, this is not talking about your behavior. This is very important to keep in mind or else you might twist the meaning of this passage. “Obedience” is actually a noun; “the obedience of the truth” describes a state of existence. For instance, we can confidently say we live in the obedience of the truth. The obedience of the truth defines our life. That does not mean we are always obedient to the truth, clearly not. But our lives having been stamped in the blood are in obedience to the truth. According to what we learned in **John 6:28-29**, “obedience to the truth” became your reality when you believed in the Son and bet your life on all that He says He is for when you believed in Jesus, God justified

you, or made you right with Him as Jesus became your obedience (**Romans 8:3-9**). Thus, as a true believer, your existence is “in obedience to the truth.”

Next, “purified your souls” is an extremely comforting statement (which, by the way, once again gives us assurance of our redemption which we learned is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God for a salvation to be revealed in the last days). “Purified” is in the *perfect active participle*. The *perfect* tense indicates that it is a done deal. It was done in the past. When you made the choice (hence the *active* voice), to receive Jesus into your life, your soul was purified and your purification is still in effect; and being a *participle*, this is a continued state of existence. In other words, your soul never becomes unpurified. How amazing is that.

Even though you choose to sin and give yourself to all manner of darkness, you have been purified and you are purified and you will continue to be purified. That is what it means to be stamped in the blood and why **Romans 5:1** makes it clear that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, there stands nothing between you and God which could ever sully, tarnish, or separate you from His love (**Romans 8:38-39**). And this peace came through Jesus Christ who, as we learned, continually interposes His blood between the Father’s judgment and our sinful deeds. The blood of Jesus ensures this peace and is the very means through which our souls have been and are purified.

Now, let’s bounce back to the beginning phrase: “Since you have.” This phrase communicates both purpose and the reason for the command. In the obedience of the truth you were purified for a purpose. And this purpose was for love—both brotherly love (in the Greek “*filadelfia*”) and Godly divine love (“*agape*”). Hence, I

am sorry to have to tell you this, but your redemption was not just about you, but it was also about your relationship with others. Let's tackle these one at a time starting first with the purpose, "for brotherly love." Now, I have difficulty with the NASB translation because the Greek says, for sincere or unfeigned brotherly love—for "filadelfia"—and it does not say, for a sincere love of the brethren. I am sure the translators thought that fit the context, but given the next command is for us to "agape" one another, I don't follow their translation choice and it sure seems to narrow the scope of responsibility in terms of our lives in this world.

As children of God, as aliens, we were redeemed unto love. God has loved us and we are to have a general brotherly love for others. Since we are commanded to agape one another, I believe that brotherly love, or "filadelfia" is to be our general attitude toward all people. "Filadelfia" is only used 6 times in the New Testament. Two of those times are found in **1 Peter (1:22 and 3:8)**, and it is also found in **2 Peter 1:7; Romans 12:10; Hebrews 13:1; and 1 Thessalonians 4:9**. In staring at these passages, what becomes clear is that as children of God, and by way of the new nature that God has given us, we are expected to have a tender and affectionate brotherly love for others.

Simply said, as children of God we have no right to hate others, to discriminate against others, to treat them shamefully, or to be cold to them. We are to be known as the people of brotherly love. And it is the reality that our souls have been purified that enables us to live in this manner. All you have to do is pick up any news source and you will quickly find that brotherly love is not the norm. People seem to love to separate, divide, hate, bite at each other in anger, and even tear each other apart. Absent the supernatural work of the Spirit of God,

there is not a single slice of society that is exempt from this love for indulgent selfishness, and sadly that includes most religious communities. Even within the family of God this seems to be such a struggle. As a gauge of our relationship with God, we should consider whether our relationships at work, casual relationships, family relationships, those with our neighbors, and even just our sentiments toward other people groups, are bound by brotherly love or if they are bound by self-love. This is an easy test since the fruit is pretty obvious.

After all, brotherly love is supposed to be unfeigned or sincere; in other words, you are not to put on a “Christian” smile and pretend and fake your way through situations. Your love is to be legitimate. Again, this is such an easy test to see if you are submitted to the Spirit. You know how it is when you really cannot stand someone, you may smile and give them your pleasantries, but then you walk away and you are filled with all sorts of ugliness. It is awful. The Spirit wants our love to be genuine, heartfelt, and earnest.

Now the Spirit is not saying that you have to somehow muster up this power to love; as we know the works of our hands do not make an acceptable offering to God. He desires things that flow from our heart, from our willingness, from our choosing to agree with His wisdom for our lives. In verse **24** and **25** the Spirit gives us the key or the source of our ability to love, and it is found in the reality of our new life and how it has been imparted to us. The point is, God always provides us the resources to live like the aliens that we are; we just have to be shaken up once in a while to stay in practical touch with the reality of our new life.

Think about the Spirit’s main theme: our lives as aliens in this world. In essence, the Spirit is saying that since you do not belong here (you have been born of

different seed) you must not let those whose abode is found in the world—those who are attached to this world—control you. Notice, I am not just talking about unbelievers, but anyone who has practically made their abode in this world. You are to be free from the attachments to this world. If what a person does can provoke you to anger, hate, separation, division, malice, disdain, and so on, it is a clear sign that you are not seeing things from the Lord's perspective and you are not yet at peace with how He wants you to live. You are not seeing people from the perspective of one who does not belong to them or to this place.

As people who make their abode in this world, they do what they do according to their nature; and treating others with hate and ugliness is consistent with their nature. Even more, treating the true people of God with absolute disdain and contempt is what darkness does with light. **John 3:20** says that everyone who does evil (who does things that do not derive from God) hates the light. We are to know this reality, accept this reality, and not be surprised at the fiery trials that we endure at the hands of others. In fact, we should expect them so we can deal with those people and those situations with mercy and from the Spirit and not reactively with our flesh. We are to be those freaks, those aliens, those foreigners who live according to a totally different set of relational dynamics that defy the norm and reject that desire to separate, divide, hate, and hurt.

To live this way, you must live in the truth; therefore, you must NOT expect and hope for love and acceptance from those in this world; they will not take care of you. It is not their nature. You don't belong; you have no place; in fact, you are an enemy and should be expected to be treated as one. That is why we are warned that it is a problem if the world is suddenly saying good things about us (**Luke**

6:26). As children of God, this is our reality and it applies to all relationships (friends, family, church members, etc.). Thus, all the energy we pour in to trying to find acceptance and approval from those in our lives is a waste of time. God gives us our acceptance. He has approved us. He calls us His own. We belong to Him. We are therefore free to trust the outcomes of our lives with the one who is the Lord, our God Almighty. He has our backs covered. Besides, from what we learned **1:6-7**, any difficulty in our lives is from His hand; He allows it, He prescribes it, He directs it, and it is for our good—to conform us into the image of His Son. We may be the enemies of those in the world through whom our trials come, but they are not our enemy. They are just people being used by the enemy who is being used by God to prove out our faith and prove out the Father’s purposes in our lives. Thus, we can extend to them brotherly love; it is ok.

However, in order to be one who is marked by brotherly love, we must gird up the loins of our minds with this truth: we do not fight flesh and blood (people are not our enemy), rather, according to **Ephesians 6:12-13** our fight is against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. That is our fight. We must know the truth, understand the truth, agree with the truth, agree that the truth is our truth, and fully adopt God’s perspective of our lives and our purposes in this world. If you are a person who is defined by brotherly love, you will stand out as a light in this world and it will be the most commanding witness imaginable, more than any words you could ever speak.

In transitioning to the command for us to agape love one another, I want to look at two instances where brotherly love is used in connection with agape love.

It reinforces this idea that brotherly love is to be our baseline of operation.

2 Peter 1:1-11

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the

eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

I thought it was important that we looked at this entire passage. It is clear to see that God's promises in our lives are about us learning to live in the divine nature, or the ***New Creation***—learning to live as aliens. We have been given everything we need to live in this manner, nothing is lacking. But as with all things there is this wonderful intersection between God's provision and our choice of faith. God has done His part and in the nature of true relationship we need to reciprocate and choose, by faith, to walk in what He has provided. As we do, there is this staircase of maturity which God takes us up in our journey of appropriating the divine nature. Each step is ours to take; He has just made it possible for us to take each step. Moreover, He does not force us to walk; He just induces us to walk the steps of diligence, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly love, and agape love.

These are the qualities of a true alien and walking these steps makes us useful and fruitful in our time on this earth. Those who do not walk this path are blind and short-sighted and have forgotten that their souls have been purified. But I hoped you noticed that at the apex of this staircase is brotherly love and in your brotherly love agape love. One leads to the other. The point is this: you cannot act like you have the love of God in your soul when your attitude and choices towards others do not reflect even the basics of brotherly love. And those who try and pull this off are fools. They are blind, they cannot see, and they have deceived

themselves. They have confused the religious part of their *Old Sinful Nature* with the divine qualities of the ***New Creation***.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

Now as to the love of the brethren [“filadelfia”], you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love [“agape”] one another.

In writing to the church at Thessalonica, Paul assumes brotherly love because they had been taught by God to love one another with God’s agape love—a love that comes only from His divine nature. The implication is that if at a minimum brotherly love does not define your relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ, then you have deceived yourselves; and despite your best intentions, you are not actively participating in the divine nature. If you are accessing God’s divine love, then as a precursor brotherly love will define you. Let’s move on to understand God’s divine love in our lives.

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. Now there are a couple of very important technical details in this passage. First of all, we know this is an exclusive instruction to agape love your brothers and sisters in Christ. The key is the Greek word translated “one another.” There are two possible Greek words that could be translated this way in English. One is “heteros” and the other is “allos.” “Heteros” expresses a qualitative difference—another of a different

kind. For instance, Paul speaks of a different gospel that is not the true gospel and in so doing he uses the word “heteros.” It is a gospel for sure, but just not the same one. Whereas, “allos” speaks of another of the same kind—one that is like the other. For example, Jesus said that He would send another Comforter (speaking of the Holy Spirit) and He used “allos” meaning the Spirit would be another of the same nature like Him. “Allos” is used in this passage; therefore, we can conclude that we are to agape love our true brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a love that is shared between like natures; as such, we are not told to agape love all who say “Lord, Lord” but in reality refuse to obey the Father, nor those who have made their abode in the world. This is an exclusive love to be shared between those with like natures.

Second, “love” is in the *aorist active imperative*. Being in the *aorist* tense, it is to be our way of life—from beginning to end we are to agape love those who are of like nature. It is in the *active* voice, so we are the ones who are to be busy about this kind of love. And it is an *imperative*, a command. Therefore, this is not a suggestion by God, this is not just good advice; rather, this is His solid unwavering expectation of those who have truly purified their souls.

Third, this love is to be fervent, which means we are to intently love one another. Again, this speaks of purpose—something we must choose. This kind of love is not accidental, it is purposeful. This kind of love does not just happen; we must fervently draw on the resources which God has provided, enacting His promises, so we might partake of the divine. Going back to **2 Peter 1:1-11**, if you have not traversed the staircase of diligence, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly love, then this divine love, this

agape love, will be very hard to access. God has provided it in its fullness; again, it is part of His nature in us. But that which keeps us from living a life of diligence, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly love tend to clog up and block our ability to freely access agape love. Hence those disrupters of wrong belief and unbelief, that cause us to look to ourselves for answers instead of to God, hinder our purpose.

I want you to never lose sight of the fact that agape love is divine; it is not of human origin or capability. It comes from God; we can just be vessels of this love. As such, people can actually experience Jesus through us and get to know Him as we are a vessel for His love. But if our relationship with God is clogged by all the wrong belief and unbelief that keeps us from ascending this staircase of maturity, then we must not be deceived into thinking we can on our own deliver this sort of love. It is impossible. If you are honest about it, you will know that even your best attempts at loving true believers are riddled with self-interest and impure motives. You may know how to make things sound Godly and of the Spirit, you may know the proper sounding religious words and phrases, and the appropriate facial expressions and sideways hugs, but it is still illegitimate.

Now instead of that being a total bummer and giving you reason to dive in to self-loathing and failure, I want it to be a reason for excitement. That means that if you are currently blocked and have difficulty accessing His divine love, there is an amazing, powerful, wonderful, joyful and pleasant life that is waiting for you. Don't stop now and be defeated. Keep heading up those steps of maturity for the promises of God are yours. As it says in **2 Peter 1:3**, they are found in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. And do you remember what we learned the other

week about the true knowledge of Jesus Christ? It is found in the fear of the Lord. That is why we are commanded in **1:17** to live in fear during our stay on this earth. As such, we are to hate evil and reject all that is in our lives that is not from Him, all that clogs our ability to access agape love. And as we do, we will fear the Lord (He will put His fear in us) and we will have the knowledge of God, and we will know how to live in His promises that allow us to escape the corruption that is in the world by lust. Then finding ourselves unencumbered by all that clogged our purpose, we can be fervent or extremely intentional in our love.

Fourth, the Greek says that we are to love from a pure heart. Honestly, I do not believe we can ever agape love from a non-pure heart. I say that because God's very nature is pure, thus His love is pure. The Spirit is saying that if you have self-interest stirring in your heart and it drives your relationships, then it is a sign that you do not love others with God's agape love. You have deceived yourself. Your self-interest and alternate motivations are the very proof that you are acting out of the religious part of your *Old Sinful Nature*; and it is all just another expression of control—of you trying to be the lord of your own life and manage the outcomes of your life. It is a sign that a course correction is needed, repentance is demanded, and surrender to the Spirit, trusting Jesus as Lord with the outcomes of your life, is the only answer.

Now, we have two major descriptions of God's agape love in the New Testament. Let me caution you; both of these passages need to be dealt with in context of their immediate text as there is a big tendency of many to pull these passages out of context and put burdens on people that the Spirit never intended. We are not going to exegete those passages tonight, but with that word of

caution, I do want to list the attributes of agape love to give us a feel for the general quality and nature of God's divine love.

God's divine love is patient; kind; is not jealous; does not brag and is not arrogant; does not act unbecomingly; does not seek its own; is not provoked; does not take into account a wrong suffered; does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; and never fails (**1 Corinthians 13:4-8**). Then in **Galatians 5:22**, we are told that the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is (singular) love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith. With fruit being in the singular, many believe that joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith are all aspects of God's agape love. Now whether these attributes are part of agape love or go along with agape love is really inconsequential, because all of it is a fruit of abiding in the Lord and accessing the Spirit of God in your **New Creation**.

I read these so you can get just a taste of the flavor of true divine love. It is something that is so amazing, surreal, and outside of our capability; it is entirely supernatural. Can you imagine what a privilege it is for this love to flow in and through our bodies to others? We can live a life that is amazing, surreal, and entirely supernatural. That is the entire point here. We can live as those who belong to a different reality, a different realm, a heavenly realm; we can live as aliens, and we can love one another.

I want to make something clear; we are commanded to agape love. This is a matter of obedience. That means that you who tend to make exceptions for yourself based on whatever you might be feeling or experiencing in the moment, it is a serious problem. This is not a command you can run over or run around. It is

the Father's expectation of how you are to deal with those of like nature. Please, stop with the justifications, stop with the reason, and choose to access the love He has provided.

With that said, I believe obedience to this command is to be viewed very similar to the command to live in the fear of the Lord. Our obedience will be realized in our willingness to hate evil and to reject everything that exists deep within our soul that fights against the true knowledge of God—all that clogs and blocks our ability to access His love. As we have studied, we are to take our thoughts captive—every single thought—and hold them up to the obedience of the truth and reject all disobedience (**2 Corinthians 10:3-6**). Using the language of **1 Peter 1:13**, we are to gird up the loins of our mind with the truth prepared for action, regardless of how we might feel in the moment. This is a choice that supersedes our feelings. I love the way the Spirit use the language of war; it gives us a feel for the seriousness and intensity of this choice.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing (or lofty thought) raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

The point is that to obey the command to love one another with God's agape love, we are to be intentionally at war. We are to destroy fortresses and speculations or thoughts which raise themselves up against the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. Anything within us that even remotely challenges His role as the Lord our God Almighty and militates (or fights) against obedience to His will, must be crushed. These areas are the high places of self-worship, they are the houses of idolatry and self-lordship, they are the places that want to control, that need to control, that live to control. These are the places that give us our excuse and justification in the moment to choose to treat someone without divine love. These places affirm us in our aggression and hostility.

This command to love addresses the battle for mastery of our lives—the battle between our *Old Sinful Nature* and our ***New Creation***. We must destroy, crush, and war against it with all fervor and intensity. Every thought, without exception, must be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. And we must retaliate against or avenge every disobedient thought that has controlled us even for a moment in time—those times when it feels so right to not love but indulge in self-protective love. For then, and only then, will His divine love have access to flow in and through our lives to those who truly believe and who are of like nature.

This is war and we have been provisioned to conquer. That is why the Spirit tells us that our weapons are not fleshly but mighty through God. They are designed by their very nature for destruction of these fortresses within our souls. But we must go for it; this is our war; it will not be fought for us but is something that we must fight. We are provisioned for victory, we just have to engage.

In **2 Corinthians 10:3**, “war” is in the *first person present tense, middle voice, and indicative mood*. It is ours to be fought (*first person*); in the now (*present tense*); it is a decision that must come from deep within our being (*middle voice*); and it being our fight is a statement of fact (*indicative mood*). Thus, our ability to obey God’s command to agape love one another is dependent upon our willingness and choice to go to war. If we go to war, we will be successful and we will have victory, the Spirit guarantees it. Our weapons have been designed for that purpose. But we have to gird up the loins of our mind with the truth because it is the deviations from the truth, the wrong belief to which we hold regarding who we are and who Jesus is, that scares us from going full-on all the way with this war. Those fortresses of fear and self-lordship that are locked in your soul have always taken a stand against Christ. It is time to hate and destroy them.

We are aliens and aliens love others with brotherly love and agape love those who call on the Father with pure hearts seeking to do His will. That is who I am, and I know that is who you are. We need to go to war! And looking back at the descriptions of divine love, we have a lot of work to do. But the good news is that it is possible; in fact, it is more than possible. It is to be our way of life and the very evidence of our obedience to the Father. Agape love proves that we are those who live to do His will; that we are true believers.

Next week, we will dive into more reasons why we can love in these ways.

Let’s Pray