

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.

As we studied last week in **1:22**, in preparation to live like an alien on this earth, the Lord made us obedient to the truth, and He did it with a very specific purpose in mind. Accordingly, although we might not know it, we purified our souls in becoming obedient to the truth, and it was for the same very specific purpose; and that is that we become people who love. First, as a baseline for our lives, we are to operate out of brotherly love {"filadelfia"}. **Hebrews 13:1**, says "Let love {filadelfia} of the brethren continue." This is actually a command—it's a *present active imperative*. We are to live this way in our now; being a command it is a matter of obedience. However, as our lives demonstrate, this is most definitely a supernatural act that comes with being one who knows their soul has been purified and is convinced to live accordingly; it is by no means natural. By way of example, **Romans 12:10-13** says, "in the love of brethren {filadelfia}, give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality." These attributes flow from brotherly love. As I said, it is supernatural and it is to be the

foundation for our relationships.

Second, we are to fervently or intently share God's divine love with one another—with those who are of like nature. If brotherly love {filadefia} is to be our baseline of operation in this world both for believers and unbelievers, God's divine {agape} love is to be the very fabric of our relationships, the very flow of life between us. Think about it, we purified our souls so we can share in God's very nature, which gives us access to His divine love enabling us to experience the joy and depth of true intimacy when we share it with one another. It is definitely an out of this world concept. The divine agape love of God in our lives and through our lives—enjoyed by others—is true alien living; and it is what will set us apart from all others. Jesus said it this way,

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 15:12-14

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.

This love—God's divine love—truly sets us apart from all others; and its mark in

our lives is simply unmistakable. Others will know we belong to God because this love is only obtainable through God in us; through His very nature. It is so unique that others can only observe it in action, but they cannot get access to this kind of love or draw from the source of this love. To them it is unobtainable. They can be recipients of this love but not vessels to carry this love. I think it is so amazing that others will know that we are children of God, aliens in this world, when we choose to freely access this love in our relationships with one another. It is that unique and unusual.

Did you notice that it says this love is proved out when we lay down our lives for our friends? Have you ever thought about that beyond the obvious application of being willing to die for another? I have to tell you, there are many people in this world who die for others; and it does not come from God's divine love but from a sense of duty, honor, bravery, care and brotherly love. So let's think a bit more fully about what it could mean to lay one's life down for another because I think this concept is rich in meaning and is applicable to our daily lives.

In the Greek, this word translated "lay down" ("*tithemi*") is used in connection with both Jesus and the disciple Stephen physically laying down their lives for others. But it is also translated in many passages as: "bow," "kneel down," "settle" "sink down" "to lay prostrate" "to subject" "to commit or appoint." When taken as a whole, to "lay down one's life" speaks of those who are willing to humble themselves before another and are willing to submit themselves to another. As we know, to do this most definitely requires access to God's divine love because this is not something we would normally do on our own. But there is no greater love than this. This is to be our aim; this is to be our way of life in the

body.

So what does that mean for you practically? Let me ask you a few questions and I want you to honestly ponder this in your heart. In terms of the fundamental principles of how you practically live day-in-and-day-out, what foundation are you standing on even now? Is it the foundation of humility or the foundation of pride? Are you willing to bow low or to take a supportive role so others can be lifted up? Is that even in your framework of thinking or are you constantly looking out for yourself? Are you standing on the foundation of surrender or the foundation of expectation and entitlement; the foundation of personal rights based on what you think others owe you or is it the foundation of what you can give to others in this body and how you can serve them? Are you willing to be subject to others and let them lead you or do you demand to lead yourself and be subject only to yourself? These are hard questions. I did not ask them to make you feel guilty but to do a reality check.

Now I want you to consider that Jesus' friends are those who do what He has commanded. Our friendship with the Lord is lived, proven out, and experienced by our decision to access God's divine love and extend it to one another. This way of life is the very evidence that the Lord truly lives in us. That is why Paul says: "What is important is faith expressing itself in {agape} love" (**Galatians 5:6**). He also said, "Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test" (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). This is a fairly easy test. Is brotherly love the foundation of your relationships and is God's agape love the very fabric of your relationships? Are you bound to others in His agape love? If you are not sure you

have passed it, don't be discouraged and don't give up. Do the work we have talked about. Gird up your mind with the truth and fight the war for your soul. In so doing, you will find that you will be able to access God's divine love and you can prove out your friendship with God.

Here is the truth. You can love, you can serve, you can surrender, you can submit with all graciousness, you can prefer others to yourself, and you can choose others above yourself, since that is the very nature of God's love. It is yours for the taking—literally; it is yours. So stop the fight thinking you will be left behind and have a miserable life if you surrender your will and choose to obey the Lord. Others may not do it right for you, but God will. If you are willing to love with His divine love, you will obey Him and come to know true friendship with God. And as we have learned, friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear Him as He loves to share His secrets with His friends (*Psalm 125:14*). Yes, the inside track to the mind of Christ is found in surrender and love. When you risk all to love, trusting that God Himself will lift you up in His time, you will come to know the power and glory of His love.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.” God is so serious about this divine love being shared amongst us that in *1-3 John*, which is only about 7 pages in my Bible, He speaks of us loving each other with agape love over 50 times. This is so serious that in *1 John 4:8* the Spirit says, “The one who does not {agape} love does not know God.” In other words, they are a Christian in mere name alone but not in reality. They are a phony. Agape love defines one who truly believes.

1 John 3:14-24

If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them. We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.

Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him. And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

Wow, I told you He was serious. This is just a glimpse of what it means to fervently love one another from a pure heart. The scriptures are overwhelming

and replete with this command. And the Spirit desires our willing obedience. He desires us to go to war against the obstacles in our lives which restrict this love from flowing through us. He wants us to tear down the strongholds of self love and protection and replace them with His love. He wants us to know victory and share this deepest form of love and intimacy with each other, for then we will be sharing it with Him. This is still about us knowing and experiencing Jesus to the maximum possibility; it's just that He designed things so we can experience Him as He lives in others. This command, as well as our obedience, is all about our unity, our safety, our security, and our real life. Loving in this way is a gift; it is in no way a burden. It is how we experience the fullness of God in our lives.

I want to continue with this line of thought and take it another step further. Because we were commanded to fervently love one another with a pure heart, we learned that the use of the Greek word “allos”—meaning another of the same kind—set some boundaries around how this love is to be shared. We concluded that it is to be shared in “koinonia” or a deep fellowship with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart—those who seek to do the will of the Father i.e., with those who are fellow aliens. But the step farther is probably a little more than a step; it's more akin to a huge leap. Although this love is to be shared and continually experienced amongst those with like natures, that does not mean that it is not to be given away to others, unilaterally, even though it cannot be shared and even though there is no possibility of reciprocation.

When we are commanded to love our enemies in **Matthew 5:44**, surprisingly, Jesus uses the word agape. In other words, in order to accurately represent ourselves as children of God, as aliens in this world, we are called to love

someone who is intentionally coming against us to hurt us and damage us. To do so, we must access His divine love as there is no way we can do this on our own; it is simply not in our nature to love our enemies. We want to hurt and kill our enemies. That is what we do. As such, God's agape love is a love that is to be given without demand for anything in return. It is to be given in the face of sure harm and rejection. This is the love which the Father showed the world when He sent His only Son to be the Savior of the world and it is the love we saw when being stoned Stephen cried out to the Lord with a loud voice: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Accordingly, we are commanded to freely give God's divine love, unilaterally, to our enemies knowing we will get nothing in return but pain, rejection, and, who knows, maybe even death.

Similarly, the second greatest commandment of the Lord, found in **Mark 12:30-31**, is to love thy neighbor as thyself. This is also a command to access God's divine love and unilaterally give this love to others. This is the second and greatest commandment which stands next to loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. In other words, we are to give back to God what He has already given to us. He has poured His divine love upon us and He wants us to access it and with that love give it back to Him. Since we have similar natures, this love is to be shared together. But with regard to the second command to love our neighbors, this was originally given in **Leviticus 19:18** in the *future* tense thereby pointing forward to the time when followers of God would have access to God's nature and literally have the ability to pour His love on others. As we know, if you are a true believer, you have access through the **New Creation** to this love as the Holy Spirit of God dwells within you (**Romans 8:9**).

One might then logically ask the following question. Well then, who is my neighbor? Well, Jesus made it clear in **Luke 10:30-39** that your neighbor can be anyone in need if you find yourself in a position to meet that need. And to make his point, He used an illustration of loving one's worse enemy, one who is considered to be a blasphemer and by their very existence vile and unlovable. So in times of need, this love is to be accessed and freely and abundantly given to others whether they deserve it or not.

Now, I went to this "step further" to explain a bit more about God's divine love because the Spirit has been talking about what it means for us to practically live as aliens. And as we get further into **Peter**, you will understand why I wanted you to have this additional information about God's agape love in our lives. Much of the remainder of the book deals with our response to a world that does not take care of us, does not love us, but instead targets us for persecution. So with this instruction in mind, you can start to anticipate what it will look like to practically live like an alien. It will be a life full of the expression of God's agape love in all its forms and all its manifestations.

This brings us to the reason why we can have a sincere brotherly love and why we can fervently agape love one another from a pure heart. We have been born again not of seed which perishable but imperishable, that is, through or by the living and enduring word of God. Once again, this is a message of great comfort and encouragement. The phrase "born again" is in the *perfect passive participle*. As we know, the *perfect* means that it was done sometime in the past but its result is still in effect. We were born again and we still are born again. It is a done deal and cannot be undone. God has done it to us (hence, the use of the *passive*

voice). And it being a *participle*, it is our ongoing state of existence. All the time, I live as one who is born again. That can never be taken away from me. I can choose to not experience the fullness of this reality, but being born again is my reality; it is my unalterable truth.

The Spirit says we were born not of seed which is perishable but imperishable. He then goes on to talk about the grass and the flower. These are all metaphors and these are images we have previously come across in the book of ***Revelation***. We will spend some time refreshing our understanding, but to start I find it very strange that this word for seed is used only this one time in the entire New Testament. Accordingly, we are not to miss what the Spirit is communicating. This is very unique concept and reality.

The idea of seed is that it has potential; it is full of impending or budding life. When first planted it is not clear what it is going to be, but as it grows it takes on its unique nature and unique character and is clearly recognizable. When we are truly born again, we may not instantly be all that we are intended to be. But the assurance is that we will grow and Jesus will be faithful to continue the good work He started in us until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again (***Philippians 1:6***). On that day, we will be all that we were intended to be and we will be immortal just as the Lord has promised. That is the seed of which we have been born again—immortality. But until that day, this seed is intended to grow in our lives until we blossom into the very image of the one from whom the seed came (Jesus Christ).

In contrast, in our flesh we were born to die. It is the base law of entropy that rules our universe. Everything in this material world, without exception, is in a

descending state of chaos and decay. As such, the life we inherited from our forefathers (**1:18**) is not only futile, worthless, and unable to provide us life, it rots us, it takes from us, it destroys us, and it leaves us in a descending state of chaos and decay. Living in the world, as one whose abode is in this world, is death. It is filled with endless striving, wanting, craving, and taking and it all comes without hope. Life in this world is about surviving at all costs and it is a futile effort as all are dying. That is the way of man. This is proven our every single day in the nature and quality of relationships that is experienced in the world. With that as the truth, then why do we insist on trying to find life in the place of the dead? There is none. It is time to fully agree with the truth and let this be your truth.

Whereas, the life into which we were born of God is a life that is incorruptible, it cannot decay, it cannot diminish, and it cannot be undone. It therefore is where true life can be found. In Jesus we live not to die, but we live to truly live. That is why Jesus said: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (**John 10:10**). To know this life and fully experience this super charged life, it takes a separation from our life of death and a rejection of all that it demands: striving, survival, selfishness, wanting, craving, and taking, and so on. That is what Jesus meant when He told the prospective disciple, "Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead" (**Matthew 8:22**). Let them be. Let them live to die. Stop trying to mingle seed that gives life with seed that takes life. We need to be convinced that we were and are born again of very unique seed intended to grow and flourish into the life of God, which is true life which cannot be corrupted.

This is why we can love others; we have the life. I know when we talk about bowing low, submission, serving, and giving others preference, some of you think

it is all negative, ridiculous, unsatisfying, and dumb. But if we were born again to live, then God's prescription for life is life. Thus, when we love the way God commands, we will know the power of this incorruptible life. As such, it is not a sacrifice and a burden to be joined together in unity and submission; rather, it is a privilege and a blessing and a source of joy unspeakable. It is the pathway to the very heart, nature, and mind of God. How wonderful is that?

Next, we are told that the life into which we have been born again came through or by the living and enduring or abiding word of God. In this passage "word" is used three times; however, it is not all the same Greek word. In the first instance, the Greek word "*logos*" is used whereas the two subsequent times the Greek word "*rhema*" is used. In the Greek, "*logos*" communicates an expression of thought. As such, this word is used to communicate such ideas as the revealed will of God, as well as the unique identity or communication of all that flows from the Father. As such, Jesus is the "*logos*" –the full expression of the Godhead (***John 1:1-14***) for in Him the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (***Colossians 2:9***) for it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him (***Colossians 1:19***). Slightly different, "*rhema*" expresses the spoken word, an utterance, which in this instance communicates that which preaches Christ.

In short, our life came through Christ who is the living and abiding word of God. God spoke and life came into existence. He spoke over you and you were born again; God did it and He gave this life to you through His Son. It was the Father's will for your life. ***John 1:13*** says that you "were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." How amazing is that? Think about it. This means you were not an accident; you were brought into this world so you

could be born again according to the will of the Father. As such, your true life is not from this world; it is not from Mom and Dad—the relationships through whom you have spent so much energy trying to find satisfaction. Rather, your true life it is from your Father in heaven as He has revealed that life in Jesus Christ. And it is in this relationship that you should spend your time and energy seeking the satisfaction which only He can bring.

And unlike our Mom and Dad who will die, the Word of God is living and enduring, both of which are in the *present active participle*. Every moment of your life the Word of God lives (*present tense*); Jesus has life in Himself (*active voice*) (**John 5:26**); and He always lives (*participle*) as He is the one who always is (**Revelation 1:8**). That means we can depend upon Him always for He is always present or enduring in our lives; in the Greek, He literally does not move. He is always there. You know those times when we have been living in our flesh and God feels so far away, well the truth is He has never moved. That is what it means when it says the Word of God is enduring or abiding. We are the ones who always move and we merely need to turn back to Him and we will find Him there always.

The “living Word of God” means that when we come to Him to talk through the difficulties of our life, or about the struggles we are having accessing His love, we come to a living being. We are not praying to the air, we are not praying to an ancestral memory, we are praying to the living God. We are praying to the one who lives to make intercession to us (**Hebrews 7:25**) because we know that He was raised and sits at the right hand of God interceding for us (**Romans 8:34**). And by the way, “interceding” is in the *present active indicative*—it is happening now, Jesus is doing it, and this is a statement of fact; something on which we can bet

our lives. Because He lives we live; therefore, because He loves we can love and live like the aliens we are. That is the point of this entire passage.

“The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” In this metaphor, grass is a picture of humanity and the flower is a picture of the glory that comes from our humanity. It may look glorious for a moment, but it quickly decays and loses its luster and brilliance and it all withers away. This is a quote out of *Isaiah 40*.

Isaiah 40:6-8

A voice said, "Shout!" I asked, "What should I shout?" "Shout that people are like the grass. Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field. The grass withers and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord. And so it is with people. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

The Lord says grass withers and the flower fades three times. It may seem a bit repetitive, but this is not just a poetic technique; the Lord is marking this truth with His undeniable stamp using the number of perfection—three: it is a perfect truth. Humanity is fading away, it cannot be relied up, and it will not endure. Even the grandest and most phenomenal aspects of this worldly life are very short lived; the flower fades. Please don't miss the message of this metaphor: like grass humanity is completely flaccid, it flops back and forth. If is feeble, it is frail, it is not something upon which anyone can lean. There is no stability or lasting

strength in anything that man does or produces. We need to know this to be true. Fame does not last. Romance does not last. Beauty quickly fades. Riches can be blown away. Health is guaranteed to be dismantled. Even knowledge is futile when experience is the only truth that lives in the heart of humanity. Hope in this life is not real. Disease and decay rots every aspect of our worldly existence. All of it, all that this world has to offer is like grass that withers. All it takes is a good cold frost or extreme heat and it will all die.

Therefore, stop trying to find life in what is unstable and dying. This world cannot give it. It may have its season where it seems to produce life, but give it time—a very short time—and it will be dead. Let it rest, stop the fight, and accept this perfect truth and seek now to live like one who belongs to the living and abiding Word of God that stands forever. The Word of the Lord can be depended upon since it does not move, it is fixed, and it is permanent. Do you know why this is true? Because Jesus, the living Word, is; and He never changes. That is why Jesus declared: “Before Abraham was born, I Am” (**John 8:58**). Jesus Christ is the I Am, and He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (**Hebrews 13:8**). This word of the futility of this world and all that it has to offer you is the word that was preached to you; it is not a new word.

Isaiah 64:6

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Psalm 90:3-6

You turn man back into dust and say, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away.

I know this is getting a bit redundant, but your struggle to hold on to this world and find validation, meaning, satisfaction, and life in this world, is redundant. Let this word that was preached to you sink into your soul. Life is found in Jesus and all that He has determined for your life. Trust Him with it for all that He gives is living and enduring—all of it. In contrast, everything this world is holding out for you—every promise, every hope—will rot, fail, and die—everything! It is the biggest disappointment ever. But Jesus is the greatest satisfaction ever. And that is why we are free to love. Once again, in accessing His love we will come to know the fullness of His presence in our lives and it is a glorious thing. Something for others to behold.

Let's Pray