

## Saved to Love Each Other

### 1 Peter 1–4

Turn please to 1 Peter 1. Four times in 1 Peter, the Apostle talks to us about loving each other. Today we will survey all four of them, to see how Peter teaches these things. Peter wrote to a wide area of churches. In 1 Peter 2:11 Peter calls them foreigners and exiles, and they really did experience life as foreigners and exiles. They were not at home in their environment. Because of their faith in Christ, the people around them were often enough suspicious and unfriendly.

So the believing congregation was the one place they would be welcomed and taken in and understood. But that means congregations need to live kindly with each other. So that's what Peter encourages. Next Sunday we have our covenant of membership, and this message is the last primer for that.

### 1 Saved to Love, Born Again to Love – 1 Peter 1:22–23

*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth for a sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (NIV, ESV)*

This little nugget has opened my eyes. I have combined the NIV and ESV in this translation. On these two verses, stick with the more literal translations.

*“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth”* speaks of our conversion, our coming to Christ. “The truth” here means “the gospel.” The gospel said “Repent and believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins” and we did that. By obeying the gospel, we purified ourselves.

Question 1: Why did we purify ourselves by obeying the gospel? So that we would have sincere love for each other. For the purpose of having sincere love for each other. *“You have purified yourselves by obeying the truth for a sincere love for each other.”* In 1 Peter 1:22, that is why we purified ourselves by obeying the gospel. I thought I believed just to get saved. No, says Peter, you believed and were saved so you could have sincere love for one another.

Question 2 asks the same in reverse: Why should we love one another deeply, from the heart? Because that's why we purified ourselves by obeying the gospel.

Question 3: What should God's imperishable seed produce in us? *“Love one another deeply, from the heart,”* says Peter, *“since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of God's imperishable seed.”*

We all get our genetic code, our DNA, from our mothers and our fathers. All kinds of traits, not just physical, come the DNA we inherited from them.

After Henry and Rita had attended this church for several years, Henry found out that one of his school teachers, Alexander Fast, was my grandfather. Henry told me, “that explains it! There was always something familiar in how you taught, Ed, but I could not place it. Now I know – you are like your grandfather.” I had very little contact with my grandfather. He died when I was quite young. I did not get it from watching him. But something of his speaking style was passed on genetically through my mother.

We are now God’s seed, his offspring. What does his nature in us lead us to do? What does God’s DNA produce in us? *Love one another deeply, from the heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of God’s imperishable seed.* God’s nature in us produces deep love for each other. John says the same things. *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God* (1 John 4:7).

We love each other deeply **because** that is why we purified our souls by obeying the gospel. We love each other deeply **because** we have been born again from God’s imperishable seed. We inherited our heavenly Father’s nature, and his seed in us leads us to love each other.

## 2 The Life We Left Behind – 1 Peter 1:14–19

Peter tells us that we had another life before we came to Christ, and he calls us to leave that life behind. We’ll not spend much time on this, but we should take a brief look.

1:14–16 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

Paul says, don’t be conformed to this world. Peter says, don’t be conformed to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. Some of those desires will still be around. Peter assumes that. Don’t be shaped by them, he tells us, the way we were when we lived in ignorance.

Instead of being shaped by our evil desires, imitate God’s holiness. Peter quotes Leviticus. God said, “you be holy, because I am holy.” We do this as obedient children. We have new birth from God, we have his nature, so let’s imitate our Father in heaven.

1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.* Live reverently. The God we call “Father” judges each person’s work impartially. That’s not what we want to hear, is it. But that’s what it says.

You see, the grace that saves us also changes us. Knowing God changes us. God transforms his people. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. He is in the business of transforming us, and he’s doing it. We live a lot differently than if we did not know God – thank you Lord for that. For our part, let’s live reverently.

1:18–19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

We were slaves to an empty way of life. We inherited it from our ancestors. My parents were believers, and so were their parents, but if we go back far enough, my ancestors lived dark and ignorant lives. God bought us out of that empty way of life. God paid a ransom to pick us up, out of one way of living, and set us down on a different life path, a Christ path.

Slaves were usually bought with money, but that's not how we were redeemed. Christ died, and his blood paid the price, so that God could redeem us and rescue us from a dark and ignorant way of life, and put us on bright path where the Spirit leads us to imitate God himself.

Jesus died so we could be forgiven, but he died for more than that. *“It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”* That's the life we left behind. Back to our new life together.

### **3 The Whole Christian Life in One Line – 1 Peter 2:17**

Here it is, the Christian life in four simple commands: *Respect everyone, love the Christ family, fear God, respect the king. Respect everyone, love the Christ family, fear God, respect the king.*

First is our basic responsibility to the unbelieving world. Everyone gets respect, everyone gets courtesy and dignity, even the ones whose behavior really troubles us. This is the core of our responsibility to the unbelieving world. Respect everyone.

Love the Christ family. “Love the brotherhood” is how Peter actually says it, but “brotherhood” is not as gender friendly as it used to be. But it does mean family. We are begotten of God, so we are truly brothers and sisters. Love the Christ family.

Fear God. Fear God means put God at the center. Serve him, love him, obey him, trust him, honour him. In this sentence, the way we fear God is to do the other three.

Respect the king. Respect the emperor. 1 Peter 2:17 comes at the end of a paragraph that begins, *“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority.”* Peter was writing to believers who were not being well treated by human authorities, and who did not respect the human authorities. And so they had trouble submitting. Submit for the Lord's sake to human authority.

Respect everyone. Not everyone deserves respect, but we fear God, so everyone gets respect, for the Lord's sake. The Christ family is not always loving, but we fear God, so we love the Christ family, for the Lord's sake. The governing authorities do not always deserve respect. But we fear God, so we respect the governing authorities, for the Lord's sake. Not easy, not complicated.

#### 4 Five Virtues of Church Family Life – 1 Peter 3:8

*Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, love for each other, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*

Many believers in Peter's time had only church family. There are still many believers whose only meaningful family is the church family. For Marilyn and I and our children over the years, this church was our family. Our biological families were too far away for regular life.

Some of us have strong biological family connections around here. That's a good thing. Sometimes biological family and church family compete with each other for our time. Remember that for many people, in Peter's day and now, church family is the only meaningful family. If the church won't be family, they don't have family. Peter's five virtues are intended to make the congregational family a good family, a good place to rest and be welcomed after the battles and hostilities of the world.

"Be likeminded" means "remember the gospel of Christ that brought you together." Get along by remembering what brought us together in the first place. The other four don't need much explanation. Let's make sure these things are alive in our life together: Be like-minded. Be sympathetic. Love one another. Have tender hearts. Have humble minds.

#### 5 Faithful Stewards of God's Grace – 1 Peter 4:8-11

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.* "Above all" Peter begins this paragraph. That's what we want to know. What should we do above all? "*Above all, love each other deeply.*" That's number one.

"Because love covers a multitude of sins." Peter is quoting Proverbs: *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers all wrongs* (Prov 10:12). This proverb is about life together. In the Christ family, people hurt and offend each other. You and I here in this church, we hurt and offend each other. Jesus always assumed it would happen, and so did the apostles.

The wound can fester and lean toward hatred and conflict. Or, we can cover it with love, we can keep loving the person. That's God's call to us here. "*Above all, love each other deeply, because hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers a multitude of sins.*"

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.* Let's always be welcoming to each other, let's always receive each other warmly, let's help our brothers and sisters when we can. Apparently Peter has watched this and has listened to the grumbling that sometimes goes with it. Peter says, be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

These days people often take their own shopping bag to the store. We do that, it is good idea. Every believer carries around an invisible shopping bag and it has packages in it, gifts. Inside each package is a piece of God's grace that he put in our care. We all have our own shopping bag that has packages of God's grace. These packages come in many sizes and shapes.

We did not put them in the shopping bag. God gave us the bag, and God gave us the packages of his grace. These little graces are not for us. They are for those around us. Our job is to give them away. When we serve the believers around us in any way, we bring God's grace to them.

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* Peter says to us, "be faithful stewards of whatever grace God put in your shopping bag. Serve others as you are able."

*If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever.*

## **6 Conclusion – the Three Questions of 1 Peter 1:22–23**

Question 1: Why did we purify ourselves by obeying the gospel? So that we would have sincere love for each other. We purified ourselves in order to have sincere love for each other. *"You have purified yourselves by obeying the truth for a sincere love for each other."*

Question 2 asks this in reverse: Why should we love one another deeply, from the heart? Because that's why we purified ourselves by obeying the gospel.

Question 3: What should God's imperishable seed produce in us? *"Love one another deeply, from the heart,"* says Peter, *"since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of God's imperishable seed."* His seed produces in us deep one-another love from the heart.

Much of this happens regularly in our church. I'm not telling anyone to do more. I'm reminding you *what is* important, and *why* it is important, and *how we know* it is important. Amen.

PRAYER: Father, here is a prayer you gave us in Philippians. May our love for each other increase more and more in knowledge and insight. If you make our love increase, then we will know what is best, and we will be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. If you make our love increase, then we will be filled with the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. So make our love for each other increase more and more. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.