

Dual Citizens: 1 Peter 1:22-2:3
“Loving our Fellow Citizens”
11/25/18

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

¹ Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As a recap- one of the major themes of this book is telling us how we can face hardships in a way that makes you greater and not lesser. Same sun that hardens clay, melts wax. Why? Not the sun, the sun is the same. It is the internal composition of the clay and the wax that makes the difference. Peter says it is the same thing in life. See, many people who go through hardships in life and turn into bitter, angry people say it was the circumstances...the things people have done to them. And yet people who have had the same circumstances, same difficult hand that was dealt to them in life and have grown wiser and kinder and more loving. There is no explanation for why Joni Eerickson Tada ended up a far greater version of herself after becoming a quadriplegic. It's not the circumstances but the internal composition of the person. And in this section we just read, Peter tells us that even in the hardships of life, we can be people whose internal composition is characterized by LOVE.

1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart

Here we see the connection with the last section v.13-21 that Pastor Todd preached last week a life of holiness, living differently as a citizen of heaven, that come from “obeying the truth”... this is a phrase that Peter commonly uses as a substitute phrase for “believing the gospel.” In other words an outworking of the gospel in us is purification, holy living...a changed life. And now Peter moves to another outworking of the gospel- here in v.22 he gives a positive exhortation about love- what to do- love sincerely and deeply from the heart. And then in 2:1 he comes back to this exhortation- love but through a negative exhortation about love- what not to do- *¹Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.* These are all practices that impede love and are incompatible with the Christian life. So there is much we could look at in this section but we are going to focus on **2 Principles of Christian Love.**

To introduce the first principle, notice in the text that Peter surrounds this exhortation to love with several other. **Show Verses**. V. 22, Having purified yourselves by obedience to the truth (trust in the gospel), v. 23 for you have been born again through the word of the gospel v. 24-25 and because the word is permanent, our new birth is permanent. v.2:2-3 he talks about the subsequent spiritual growth that results from being born again. Why does Peter surround this command to love one another with all of this? Why doesn't he just say- Just love each other, What the world needs now is love sweet love. All you need is love. Close in prayer. Here's the answer.

Principle #1- Without the New Birth we are incapable of truly living out Christian Love.

About 10 years ago I hiked Mt. Elbrus in Russia, highest peak in Europe, about 19,000 ft. Fundraising hike to launch a new non-profit called the Last Well, clean water in Liberia. **Picture from summit**. Now if you know anything about high altitude mountaineering this picture should strike you, that there is something not quite right about me. It is extremely cold, -30 degrees. But I'm completely unzipped. I don't remember much, but I remember sweating and feeling so hot that I wanted to remove all my gear. And this is a sign of High-Altitude Cerebral Edema. Brain swells, shuts your systems off, can be deadly. On the way back down the mountain I suddenly lost consciousness, like a tunnel, fade to black and collapsed. I was incapable getting down that mountain on my own. So my fellow climbers took turns carrying me, one on one side, one on the other, step by step a few miles, until I was below 15,000 ft...

In the same way I was incapable of picking myself up, mustering up the strength and hiking myself down that mountain, we are incapable of living out the ideals of Christian love in our own strength, especially under challenging circumstances (which is the context of this letter). See, it is an illusion to think you can just hold up the Christian ethic of love to the world and it will be a better place. Some say the churches' job is not to tell people what to believe and preach doctrines and try to convert people, just tell the world to love others and follow Jesus' example. And that's not all bad. But preaching moralism is like my hiking team just saying- get up Nate, you can do it. Try hard! What would Jesus do?

Back to Principle #1 Slide Now some of you might not be convinced. You might think of yourself as a very loving person by nature and that Christianity is a bit of a crutch for people who aren't strong enough on their own. Or you are a Christian, but you are walking in your own strength and think you can live out these commands on your own. But has that been tested with the fires? The hardships? We often think about our best version of ourselves in the easiest of circumstances. What about when loving someone is really difficult? What about when loving someone is downright illogical or completely counter-intuitive? What about when it costs you something? **The Christian ethic of love, the divine love of God, agape love- is one-directional, unconditional, sacrificial love, even when it isn't reciprocated.**

When people persecute you, speak evil against you, abuse you, make up lies about you, take advantage of you, you have an ongoing conflict with someone...what do you do? Most people will respond one of two ways:

-You go after them- we can take out vengeance on them, pay them back for the harm they did. We get in their face, we denigrate them and look to destroy them or talk bad about them to others... we make them pay. Marriage- you did this to me, well I'm going to get you back.

-You not go after them, but hate them. You stuff it down, you stew, you avoid them...if you see them in the aisle, you go the other way. That person is dead to you. You leave that church and go to another one. You completely cut that person out from your life, disconnect emotionally. Marriage- you make them pay through distance.

-Christian Ethic: You go after them and love them. You pursue them in love. This was at the heart of Jesus' teaching from the sermon on the mount Matthew 5-7- conflict with someone? Leave your offering, go after them and love them trying to reconcile. Enemy? How do you go after them, You pursue them in prayer that they may turn from their evil and bless them instead of curse them. Turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile. This doesn't mean we let people walk all over us, we are also called to uphold justice. But we let God be the judge instead of us.

So which is easiest to do?

Conflict lover- #1 Go after them and get vengeance.

Conflict haters- #2 You will stuff it.

But Christian Ethic of love goes against either of these...goes against our impulse and logic and what the world would tell us to do. And in the fires of life and conflict and people hurting and disappointing you, your impulse will not be the divine ethic of love!

If we are going to live out true Christian love it will take something supernatural, it will take the new birth, a radical transformation of our hearts through the Holy Spirit, giving us a new ability to love. This is what Peter is saying. Do you see that you are incapable of this kind of divine love apart from divine help? Apart from picking you up on both sides of the arms and carrying you toward it?

That is principle #1 about Loving One Another. You can't do it.

Principle #2- Loving One Another is the Acid Test of our Christian Faith.

1 Peter 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply.*

Notice the so that- in other words, embracing the gospel is evidenced in, results in sincere, deep love. These two descriptors of love mean a love that is truthful (unhypocritical)...one that is willing to tell the truth when it hurts but do it in love. And a love that is deep- word means persevering. A love that goes the distance. A sincere, deep love is the strongest evidence of our faith. This is the same thing that Jesus said, **John 13:35 They will know you are my disciples if you love one another.**

1 John 4:8 *Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.*

Back to Principle #2 Slide It is possible to have both doctrinal purity and morality for other motivations other than the gospel... Out of tradition, out of cultural upbringing, or

conscientiousness. You could have our doctrinal statement memorized with its proof verses. You could avoid sexual sin, not lie or cheat or steal and go to church every Sunday...But if you are a cold person, critical, distant person, if you have to be right and win, if you look down on others who are not as pure as you or believe just like you, if you avoid people or reject those whose lives are dysfunctional or broken or think they deserve whatever they have gotten, if you are self-righteous. If you treat people on the other side of the political fence as if they are worthless, and mock and dehumanize them on social media. You may need to think very hard of whether you have truly understood and embraced the gospel.

I'm not saying that doctrine isn't important, you can't be a Christian and not believe certain truths. Not saying that morality isn't important...we are called to live holy. But the acid test you can't fake. Do you love one another? Here's why this is the acid test. Because it is completely aligned with the gospel. The **Gospel has two parts- You are a sinner... you are loved and accepted by God.** Don't you see how this should change you if you embrace the gospel? You see how much of a sinner you are and mistakes you made and make and how cold your heart can be under the certain conditions, how easily drawn to self-centeredness and complacency you can be. How stingy and greedy we can be and easily faithless...would you like me to go on? We understand that by and large the difference between any of us and a drug dealer, pimp or murder... is that those seeds in our hearts may not have been watered by nature (DNA) or nurture of our environment. All fall short, all lost. That changes your attitude. You can't look down on anybody. When someone wrongs us, we know that we are capable of doing the same thing or worse. Other side- You believe you are forgiven, accepted, loved anyway eternally through Jesus Christ. And so our attitude should be one that lives out the same forgiveness, unconditional love and acceptance that we have received. This is basic, 101 Christianity.

Two Principles of Christian Love

Principle#1- Without the New Birth we are incapable of truly living out Christian Love.

Principle #2- Loving One Another is the Acid Test of your Christian Faith.

Play Video- Hear story of a couple- the Endsleys who went through Re|engage, this is a ministry we have launched. But their story lives out these two principles.

What is the application?

-Are you on the mountain trying to pick yourself up? Go to Jesus and hear the words, you must be born again.

-Are you a Christian? Go back to being a newborn baby- Go back to the Gospel- you can't do it. Jesus Can and Did!

