

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expository Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 1:22-25**

### 13 The Futility of Hoping in Grass and Flowers

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December 17, 2017

#### **1Peter 1:22-25**

**22** 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,

**23** for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.

**24** For, "***ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,***

**25** ***BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.***" And this is the word which was preached to you.

To the Glory of God

For the first three hundred years of its existence, Christianity grew to be the largest religion in the history of the world in soil that was wet with the blood of the martyrs. From the first Prayer Meeting to the Edict of Milan in 311AD, Christianity spread as far West as Great Britain, and as far East as India because of people who were willing to be tortured and die rather than be lukewarm.

To a man, those who walked down the steps of that Upper Room lived every moment of every day under the threat of total annihilation. Every single man, who physically saw Jesus and who was chosen to establish the Church in the earth, never knew anything other than the most horrific and unjust persecution. And to a man, they counted it a blessing, a joy, to suffer and die for the Glory of the Savior Who had washed their sins away.

Until the Emperor Trajan (about AD 98) persecution against Christians was *permitted*, but was not legal. But from Trajan to Decius

(about AD 250), persecution was legal everywhere in the Roman Empire. But from the Emperor Decius, who hated the Christians and feared their impact on his reforms, until the first “Edict of Toleration” in AD311, the persecution against saints of God was not only legal, it was widespread and encouraged.

One unknown writer described the situation in this third period like this:

“Horror spread everywhere through the congregations; and the number of *lapsi* [the ones who renounced their faith when threatened] . . . was enormous. There was no lack, however, of such as remained firm, and suffered martyrdom rather than yielding; and, as the persecution grew wider and more intense, the enthusiasm of the Christians and their power of resistance grew stronger and stronger.”

So, for three hundred years, to be a Christian was an act of immense risk to your life and possessions and family. It was a clear and decisive test of what you loved more. And at the *extremity* of that test was martyrdom.

And this historical reality of the blood of the martyrs is the best argument against the shallow and vapid prima-donnas of our day, who proclaim a message of “Peace and Prosperity” to all who “have enough faith”. As these modern “pillow prophets” lay claim to represent the Virtues of Christ as they brag about their private jets and their luxury condominiums, paid for by silly and undiscerning sheep; listen to the inspired testimony of the writer of **Hebrews**:

### **Hebrews 11:35b-39a**

**35... and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;**

**36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.**

**37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated**

**38 (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.**

**39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith...**

Look again at the resume of these saints. Look again at the testimony of their lives:

- ✓ They were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection
- ✓ They were mocked
- ✓ They were scourged
- ✓ They were put in chains
- ✓ They were imprisoned
- ✓ They were stoned
- ✓ They were sawn in two
- ✓ They were tempted
- ✓ They were put to death with the sword
- ✓ They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated
- ✓ They wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

And while the modern pied-pipers call these beautiful, faithful, fruitful, saints, “losers” and “lacking in faith”, the writer of **Hebrews** said they:

**... gained [God’s] approval through their faith**

... and gave them the title of being people:

**whom the world was not worthy**

And these are the people to whom the Apostle Peter addresses this Epistle. People, “whom the world is not worthy”. People who have gained God’s Approval through the faith that they exhibited by remaining faithful, fruitful, and busy under the terrible persecution of the Emperor Nero.

And sitting above all that martyrdom was a Sovereign God, Who said there was an appointed number of martyrs. So, these “suffering saints”, these “scattered aliens” have a special role to play in both the *planting* and in the *empowering* of Christ’s Church. And they have a special role to play in shutting the mouth of satan, who constantly says that the people of God serve Him only because their existence in this life gets better, which is the main point of **Job 1:9-11**, that says:

- 9 Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing?  
10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.  
11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."**

But, dear friends, we need to understand that Martyrdom is *not* something accidental. And it is also *not* odd or strange to Christianity. To suffer and die because of your faith in Jesus has been the *mainstream* of Church life for the majority of its 2,000 year existence. Suffering unjustly because of your love for Jesus is "Normal Christianity". It has only become rare over the last 230 years or so to about 12% of the earth's population. We, who are blessed to live in the United States have been given a "Divine Reprieve" against this kind of Price to pay for trusting in Jesus Christ.

So, for example, in **Luke 9:23b-26**, When Jesus said:

- 23 ... If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.  
24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.  
25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?  
26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.***

He meant it, *literally*. And the result was that many, many people were driven from their homes and had their children taken from them and had all their earthly goods confiscated, and were set on fire and were crucified because they repented of their sins and trusted in Jesus for Salvation.

And even though some of these martyrs were wealthy and influential people, most of them were just average, everyday souls. They were farmers and housewives and children and small business owners. And, until we get to Heaven, we will never know their names, but right now, they cry under the Mercy Seat in Heaven,

## **The Revelation 6:10b**

**... How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**

When you examine the life of American believers today, you come away with the idea that believing in Jesus gives you a “leg- up” on others. It appears to be a pathway to more material possessions and nicer cars and finer homes and healthier bodies. Listen to the testimonies of those who occupy the modern Church and you will come away with the notion that being a Christian is about making this life infinitely better and safer and more secure.

But when you read the New Testament, you come away with a puzzling contradiction. You will see a willingness on the part of the people in the Bible to follow Jesus to death, to actually “witness through their deaths”, which is what the literal meaning of the word “*martyr*” means.

In the pews of the modern church, far too many see serving Christ as a political issue or something that is unnecessarily difficult. But when you read the Bible, you see the necessity, yea, even the *beauty* of martyrdom. Amidst the groaning and complaining that fills the air of the modern church at the least degree of *inconvenience*, the Bible is filled with men and women who saw terrible suffering, and even death, as a *prize*, a sort of *reward* and something to be sought after.

It is one thing to have martyrdom happen to you, but it is an entirely different thing to actually *prize* it. That is hard to grasp. It is embarrassing to think that one of the best places on earth today that preserves the early Christian attitude about martyrdom is among those deceived by the false religion of Islam.

My goal in this Church is not to simply have more warm bodies sit on more pews. And God forbid that *anyone* could be a part of this Church for very long and be comfortable with being worldly or lukewarm or lost. My goal is to preach and teach and live Jesus Christ to the extent that we would join in with the scattered aliens of Peter’s day, and we would so treasure Jesus Christ that we would see suffering and persecution as a *reward*, as a *gift* from God rather than something to avoid at all cost.

So, I’m really not looking for people who are willing to commit *some* of their time and *some* of their life to Jesus; I’m looking for people

who will hunger and thirst after Righteousness, people who will pant after God as the deer pants after the water-brooks, a people who are willing to die rather than be found to be in love with this present world.

Because, suffering doesn't take God off-guard. It is not unexpected. And, contrary to many of the leaders of the modern church, Suffering for the Sake of Jesus Christ is emphatically *not* a strategic defeat for the Cause of Christ.

Now it may *look* like a defeat. And it certainly isn't popular. But whether we want to admit it or not, Suffering for genuine believers is part of God's overall Plan that no human strategist would ever conceive or could ever design. No man-made religious architect would ever devise a plan like this, one that looks so bad and that feels so horrible, yet one that will triumph for everyone who endures to the end by faith in God's all-sufficient Grace.

And this lost view of martyrdom is rooted in two things:

1. Jesus' Own Suffering.
2. A view of the Gospel that allows us to actually enter into the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, being hidden from our eyes and ears and mind and hearts.

... and the Apostle Peter was especially gifted at helping people understand both.

As I have been preparing each week to stand before you and herald this Truth, I have become all too aware of my own love for this present evil world, and my own shallowness and my own lukewarmness. And I am ashamed. And I have marveled that the words of this fisherman would be used by God to encourage and edify the believers of his day, who were hurting so badly.

I have asked myself this question over and over again, as I study for each Sermon. *"Would I be encouraged by what Peter wrote here? Would I be equipped to endure to the end by these words? Would I be able to remain faithful by what God the Holy Spirit moved on Peter to write here?"*

Now at the very core of the Passage that Brother Andy just read to us is the Command to:

**fervently love one another from the heart**

And once again, I asked myself the question, "*This* is what you tell believers who have lost everything? Of all the issues to speak about, fervently loving one another from the heart is one of the highest and most important things to say?" Evidently, because, indeed, that is what God moved upon Peter to say here. And the fact that talking like this is *not* the highest and best thing to us tells us volumes about how distant we are to real, sure-nuff Biblical Christianity.

But this is not an isolated Commandment. It is not an Apostolic Command that stands alone. It is spoken by every writer of all 27 Books, including the Lord Christ Himself. So, the most important thing I pray that we can see in this Passage is that the Power to love, in times of great suffering, comes through a firm and unshakable hoping in God. And hoping in God will reveal to us the futility of trusting in grass and flowers.

And to really feel the force of this Truth about just how Hope and Love work together, *especially* during times of intense persecution, and of *corporate* or even *individual* suffering, we need to step back and get the big picture of the entirety of Chapter 1.

As I said last time, Chapter 1 is overwhelmingly about Hope. And verse 3 begins by saying that:

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

Now many people will be happy to talk about being "Born Again." But Peter doesn't leave it at that. This Apostle, who was in the very courtyard where Jesus was beaten, is careful to tell us that we are born again unto something. He said that God sovereignly caused us to be born again unto...

**... a living hope ...**

So, this verse means that being born again by the sovereign Power of God means that we become a person with *living* Hope. Hope that is not simply "present day Hope", but Hope that is ongoingly alive for the future. And I would go so far as to say, in view of what we will see, that the very *essence* of the newness of the new person, who comes into

being through the miracle of the New Birth, is that the new-born person *relentlessly* hopes in what God can do, rather than what Man can do. A born again soul has both the power and the desire to trust and hope in God, and to not put his hope or his trust in things that are passing away.

And what verse 3 says is that God raised Jesus from the dead to give us that kind of Hope. And that means that physical death is no longer a terror to those who have been born again. And this had to be unbelievably encouraging to those who faced death every day. But it not only made them encouraged, it made them to be fearless. So, hoping in God made average men and women to be joyful martyrs. So, not only is the worst enemy of our *future* destroyed by hoping in God, but the very worst that any man can do to us is also destroyed.

And then, in verse 4, Peter underlines the certainty and the greatness of our future by telling us that, as God's newborn children, we have an Eternal Inheritance with four hope-filled characteristics. Our Inheritance is:

1. Imperishable
2. undefiled
3. Unfading
4. Reserved in Heaven

... precisely because we are:

### **1Peter 1:5b**

**... protected by the power of God through faith ...**

So, the glorious future that God has designed for these scattered aliens, and for us, will be there. It will not perish, spoil, or fade. It is "guaranteed" by none other than the Owner and Creator of the Universe!

Verse 5 *strengthens* our Hope by telling us that not only is our Inheritance kept for us, but that we are kept for our Inheritance. Peter says that all those whom God has caused to be born again are:

**protected by the power of God through faith.**



... so, God "sees to it", with Omnipotent Power, that our faith does not fail. And who better to tell us this than Peter, because it was Jesus Himself who told Peter in **Luke 22:31&32a**:

**31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat;**

**32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail ...**

So, in his Epistle, Peter tells us that this glorious News that Jesus Himself prays that he would not be sifted was not just for him, but for all believers. And he confirms this in verse 7 by contrasting gold that perishes with our faith which does not. So, if gold is *refined* by fire, even though it's perishable, how much *more* will something as valuable as our faith be *refined* by suffering, precisely because our faith is *not* perishable. That's the very essence of a Hope that *cannot* be manufactured by anything that we do for ourselves. Peter says this kind of Hope will:

**1Peter 1:7b**

**... result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation [Second Coming] of Jesus Christ;**

Then verse 8 describes the fruit of this amazing Hope as we worship and serve and love a Savior, Whom we have never seen:

**1Peter 1:8**

**and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**

Verse 9 presses for even more Hope by telling us again (like v. 5) that the *end result* or the *outcome* of our faith will be:

**the salvation of our souls**

So, those whom God has caused to be born again will never die. We may hurt in this life, but we will not perish forever. In other words, Peter tells us that as bad as our suffering might be, it is only for this one life. Once this life is over, we will be saved, forever, and we will live

in the very Presence of God with unimaginable pleasures and delights. No wonder these saints rejoiced in their sufferings!

Then verses 10-12 are meant to *increase* our anticipation for our glorious future by telling us that the great Prophets of old wanted to see the Hope-filled Truth we are experiencing, but couldn't see it. And that even angels, who stand day and night in the Presence of God, love to look into the Gospel of our Salvation!

And only after spending 10 verses of Exultation in what God has done to give these pilgrims and strangers this amazing Hope, Peter gives us four Commands in the rest of this Chapter. The first one is found in verse 13:

**1Peter 1:13b**

**... fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

... in other words, even though these believers were going through horrific suffering at the hands of evil men, Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to tell them (and us) that born-again people have all these reasons to hope, and therefore:

Hope fully in the Grace of God that Jesus is bringing with Him  
when He comes back.

So, the Promise of Scripture is that there is a particular Grace, that we have not yet experienced, that Jesus is bringing with Him, and the Command from this Apostle is that we are to hope fully in that. The second Apostolic Command comes in verse 15:

**1Peter 1:15**

**like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;**

So, the first Command is, "*Be fully hopeful in God.*" And the second Command is, "*Be holy like God.*" And that tells us that if you really hope in God, you simply *cannot* be indifferent to whether you love what God loves and hate what God hates, and you will become as holy as He is holy. So, by default, hoping in God will remove your heart and the affections of your heart away from anything that this world offers

you. And the Apostle Paul echoed this Truth when he said this in **1Thessaloninas 3:12-13**, when he said:

**12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you;**

**13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.**

So, there is no such thing as “being holy” without “loving the brethren fervently”, and that means there is no such thing as “being holy” without “hoping in God”. So, hoping in God is the pathway to being holy. And, by the way, Paul was speaking to believers who were being horribly persecuted, too.

But the third Command is a jarring one. And it too is rooted in Hope. Verse 17b:

**... conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*;**

... and we struggled together last week trying to tie in this godly Fear with this glorious Hope. So just how does Fear relate to Hope? Look at the *basis* of this Fear in verse 18:

... conduct yourselves in fear, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold". . . but (as v. 19 says) with the precious Blood of Christ.

Now that is a very strange logic: Peter commands us to Fear! Why? Because the Ransom paid to rescue you is *not* perishable? Fear because the permanent and precious Blood of Christ is what saved you? And last time, we discovered that the point is this:

Don't treat the Ransom that was paid for your soul with contempt. It is a fearful thing to minimize or marginalize the Blood-Ransom of God. It is fearful to act as if the future that God has ordained for us is not secure and all-satisfying.  
It's a fearful thing not to hope in God.

So as odd as it sounds to fallen human logic, the point of the third Command is crystal clear:

We are to fear not hoping in God.

Now this is not Peter talking out of both sides of his mouth. The Apostle is not trying to be cute here; he is actually using the very same logic that the writer of **Hebrews** used:

**Hebrews 4:1**

**Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.**

So we are told to “**fear**”... lest we even *seem* to come short of entering God’s final Rest. And then this writer uses this same logic to say:

**Hebrews 4:11**

**Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.**

... so we are to “**be diligent**” (which includes a healthy dose of fear) so we may “**enter God’s Rest**”.

And then as Peter ends this first Chapter, we come to the fourth Command in verse 22b:

**Fervently love one another from the heart.**

Now you can see what I meant when I told you that the most important thing we will see in this text is that the Power to love like this comes through hoping in God. And what we have seen is that virtually *everything* in Chapter 1 is about Hope. Peter is *exulting* in all that God has done and is doing to make the future of His people infinitely and infallibly Happy. And so, here, Peter is now describing how people live, who are captured by this Truth and really believe it.

Hoping in God produces fervent Love

So, it’s not surprising then, that this fourth Command to these scattered aliens, that in the midst of their suffering, they are to love each other fervently; that Command is sandwiched in between the two

very powerful *Reasons* to Love. And both of these Reasons are descriptions of the birth or the genesis of this amazing Hope.

1. Love is encased in Hope
2. Love gets its life from Hope

So, if we are *not* a "hope-filled people", we will *not* be a "loving people". Or to put it another way, if we ever plan on being the kind of people who are willing to suffer and die for Jesus, *gladly*, we must have a supernatural Hope in God. And the best barometer that tells us that we are actually hoping in God is that our Hope is producing a fervent Love for the brethren. So, let's see if what I just said is in verses 22–25.

Notice first that there is one *Reason* to love given *in front of* the Command to love (v. 22a), and there is another *Reason* to love given *behind* the Command to love (v. 23). So, let's make sure we see this clearly.

#### **1Peter 1:22a**

**Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren...**

... there's Reason number one:

**WHEREAS:** (Or Since it is true) that you have purified your souls by obeying the Truth,

**NOW THEREFORE:** "fervently love one another from the heart."

Then comes the second Reason to love.

"Love one another from the heart . . .

**FOR** (Or BECAUSE)...

#### **1Peter 1:23b**

**... you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.**

In other words, Peter tells these suffering saints that they are to love one another precisely because they were born again by the Word of God.

And that means that the *Command* to love stands between two *Reasons* to love. And these two Reasons are like two strong Pillars that not only *support* the Command to love, they are the very *basis* of the Command.

Pillar 1: Obedience to Truth which purifies the soul (Holiness).

Pillar 2: The New Birth caused by the Word of God.

So, if there is going to be love among us here at The Covenant of Peace Church, these two Pillars must be our shared experience:

1. All of us must be born again by the Word of God.
2. All of us must have our hearts purified by (or through) the purposeful pursuit of Holiness (obedience to the Truth).

But where is the Hope in this? How does the Power to love come through hoping in God?

Well, look again at the second Pillar. And let us comprehend what it really means for us to be born again by the living and abiding in the Word of God. Look at what Peter really emphasizes in verses 23–25. He doesn't just emphasize a New Birth "by" or "through" the Word. He *emphasizes* something very specific about that Word. And he really draws it out by using a supporting Old Testament quotation from **Isaiah 40:6-8**. Look again:

**1Peter 1:23a**

**for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable...**

Now Peter seems to love this Truth:

- ✓ Our Inheritance is not perishable (v. 4)
- ✓ Our Faith is not perishable (v. 7)
- ✓ Our Ransom is not perishable (vv. 18, 19)
- ✓ God's Word is not perishable (v. 23)

So, what's the point? The point is: all of these things last. Unlike persecution that has a beginning and an end, even like our own lives which has a beginning and an end, these things are eternal! And that means none of these things will be proven wrong. They will not fail you. These things will stand as long as God Himself stands. And those who stand on *these* things, those who hope in them, even in horrific persecution, *especially* during times of suffering, they will not fail either! So, once again, the Apostle is giving these saints, who are hurting so badly, a *reason* to hope in God!

Now keep reading in verse 23. Peter goes on to define the imperishable seed as:

**... the living and enduring word of God**

In other words, Peter makes the Word to be the very Instrument of the Seed. And there's the point again. It is not only *imperishable*, it is also *living* and *enduring*! And that means that it lasts. It will not fail you.

So, if this Seed, this Word, has brought you "into being" through the miracle of the New Birth, you will *remain* alive in Jesus Christ. And nothing that evil men can do to you will change that. And once again, the point here is Hope!

But he's not finished yet. Peter then is going to prove that this Hope was God's Plan all along by quoting from the Old Testament.

**1Peter 1:24&25a**

**24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,**

**25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER."**

Here, Peter reaches back to the golden tongued Prophet, Isaiah, who 600 years earlier had been anointed by God to describe the futility of hoping in flowers and grass. And then Peter leaves the Old Testament to put a cherry on top by saying:

**... And this is the word which was preached to you.**

And the meaning here is crystal clear. The “Word of God” that Peter is talking about here is the Gospel that was preached to these pilgrims and strangers, the Good News that we have been reading about in this entire Chapter:

- ✓ The Ransom of the Blood of Christ (vv. 18–19)
- ✓ The Resurrection of Christ (vv. 3, 21)
- ✓ The Keeping Power of God (v. 5)
- ✓ The Inheritance of God

All this Good News was preached to them. And the point now in verse 25 is that these things are *not* like grass and flowers, these things don't wither and fall, they abide forever! And if this Word is in your life, you live forever! And once again, the point here is Hope.

So, here's the Pillar holding up the Love that Peter wants to see in the people of the Church, this “fervent love for one another from the heart”:

You have been born again by a seed, a Word, that is imperishable, that is living and abiding, and that is not like grass but abides forever!

What amazing hope-giving life to suffering saints! But what's the point of making such a big deal out of the Word's Permanence to these believers? The point is that when you are born by a human father's seed, you take on the character of that human father. His seed constitutes your nature. And what Peter wants us to see is that the Seed that created us, that caused us to be born again, was not a man, but the Word of God that is imperishable, living, abiding, and lasting forever! And that means that Who He is, we will be. Which means that we will live forever! And what is the Power to trust in this? Hope!

So, the Pillar that holds up the Love is the Word-created, born-again heart of HOPE. And this is a Hope that is set free from all the grass and flowers of the world.

Now one thing that keeps us from loving is the fear that if we pay the price of this amazing Love, we might lose out on the bright things that life in this world is supposed to offer us. “All its glory like the flower of grass” (v. 24). So, Peter encourages us here that:



- If we endure suffering meekly
- If we renounce boasting and calling attention to ourselves
- If we spend time and energy supplying the needs of others without fretting over our own
- If we risk making necessary reproofs that are almost surely to be interpreted as something other than love
- If we receive reproofs without animosity and defensiveness
- If we cover a multitude of sins and put away our list of grievances
- If we rejoice when others prosper while we don't
- If we bless those who curse us and do good to those who despise us
- If we "love each other fervently from the heart,"

... it will be costly. And the price will be that we absolutely will lose some of the cherished glory of the grass and flowers that people in this world live for.

And the Power to overcome this kind of fear is the Power of godly HOPE, that the glory of this world is passing away, and we who are born again through the Word of God and who hope in the Word of God, will endure forever.

And finally, a second look at the other Pillar holding up this Love. Verse 22:

**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,**

The rock solid Truth that Peter gives here is that the "Word of God", the "Gospel" of verse 23, is the Hope producing Truth that we have been looking at all through this first Chapter. And obedience to this Truth (striving for Holiness on purpose) is what Faith really is. And that means that what the Biblical Gospel demands is Faith. Therefore:

Faith = obedience to the Gospel

... and Peter confirms this in **The Acts 15:9** when he says that God:

**... made no distinction between us [believing Jews] and them [believing Gentiles], cleansing their hearts by faith.**

So, humble and joyful obedience to the Truth cleanses. And we are humble and joyful in our obedience precisely because we believe. So, it is Faith that cleanses. Therefore:

Obedience to the Truth = Faith

But Faith is *inseparable* from Hope. So, if you have Faith that the Word of God will abide forever, you are *hoping* in the Word as well as *believing* in the Word.

Therefore, the Pillar of verse 22a that holds up Fervent Love for one another is soul-purifying Hope in the Word of God. But what is the filth that this Hope cleans out of the heart? The answer is that hoping in God cleans out hoping in the glory of grass and flowers. Hoping in God cleanses out the futile, empty hopes of the flesh. It convinces us that if we live for the bright flowers of money and comfort and fame and sex and leisure, we will wither and die.

But when this new Hope cleanses out these old, futile hopes, and banks on the imperishable, living, abiding, eternal Promise of God, then and only then can we "love one another fervently from the heart".

So, as we come to the end of the First Chapter, the portrait that this uneducated, redeemed fisherman has been painting for 25 verses is made complete: The fervent Love for one another is held up and made possible by two strong invincible Pillars. One Pillar is God's sovereign Act in *causing* us to be born again through the living and abiding Word of God. The other Pillar is our *response* to that Divine Act, as newborn children of God we hear the Word of our Father and gladly obey by putting our Hope in Him. And when we Hope in God, that our future that He has planned for us is greater than all the glory this world can offer, then our hearts will be clean, and we will be free to love each other earnestly from the heart.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.