

Subject: *Loving Others in God's Family*

Scripture: *1 Peter 1:22-23*

Salvation changes everything about a person. It changes your present and your future. It changes your relationship with God and with other people. It is a radical change of your life from the inside out. In these verses Peter is dealing with the change of heart that happens when you become a Christian.

In verses 22-23, Peter mentions four these radical changes that happen in salvation:

- 1) The soul is purified (vs. 22)
- 2) The truth is obeyed (vs. 22)
- 3) The person is born again (vs. 23)
- 4) The person has a genuine love for others (vs. 23)

The main thought of our text is that Christians truly love one another in God's family because we have been born again by God's Word. This is what it means to have Christian unity in God's family: *Psalms 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

1. The believer has a pure heart (vs. 22)

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

When Christ said this He was referring to inward purity of the heart and soul.

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Paul says that believers are those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, and he cautions Timothy to keep company with people who are saved and have pure hearts.

When God saves us He cleanses the sin from our heart. He is the only one who can do that.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

No one can say that. No one can cleanse his own heart.

We all have a sinful, dirty heart. The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Psalms 51:5-7 ⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

In Acts 15 we read about the Jerusalem Council where they debated whether Gentiles had to become Jews to be saved or if they could be saved simply by believing in Christ. Peter said:

Acts 15:7-9 ⁷ And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. ⁸ And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; ⁹ And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

2. The believer has an obedient heart (vs. 22)

The truth Peter mentions here is the truth of the gospel and obeying the truth refers to obeying Christ's command to repent and believe the gospel. This is how Peter began this letter in 1:2. **1 Peter 1:2** *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

Believers are chosen by God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit so that they obey the gospel and are sprinkled by the blood of Christ. To obey the gospel means to repent (turn) from sin and believe (trust) in Christ as Lord and Savior. Those who obey the gospel are saved and those who disobey are not saved.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 *⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

A true believer in Christ becomes an obedient follower of Christ. Jesus made this very clear: **John 10:24-28** *²⁴ Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. ²⁵ Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. ²⁶ But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

Believing in Christ and following Christ are both used as synonyms to describe obeying Him.

3. The believer has a new heart (vs. 23)

He has been "born again...by the word of God" (vs. 23). Peter mentioned the new birth at the beginning of this letter (vs. 3), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who...hath begotten us again."

God caused us to be born again (from above). He gave us a new life and a new heart. This is a work of His power, grace, and mercy.

John 3:1-8

Titus 3:3-5 *³ For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. ⁴ But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

Those who are born again by the incorruptible (imperishable) seed of God's Word receive God's life and character. They are born "from above." God uses the truth of His word as seed to germinate in the heart and produce new life.

James 1:17-18 *¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.*

Our first birth is a physical birth and we have a nature like our earthly parents.
Our new birth is a spiritual birth and we have a nature like our heavenly Father.

4. The believer has a loving heart (vs. 22)

Because we are born with a new nature, we now have the desire and capacity to love others. A person with a pure heart, an obedient heart, and a new heart will also have a loving heart. He will love God and love others, especially other children in God's family.

This is an "unfeigned" (sincere, genuine) love. Someone may say, "Well, I love them, but I don't like them." Try that on your wife or husband. To say I love them, but I don't like them is to say I love them with a phony, superficial love, but I don't really love them with a sincere, heartfelt, genuine love. This is also a "fervent" love for others. "Fervent" is from *ektenos*, is a physiological word that means to stretch a muscle to the limit. Fervent love means to love all out, to love to the maximum extent. Peter uses the same word in 4:8,

1 Peter 4:8 *And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins.*

The apostle John said this kind of love as an evidence of being God's children.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

1 John 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

1 John 4:10-11 ¹⁰ *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

1 John 5:1 *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

This kind of love for others is a sure sign of the new birth.

I ask you to examine your heart honestly and earnestly:

- Do you have a pure heart?
- Do you have an obedient heart?
- Do you have a new heart?
- Do you have a loving heart?