

Series: **Living Under Pressure** – week 6

CDOBC – beginning on 2/7/16

Today's Title: **“God's Truth Leads to Love”**

March 13, 2016 ~ 1 Peter 1:22-25

OBJECTIVE: To help believers understand one of the ‘natural’ results of their life in Christ is love for other believers.

Opening Prayer

Turn to **1 Peter 1:22** – as we continue our look at Peter's first letter to the Christians scattered throughout the region which is modern-day Turkey. He is giving them encouragement and instruction so they can “stand fast” (5:12) or remain faithful to Christ when difficulty and persecution enters their life. Our verses today help us realize one of the ‘natural’ results of your life in Christ is love for others – especially those who are believers.

Think of those in your circle of influence (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.), and focus on those in your circle who don't know Christ. If you were to ask them what they think about the church and those who attend church, do you think one of the words they come up with would be “love”? If they were asked to describe you...would ‘love’ be one of the words they use?

VIDEO: <https://skitguys.com/videos/item/do-you-love>

Love should be the observable climate in the local church.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer says the quality that distinctively sets believers apart as Children of God...is love.”

(Quoted in Following Christ..., the Man of God, study guide, by Charles R. Swindoll, p. 86)

Not morals – not going to church – not theology – our greatest point of distinction from the world should be LOVE. Love is what the world will see and what will impact them before anything else!

Look at our verses this morning:

1:22-25

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.”

I want to cover 3 primary points these verses communicate to us. As we strive to be holy (vs. 14), one of the ways our holiness is expressed is by our love for others. But we can never achieve greater levels of holiness on our own. This is not some human-based grind-it-out kind of work. Of course it may involve grind-it-out kind of work – but the basis of our holiness and love is not in our human will alone – but we:

Christians have a supernatural capacity to love. vs. 22-23

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, ... For you have been

born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

Notice our “sincere love for each other” finds its origin in our obedience to the truth. The phrase: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth...” refers to our obedience to the call of the Gospel. It refers to our obedience to the Holy Spirit’s leading in our life and the gift of faith we received – which we obeyed by believing in Jesus. “Purified” is a Greek word (*hagnikotes*) which points to a past action with results continuing in the present. It points back in time to the moment of our conversion when we were “purified” from our sins, and we are still being “purified” each and every day.

Peter is telling us that our purification from our sins produced in us the capacity to have “sincere love for each other.”

At first reading, it seems like Peter is saying *we* have purified ourselves – but this would not only go against Peter’s other writings, but it would go against the entire testimony of the scriptures.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (God speaking through the prophet Ezekiel)

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.”

The prophet Ezekiel is looking forward to the time of the New Covenant – the time we are in now.

Notice how God is causing all these things to happen – not only the new spirit – but a change of heart (from stone to flesh) and the indwelling Holy Spirit which will motivate people to obey God’s commands.

In **1 Peter 1:2** he said:

“To God’s elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with His blood...”

All this to say our ability to love is not based in ourselves – not based in our human desires and abilities – it’s based in the supernatural work of God in us. The abiding Holy Spirit in our life – the power of God’s Word – these two things should be active forces in our life – guiding us / correcting us / encouraging us to love. In our good times, the one-another ministry in the local church naturally (& spiritually) lead to love. Birth of a child celebrated with others – meals provided in a time of crisis or need – support and prayer – notes / cards / e-mails / text messages sent to encourage – helping when a need arises – all these things provoke us to feelings and actions of love.

But let’s be honest, when you are part of a church, there are times...and there are people in the church...there are

things which happen in the church – which do not provoke ‘love’ in your flesh.

During those times, instead of responding in love, we want to lash out – we want to get even – we want to tell them something which will *‘put them in their place’*.

Unfortunately – that is exactly what happens in way too many churches. Instead of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the human, sinful - self-protecting...self-promoting and self-justifying flesh is allowed to run unchecked.

But this kind of reaction is not the fruit of your purified soul (Gal. 5:22-26).

Because your soul has been purified – because you have the Holy Spirit in your life and the Word of God to transform your thinking so you are conformed to the image of Christ – we are able to love.

But *“able to love”* (having the supernatural capacity) doesn’t mean we love by default.

We have the supernatural ability to love – but we must exert ourselves to love as the spirit and truth leads us.

Love in these cases is only possible when we deny the flesh and choose God’s Spirit and truth.

Rom. 6:6

“For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...”

You see...as Christians...as those who have died to sin – you still have a choice to make each and every day. Will you live in the flesh...or will you live in the Spirit? Which brings us to point #2:

Christians must practice genuine love vs. 22b

“...so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.”

Over the years of ministry, I have observed a point of confusion with many believers when it comes to living the Christian life. As with so many other things, the confusion is due to extreme positions which contain truth – but partial truth.

Some believe the Christian life is realized when God makes things happen in our life – when He ‘forces’ us to act in certain ways – completely by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The other extreme is a belief that living the Christian life means self-discipline and self-denial – a constant work of shaping and denying my sinful desires so I can live in obedience to God – completely by my self-determination and will.

Both of these contain truth – but they are extreme positions – and I believe the truth is found in the middle.

We cannot live the Christian life – we cannot pursue holiness and love without the power of God being an active force every day.

But there is also a human effort we must exercise as we fight against the desires of our flesh.

“deeply” (‘fervently’ – NASB) at the end of vs. 22 is a Greek word that describes a muscle that is being stretched to its maximum capacity. I believe it brings in the human side of our battle to love. It’s not only about the spiritual truths we know – it’s about denying our flesh when it craves to ‘lash out’ and ‘put down’ instead of ‘build up’ and protect unity with love.

When I exercise, I don’t always enjoy exercising – it’s uncomfortable – it strains my endurance and taps out my strength – it’s exhausting. But when I’m finished, I’m so glad I didn’t give up – and later, after I’ve recovered, I feel better than before.

Practicing genuine love is not always a fun or enjoyable process.

When you practice sincere, genuine and deep love for others, you will have to strain against your own thoughts – you will have to endure against the constant pressure to say or do something which would feel really good. Your flesh will fight against supernatural love.

But you must reach “deeply” or “fervently” in your human strength which is being supported and guided by the Spirit and the truth of God.

All throughout the N.T. we see commands to love – and we see love elevated to one of the highest virtues we can achieve.

Romans 13:8

“...the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.”

Hebrews 13:1 “Keep on loving each other as brothers.”

Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.”

1 Thessalonians 4:9 “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.”

1 John 4:11

“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Due to the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence in the believer’s life, each believer has the capacity and the ability to love their brothers and sisters in the faith.

Jesus said He had a new commandment – but the new commandment was not simply to love others.

The new command was to love as Jesus loves – to love sacrificially and through serving.

“Christian love is not about emotion or likes and dislikes; it is about the challenge of self-sacrifice, service and

obedience to Jesus' commands. This kind of genuine Christian discipleship is one of the most potent forms of evangelism."

(Source: Commentary: Read Mark Learn, John's Gospel, St. Helen's Church, Bishopsgate, p. 156)

Sincere, deep love from the heart is not pretending to love – its not playing at love. It's not love where the depth is found only in words or some sort of sentimental feelings. Rather, the Christian life – supernatural love - should be deeply rooted in our loyalty to Jesus – and our family bond with one another. As bible teacher and theologian Arthur Pink said:

"Love is the badge of Christian discipleship. It is not knowledge, nor orthodoxy, nor fleshly activities, but love which identifies a follower of the Lord Jesus ...genuine, active love, not in words but in deeds."

(Arthur Pink, quoted in Following Christ..., the Man of God, study guide, by Charles R. Swindoll, p. 86)

Our 3rd point this morning:

Christian love endures and doesn't fade. vs. 23-25

In 2008, residents of Paris and tourists starting attaching padlocks (called: 'love locks') onto the metal grating / fencing along the side of the Pont Des Arts (Pone Days Are) Pedestrian Bridge in Paris.

A couple writes their name or initials on the lock, secures the lock to the bridge and then tosses the key

into the river – symbolizing the enduring commitment to their love.

By 2015, the number and weight of the locks had become a safety concern. Over a million locks were placed, weighing approximately 45 tons.

It's a beautiful gesture – romantic gesture – but when trouble comes, I don't think a lock secured to a bridge in Paris is the foundation needed to save a marriage.

What's one of the most difficult things to do in a marriage?

- Love when you don't feel like loving.
- Love when the relationship has fallen into a pattern / season of life where excitement or passion is missing.
- Love when your spouse is not very lovable.
- It's difficult to love your spouse when you are only thinking about yourself.

You get the picture. As the number of anniversaries celebrated increases, there is a real danger the love between husband and wife will grow stale and one or both will become bored with the marriage.

So, we read in **Prov. 5:18**:

“Rejoice in the wife of your youth.”

The passing of time and the trials of life have a way of dulling our passions and causing us to see everything in a negative way.

We see faithfulness and consistency – but as the years go by we label it: boring

To keep a marriage fresh and infused with passion, you must rejoice in your spouse - spend time with your spouse.

Husbands...take your wife on dates like you did when you first met. Give her small gifts and surprises to let her know you are thinking of her.

Serve each other – nobody ever gets bored with being served!!

In a similar way, we can get tired of a church routine – of a weekly pattern of living which has become dull and lifeless because we're lost our love for Christ and church has become a pattern of activity instead of actions inspired and motivated by our love for Christ!

We can also get tired of loving those in the church.

Loving others takes a great deal of focus and energy.

Loving others means you are always looking to serve them – to help them – to do what will encourage them in life.

Peter reminds us that our life in Christ (vs. 23 – “you have been born again”) is not due to something that dies – but it's eternal (“imperishable” [seed]).

Every living thing on earth finds it's beginning in some sort of seed.

Trees drop seeds, and the seed is germinated, and that seed contains everything needed to produce a new tree. The Apostle John, speaking of those who believe and are called children of God, says in the first chapter of his gospel – vs. 13:

“...children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Spiritual life – the life of God is from imperishable seed – “the living and enduring word of God.”

Peter quotes **Isaiah 40** (vs. 6, 8 – LXX) which is a poignant passage about the passing and temporary nature of life. All living things are beautiful while they’re here – but their time is limited and they all wither and fade away.

In contrast, God’s Word is enduring – eternal.

The Gospel which was preached to you – the gospel you believed in – it won’t fade away.

God’s love for you doesn’t fade away – it doesn’t lessen over time – it doesn’t diminish in its intensity.

In the church, our love for others shouldn’t fade away either.

We should never tire of loving.

Love for others should never fall out of style.

But...

People get on my nerves!

People don’t change and their annoying tendencies don’t ever seem to go away.

On top of that, right when I get used to people – and I get in a pretty good groove of loving them – new people show up – and I have to love them too!

Amen!!!!

What a blessing...but what a challenge!

As a follower of Christ, you must realize the eternal nature of God's love for you – which in turn calls you to love others – always!

Apply it...

Put your faith in Christ – become a Christian (purify yourself by obeying the truth)

Obey the truth of God – the Gospel – which leads you to the love of God – which in turn leads you to love others.

Admit your sins

Believe in Jesus as your Savior

Commit to Christ every day

Use all your strength to love others

“Love one another deeply, from the heart”

Love one another...always

The truth of God never fades – it will endure for eternity.

Let your love for others be unmovable – unshakable – eternal.

Close in prayer