

Love Always  
I Peter 1:22

It happened on April 26, 1478 in the city of Florence at the most sacred moment of the Mass. The cathedral was filled with 10,000 worshippers. At the moment the priest elevated the host Giuliano Medici was murdered causing one of the greatest political upheavals the city had ever witnessed.

The assassination was over money and power. For over a century the Medici family held great influence through their bank. Two rival banking families, the Pazzis and the Salviatis sought to end the Medici influence. What strengthened their resolve to commit this barbaric act was the hatred Pope Sixtus IV had for the Medici family because the policies of the Medicis thwarted his extension of power. Reports vary, but it appears the Pope granted the Pazzi family concession to assassinate two of the Medici brothers. With the Pope's support, they plotted to kill Lorenzo and Giuliano Medici, along with nine members of the ruling council of the city. Among the conspirators was the Archbishop of Pisa. When regular soldiers balked at murdering the Medicis in the sacred building, priests were designated to accomplish the sacrilegious act. As the host was being raised for its blessing, two of the priests stabbed Giuliano to death. Another priest hesitated long enough for Lorenzo to escape even though he also had been stabbed.

A loyal supporter aided Lorenzo by barring themselves in a side room of the church. At the same time the Archbishop assaulted the town hall but was repelled. Other conspirators tried to rouse the city for support to finish the job, but in outrage they chose to support the Medici family. They captured the Archbishop and hung him to death. Others were also killed. One conspirator escaped to Constantinople but was extradited by the Muslim ruler back to Florence where he was also hung.

After the plot failed, Pope Sixtus IV banned the city

for killing the Archbishop. He raised an army to crush Lorenzo, a war that lasted two years and almost ruined Florence, but which prevailed under Lorenzo as its ruler.

This story stands in stark contrast to the exhortation given to us in our passage. It is a command that we see throughout Scripture. We find it etched in the underlying principles of the 10 commandments. We see it from the teachings and example of Jesus. We see it from the pen of the Apostle Paul and we see it in our passage today. I invite you to turn to I Peter 1:22 and read with me our verse for today. It is also a reminder of what is so desperately needed not just in our world, but in our churches, and in our homes.

Once again we come to the admonition to love one another deeply.

We see in this passage the correlation between obeying the truth and the kind of love we are to have for each other. We see the theme of obedience in verse 2 and then again in verse 14.

We pick up the theme of being purified from verses 15-16. Then again in verse 17 telling us why we are to live holy lives. It's because Christ bought us out of the slave market of sin with His own blood.

There are three truths in our passage for us.

Our condition is settled

Our compliance is straightforward

Our command is simple

## I. OUR CONDITION IS SETTLED

Our condition is captured for us in that word "purified". The statement "now that you have purified yourselves" looks back at the previous verses where we see that we have been redeemed or bought with a ransom from our empty way of life passed on by the traditions of others which are futile in regard to salvation. The purchase price by which we are purified was the precious shed blood of

Christ, the perfect sacrificial Lamb.

The word “purified” is a perfect active participle, which means it is something that happened in the past that continues into the present, and which we could say keeps on going into the future. It’s a word that means to be morally cleansed. This purification began the moment we trusted Christ as Savior. II Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things are made new.”

That verse speaks both to the initial act of salvation and the ongoing nature of our relationship with Christ. At the moment of my salvation I was a new creation and today 51 years later I am still a new creation.

Many of you have probably seen the oxiclean commercial where the ad rep has a large clear tank of colored water on a table in front of him. He takes a cup of oxiclean and pours it into the tank and swishes it around until the water is clear.

The perfect nature of Christ is given to us making us perfect in God’s eyes as if we had not sinned. We are purified the moment we believe in Christ as Savior. We recognize that we are a sinner and that His death on the cross paid the price owed to God because of sin and His shed blood is the oxiclean, if you will, cleansing us from our sin.

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole (purify/cleanse me) again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh, precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow.

Purification of the inner being brings new motives, new thoughts, and new actions. But let’s keep in mind that this purification is God’s work.

Ezekiel 36:25-27

I Corinthians 6:11

Ephesians 5:25-27

II Thessalonians 2:13

Titus 2:14

Titus 3:4-7

God does it all. I have nothing to offer that will in any way be an aid to my purification, otherwise, as Ephesians 2:9 says I would have something to boast about.

And just in case you still remain unconvinced about our inability to produce any purification or righteousness of our own, it is plainly spelled out for us in Isaiah 64:6. “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”

The Message – “We’re all sin-infected, sin-contaminated. Our best efforts are grease-stained rags. We dry up like autumn leaves-- sin-dried (not sun-dried), we’re blown off by the wind.”

It’s clear that we all need help in this matter and God has purified us through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ and the ongoing empowering, enabling work of His Spirit in us to change us into His image.

Here’s what Rice Broock wrote in Man, Myth, Messiah. “Through our faith in Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit unites our lives with His. So we become transformed daily into His image. Over time we experience greater power over our sins, and our very thoughts to greater and greater extent conform to God’s will. We can also experience peace and joy, knowing that God does not see us in the light of our own imperfections but in the light of Jesus’ life.”

The purifying work of the Holy Spirit settles our condition. Once we were unregenerate reprobates due to our sin. Now we are righteous, made right with God through faith in Christ and His redeeming

work on the cross by the shedding of His blood.

But while purification happens at the moment of our salvation there is something we must do. It's found in the second part of the verse and for that we now turn our attention.

## II. OUR COMPLIANCE IS STRAIGHTFORWARD

Notice once again from our passage.

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth...”

Webster's dictionary defines obedience as the act of submission, with an underlying assumption of willingness on the part of the person to whom an order or action was given. Or, simply, it is carrying out instructions.

We have already considered from verse 2 that obedience begins with submission to the initial call of salvation by the person who, in belief, is saved. We hear the call of the Holy Spirit and we respond in faith. Obedience then transitions into ongoing obedience to the will of God by striving to live a holy life. That's found in verse 14.

Obedying the commands God has given us in His Word results in what Greek scholar A.T. Robertson calls “the cleansing power in the truth of God's Word.”

John 14:21

The psalmist gave us that underlying principle in Psalm 119:9, 11 – heed God's Word.

Growing up in Sunday school I learned this song: Obedience is the very best way, to show that you believe.

Doing exactly what the Lord commands, doing it happily.

Action is the key – do it immediately, joy you will receive.

Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.

*Chorus:*

O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E

Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.

We want to live pure we want to live clean.

We want to do our best.

Sweetly submitting to authority, leaving to God the rest.

Walking in the light, keep our attitudes right,  
On the narrow way.

For if you believe the Word you receive, You  
always will obey!

Peter Davids writes “Conversion is not simply a matter of intellectual change, but of a transformation of behavior, that is a response to a command.”

There are ultimately only two responses to the Word of God when it comes to obedience. We either do it or don't do it.

If I tell David to clean his room that statement alone could be interpreted as meaning he can do it now or choose to do it later, say in a month. Even though my intent may have been for him to do it now, I shouldn't discipline him if he chooses to wait. But if I tell him to clean his room now and he delays, then that's another story.

God has given us commands and the expectation is to do them without delay.

Jonah. Did he obey God or not?

Noah. Did he obey God or not?

Abraham. Did he obey God or not?

Joshua. Did he obey God or not?

King Saul. Did he obey God or not?

The Israelites. Did they obey God or not?

As I just shared from the children's song “action is the key, do it immediately.”

Our compliance is straightforward. Let me just add this one thought. We might think that obedience is nigh unto impossible and we would be right except that what God commands He also provides the empowerment through His Spirit to carry out the command.

Now did you notice that Peter tells us what we are to obey? We are to obey the truth.

You might say, that seems a bit obvious Pastor. But think about it for a moment. We read just a moment ago from Psalm 119:9, 11 telling us to hide God's Word in our heart so that we might obey it and not sin. That tells me that if I'm not in God's Word it will be difficult to discern the truth we are to obey.

How many of you will admit to playing Simon Says when you were growing up or maybe with your Grandkids. It's a simple game. There is Simon who gives straightforward commands to everyone else. What Simon says you have to do.

Simon says stand on one leg.

Simon says hop like a bunny three steps.

Simon says roll backwards.

Stand up.

It's at that moment you find out who was paying attention to the word given by Simon because invariably one or two will stand up.

If we aren't in God's Word regularly we won't be able to discern what it is He wants us to do or doesn't want us to do. If that's the case it's all too easy to listen to the voice of the world instead of the voice of God.

God says don't lie.

The world says a little bit won't hurt.

God says don't cheat.

The world says it's okay to cheat once in a while.

God says don't steal.

The world says it's okay to steal once in a while.

God says don't commit adultery.

The world says it's okay.

God says that a Christian shouldn't marry a non-Christian.

The world says it's okay as long as you love each other.

God says don't commit murder.

The world says abortion is okay.

God says a man should marry a woman.

The world says people of the same gender can marry each other.

"...you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth..."

If you aren't sure you should or shouldn't do something, read God's Word.

If you still aren't sure after reading God's Word, the best advice is don't do it.

I Corinthians 10:27-28

Let me give you a little background to this. A number of these folks in the church of Corinth were saved out of a pagan and idolatrous lifestyle, which basically meant you could do whatever you wanted. They also had a sacrificial system to appease their gods for their sins. They would take a sacrifice to the temple where it was offered to an idol as part of their worship. The pagan priest would take his cut of meat from the sacrifice to eat and there would be this hunk of meat left. The remainder of the meat would be taken down to the market to be sold.

Now let's say you get saved and you don't want anything to do with that former way of life. You have totally changed your behavior, but the Joneses who live next door are really good friends and they want to have you over for a barbecue. You really like the Joneses because you have been great friends for many years but they aren't Christians, but you want to use this opportunity to share Christ with them. Paul's advice is that when you sit down to the meal, eat what is set before you without asking questions of where it came from.

Paul throws in a little wrinkle. Let's say you are attending a block party with the neighbors. It's a mix of Christians and non-Christians and folks are

bringing all kinds of different food to eat. You're looking forward to eating because you like those kinds of things. As you are mingling with friends from the neighborhood another Christian says to you that the Joneses are fixing some meat that came from a pagan sacrifice. What should you do? Is it better to offend the believer or the unbeliever who you want to win to Christ?

Paul says in this instance that it is better to offend the non-believer by obeying your conscience than to offend your fellow believer. He is saying that your love for the other Christian by obeying makes your faith appealing to the non-Christian. If we think that it's better to offend the believer than the non-believer then the non-believer may conclude that it's better not to get saved.

This not only points to our need to be obedient but also points to our demonstration of love for our fellow believer. That brings us to our final point where Peter identifies the specific command to obey. When the world watches what we do, our actions, out of obedience and love, shows them that we are followers of Christ. And really, it's a simple command.

### III. OUR COMMAND IS SIMPLE

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.”

I want you to notice two important principles right away. They're important for us to bear in mind as we consider the implications of what Peter is saying here and how this is applied.

The first thing I want you to notice is that this love is for Christians. It is a command to love others in the body of Christ.

A limerick tells us how difficult a task that is.  
To dwell above with saints we love

That will indeed be glory.  
But to dwell below with saints we know,  
Well, that's another story.

If we are honest with ourselves sometimes carrying out this command is a challenge. After all we still have the old sinful nature still lurking around encouraging us to give in once in a while. We have all known one or two Christians who really made you work extra hard at loving them. But none the less, it is still a command to be obeyed without question or hesitation or consternation or exception.

The second truth I want you to see about this command is this: it is a command that bears mutual responsibility. It is reciprocal not in the sense that because I love you, you in turn must love me, but rather in the sense that we naturally have love for one another.

“Love one another...”

We are to love each other. There are no excuses or exceptions.

Howard Marshall states that “love in the church is a priority both because this is the intended nature of the church and because without it the church will not be able to face the world.”

Our love for one another shows a watching wondering world that we belong to Christ. Now that we know who this command is directed to, the question then remains as to how we are to demonstrate a mutual love for each other.

I won't take the time here to discuss the definition of love but suffice it to say that Peter uses two different terms for love here. Phileo and agape. Brotherly love and unconditional/God like love.

Walvoord and Zuck in their commentary note that “A purified life allows one to love purely those who share the same faith.”

Being filled with the Spirit of God and the Word of God will result in showing the love of God to others.

So, from these two principles identified by Peter in this passage there are several additional applications that we can make to help the rubber meet the road.

#### A. This Love is to be Genuine

In our text it's the word "sincere". It means not hypocritical. According to Galatians 5:22, this love is generated only by the Holy Spirit. It is part of the fruit that He develops in us as we yield more and more of ourselves to His control and leading.

Several weeks ago I shared about the transformation in the heart of Josh McDowell for his father that can only be attributed to his faith in Christ. It's a love that is really hard to explain, but one we readily experience. This love cannot be artificially produced and is without pretense. It is not superficial, but is motivated by a genuine desire to give and never to get.

From Romans 12:9 we read that "Love must be sincere." But then he continues by showing us what sincere love looks like. "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Romans 12:9-13

Peter says that our love is to be genuine toward other believers.

#### B. This Love is Fervent

Fervent means to strain or stretch. Originally it was used of a horse stretching the very limits of its muscles. The word then became associated with athletics and refers to an athlete going all out.

John MacArthur writes "We are to love so that our love reaches very far, stretches to the limit..."

It could be in reference to forgiveness.

It could be in reference to a financial need.

It could be in reference to medical care.

This love is to be sacrificial. That's the example God gave us who loved us so much that He gave His only Son as the sacrifice for our sin.

We have some folks whose life journey right now is incredibly challenging. It is a time for the church to rise up and express the kind of fervent love for those going through various trials.

Yard work

Meals

Visits

Shopping

Home repair work

Any number of ways can express the love of Christ.

Again from John MacArthur who says "this kind of love is stretching intense unrelenting sacrificial love that reaches out." This love comes from the heart. It comes from an inner excellence of purity through obedience that expresses itself externally. It is done in such a way that the non-Christian looks in and says see how they love one another.

This love doesn't say "someone else will take care of it".

It doesn't say "I'm too busy or I don't have time".

It doesn't ask "what about my needs".

It doesn't ask "what will I get in return".

Bible commentator Hort writes "It is the life of God in man which raises the love of man for man to its highest level."

This love is fervent.

#### C. This Love is to Grow

Philippians 1:9 "And this is my prayer: that your love may about more and more in knowledge and depth of insight."

I Thessalonians 3:12 “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.”

II Thessalonians 1:3 “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.”

#### D. This Love is Generous

Perhaps the best illustration is the parable Jesus told of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. Beaten, robbed and left for dead a man was cared for by someone passing by. In cultural terms of the day, they would have been considered enemies. Yet he stopped and attended to the needs of the others. In the end of the story we read “The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

Think about the sacrificial gift of God to give His Son so that those who believe can have eternal life. Such sacrificial giving certainly stretches us and our faith to trust the Lord and love His people more.

Paul says that there are three Christian qualities that we should have in growing measure, but of the three, faith, hope and love, he said the greatest quality to possess was love.

Paul wrote a letter to his protégé, co-laborer, and friend Timothy to say that “the goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1:5) This kind of love is an encouragement to the body of Christ and a witness to a watching world looking to see if our love for each other is genuine.

John asked a very pointed question worth our consideration. How can we say we love God if we don't love one another?

We have heard of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 to go into all the world proclaiming the good news.

We have heard of the Great Commitment in Luke 9:23 to follow after the Lord by taking up our cross daily.

The Great Commandment is in Luke 10:27 to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as our self.

Bruce Barton concludes that “such love is not possible in the world at large, for it doesn't understand the love that results when people's sins are forgiven and their souls are purified.”

Deep love can only come from a changed heart, so notice carefully that this kind of love for one another is in the context of spiritual growth. They go hand in hand. A deep, fervent love for God leads to the same for others in the body of Christ. Is our love for each other sincerely motivated by obeying the truth of God's Word that purifies us?

We are to love each other always.