

## **STUDIES IN FIRST PETER** **(Loaded with Legitimate Love – 1:22)**

### **Introduction:**

- I. I love this finger. This finger has been with me a long time, in fact, this finger has been with me for as long as there's been a me. I am very familiar with this finger. I know all about what it can do and what it can't do. I know what it looks like front and back. Yes, we've been together a long time.

Come to think of it, I love this hand too. It has served me well over the years. It has help me to work and play and to engage in all kinds of activities. I have hammered things, made things, handled things and touched things with this hand. It is very functional. I'm certainly glad that it is a part of me.

Come to think of it, I love this arm too. In fact, without this arm I wouldn't have this hand and thus I wouldn't have this finger I love so much. And the truth is all that I have done with my hand was only possible because it was attached to my arm. And this arm has been with me a really long time, just as long as my finger as a matter of fact. And it sure has help me in times of need. There have been times when I have stumbled and fell, and if it wasn't for my arm breaking the fall I probably would have been badly hurt. And I don't remember asking my arm for help at the time, it just sort of took over by nature and acted in my best interest. I sure love this arm.

Come to think of it, I love every part of my body. Oh there are members that get on my nerves and there are parts of my body that I wish looked a little different, but I can't think of any member of my body that I would want to do without, after all the parts make up the whole. The parts make up who I am! I'm pretty attached to my body. Indeed, I love my body.

- II. It is not by accident that Paul wrote what he did in 1 Cor. 12:14-27. Let's read that together. How do you feel about your body? I'm not talking about your physical body, I'm talking about your spiritual body. How do you feel about other members or parts of the church. We should love our spiritual body just like we do our physical body. We ought to be attached to every part of the body. We ought to love every member. With this in mind, let's return to our study of the first chapter of First Peter.
- III. In 1 Peter 1:14-21 Peter dealt with the conduct of the Christian, or as we referred to it, the habits of the holy. Peter emphasized that the Christian who is holy will be obedient to God and will live his life with godly fear. But there is yet another habit that those who claim to be Christians must have and that is the habit of loving the brethren. Peter tells us that we as Christians who have been bought with the redeeming blood of Christ and purified by obedience to the truth, we should be loaded with legitimate love. Listen to his words found in verse 22.

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit\* in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, NKJV*

The word *purified* here connects this section with the last. The Greek word for holy found in the last section *hagios*. The Greek word purified in ver. 22 is *hagnizo* and means, "to make clean, i.e. sanctify. And it is obvious from Peter's language that he means to emphasize that we have a part in this purification process. I like what Barnes says in his comment on this verse:

"The apostles were never afraid of referring to human agency as having an important part in saving the soul...the amount of effort which we make "in purifying our souls" is usually also the measure of our attainments in religion. No one can expect to have any true piety beyond the amount of effort which he makes to be conformed to God, any more than one can expect wealth, or fame, or learning, without exertion."

We were not purified by accident nor did God purify us totally apart from our own involvement. We became pure and holy in the eyes of God when we obeyed God, and not one moment before that. And it wasn't obedience to just any message that purified us, it was obedience to what Peter simply refers to as the truth. And this, by the way, is exactly what Jesus prayed for in John 17:17 when He said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" If you are here this morning and outside the body of Christ, and if you want to be purified, sanctified and made holy, you too must obey the truth.

Next comes the instructions of Peter which constitute the primary point of this verse. Peter writes, "*in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*" Peter uses three adjectives to tell us exactly what constitutes a legitimate love. And those adjectives will be the main focus of our lesson this morning. However, before we go any further, let me emphasize that Peter is obviously talking here about the love we should have for each other in Christ. In other words, we know that we are commanded as Christians to love all men. But there is a special emphasis in scripture placed on the importance of Christians loving Christians. There is at least three reasons the Bible says we should love each other.

- **It is a badge of discipleship (Jn. 13:34-35).**

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

- **It is an indication of our spiritual life (1 Jn. 3:14).**

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.*

- **It is a demonstration that we love God (1 Jn. 4:21).**

*And this commandment have we from him, That he who loves God love his brother also.*

So Peter is emphasizing here the importance of us loving each other in Christ. And let me say to you that this is a key component in the success of the people of God. So let's look at the importance of being loaded with legitimate love.

## **Lesson:**

### **I. We Must Be Loaded with Love That Is Sincere.**

The word *sincere* means without dissimulation or disguise. It is the exact opposite of the word hypocrisy. Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, hypocrisy is the arch enemy of everything that is right and associated with God. You see with God there is no pretense. With God there is no cover up, concealment or camouflage. We can trust God because His love real and God expects, no He demands, that our love one for another be the same. Our love must be accurate and authentic, not fake, forged or fictitious because hypocrisy is despicable in all its forms, but never more so than when it attaches itself like a leech to love.

Picture in your minds Jesus in the placid and peaceful surroundings of the garden of Gethsemane. His heart is overflowing with sadness. He prays that He can avoid drinking from an unidentified cup of sorrow, but concludes by saying to His Father, "*thy will be done.*" He goes back to his disciples, Peter, James and John and finds them sleeping. With the distinctive tone of His voice He wakes them up. "*Rise, let us be going,*" He says. "*Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.*" And while Jesus is talking to His disciples, Judas approaches them with a band of armed people. Without remorse, he walks staunchly up to Jesus, looks him in the eyes and says, "Hail Master," and kisses Him. In an instant, this universal sign of love, the sign of a kiss, is distorted into a sign of betrayal.

Let me ask you, how many times have you kissed your brethren with a fictitious kiss? Every time we exhibit a manufactured and insincere love that is exactly what we are doing. Listen to me: some things just don't go together.

***Love and gossip don't go together.*** If you tell your brother or sister in Christ that you love them and then turn around talk badly about them behind their back you are guilty of betraying them with a kiss.

***Love and invective language don't go together.*** When you begin a sentence by saying how much you love someone, but then proceed to castigate them with unwarranted and unfair accusations, that's hypocrisy and you are betraying them with a kiss.

***Love and workless words don't go together.*** If you tell someone that you love them, but neglect to help them in their time of need, you are guilty of betraying them with a kiss (**1 Jn. 3:16-18**).

### *Love in Deed and Truth*

A young man spent an entire evening telling a girl how much he loved her. He said that he could not live without her; that he would go to the ends of the earth for her; yes, go through fire for her, or die for her. However, on leaving, he said, "I'll see you tomorrow night if it doesn't rain."

How often we say we love God yet deny it by our actions. Christ will give His crown of life only to those who love Him in deed and in truth.

### *Love Demonstrated*

A class of little girls was learning to spell. They spelled a number of small words, such as "pig," "cat," "dog," "cow," and amused themselves by imitating the sounds that these animals make. Then little Mary was asked to spell "love." She didn't stop to give the letters, but ran and threw her arms around the teacher's neck and kissed her on the cheek. "We spell 'love' that way at our house," she said. The girls laughed, but the teacher said, "That is a beautiful way; but do you know another way to spell 'love'?" "Oh, yes," cried Mary, "I spell love this way," and she began to put the books in order on her teacher's desk. "I spell love," she said, "by helping others when they need me."

## **II. We Must Be Loaded with Love That Is Fervent.**

This is the second time Peter uses the word love in this verse, but this time the word is a form of the word **agape** which Vine says is "the characteristic word of Christianity." Peter uses this word in the imperative mood meaning that he is setting forth a command. We are commanded to love each other and we are commanded to do so fervently. Now there are two important aspects of the word *fervent*. It denotes first of all something done with intensity. The Greek word literally means to stretch out giving a mental picture of someone "on the rack." In other words it denotes intense feelings.

But there is another shade or nuance to this word that is important and may even be Peter's primary thought in his usage of it. The word also denotes the idea of continuation and durability. The only other time the word is used in the New Testament is in Acts 12:5.

*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made WITHOUT CEASING of the church unto God for him.*

That's our word right there. Our love for each other must be like the prayers of the saints in Mary's house—our love must be without ceasing. You see this love that our text is talking about is not a love that is wishy-washy. It is not a love that comes and goes. It is not a love that ceases in adverse situations. Let me tell you something about this love with which we are to be loaded. It is a love that always remains, even when others don't act right. It is a love that bears burdens, even when others behave badly. It is a love that is not self-serving, even others are serving self. It is a love that endures, even when the love of others end. It is a love that maintains even when others make mistakes. It is a love that never fails, even in the face of our

brother's faults. This love, ladies and gentlemen, never stops. That's what a fervent love is all about and that's a part of what makes our love legitimate.

Now all this says something else about this love under consideration. It is not something that happens accidentally. A fervent love is a rational and reasonable love. A fervent love is a purposed and predetermined love. A fervent love is a love of desire and determination. Listen to Peter in another place (**1 Pet. 3:8-12**).

- **Having compassion one for another** (*literally having a fellow-feeling*). 1 Cor. 12:26
- **Pitiful** (*sympathetic and tender-hearted*).
- **Courteous** (*kind and friendly of mind*).
- **Not rendering evil for evil** (*not returning harmful or injurious behavior*). Rom. 12:17-21
- **Not returning railing for railing** (*invective or abusive speech*).
- **Instead return a blessing for railing** (*speak well of those who curse you*). Matt. 5:43-48
- **Eschew evil** (*go out of your way to avoid harmful behavior*).
- **Do good** (*practice that which is beneficial*).
- **Seek peace** (*plot and plan for quietness and tranquility-avoid drama*).
- **Ensure peace** (*to run after or swiftly pursue*).

And let me tell you if we as a local church are loaded with this legitimate love we can soar to great heights. We can break through any blockade and breach any barrier; we can cope with any concern and conquer any circumstance; we can defeat any difficulty and demolish any dilemma; we can prevail over any problem and pardon any person; we can overcome any obstacles and overpower any opponent; we can triumph over any trial and trounce any trouble; I'm here to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the devil doesn't stand a chance if we are loaded with a love that is fervent.

### **III. We Must Be Loaded with Love That Is Pure.**

While pureness and sincerity are closely related, this is not a repetition of our first point. The word for pure is **katharos**, meaning, "*free from impure admixture, without blemish, or spotless*". While it would denote a lack of pretence and fakery as does the word sincere, it involves more than that. In fact, you can have a sincere love that is still impure. You see this word pure points not only to the nature of the love, but to the object of the love. To have a pure love is to love that which is right and morally good within itself. Any love of something that is sinful in nature is not a pure love.

The greatest example of an impure love is a love that leads to illicit sexual behavior, or as it is put in biblical terms fornication. Listen to me: fornication is never the result of a pure love. Do two people caught in an extramarital

affair love each other? Perhaps, but not with a pure love. Do those involved in homosexual relationships love each other? Yes they can, and the love can be sincere, but it's never pure. Why? Because pure love always involves that which is right and morally good.

Now, why is this point that Peter makes so important in this particular text. It's possible, if we are not very careful, a healthy brotherly love can spin out of control and turn into something unholy. I can't begin to tell you how many times couples in Christ become best friends with other couples in the local church, only to have an illicit sexual union develop from it. Our love for brothers and sisters in Christ must remain brotherly and nothing else.

### **Conclusion:**

Do you love your body? I'm talking about your spiritual body. Are you attached to the various parts that make up the body of Christ in this location? The question is this—do you love your brethren, and if so is the love that you have legitimate? Is your love sincere, pure and fervent? This is the kind of love with which Peter tells us to be loaded.