

1 P E T E R

A VERSE BY VERSE STUDY THROUGH PETER'S EPISTLE

SESSION OBJECTIVE: 1 PETER 1:22-25

To understand how salvation enables us to love others.

Get Together!

As a student (and lover) of music, I cannot deny the power of the 1960's on music. As a millennial, I love the music of the 1990's, but I also recognize that we would not have the 90's without the 60's, because so many of the musicians in the 90's were directly influenced by the musicians of the 60's. One song that comes to mind this week as we prepare to dive into 1 Peter 1:22-25 was written in 1967 and featured on the debut album from a band called The Youngbloods. The song's title *Get Together*, eventually became the album's title when it was re-released in 1971. Get Together is well-known across generations. Even millennials usually recognize it, if for no other reason than it was also featured in a song by the iconic grunge-rock band, Nirvana. The words are recognizable in the chorus: "Come on, people now, smile on your brother, everybody get together, try to love one another right now." It's so catchy, you are probably singing it to yourself at this point. You're welcome, by the way. "Love one another," they say. He goes on to sing in verse 2: "Some may come and some may go, but He will surely pass, when the one that left us here returns for us at last. We are but a moment's sunlight, fading in the grass." Amazingly deep lyrics from some old, rock'n rollers from the 1960's, right?

Peter has thus far spoken in depth about the profound impact that salvation has on us. It is enacted by God (1 Pet. 1:3), and not just the Father, but the Son and the Spirit as well (1 Pet. 1:1). This salvation produces in us a, "tested genuineness of your faith" (1 Pet. 1:7), and makes it possible for us to set our hope, "fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). It was announced by the

prophets of old, but is made clear in the person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:10). Now, in verses 22 through 25, we learn that our salvation also empowers us to love one another with a specific kind of love that is unique to our faith, because it is born in us, “not of perishable seed, but imperishable” (1 Pet. 1:23). Love, then, springs forth in the life of a believer as a plant that began as a seed, and that seed, is Scripture.

Pure Love

Verse 22 begins with, “Now that you have purified yourselves.” The word here for purified is the Greek word ἁγνίζω (hagnizō), and it is a word that typically means, “to purify or cleanse and so make acceptable for cultic use.” In fact, it’s the exact same word, ἀναγεννάω (anagennaō). It is the same word that the Greek Old Testament uses in Exodus 19:10: “And the Lord said to Moses, Go down and solemnly charge the people, and *sanctify* them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments.” To sanctify, or purify, connotes the idea of setting apart as ceremonially clean, and thus ready to be used by God. Notice that Peter says that this is an action being done reflexively to oneself. The question is, how does one do this? Below is a breakdown of how and why this purification process is intended to take place.

BY OBEYING THE TRUTH

The first phrase sheds light on the action that purifies, namely, obedience to the truth! The question is, “what does this really mean?” Obeying the truth is a central part of the Christian experience, and yet it can be understood differently depending on the context. Does Peter mean a general obedience to God’s Word? Or does Peter mean our initial obedience to the truth at the moment of salvation?

I am inclined to accept the latter. The whole context of this passage is centered around new birth through the imperishable seed of the Word. In light of that, obedience to the truth (God’s Word, or more specifically, the Gospel) is the action of faith that purifies a person and enables them to carry out the love of God towards other people. Again, this is a moment of tension in Scripture. How is it that new birth can be caused by God, through His imperishable Word, but understood to be something we do? Is it God bringing about new birth, or is it us? The answer is, yes. Yes, God brings about the new birth in our life. Yes, new birth is established through His imperishable Word. And yes, we purify ourselves when we obeyed it for the very first time. Splitting theological hairs to solve this age-old question will only result in frustration, because the divine plan of salvation is conceived in the mind of an eternal, Divine Being. How can a mortal, human mind fully grasp it?

SO THAT YOU HAVE SINCERE LOVE

This purification process enables us to have, “sincere love for each other” (1 Pet. 1:22). Prior to this, our condition was bleak at best. Paul gives a powerful summation of our inner-depravity: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” We were carried on by demonic power, only inwardly focused, and caring nothing about those around us. However, the transforming power of God brought out through His Holy Spirit at the moment of new birth reprograms us in some way. Though formerly we were unable to love our neighbor rightly, now we can.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER DEEPLY

This ability to love still must be put to use, and so Peter calls us to task with a command: “Love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Pet. 1:22). This is an important passage to reflect upon given the context of 1 Peter. Recall that Peter is writing to Christians who are experiencing high levels of persecution. Peter’s reminder to

them is that they have been born again, "to a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3), and that in light of this hope we are to love one another from the heart regardless of the heat we feel from worldly persecution. This also speaks to the importance of unity within the body of Christ. Too often, the greatest battles Christians fight today are with other Christians. This is unheard of for Peter's day. Christians' chief goal apart from loving God is to love one another, for it is by that love that the rest of the world knows that we are His disciples (Jn. 13:35).

Lasting Seed

Peter's contention that our salvation is wrought by the actions of God is here confirmed even further: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." The usage of such a term conveys the imagery of the seed of a Father bringing forth life. This is not the first time we have seen God's Word compared to seed. Jesus tells the Parable of the Seeds in Mark 4:1-20, wherein the seed represents God's saving Word falling on a multitude of types of hearers. Some are like the worn down roads, some like the rocky ground, some like the thorny soil, and some like good soil. The beloved disciple, John, wrote: "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God" (1 Jn. 3:9).

The word is lastly identified as the same word that Isaiah proclaimed. Peter enlists Isaiah 40:6-8 to make his case: "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." The context of Isaiah is fitting given Peter's application of it. In Isaiah, the word of the LORD comes to Israel to remind them that though they are in exile, His work with them is not finished, and that He will one day restore them. God reminds them that the people who have taken them captive are like grass that withers and fades, but that God's Word endures forever, and is therefore more trustworthy than anything else. Remember how Peter referred to Christians in the beginning of this letter? "Elect *exiles*." Peter's usage of Isaiah 40 solidifies our understanding that he saw Christians living in this foreign and hostile world in the same way that Israel saw the foreign and hostile nations who had taken them captive.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read 1 Peter 1:22. What does Peter say we have done to ourselves? What does this refer to, and why? (Hint: See above notes)

2. Read 1 Peter 1:22. How did we purify ourselves? By what means?

Day Two

1. Read 1 Peter 1:22. What was the goal of this purification, according to this verse?

2. Read 1 Peter 1:23. What is the agency God used to bring about new life in us?

Day Three

1. Read 1 Peter 1:23. What imagery does this term *seed* convey here, and why? Are there other places that picture the Word of God as seed? If so, where? (Hint: See above notes)

2. Read 1 Peter 1:24. What does the word, “For,” indicate about what follows?

Day Four

1. Read 1 Peter 1:24. What passage is Peter quoting here, and what is the contextual significance of it?

2. Read 1 Peter 1:25. When Peter says, “This is the word that was preached to you,” what does he mean?

Week 6 Discussion: Love One Another

I don't know about you, but I remember how awful I was prior to Jesus (that's not to say that I'm *great* at this point - progress, not perfection, am I right?). The Scripture presents to us a bleak reality of our condition outside of the Lord. However, after salvation, we are able to love one another in a way that is foreign to the dying world around us, so much so that it indicates to them that we are Jesus' disciples (Jn. 13:35). Talk as a group about the power of loving one another, and the message that it promotes to the world around us, especially when we face persecution.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever been the recipient of timely, radical love? How did it make you feel?
2. Have you ever considered that loving other Christians is a form of witnessing? Why do you think that might be? How might our inner-working love be a message of hope to non-believers?
3. Are you good at loving others? Why or why not?
4. Are you good at receiving love from others? Why or why not?
5. Practically speaking, how can someone demonstrate love to their Christian brother or sister?
6. Do you feel adequately equipped to love others? What could the church do to equip believers to be more equipped to carry out this command?

Takeaways:

1. Salvation enables us to love one another deeply.
2. Salvation is brought about by the seed of God's Word.

PRAYER REQUESTS: