

I PETER 1:13-25

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Peter chapter 1 as we finish up this chapter this evening in our study through the Word of God.

If you remember from our study last week, Peter is writing to Christians who have been dispersed throughout Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey, for their faith in Jesus Christ.

And in the midst of these trials they were facing, in all that they were going through, the persecution that was growing against Christians, Peter speaks of them rejoicing!

We seem to be talking a lot about trials and joy as we are going through these letters of the New Testament. Why is that?

Because it was a reality of their life because of their faith and yet, joy flowed from their lives because their joy was based on the Lord – an internal reality and not the things that were happening around them – an external reality.

And it is part of our life as well. So as we look at what they went through it gives us encouragement for the things we are going through.

And remember what we said of this letter. If you want to sum up this letter, it can be as simple as this – ***WHERE THERE'S CHRIST, THERE'S HOPE!***

Let me share this with you so you can see the importance of hope in our lives, something people today are lacking. We are told,

Viktor Frankl has written powerfully on the importance of maintaining hope. After enduring an exilic-like existence in a German concentration camp during the Second World War, Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, told the true but tragic tale of a fellow prisoner who lost all hope:

A fairly well-known composer and librettist confided in me one day: . . .

“Doctor, I have had a strange dream. A voice told me that I could wish for something, that I should only say what I wanted to know, and all my questions would be answered. What do you think I asked? That I would like to know when the war would be over for me. You know what I mean, Doctor – for me! I wanted to know when we, when our camp, would be liberated and our suffering come to an end.” . . .

“What did your dream voice answer?”

Furtively [stealthily] he whispered to me, “March Thirtieth.”

When [he] told me about his dream, he was still full of hope . . . but as the promised day drew nearer, the war news which reached our camp made it appear very unlikely that we would be free on the promised day.

On March twenty-ninth, [he] suddenly became ill. . . . On March thirtieth . . . he became delirious and lost consciousness. On March thirty-first, he was dead. To all outward appearances, he had died of typhus. [You can get it from infected mites, fleas, or lice.]

[But] those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man . . . and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope . . . can have a deadly effect. . . . Any attempt to restore a man’s inner strength . . . had first to succeed in showing him some future goal.

From what we know of 1 Peter so far, it appears that the apostle not only comprehended Frankl’s truth centuries earlier but wrote of hope on an exalted plane – of something fixed and permanent – a hope far above what Frankl believed could ever exist.

Peter's hope was "a living hope" (1:3), and it was "living" because it was grounded in the resurrection of Christ. Peter spoke of nothing less than the hope of real Heaven. And for his early readers this message could not have come at a better time.

- David R. Helm, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude – Sharing Christ's Sufferings, pp. 55-56

I agree, I don't think this letter could have come to us at a better time than this as we are seeing all kinds of confusion, hopelessness, frustration, and-so-on as we look at our nation and the world.

But remember what this book is all about – ***WHERE THERE'S CHRIST, THERE'S HOPE!***

Amen to that! No matter what comes our way, as we are focused on Christ, He will see us through those times! We need to have that hope because without hope, we are lost, we are in despair, what is the point!

But God gives us so much hope as we saw last time!

And, Peter's point as we saw last week, is that we can be overflowing with joy because of all that God has done for us, because our salvation is secure in Him, because our inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, it will not fade away, and not only has the Lord reserved for us a place in heaven but our salvation is kept by the power of God.

You see, how can you not rejoice in that! Those are wonderful promises of God for us and it should give us great hope that there is a time coming when all this pain and suffering will be gone. This life is short, but we can spend an eternity with the Lord and why not start right now, having that joy because of the hope we have in Christ! He is coming back!

Also, God will use trials in our lives to help us to grow in the faith, nothing happens without a purpose, without a reason, even though we might not always understand it or see it.

It is as J. H. Jowett said, ***“I never expected to find a fountain in so unpromising a waste.”***

Think about these struggling Christians and Peter is telling them to set their hope fully on the future coming of Christ. And what was an encouragement to them the Holy Spirit is trying to encourage us in the days we are living in. Jesus is coming, let’s get ready! And that is really the focus of the rest of this chapter, holiness or the sanctification process.

Remember what we saw in our study last week. The first part of this letter deals with ***THE SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER*** and it covers I Peter 1:1-2:12.

Last time we looked at the issue of ***SALVATION*** in I Peter 1:1-12.

And tonight, we will begin a section that deals with ***SANCTIFICATION*** and we will see that in I Peter 1:13-2:12.

So with that said, let’s pickup our study in I Peter chapter 1 starting in verse 13 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we look at what God desires in our lives, what He is doing – this ***SANCTIFICATION!***

I PETER 1**VERSES 13-16**

Because the Lord is coming back, because of all He has done for us, let's prepare ourselves and Peter starts out by saying, "**... gird up the loins of your mind.**"

That phrase, "**gird up the loins**" is not one we use today.

To put it into our vernacular we might say, "*It's time to roll up your sleeves.*"

You see, back then men wore long robes, which were fine for walking in but were a hindrance when you tried to run or do battle. It would be like wearing a long dress and trying to run a race. It would be very easy to fall, to stumble as you trip over it.

Peter's point is this.

God wants us to live a life that is ready. You are not going to place yourself in a situation that will cause you to stumble, to fall.

Prepare your minds so the enemy doesn't trip you up! This is a conscious act of our will to obey God, to follow His commands, to live a life that is holy, honoring Him, not because the Law makes us, but out of our deep love for Him!

Now, in these four verses there are five points that Peter is making, and we are going to take a closer look at them. We touched on the first one.

Peter is telling us that we need to - ***PREPARE YOUR MIND FOR ACTION!***

In other words, get rid of loose and sloppy thinking. It means to control what you think about, those things you decide to set your mind upon.

Paul, in Romans 12:1-2 tell us, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

You see, as you let your guard down you give Satan an opportunity to trip you up!

Don't let him, allow the Word of God to transform your life – be prepared!

Next, Peter speaks of the fact that we need to - ***BE SOBER OR SELF-CONTROLLED!***

The idea here is not to allow the outward circumstances to control your life but to allow the Spirit of God to control you!

Peter is speaking of mental and spiritual drunkenness or excess – don't let that control your life.

Paul, in Ephesians 5:15-21 tells us, **“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Thus, be continually being filled by the Spirit of God and you won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh!

Next, Peter tells us that we need to - ***SET OUR HOPE FULLY ON THE LORD!***

People place their hope in all kinds of things because without hope we lose the will to live, as we have seen in our introduction to this study tonight. But if what you place your hope in is untrue, then your hope is meaningless!

Make no mistake about it; hope is a very powerful in our lives for without it we would just give up!

Let me show you what I mean regarding hope.

Several years ago, there was a study done in California with wharf rats or rats that lived by the water.

The first group of these wharf rats was placed in water and after about 16 minutes of trying to swim they would give up and die, they would drown.

Then they used another group of wharf rats, placed them in the water for 15 minutes, then they took them out, dried them off, gave them something to eat, and then they placed them back in the water.

They repeated this several times until finally they just left them in the water to see how long they would last.

Interestingly enough, these wharf rats didn't last 16 minutes, 32 minutes, not even 2 hours, but they lasted some 32 hours!

What happened?

What was the difference?

One group had no hope while the other group did!

You see, without hope there is no point in going on, but with this other group of wharf rats, they had hope that they would be rescued, and it encouraged them to go on.

The only problem is, like I have said, if you place your hope in something that is hopeless, you are going to be discouraged, disappointed, you will lose hope eventually.

Thus, we need to place our hope in the Lord because He alone has given to us eternal life and that eternal life is only found in Him and it is a guarantee.

We have a place reserved for us in heaven by God that no one can take away!

And one day we will see Him face to face!

It is as Paul said in Romans 5:5, **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

Thus, holy living demands determination – set your hope fully upon Jesus!

Next, Peter warns us by saying - ***DON'T CONFORM YOURSELVES TO THE FORMER LUSTS!***

In other words, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1-3, **“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”**

You see, we are a new creation in Christ and no longer are we controlled by the flesh but by the Spirit.

Thus, what God is doing on the inside of our lives is then manifested outwardly, how we conduct ourselves.

We no longer meander through life without direction, but God is guiding us, and we live accordingly.

Which really leads us to our next point.

Peter just lays it all out and he tells us - ***BE HOLY BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY!***

The word “**holy**” speaks of being set apart, and we are to be set apart for God.

Again, the idea is that we are God’s children, born again by the power of God and thus, we need to live accordingly.

Paul, in Ephesians 1:3-4 tells us, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.**”

You see, that is the standard that God has set, and He is calling us to live that way, to be holy.

“But I can’t do that?”

Yes, that is partially true, and we will deal with that in a minute.

But what I want you to see here is that Peter is not saying we are to be as holy as God is, we are to be holy like God is! We will never be holy as God is, but far too often we set the bar so low anyone can attain it. Now, we are to be holy or set apart for God and allow Him to give us the ability to live accordingly!

Before we get to dealing with how we can accomplish this, listen to what Paul says to the Thessalonians regarding this issue of sanctification or that process that God is using to purge the garbage from our lives and to make us more like Him.

We are told in I Thessalonians 4:1-12, **“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.”**

God’s will for our lives is sanctification, that we would be holy as He is holy.

But how can we do that?

Yes, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!

So what is the answer?

Listen to what Peter tells us next because he is going to show us what we need to do to accomplish this in the next verse.

VERSE 17

Folks, we can call upon the Lord, our Father and ask Him to help us to live a life that is pleasing to Him and He will give us the power to do that.

You see, He has called us to be holy and our response is that we are to walk accordingly!

We also need to understand that God is going to judge us, not for damnation if we are saved, but for rewards and He will convict us if it is needed.

And Peter also tells us that God shows no partiality towards us, He doesn't have a favorite, a "*teachers' pet*" you might say.

He doesn't say, "*I'll excuse Stevie boy because I really like him!*"

You see, that would be inconsistent with His character, His nature. He will chasten us because we are His children and when we go astray, He loves us so much that He will do whatever it takes to bring us back.

We are told in Proverbs 9:10, "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**"

When Solomon and Peter speak of fear they are speaking of a reverential fear and if need be, a fear of knowing that our God is a consuming fire!

We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ or the Bema Seat of Christ, not for judgment as Christians, but for rewards as I have said.

Paul, in II Corinthians 5:9-10 tells us, "**Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**"

And in I Corinthians 3:11-15 we are told, **“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”**

In other words, the Bema Seat of Christ or this judgment seat is where rewards will be handed out for faithful service, not for salvation because Christ saves us, but we will be rewarded as we serve the King of kings and Lord of Lords!

Yes, in this life God is still molding and shaping us and He will chasten us when needed because He is working on us down here to fit in up there!

It is as John tells us in I John 3:2, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”**

We long for that day!

Now it all boils down to this, as Paul said in I Thessalonians 2:10-12, **“You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”**

May we walk accordingly and set our hope fully on the Lord Jesus Christ and all those precious promises He has given to us!

VERSES 18-19

Peter is speaking of our redemption and this is an interesting concept and well-known to the people of Peter's day.

You see, there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and often they were bought and sold like pieces of furniture!

Also, in the center of every Greek city stood the agora or the marketplace and it was here where slaves were bought and sold.

Now there are three different Greek words for "*redemption.*"

One of the Greek words for the act of redemption (the purchasing of a slave) is *agorazo*.

There's a second word for redemption that the Greek reader of Scripture would readily understand, *exagorazo*, or "*the act of purchasing or redeeming never to return.*"

You see, oftentimes, a man would buy a slave, use him for the cultivating and planting of his fields or the harvesting his crops, and then return him to the marketplace to be sold again.

Exagorazo was the exact opposite of this practice, in that it spoke of permanent possession.

The third Greek word for redemption is *apolutrosis*.

Apolutrosis speaks of a man going into the agora to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free totally and completely never to be a slave again.

Paul uses this third Greek word in Colossians 1:14 where he tells us, "**in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**"

What Paul is saying is that Jesus Christ has purchased us from the slavery of sin and has set us free, never to be returned as a slave any longer!

And we were not purchased with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ!

You see, Peter is telling us that it cost Jesus His life to redeem us, to purchase us back or to pay the price for our sin.

What is the point in regard to what he has been talking about, sanctification and holy living?

Because of what Christ has done, Peter is calling for us to live accordingly!

In other words, God has done all this for you and knowing that should help us to have a walk that is worthy of the high calling by which we have been called.

You see, it was not by our good works, the keeping of the Law, our aimless conduct that saves us.

No, it is by the precious blood of Christ that was shed for our sins.

Throughout the church history people have been led to believe that you can buy things from God, that you can buy your way into heaven.

Remember Simon in Acts chapter 8 who practiced sorcery and had a pseudo conversion experience.

When he saw the power of the Holy Spirit fall upon the believers in Samaria he wanted to buy that power – but Peter rebuked him saying, “... **‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!’**” Acts 8:20.

We see this portrayed in the Roman Catholic Church with its indulgences where you buy a candle, a Mass card, this and that so you can buy your way out of Purgatory and into heaven.

And the protestant church where some believe if you sow your seed faith to God He will multiply it back, He will heal you, He will do whatever you want as long as you show these televangelists the money!

But Peter tells us you can't purchase this gift of life because the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus Christ has already paid for it.

You see, the rich, the poor, the middle class, anyone who comes to Jesus can freely receive the gift of life because it was paid for by the shedding of His blood and not by my efforts, not by the money I have in my possession!

I want you to also notice that Jesus, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world was a perfect sacrifice.

There was no "**blemish**" or acquired sin in His life.

There was no "**spot**" or inherited sin in His life.

Thus, Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, "**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"

You see, we could never pay for our own sin because we have many blemishes in our life or we have sin in our life.

Not only that, but we also have a big spot in our life or that sin that has been passed down to us through Adam!

If Jesus had a blemish or spot, He could not have been our Redeemer, but He didn't and thus, He paid in full the penalty for our sin.

It is as Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us, **“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

Praise God for His love for us and His sacrifice so that we can live with Him for eternity if we receive Him into our lives!

VERSES 20-21

As some look at what happened to man, his falling into sin, they think that then God had to come up with a plan to fix the problem, to save man from his sin. That is not the case, not at all.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

. . . God was not taken by surprise by the fall of man. It was foreknown, in the councils of eternity. If God acted in creation, He would eventually have to act in redemption. All three persons of the Godhead would have to be involved.

So it was that, before God ever stooped down to fashion Adam’s clay, before the song of the seraphim ever awoke the echoes of the everlasting hills, before the galaxies were ever flung into orbit, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit conceived the plan to redeem Adam’s ruined race when once the Fall transpired.

It was, thus, “foreordained before the foundation of the world” that, when the fullness of the time was come, God the Son would enter into human life. He would become the Babe of Bethlehem and then, in due time, the Lamb of Calvary. Our redemption was no afterthought with God. It was part of a plan.

The full ramifications of that plan escape us now, but when we arrive in glory and know even as we are known (1 Cor. 13:9–12), then we’ll understand. We shall out-sing the angel choirs. We shall sing, from full hearts, as only a redeemed people can sing.

- Source Unknown

And that is what Peter is telling us, that even before man was created, before God laid the foundations of this world, Jesus knew what He would have to do to redeem man from his sin!

We see this spoken of in Revelation 13:8, where we are told that Jesus is, “**. . . the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**”

Also, in Galatians 4:4-5 as Paul wrote, “**But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**”

That is love folks!

Think about that for a minute, I have.

And you know what, if I was God, and I knew my creation would turn against me and I would have to put on a body of flesh and blood, die for their sins, their rebellion, I would grab another lump of clay and start over. I wouldn’t have made this creation in the first place.

But God did! That is – **LOVE!**

He knew what it would cost Him, and He still created us, and again, that just shows us how much He loves me, how much He loves you!

In fact, in John 3:16-17 Jesus tells us, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

And John was right when he wrote in I John 4:19, **“We love Him because He first loved us.”**

Let me explain it like this and you will see how this plays out with this true story. We are told,

The Vietnam War was mercifully drawing to a close during my middle-school years. And that meant that young men who had been sent over to fight were now returning to the states. Each one needed a fresh start on life. For one man that meant enrolling at Judson College. I never knew the man by name, but I regularly saw him from a distance of a hundred yards.

Judson College is on the Fox River in Illinois; my dad’s office in the Athletic Department was a wedge shot from its banks. I could see the river from the gym. During the frigid winter months the man stood alone along the river’s frozen edge, tending a covey of ducks. He fed them. He cut through the ice to open up an area of water for them. In short, he met their every need during the cold season. Every day.

I asked my dad why the man cared so much about the ducks. I will never forget the story he told: “He has just returned from the war in Vietnam. The story is that ducks saved his life. His unit had been ambushed. Many of his friends had been killed, and while he hadn’t been shot, he lay down to look like he had. He hoped they would go away. But they didn’t.

The enemy kept coming. Through the fields they came. They'd put one more shot in every fallen man to ensure that he was dead. But suddenly a covey of ducks flew overhead, and the attention of the soldiers was diverted. In their excitement they began running after the ducks to shoot at them instead. In the end, they stopped checking the field for men and left. That's how the man down by the river escaped. And now he has a special love for ducks. He loves because he lives."

- David R. Helm, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude – Sharing Christ's Sufferings, p. 65

Make no mistake about it, we love the Lord because He first loved us and that love for us is seen in the sacrifice that He made to save us from our sins!

I think the Puritan, Thomas Watson had it right as he spoke of redemption being God's greatest work. We are told, "***Great was the work of creation, but greater the work of redemption; it cost more to redeem us than to make us; in the one there was but the speaking of a Word, in the other the shedding of blood. Luke 1:51. The creation was but the work of God's fingers. Ps. 8:3. Redemption is the work of His arm.***"

Now, what God has planned before the foundation of the world, what the Old Testament Prophets spoke and wrote about, has become a reality, the Messiah, Jesus has come and has finished the work the Father sent Him to do.

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 1:1-3, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”**

And when you look at the evidence for the resurrection, and many have, the only conclusion you can come to is that Jesus did rise from the dead, the evidence speaks for itself!

Thus, our faith and hope is not based in fantasy but in truth, a reality!

Our faith is not empty, it is not futile, our hope is not in nothing, but in the truths of God found in the Word of God!

Thus, may we not only appropriate the truths of God into our lives but also share them with others so they can come to the saving faith as they place their lives into the hands of Jesus and walk by faith in the hope of God’s promises!

It is as Paul said in Ephesians 2:11-12, **“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”**

You see, outside of Christ, outside of God there is no real hope and when you talk with people today, many are feeling this way.

But in Titus 1:1-3 Paul tells us, **“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior.”**

You see, our hope is secure because it is based in God and His Word and God cannot lie, what He has told us is truth and what He has promised He is more than able to bring to pass!

VERSE 22

In other words, since you’re now a new creation in Christ, the greatest evidence of the new birth is love. First and foremost, we must demonstrate that love to other members of the Body of Christ

What Peter is saying here is that holy living, that life that has been separated from the world is incomplete if you don’t have love!

In I Corinthians chapters 12-14 dealing with Spiritual gifts, everyone focuses on the gifts, the power but Paul tells us in I Corinthians chapter 13 that if you don’t have love, then all those gifts are empty, they are worthless.

In fact, Jesus said in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

And Paul in Galatians chapter 5 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit working in our lives and through us is *LOVE* and then he goes on to show us how love manifests itself with joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control!

It's interesting that Peter uses two different Greek words in his admonition for us to love one another as Christians.

“In sincere love of the brethren” Peter uses the Greek word *phileo*.

Phileo, is a word that denotes “friendship” love, it is a reciprocal love that involves mutual caring, kindness and overall speaks of the love that enjoys being with a person. Think of it as “mutual affection” or “brotherly love.”

The second kind of love that Peter speaks of when he says, **“love one another fervently with a pure heart”** is “agape” love.

This is a love that is typically associated with God as in 1John 4:8 where it says that ***“God is love (agape)”***; and in John 3:16 which says, ***“for God so loved (agapao) the world that He gave His only Begotten Son . . .”***

Agape is the love that God poured into our hearts when the Holy Spirit came to live within us at the moment of our salvation. (Romans 5:5).

This is a supernatural love that can show kindness to an enemy because it's not rooted in feelings but in the will as we will to obey God's command to love others, even our enemies regardless if we feel like it or not.

So what is Peter's point? What is he showing us using those two different Greek words for “love”?

First of all, we are to love (*phileo*) each other like family (affection, kindness). In other words, we genuinely like each other and enjoy being around each other.

For this to become a reality, we need to stop the gossip, the backbiting and thinking the worst of each other.

There is nothing worse than when I come to church and see Christians avoiding each other because they've had a falling out and they're too proud to humble themselves and work it out.

And secondly, we are to love (agape) each other unconditionally and sacrificially as God loves us.

That means we look out for each other and help those brothers and sisters in Christ whenever they have a need, and even our enemies. It is a love that comes from God and is not dependent upon what the other person does or says!

Warren Wiersbe sums this up nicely as he tells us,

It is tragic when people try to “manufacture” love, because the product is obviously cheap and artificial, “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps 55:21).

The love that we share with each other, and with a lost world, must be generated by the Spirit of God. It is a constant power in our lives, and not something that we turn on and off like a radio.

Not only is this love a spiritual love, but it is a sincere love (“unfeigned”). We love “with a pure heart.” Our motive is not to get but to give. There is a kind of “success psychology” popular today that enables a person to subtly manipulate others in order to get what he wants. If our love is sincere and from a pure heart, we could never “use people” for our own advantage.

This love is also a fervent love, and this is an athletic term that means “striving with all of one’s energy.” Love is something we have to work at, just as an Olympic contestant has to work at his particular skills.

Christian love is not a feeling, it is a matter of the will. We show love to others when we treat them the same way God treats us. God forgives us, so we forgive others. God is kind to us, so we are kind to others. It is not a matter of feeling but of willing, and this is something we must constantly work at if we are to succeed.

We have two wonderful “assistants” to help us: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The same truth that we trusted and obeyed to become God’s children also nurtures and empowers us. It is impossible to love the truth and hate the brethren. The Spirit of God produces the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives, and the first of these is love (Gal 5:22-23).

If we are filled with the Word of God (Col 3:16 ff) and the Spirit of God (Eph 5:18 ff), we will manifest the love of God in our daily experiences.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 901

You see, as we obey the truths of God found in the Word of God we will, by the power of God’s Spirit working in us, live a holy life, a purified life.

Our life will be sincere or without hypocrisy and folks, that kind of love, that kind of living is only possible for those who are born again by the eternal Word of God and Peter is going to talk about that next.

VERSES 23-25

People today, Christians, can say what they want about the Bible, they can try to put it down or say it is not enough or whatever. But Peter nails it here! If you don’t think the Bible is important, then you need to read these verses again!

You see, Peter is telling us that God's Word, the Bible brings forth life in that within its pages are the words of eternal life for us and as God's Spirit opens them up to us, we can be saved, we can be born again!

Paul said in Romans 10:17, "**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**"

And Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16-17, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**"

That means all 66 books, all 1,118 chapters, all 774,746 verses, all 3,500,034 words are inspired by God or breathed from the lips of God!

In fact, the rabbi's felt that even the spaces between the words were inspired!

One of the things that really upsets me today is the disregard for God's Word by pastors and people.

Do you realize the number of godly men and women who were put to death by the Roman Catholic Church because they tried to get God's Word into the hands of the common people and the Roman Catholic Church didn't want that to happen.

And yet, today we see leaders saying things like, "***We study God's Word too much!***" or "***We need to be open to new things outside of God's Word!***" or "***God's Word contains the Word of God but we have to find out which ones He spoke and which ones He didn't!***"

How tragic – just believe what Paul said that God's Word is inspired, all of it and then walk accordingly!

And here's the thing. Satan wants to get us away from God's Word, to twist God's Word because it not only brings forth life, it not only brings salvation to people, but it helps us to walk accordingly!

God's Word tells us what is right.

God's Word tells us what is wrong.

God's Word tells us how to get right when we have gone astray.

And God's Word tells us how to stay right so that we might be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work!

God's Word will endure forever and the philosophies, the principles of man will come and go, they will not last forever!

We see that once again in Isaiah 40:8, which tells us, "**The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.**"

And yet, people have tried from early on to discredit the Word of God or to eliminate it from getting into the hands of the common people.

"In AD 303 the Roman Emperor Diocletian demanded that every copy of the Scriptures in the Roman Empire be burned. He failed, and 25 years later the Roman Emperor Constantine commissioned a scholar named Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Bible at government expense."

"A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put." (Bernard Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences)

And why is that? Because "**. . . the word of the LORD endures forever.**"

And some of you are aware of the man named Voltaire. He was the famous French atheist who died in 1778 who made an infamous prediction. He predicted that within 100 years of his death the Bible would disappear from the Earth.

Ironically, 50 years after his death the Geneva Bible Society bought his house and used his own printing press to produce thousands of Bibles for distribution! God has a good sense of humor and He will not be mocked!

H. L. Hastings wrote,

Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this Book and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before.

Infidels with all their assaults make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt.

When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his domain, an old statesman and warrior said to him, ‘Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.’

So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this Book for ages, but the hammers are worn out and the anvil still endures.

If this Book had not been the Book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the Book still lives.

- H. L. Hastings

Let me share these points that we have seen emerge from this chapter here in I Peter.

God has given to us -

AN INCORRUPTIBLE INHERITANCE!

We saw that in I Peter 1:4 where we are told, “**to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.**”

God has given to us –

AN INCORRUPTIBLE REDEMPTION!

We saw that in I Peter 1:18-19 where we are told, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**”

God has given to us -

AN INCORRUPTIBLE WORD OF GOD!

And we saw that in I Peter 1:23 where we are told, “**having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.**”

And I will close with this. This is from F. F. Bruce, who is a Christian scholar, professor and author. He wrote, “*No part of the human body can be properly explained outside the context of the whole body - so no part of the Bible can be properly explained or understood outside the context of the Bible as a whole.*”

Amen to that!

Thus, to these Christians who were being persecuted for their faith in Christ, and for us, there is no need to fear but keep our eyes upon Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith.

Our hope is in Him and His finished work, for God has reserved a place for us in heaven that no one can take away!

Praise the Lord!

Remember - ***WHERE THERE'S CHRIST, THERE'S HOPE!***