

4. Learning to Love with a Pure Heart

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live a holy life. The thing that motivates us to live a holy life is an understanding of the love of Christ. This was demonstrated by His payment to redeem us from the consequences of our sin. We will do much more when we are motivated by the love of Christ than we will do because we feel it is our duty. The same is true for our children. As we help them grow in their understanding of the love of Christ, they develop a strong desire to please Christ and live to bring glory to Him. In our topic today, we are going to see that we want to help them learn to love with a pure heart.

1 Peter 1:22 says, “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.” We saw the previous verses talked about living a holy life in response to the love that Christ showed for us, by shedding His precious blood, to pay the penalty for our sins. We saw that His payment redeemed us from the bondage of sin and Satan. As a result, we saw that we want to live holy lives that please the One that paid our penalty. That is what motivates us to obey the truth and be obedient to the Word of God. However, we also know that we can only obey that truth as we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

We see that when we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit, He will give us a love for the brethren (other Christians) that is without hypocrisy. Godly love is much greater than family love. At any moment that we are yielding our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit, it is then possible for the love of Christ to flow through our lives. The word that is translated “fervently” means “*to stretch out the hand.*” The people who are not Christians cannot love with this kind of love because they cannot yield their lives to the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:38 says, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Christ was able to go about doing good because the Father was with Him. In the same way, we can love fervently and go about doing good because the Holy Spirit is working through our lives. That love in our lives will also be a pure love.

The only way that we can really love fervently is to love with a pure heart. The word that is translated “pure” means “*a heart that is free from sin, evil desires and guilt.*” We keep our hearts pure when we confess our sins as soon as we realize that we have sinned. We keep our hearts from evil desires as we set our minds on things above. Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” That makes it possible for us to think Biblically instead of thinking according to the way of the world. We keep our hearts free from guilt as we fully understand that Christ has forgiven our sins and no longer holds them against us. Many times, this is a very difficult thing for many Christians to understand and apply in their lives because of various sins in their past. In such cases, we need to help them learn how to let go of their guilt.

1 Peter 1:23-25 says, “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.” Here,

we see why we are given the power to do good. We have received spiritual birth. John 3:6 says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The spiritual seed that made it possible for us to receive spiritual birth is seed that is incorruptible. Incorruptible seed is seed that cannot corrupt or decay. “Incorruptible” was used in 1 Peter 1:4 to describe our eternal inheritance. That verse says, “To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

In addition, we have been given spiritual birth through the Word of God which lives and abides forever. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God was able to pierce through our sinful and rebellious hearts as the Holy Spirit brought conviction to our hearts and the Father drew us to Christ. We want to help our children fully understand the difference between their words and the Word of God. Our own words are just our opinions. When we share the Word of God, we are sharing a message that is living and powerful.

Peter illustrated this great difference between our words and the Word of God by quoting from Isaiah 40:6-8. Our lives (and our opinions) are like the grass. Our glory is compared to the flower of the grass. Flowers are beautiful when they are in bloom. However, they are beautiful today and quickly fade away in a few days. That clearly illustrates our lives, our ideas and our opinions. Very few of us make it to live to one hundred years of age. Our ideas and opinions may change tomorrow. In contrast, Peter reminded us that the Word of the Lord endures forever.

Peter went on to point out the fact that when the Gospel was preached to the people that they had heard from the Word of the Lord, which endures forever. This is a key statement for us to understand and explain to our children. In Matthew 24:35 we read, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Revelation 21:1 adds, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” There will be an end to the present heaven and earth. However, the Word of the Lord will last forever. The things that the Lord has spoken will happen exactly as the Lord has spoken them. As a result, when we share the message of the Gospel from the Word of God, we know that we are sharing a message that provides eternal life to all who believe. We go on to see how that Word will change our lives.

In 1 Peter 2:1-3 we read, “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.” As we come to these verses, we see that we are to lay aside certain things. The word that is translated “laying aside” means “*to put off or to put away something from you.*” Romans 13:12 says, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” Here, we see that we are to cast off or lay aside the works of darkness. Five of those works of darkness are mentioned in this verse.

First, we are to put off all malice. The word that is translated “malice” means “*to desire to injure*

or wickedness that is not afraid to break laws.” Titus 3:3 uses this word when it describes our life before we placed our faith in Christ. That verse says, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” Second, we are to put off all deceit. The word that is translated “deceit” means “*deception or guile.*” Christ is our example because 1 Peter 2:22 says, “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.” Christ always spoke the truth when He spoke.

Third, we are to put off all hypocrisy. The word that is translated “hypocrisy” means “*the acting of a stage player.*” In New Testament times, one actor would play different parts in a play. If he was supposed to be an angry person, he put an angry mask in front of his face. If he was supposed to be a happy person, he would put a happy mask in front of his face. As a result, the word “hypocrisy” came to mean a person who puts on a false front and acts in a different way than that person really is in his heart. Christ used the word to describe the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:27-28 where we read, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Christ said that the scribes and Pharisees were full of hypocrisy. Fourth, we are to put off envy. Here, we see that we are not to desire what belongs to someone else. Fifth, we are to put off all evil speaking. The word that is translated “evil speaking” means “*to speak evil against another person or to try to defame their character.*”

Instead of speaking those evil things that hurt and destroy others, we see that like newborn babies we are to desire the pure milk of the Word of God so that we can grow spiritually. The word “newborn” speaks of a person that has just received spiritual birth and become a Christian. The word that is translated “desire” means “*to long for or to pursue something with love.*” Philippians 1:8 says, “For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that Paul had a great longing and love for these Christians. We see that we are to have that same love and longing for the pure milk of the Word of God. The reason why we are to have this longing for the less difficult teachings of the Word of God is due to the fact that those teachings will help new Christians in their spiritual growth.

The word that is translated “tasted” means “*to experience or take as food.*” As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to put the Word of God into practice in their daily lives, we see that God’s Word causes them to experience spiritual growth. It also helps them to understand that the Lord is good, kind and loving. As a result, they are able to continue to experience spiritual growth in their lives, which makes it possible for them to grow and learn to love with a pure heart. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to love with a pure heart.