

TEXT SERMONS

SERIES: *THE RICHES OF SALVATION*

Message #15

“THE PROOF OF SALVATION”

I Peter 1:22

“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”

We say, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” That is true as pertains to food. Our verse for today is saying something similar as pertains to our profession of salvation: “The proof of salvation is in the loving!”

There are three actions mentioned in verse 22 that should be true of every believer. They are: An experience that we have had; an exhibition that we should make and an exhortation that we must obey. We begin with....

I. AN EXPERIENCE THAT WE HAVE HAD.

“Since you have purified your souls....”

A. What happened when I experienced purification?

My soul was “purified.” Let me make it abundantly clear that we did not save ourselves! This is not “self-purification” that Peter is talking about. God purifies believing sinners by the blood of Christ being applied to the believing one. Here we see divine provision and human responsibility. God provided the remedy, we, as sinners, received the remedy by believing. The sinner, being confronted with the Gospel and made aware of his “impure” condition, either believes the Gospel or remains in unbelief. Believing sinners are “purified.” In that sense we “purified our souls.”

B. Why the need for purification?

As sinners we were impure in the sight of the holy God. He saw us as defiled by sin. There is a graphic picture of the sinner, from God’s perspective, in Romans chapter three. Here is the divine diagnosis:

*“There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.
Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit;
The poison of asps is under their lips;
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace they have not known.
There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom.3:10-18)*

Please tell me, who or what on earth could remedy such a dire disease as that? Clearly, we see why we need to be “purified.” Obviously, only God could effect a complete and permanent change in status of one so impure!

C. When was purification experienced?

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...”

When we obeyed the demands of the gospel, God purified us. When Peter states, “you have purified your souls in obeying the truth” he is saying that we were willing participants in the process by obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit. God took the initiative and provided the remedy. When Paul and Silas told the jailer in Philippi to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,” (Acts 16:31) they were not instructing him to do something that he was incapable of doing. When sinners comply with the demands of the gospel and believe they are purified.

We did not do the “purifying” – we did the “obeying,” the “believing.” There are those all about us who have not “obeyed the gospel” for Paul states: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom.10:16-17)

In II Thess.1:8 Paul speaks of the judgment coming upon those “who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In addition, Peter writes: “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (I Peter 4:17)

There are those who insist that the unsaved cannot obey the gospel demands. God would be unjust to judge persons who were commanded to “obey the gospel” but were incapable to do so. Having met the demands of the gospel by “obeying the truth” the believing sinner is purified. Being made pure is the work that God alone does: “He gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” (Titus 2:14)

D. Who effected purification?

“through the Spirit”

It is by the Holy Spirit, Who is the divine Agent, doing that internal, eternal work that only He can do, that we come to see our impurity before the Holy God; It is through the awakening ministry of the Holy Spirit, that the sinner, who is “dead in trespasses and sins,” is convicted; It is the Holy Spirit Who imparts faith to the faithless; It is the Holy Spirit Who applies the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ to the believing sinner thus effecting purification: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5); It is the Holy Spirit Who imparts new life: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

That is the experience that believers have had. We have been cleansed, we have been

changed from the inside out; we are new creations in Christ Jesus. That is past, that is history. Next comes the proof of our purification. Peter's complete statement, again, is: "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..." Notice the words, "sincere love of the brethren." Here is:

II. AN EXHIBITION THAT WE SHOULD MAKE.

"sincere love of the brethren."

A. We are to exhibit our love for one another.

The first proof that we have been purified from our former sinful state is that we love those who have had the same experience! There is a common bond that binds us together. Paul commends the Thessalonian believers for their exhibition of brotherly love in these words, "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." (I Thess. 4:9,10)

The dictionary defines an "exhibitionist" as: "One who has the tendency to call attention to oneself or to show off ones talents, skill, etc." The word is sometimes applied in a vulgar context. The dictionary adds: "A tendency to expose parts of the body that are conventionally concealed."

There is a legitimate "showing-off," an exhibit that we are encouraged to make and that is a "sincere love of the brethren." This is love for those in the faith family, blood-bought brothers and sisters in Christ. The phrase, "Love one another" occurs at least a dozen times in the New Testament. In fact, it is a command. Listen to Jesus words, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must Love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34,35)

We are, by grace, made God-like in the sense that "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Rom.5:5) "God is love"; we become loving: "Everyone who loves is born of God." (I Jn.4:7) As a branch in the True Vine we are to evidence the union in our relationships with the member branches. Charles Spurgeon commented: "Those who are made partakers of the divine nature will manifest their high and holy relationship in their intercourse with others." (Daily Devotions)

B. We are to exhibit our love for one another genuinely.

Notice the words, "sincere love of the brethren." In the KJV It is "*unfeigned* love," that is, un-faked, non-hypocritical love. The love of which Peter speaks is the product of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. It is genuine, without pretense, not two-faced, and with no inner grudges harbored beneath an outer appearance of pleasant unity. This is love that is "without hypocrisy." (Rom. 12:9) A poet, unknown to me, penned these lines:

*“To dwell above with the saints we love,
Oh, that will be glory!”
But to dwell below with the saints we know,
That is a different story!”*

We hear much today about “raising the standard of living.” There is another standard That needs to be raised among Christians and that is the standard of loving!

We have seen “The Experience That We Have Had” and “The Exhibition We Need To Make” but there is one additional emphasis in the verse.

III. AN EXHORTATION THAT WE MUST OBEY.

“love one another fervently with a pure heart”

A. We are to love with a fervent heart.

There are two different Greek words for “love” used in verse 22. One is in the statement, “sincere *love* of the brethren” and the other is in the statement, “*love* one another fervently.”

Note the phrase, “in sincere *love* of the brethren” – the Greek word for *love* in this statement is from the root word “phileo” and it is the word from which the city of Philadelphia gets its name – it means “brotherly love.”

However, the Greek word for love in the second instance is different from “phileo.” It is the Greek word “agapaō,” the verb form of “agape” which is divine love! The first phrase tells us to love as brothers love. The second tells us to love each other as God loves, that is fervently!

The one is fraternal love, the other supernal love. God-like love is that sacrificial love of God that moved Him to love us unconditionally and unbidden, setting His unbounded affection on the unlovely, unworthy and undone. His love is unlimited, unending and undying.

Fervent, God-like love:

- Serves others;
- Is giving;
- Thinks more of others than self;
- Loves to do for others;
- Is courteous and kind;
- Listens to others;
- Speaks positively about brothers and sisters in Christ;
- Sympathizes with the suffering and sorrowing;
- Is I Corinthians 13 love!

B. We are to love with a pure heart.

“love one another fervently with a pure heart”

We are to love out of pure motives; we are to love not with the desire to gain but love with the desire to give; we are to share what God shared with us. We are to love because “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom.5:5) He has shed His love in our hearts so that we can spread His love to others! We are not to be reservoirs but conduits. He gave His love to us unselfishly; we are to give that same quality of love in the same manner. We grieve and quench the Holy Spirit, Who poured God’s love into us, when we selfishly bottle it up within ourselves and do not pour it out on others.

SUMMATION

So, what does God say to us in I Peter 1:22? He tells us about an **experience** that those who are born-again have had; He tells us about an **exhibition** that born-again ones should make and He tells us of an **exhortation** that we must obey.

CONCLUSION

I conclude by asking a question that bothered me for a long time. It is this: “Why would our Heavenly Father tell us at least 12 times in the New Testament to “love one another”? After all, we’re family aren’t we? So, why all these reminders to love one another? Finally, I figured it out. You see, there are, at the very least, two reasons the Lord repeats the “love one another” emphasis so much:

Reason # 1 - we are saints who were sinners! And we have the tendency to revert to acting like sinners rather than saints. Therefore, the repeated reminders to “love one another.”

*Reason # 2 – and this, I believe is the primary reason God emphasizes the need for us to love one another, and that is that **there are sinners who are not yet saints!***

We have the tendency to forget our mission in the world. That mission is to be “the light of the world” – to let love shine so that sinners will come to Jesus and become saints. That is what Jesus said in the following words: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34,35)

And again, in His high priestly prayer He prayed, “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:23)

Notice that this command to “love one another” isn’t a command to love the unsaved. It is the command to love one another so that the unsaved can see what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We can spend our energies, our prayers, our time, our money loving the unsaved, but if they don’t see love among Christians why would they want to become a part of God’s family?

Are we trying to fulfill the Great Commission, without really loving one another?

You may say, I love the unsaved and I witness and I pray for them and I certainly do my best to relate to them and isn't that love? It may or may not be. We can do all that to fulfill what we consider it our duty to do – and it can be totally ineffective if the sinner does not see something different about being a follower of Jesus Christ. The world has no idea what God-like love is. Jesus said that if they see it in us, they will recognize it as something totally outside their earthly experience.

If we are properly fulfilling the command to “love one another,” our unsaved neighbors will be forced to recognize that there is something different about us. We will attract people to our Christ and our church when they are attracted by the love of God that they see demonstrated in us.

We have the awesome privilege of proving to a lost and lustful world that there is a Savior Who loves them by demonstrating His love in our relationships with others in the household of faith.

Illust. One evening just before the great Broadway musical star, Mary Martin, was to go on stage in the show *South Pacific*, a note was handed to her. It was from the renown Oscar Hammerstein, who at that moment was on his deathbed. The short note simply said:

“Dear Mary,
A bell's not a bell till you ring it. A song's not a song till you sing it. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love isn't love till you give it away.” (James Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited)

We have been gifted by love to give love. Such receiving and giving is proof that we have “passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” (I John 3:14)

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