

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 7
1 Peter 1:20-25
"A New Nature"

Introduction

"I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." **John 13:34-35**

It seems that there are so many these days who are either in doubt about their own salvation, or worse yet, tend to doubt everyone else's *except* their own. I think in both regards, that it all seems to stem from the mistaken belief that we have to somehow earn our way to God's favor and forgiveness. Therefore, there are some who will always feel inadequate, while others tend to feel self-righteous. The plain truth is, that no one deserves the grace of God. And as a result, the only people who will ever find salvation are the ones who place their faith in the promises of God in Christ Jesus... ALONE. For it is God Who initiates our salvation, God Who grants our salvation, and also, it is God Who maintains our salvation. All that we are required to do is to take Him at His word. In short, it is by simple faith that the gift of God's grace is procured.

"For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do." **Ephesians 2:8-10**

The LORD has made the plan of salvation so simple, that even a child can understand it. So why do we try and complicate the matter? Is it arrogant pride that causes so many to try and muddy the waters of salvation? I, for one, am growing tired of hearing so-called preachers who try and disqualify the faith of others. It is one thing for a *Bible* teacher to point out false teachings. However, it is another thing entirely when a so-called pastor feels that he can disqualify the faith of another Believer. Quite frankly, that is far above my pay grade. I know for a fact that many *Bible* teachers out there engage one another in disputes over one particular doctrine or another. Does that make them lost? No, it does not. There are things that we must believe in order to be saved, but there is a whole host of others that are non-essentials as far as redemption is concerned. So we mustn't be so quick to write off another Believer, simply because they do not see everything the way that we do.

For example, nowhere in Scripture does it say that a Calvinist is going to heaven while an Armenian is not. In fact, most Believers don't even know what these things are! So why are there so many these days that seem to revel in making others feel less than? I'm not sure, but I can tell you this; I believe the division in the Church breaks our Saviors heart. If you wish to know what He wants, all that is needed is to read what He prayed just before going to the cross.

"May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory you have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as you have loved Me." **John 17:21-23**

Convicting, is it not?

So just what will it take for Believers to be unified? Aside from the perfection that shall come with the second coming of Christ, we need to be less condemning and more loving, that's what. Christ died not only to save us but to unify us. That should go without saying. I am thoroughly convinced that The Church needs a good old fashioned Holy Spirit revival. We need to set aside our petty differences and

come together in love. That doesn't mean that we compromise Scripture, but it does mean that we need to prioritize love over condemnation. In today's passage, we see the Apostle Peter admonishing the Church to love one another both un-hypocritically and fervently (**vs. 22**). But in order to do just that, we must be completely transformed from the inside out. We need to *Behold* The Savior, *Believe* in The Savior, and be *Born-again* from above. For as long as we are ruled by the flesh, genuine love will never come naturally. To love as God loves... is supernatural.

Behold (vs. 20)

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you. **1 Peter 1:20**

This verse actually ties back to the previous one that speaks of Jesus being The Spotless Lamb of God. Peter then goes on to say that He existed before the foundation of the world. Simply put, this means that Christ was God. Or as Peter's good friend John would say:

In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God. **John 1:1**

Peter continues by saying that this God before time, revealed Himself to us in the "last times". In Scripture, the *last times* refers to the time between Jesus' first and second coming. We too are now living in these last times. And it is in these days that God has sovereignly chosen to reveal His very nature to us in the person of His Son. The writer of *Hebrews* establishes this reality quite plainly.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. So He became superior to the angels, just as the Name that He inherited is more excellent than theirs. **Hebrews 1:1-4**

So God revealed Himself to us in the person of The Son, namely The LORD Jesus Christ. He is the "exact expression" of God's being. This is why Jesus was able to say to His disciples when one of them asked to see The Father...

...“Have I been among you all this time and you do not know Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen The Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don't you believe that I am in The Father and The Father is in Me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on My own. The Father Who lives in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in The Father and The Father is in Me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.” **John 14:9-11**

Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples face to face. But to us He was revealed by The Holy Spirit through The Word of God. It is by The Spirit and The Word that we come to know the revealed nature of The Father by coming to faith in His Son. So, before we can believe in Him, we must first *behold* Him, to see Him as Who He truly is, for only then can The Spirit come to live within us so that we can have a genuine relationship, becoming one with both The Father and The Son. This is how we are born again and made alive in Christ Jesus; He in us and us in Him. And it is because of this reality that Christianity is no mere *religion*, it is much more. Christianity is a relationship with a person; Namely The LORD Christ Jesus.

Believe (vs. 21-22)

Through Him you believe in God, Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Since you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth, so that you show sincere brotherly love for each other, from a pure heart love one another constantly... **1 Peter 1:21-22**

Once The Spirit and The Word have revealed Christ to us, then we choose to accept Him by faith. It is at this moment, when we who were dead to the reality of God, become alive in Christ. The resurrection proves the Deity of Christ to us, and we believe *through Him in God*. Those who do not believe in Christ do not know God, for it is through Christ that we receive this reconciliation and access to The Father. As Christ Himself has said:

...“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to The Father except through Me.” **John 14:6**

So it is only through Christ that you can come to know The Father. It is only in Christ that you can truly believe in The Father. To deny The Son is to deny The Father also.

And notice how Peter says that it is through Christ that we have faith *in God*. I think far too many Believers these days have faith in their faith. They think if they just have *enough* faith then everything will be alright. But we need to place our hope in God, not in our own faith! Remember the Passover that Peter mentioned earlier in this passage? Do you think that the children of Israel who placed the blood of the lambs on their doorposts during Passover were also required to have an absolutely perfect faith? If any of them had a single doubt or fear while they waited in their homes that night, hearing their neighbors cry out in anguish, would the death angel have failed to pass over them? No, they took God at His word, and obeyed His commands, and were passed over because God always keeps *His* promises. Their faith was in God, not in the strength of their own faith! So place all your hope and faith in God, because through Christ, you are in God. And God takes care of His own.

So, how do we know that God is in us, and we are in God? Because of the change that is wrought within us when we are brought from death unto life by The Spirit. The love of God then comes alive in us. In other words, he who has been born of God will display the love of God. Where there is no love, God is not present. Let us hear from Peter's good friend John once more on the subject.

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the Word you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother or sister is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother or sister remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother or sister is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn't know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. **1 John 2:7-11**

Now, church history tells us that Peter was crucified at a relatively young age, while the disciple John lived to be a very old man. It has been said that in the last years of his life, John spoke continually about God's love, and how we must also love one another. It was said to be the topic of most of his sermons. What does this tell us? It should remind us that the more mature we become spiritually, and the closer we get to the very image of Christ, the more we should love. To be like Christ is to love as Christ loves.

Peter mentioned two types of love in his letter to the scattered church. The first type of love that he speaks of between the saints of God is "*Philadelphia*", meaning simply *brotherly love*. Genuine Christians should have a natural affection for one another, because we are now members of the family of God. Families look out for each other. When I was young, I had two younger brothers. And although we sometimes had serious disagreements between ourselves, no one, and I mean no one was ever allowed

to pick on my little brothers. Oh, we might have our own fusses and fights, but in the end, we were family, and family sticks together through thick and thin. At least that was how I was raised.

The second type of love that Peter speaks of is agape. Agape is the love that comes directly from God to us, and it is the deepest kind of love known in the Greek language. The world has no understanding of agape, but those in Christ Jesus have Him as the living source of it. So Peter says that we must love one another from a pure heart (the Greek means without hypocrisy) and continually, (the Greek actually is an athletic term that means with extreme vigor.) And John says, that if we do not have this ingrained love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we do not have Christ. So, in the end, love is a sign of genuine transformation by The Spirit. For **the fruit of the Spirit is, love, joy, peace... (Galatians 5:22)**. First comes love, and if you don't have that, there really isn't much need to talk about the rest. Love is the undeniable proof that you have truly believed on Christ and have come to know God as a result.

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Be Born Again (vs. 23-25)

...because you have been born again — not of perishable seed but of imperishable — through the living and enduring Word of God.

For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of The LORD endures forever.

And this Word is the gospel that was proclaimed to you.

1 Peter 1:23-25
(with Isaiah 40:6-8)

I recently heard a story about a woodpecker who was about to strike a tree with his sharp beak in order to get at the insects living just beneath the bark of the tree. But just as he pecked against the tree, a bolt of lightning struck and split the tree in two. The woodpecker immediately flew away, returning in a few minutes with all of his woodpecker friends. "See, I told you I did it!", he exclaimed.

So often we kid ourselves into believing that we have some kind of real power. We try and take credit for things that only God can do. Well, here is the truth of the matter. We cannot possibly, in our own strength, accomplish the things that God has called us to do. The only way that we can love one another in the way that God has commanded us, is to allow Him to love *through* us! And the only way that this will ever happen is that we must be born again from above.

In *John* Chapter Three, Jesus spoke plainly about this "new birth" that must take place for us to be transformed.

... "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and The Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of The Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of The Spirit."

John 3:5-8

So you see, just as a person born of the flesh (of water) is produced by two parents (a mother and a father), to be born of The Spirit also requires two "parents", as it were; The Spirit and The Word of God. The Spirit impresses upon us that The Word is truth, we believe God and are transformed by The Spirit's power. In short, we are reborn in Christ and changed from the inside out. We now have God's imperishable DNA within us, so that what we could never do in the flesh, we can now do by the power of God. So, all that God has commanded us, He now enables us to perform. All we must do is to let go and let God. Or as the Apostle Paul would say:

I am able to do all things through Him Who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

So the truth is, you need not feel worthless, nor worthy. You simply need to feel dependent upon The Spirit of God. For He has promised to enable you to do all that is required. And what He requires of you, above all else, is love. To love Him enough to obey His commands (**John 14:15**), and to love our brothers and sisters *fervently* and *without hypocrisy* (**1 Peter 1:22**). And rest assured, it is far easier to love when you do not have to do it in your own strength!

So stop trying and start relying. Stop comparing yourself to your brothers and sisters to feel inadequate or superior. For we are all purchased by the blood of the same Lamb. We are all filled with the same Spirit. And none of us can do anything apart from the empowerment that we receive from above. Just as Jesus said, just like the wind, you can't see where the power of The Spirit comes from, but you can certainly feel its effects. So don't try and take credit for His work. Just stay connected to Christ and allow Him to live and work through you. And when you do, don't be surprised to see those other things start showing up as a well.... You know those other born-again things like, **joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The Law is not against such things!** (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

So, in order to be all that God has for you, you must *behold, believe,* and be *born-again* from above. It is only then that you will know how, and be able to... truly *love*.

TRUTH!!!