

It's a joy to be able to minister the Word of God to you. It is my prayer that by the power of the Holy Spirit He will accomplish His purposes in your heart. Certainly my goal in preaching to you is to reestablish the supremacy of God in the throne of your life, because all week long you've had the world try to tear that down, to try to erect other gods in your life. I pray that through the preaching of His Word that the Spirit of God will display and magnify His glory as we consider our duty and our desire to manifest an "Undying Love for the Brethren," which is the title of my words to you. Let's read the text in 1 Peter 1:22-25.

"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For, 'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you."

As we have studied Peter's epistle so far, we have seen that his doxology of praise to the suffering saints concerning the nature of their salvation, combined with the practical exhortations that call us to a higher level of holy living in our daily lives, now really transitions to yet another very logical yet fitting admonition. That is, for us as believers to strive for an undying love for the brethren, for your brothers and sisters in Christ. I would ask you from the outset, do you really love your brothers and sisters in Christ? You don't need to look around the room, but in your mind's eye look around. Ask yourself, "Do I really love those that are part of my church family here at Calvary Bible Church?" Of course the question is, "What do you mean by love?" God has made that very clear. Scripture teaches that love is a manifestation of our faith in Him. The second great commandment is to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves, and we love ourselves very dearly, do we not?

Of course the first commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Scripture teaches us that love is a call to generous sacrificial service to others in the body of Christ. Especially, Paul says in Ephesians 6:10 (THIS DOESN'T SEEM TO BE THE RIGHT REFERENCE), "to those who are of the household of the faith." In 1 John 3:23 we read, "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment." Love is literally a fruit of the Spirit. It's something that will naturally spring forth from the vine of someone who is truly born again. It is manifested in brotherly kindness, in meaningful and purposeful involvement in the lives of brothers and sisters in Christ. Is that how you love your church family? True Christian love for other Christians is way beyond a casual hello on Sunday morning, a casual shaking of the hand and an, "It's good to see you again." It's beyond sharing an occasional meal with a brother or sister in Christ. What's tragic in some churches, and maybe even here, is that we come to church and we don't take time to shake hands with anybody. We don't really care that much about those around us, others in our family, because we have more pressing matters to tend to, maybe our children or seeing one of our closest friends, and oh yes, we must hurry and make it to the restaurant in time to get a seat. Unfortunately, in some cases, not only is there no attempt to get to know and truly love one another, but there's really no desire to do so.

The question would be then, how can you really love someone if you never take the time to get to know them? The Word of God tells us that love is to be exhibited in ministering to those who are physically sick, visiting the sick, literally going to see them. In Romans 12:15 we read that love is to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." How often does that happen with

you among your brothers and sisters in Christ? It also includes supporting the weak who struggle with sin. Oh my, Pastor, now we're getting to a whole new level of love. In Galatians 6:2 it talks about how we are to help restore one another in the spirit of gentleness. That's love. How often does that go on in your loving relationships with the brethren? It also includes in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, "warning the unruly, comforting the fainthearted, upholding the weak, being patient with all men."

Love begins to take on a meaning far beyond a superficial, cavalier kind of love that is indicative, sadly, even of many Christians. Love also includes covering the faults of others with a forbearing spirit. Ephesians 4:2 says "(We are to love each other) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another." In verse 32 it says, "...be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." The Word of God tells us that love is the evidence of selflessness. It's the evidence of being in the light, Scripture tells us, being born again. In fact, it is a distinguishing characteristic of a disciple of Christ. Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The bottom line is this: loving one another is a mark of genuine saving faith. In fact, in 1 John 3:14 we read, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death." This is very clear. This does not take some great scholar to figure out what the Spirit of God is telling us here. He's literally saying those who call themselves Christians, yet want nothing to do with their spiritual family, are simply not saved. In 1 John 3:10 we read, "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother." The love used there, as in other passages, is a love that is not a love of abstraction but a love of action. It's not some warm fuzzy that we think we have in our heart. It's literally rolling up our sleeves and getting involved in the lives of other people that are a part of our family. Indeed, Scripture is clear. There is no evidence of genuine saving faith in those who call themselves Christians yet have no desire to be a part of a fellowship of believers.

The same is true for those who may have attached themselves in some superficial way to the church, yet refuse to have any involvement in the lives of their church family. Those that just show up occasionally and disappear. Call yourself what you might, but you are not a Christian if that is indicative of your life, because that is not loving the brethren. Some will argue, "Pastor, yes, I love my brothers and sisters in Christ, but you must understand that I don't have time to be around them with my busy schedule. Frankly, that can't be a priority. I have my family, my job, my hobbies." Well, excuse me, but imagine telling that to your wife on the day you marry her. "Sweetheart, I want you to know that I truly love you but you must understand that I'm not going to have time to spend with you. I don't want you to think that I need to be getting to know you more or that I'm expected to do that. Please don't think that I'll have time to be involved in your life because I have other pressing priorities." My friend, if this is you I plead with you to examine your heart for I fear that you have perhaps deceived yourself with a damning lie.

How different this is from the first century church. For example, in Acts 2:46 we read that they were, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." How different from the words that we read in 1 John 5:1. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments."

These are some words of introduction that perhaps get you to think about your own heart and love for the brethren. The inspired apostle understood the importance of an undying love for the brethren with the first century saints. They were being persecuted and the suffering was only going to mount. Their children were going to be tortured in front of their eyes. They were going to be thrown into arenas where wild beasts would eat them. There were going to be atrocities committed upon them that were mind boggling. It was crucial for their survival—as it is for ours, dear friends—in those days of barbaric persecution for them to understand the importance of truly loving one another. So he reminds them of the glories of their redemption as we have been studying, and the marvels of their inheritance, and certainly those who understand the staggering implications of their salvation will have little problem in loving one another. For indeed, our love for others will be in direct proportion to our love for God who has lavished His love upon us. Andrew Murray has said it well. “Our love to God is measured by our everyday fellowship with others and the love it displays.” Selfishness and pride will always be the enemies of love. If loving your church family in ways God has delineated in His Word is simply not a priority for you, for whatever reason, then again I would ask you to ask yourself if you are truly in the faith, if you truly know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Because if not being loving is a pattern of your life, you’re probably not saved. But if it is only an occasional pattern, as I fear it is for all of us at times, then we want to examine the carnality in our life, the fleshliness of our selfish pride, because I fear we have forgotten the undeserved love that we have received in our salvation. That is the point of all the Peter is bringing to bear here in this text. May I challenge you to be brutally honest in evaluating your love for the brethren in light of your love for God and His love for us.

Peter’s call here to love in verses 22-25 can be divided into three very practical categories for us to consider. Let me give those to you. We’re going to see: 1) The Source of our Love; 2) The Object of our Love; 3) The Extent of our Love. First of all, notice the source of our love in verse 22. “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls.” Literally what he’s saying is since you have in obedience responded to the truth of the Gospel, and since you have been saved and therefore purified your souls—literally referring to that transforming power of the Spirit of God. This transformation, which by the way grammatically here is an ongoing, continuing process, not something that happened just once back there and now that process is over with, is something that continues to occur. “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls.” You see, herein is the source of our love. Peter is describing the miracle of the new birth. This is when, in response to the truth of our sinful condition, and in the brokenness of our heart when we cry out to God in faith for undeserved mercy and grace, God forgives us. When that happens the Word tells us that He makes us new creatures in Christ. In fact Peter said in verse 2 of chapter 1, it’s by “the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.” There’s this miraculous cleansing and purging from sin. Scriptures tell us that we are then “made to walk in newness of life.” Salvation is a miraculous and ongoing process, whereby the Spirit of God is little by little transforming us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1 John 3:2 we read, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be.” In other words, there’s a tension here between who we are and what we will be. Then he says, “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” In other words, at Christ’s return this process will be completed and we will be conformed into His likeness. What that will be we are not fully sure. Certainly we will not become God, we will not become deity, but to whatever degree we can be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be.

I say all of this to remind you of the source of our love, because we have a transformation that is in process that empowers us to love as Christ has asked us to love. In fact, later in 2 Peter 1:3 we're told that, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." Of course that would include the ability to love our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourself. He goes on to say that we have been made "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." Can you imagine that? What an amazing thought. To think that God has implanted a divine nature into His children. We have what I like to call a supernatural DNA, a divine nature. We have a supernatural DNA. The royal blood now flows through our veins. When we are saved we become spiritual descendants of the King of kings. In fact, later Peter will elaborate on this very concept in verse 23 where he says, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable."

Herein is the source of our love. If you have a difficult time loving, as I'm indicating to you that the Spirit of God would have us love, then once again you must ask if this transformation has begun in your heart. Do you truly know Christ? One of the most striking and observable results of this utter transformation of the inner man is our ability to obey God and to love others as He loves us. That's the capacity we have as new creatures in Christ.

It's important for us to understand that genuine saving faith is always validated by our willing obedience to the truth that is found in the Word of God, not necessarily found in some past profession of faith or some water baptism or whatever it might have been. In 1 John 2:3-6, 10 we read, "By this we know that we have come to know Him." All right, what is it? "If we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked...The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him." A lack of love really proves a false profession. I'm not talking about the warm fuzzy, sentimental love that you hear on the country music stations. I'm talking about a self-sacrificial love that is willing to do whatever it can for the benefit of someone else for the glory of God. Peter reminds us that the source, literally the wellspring, of our love can only come from the purifying work of the Holy Spirit that occurs when we by faith respond "in obedience to the truth."

Many times over the course of my ministry I have dealt with marital problems of people. What you will quickly find is that there is a lack of love in a relationship. What is the problem there? Do we need to teach them better communication skills so they can learn how to love one another better? Or maybe what we need to do is schedule more date nights. Maybe we need to put them in some kind of anger management therapy group; all of the "Dr. Phil" kind of external remedies where you just rearrange the externals but never deal with the heart. Please understand, when there is a problem in a marriage or any kind of a relationship where there needs to be love, we must understand that unless problems are defined in such a way as to include the realities of sin and repentance and the Spirit of God and the power of His Word, all you're going to do is rearrange the deck furniture on the Titanic of your life. How can marriages experience more love? How can we experience more love within the church? The answer is very simple. We've got to get serious about obeying the truth of divine revelations found in the Bible. Then we will experience the transformation of the inner man. As we walk consistently with the Word of God we will see that that love will naturally flow from us as we experience the ongoing purification of our souls.

Notice that Peter goes on to say in verse 22, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren.” Here is, secondly, the object of our love. The point is rather simple. Because of our love for Christ we’re going to have a sincere love of the brethren. That’s the object of our love. Of course the first object would be the Lord our God, the first commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And secondly to love our neighbors as ourself. Let me give you a great example of the power of this kind of love. We see it in Paul’s words to the church at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4:9. Paul says, “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren to excel still more.” Literally in the Greek he’s saying we want you to super-abound more and more in this virtue of your love. As much as you love, we’re going to ask you to love even more. He goes on to say, “and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life.” A quiet life in the original language means to keep silent. In other words, don’t be a meddlesome busybody stirring up strife and disunity in the church. When you have that kind of a person, that’s the opposite of love. In fact, those kinds of folks are to a church what a skunk is to a picnic. It tends to cause people to run the other way. So Peter admonishes us in a similar fashion here in verse 22. He says for us to have “a sincere love of the brethren.” ‘Sincere’ is a word that literally means ‘without hypocrisy.’ You don’t want to have some phony kind of love. There is nothing to me—and how it must offend God so much more—more sickening than shallow, syrupy, saccharine love in the body of Christ. The type of love like, “Oh, hi girlfriend! How are you? I’m so happy to see you! I just love you!” That type of love.

If you really do love the person as much as you just indicated in the way you came across to that person, let me ask you, do you pray for that person? Do you weep with that person? Do you rejoice with that person? Do you endeavor to see that person grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have a forbearing spirit for that person? Do you endeavor to restore them in the spirit of gentleness when you see them dealing with some life-dominating sin, and answer the call in Galatians 6 to “come and to bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ, that law of love?” Bearing their burdens there literally means to bear up under the burden of their sin as you see them deal with their sin, as you walk with them and help them to grow in conformity to Christ. Is that what you mean when you imply to them that you love them? If not, dear friends, you’re not loving them with a sincere love. That is a love of hypocrisy, not a love of sincerity. And if that’s not how you love people then I would humbly ask you to cut the phony masquerade of hypocrisy and learn what it means to love with “a sincere love of the brethren.”

The Lord Jesus reserved His most stinging rebukes for the Pharisees, who were the epitome of hypocrisy and spiritual pride. He pointed out to them their lack of love in Luke 11:42. He said, “Woe to you Pharisees!” Literally *cursed are you*. “For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” Here’s the point. If we sincerely love the brethren, if we genuinely love one another, then we’re going to want to treat other people as the Lord treated us. If I can put it practically, we’re going to want to be with them. We’re going to want to get to know them. We’re going to want to pray with our church family and sing with them and fellowship with them; protect them and weep with them and rejoice with them; encourage them, strengthen them, and at times exhort them and even rebuke them. This is the stuff of Christian love.

Think of the power this has on non-believers when they see that kind of love, not the phony superficial stuff that is indicative of our world today. You see, the vast majority of unsaved people live in a world where all they're used to experiencing is perpetual conflict. They're dealing all the time with liars and thieves, gossipers and slanderers, immoral people with eyes full of adultery, control freaks, hotheads and on and on. Sometimes that stuff slithers into the church and finds a seat. But think what it's like for people of the world who do not know the love of Christ to suddenly experience believers that truly love one another as the Word would have us love, and truly manifest a sincere love of the brethren. My, what a confusing experience that is for them—one that can draw them to the love of Christ.

I remember a woman that came to this church. She was not a Christian and over time she came to Christ. You began to see everything from her dress to her demeanor be changed. She was married to a man that was not a believer. He was absolutely baffled by the change in his wife. He was confused over her love for him and for others. She understood the 1 Peter 3 concept of being submissive to a husband who may not be a believer and try to win them without a word, to allow them to be able to see, as that text says, the chaste and respectful behavior, not the external preoccupation of clothing and body but the internal qualities of a godly character. She began to manifest, as Peter says, "the hidden person of the heart, that imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." He began to see that. Eventually, he came into the church. I'll never forget it. I could tell when he came in he was very cautious and guarded and looked half mad. He sat down and over a period of months, he gradually began to get to know people in the church. Eventually, during communion, you could see that the Spirit of God was working in his heart and even after the close of the service he sat there and sobbed as he gave his heart to Christ.

Later on, he gave his testimony. When asked what some of the things were that God had used to bring him to a saving knowledge of Himself, he gave the examples, which centered around true Christian love. One was a time when he went with the men and the boys to go fishing. He didn't want to fish, he just walked around and observed. I remember asking him, "Don't you want to fish?" And he said, "No, I just want to watch." I thought that was curious, but I didn't say anything. Little did I know that the Spirit of God was using that scenario to confuse him with love that he had never seen before in his life. Men with men, brothers in Christ, fathers with sons, sons with fathers and grandfathers.

He also described a time when a group of families had invited them over. Again he was guarded when he came, but he described that scenario later on after he came to Christ. He said, with tears in his eyes, "the thing that absolutely blew me away was that the whole time no one hit on my wife." That's the type of stuff the world is used to. When they see true, genuine, Christian love, it is powerful. God uses that to bring people to a saving knowledge of Himself. How sad to see the opposite of love, especially among the saints.

Again the Source of our love is inherent in the power of faith and obedience, the transforming power of the Word of God in our life. And the object of our love is the Lord our God and our neighbors, especially fellow Christians, but thirdly, the extent of our love is found here in verse 22. He says that we are to "fervently love one another from the heart." This is far more than the casual superficial love that is characteristic of most Christians even within many churches. I fear the sting of the lash falls upon all of our backs here. 'Fervently' in the original language means earnestly, zealously, seriously, ardently, it is a term that is literally used to describe someone straining with all of their might to do

something of great importance. It's a term used to describe one that is stretching their muscles to the farthest limit of their ability.

In Luke 22:44 we see this word fervently used of the Lord Jesus in the garden. It says, "And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." That's how we are to love one another: fervently. The term was also used in Acts 12:5. "So Peter was kept in a prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God." Unfortunately our culture knows little of this kind of straining, either physically or spiritually, being proverbial couch potatoes on both accounts. Beloved, this is the way we are to love one another. This is not some perfunctory love to be taken lightly. Nor is it a love that can be conjured up by the human will apart from divine enablement. But rather, this is the passionate love of self-sacrifice, an attitude of self-sacrificial involvement in the lives of others. That is a fruit of the new nature. A fruit of the Holy Spirit, as we read in Galatians 5.

Again he says, "fervently love one another from the heart." It's from that word that you're familiar with, *agapao* in the original language. This is the love of choice, the love we can have for an enemy. This is not the love of emotion. One commentator put it this way, this is the love "that which is exercised by the will rather than emotion, not determined by the beauty or desirability of the object, but by the noble intention of the one who loves." In John 13:34 Jesus commands us to "love one another, even as I have loved you...By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." And what was the extent of our Lord's love for us? Of course it was the unremitting, undeserving love whereby He sacrificed Himself for us. He gave His very life. In John 15:12-13 He says, "This is My commandment, that you love another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Is this the kind of fervent love that you have for your church family, for your brothers and sisters in Christ here at Calvary Bible Church and other places? Do you fervently love each other from the heart? The heart is a reference to the inner man, the wellspring of life as Proverbs 4:23 says. It is the very core of who we are. Do you manifest a love without hypocrisy? A love that is intense and unremitting in its affection? One that can be measured by your actions, by your involvement in the lives of others, because your heart has been transformed by the power of God and you are yielded to the truth in humble obedience?

"...fervently love one another from the heart." I fear the weight of such a solemn charge breaks the backs of the words that bear it. How shallow is our love for one another. I became increasingly convicted of this even in my own life as I lived with these texts over the last several months. Ask yourself, for whom in this room would you lay down your life, other than your family? Suddenly that puts love at a whole new level, does it not? Most will not lay down their time, much less their life. God's standard for love far exceeds what is typically evidenced in the lives of believers.

Peter goes on to explain why we are to love each other with such zeal in verses 23-35. He says, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Here we have a powerful analogy that Peter uses to underscore the power we possess to love one another to this extent, and it's because we have been born again. It's the miracle of the new birth. May I remind you this is in the perfect tense. It means there was a past action with continuing results. We have been given a new nature, a new life, one that cannot die, nor can we choose to kill it. Implied here is a contrast between two births, which produce two different kinds of lives. There is the mystery of the physical birth, a process of unimaginable complexity that still

boggles the minds of biologists. But how much greater the mystery of the new birth, when we are born of the Spirit. Remember in John 3 Jesus told Nicodemus that “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He went on to describe the uncontrollable and mysterious power, that quickening, regenerating power of the Spirit of God unto salvation. In verse 8 he says, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Even as in physical birth, a new person is created in the spiritual new birth. In the spiritual new birth, there emerges an infant child. In the spiritual birth it is a child of God that resembles the characteristics of his or her heavenly Father. Suddenly we are made new creatures in Christ and the old things pass away. We’re given a new heart, a new mind, a new song the Word tells us. The old corruption of the sin nature that was passed on by our physical parents is now gone and in place of that we are given a new nature—one that is born of God, one that is dead to sin. Indeed, we still sin, not because we have to or because we’re still slaves of it, but because, unfortunately in our stupidity and in our rebellion, we choose to. While the old flesh remains, it no longer reigns because we have been “born again” as Peter says, “unto a living hope.”

Furthermore, like an infant child must grow and develop mentally, physically, spiritually and even emotionally, we see in the spiritual new birth a saint must grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. But unlike unregenerate earthly children that can at times ultimately grow in corruption and shatter the hopes and joys of their parents’ hearts, please understand that the new creature in Christ is supernaturally endowed with all that he or she needs to ultimately grow into the glorious perfection of the God who fathered him. How often we witness the miracle of that new birth. We see drunkards and homosexuals, thieves and murderers gain victory over some life-dominating sin. We see hell raisers become heaven praisers. We see the radical transformation and the world stands back in amazement when they witness this. Certainly one of the greatest characteristics of this new creature in Christ is their ability and desire to love their Father and the rest of their family. This is a solemn matter for all of us to consider. We all must be born again, regardless of how religious or moral we think we may be. The inside has to be changed, not just the outside. In fact, Jesus told the very proud and religious Pharisee Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” When the new nature is born, a new creation emerges, one that reflects the characteristics of Christ-likeness, one that can love another one fervently from the heart.

I’m reminded of Paul’s words in Ephesians 4:24. There we read that when we are born again, we “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” Oh the mystery, the wonder of the new birth, of being born again. Notice in verse 23, he says, “you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God.” Once again we have a contrast between human seed and divine seed—seed of course depicting the source or basis of life. Here’s the point. Every seed in the plant and animal world that God has created is subject to the curse. As a result of that, each seed will ultimately die. But not so the divine seed that is supernaturally infused into born again sinners. That seed will never die. Our seed, he says here, is imperishable. In the original language it is incorruptible, it cannot be affected by decay, it is not subject to destruction. I would hasten to add that this truth deals a death blow to the Arminian error that would have us believe that one could lose their salvation, that man’s will remains free after salvation, and therefore has the power to reject the grace once bestowed. How can this be, if the new nature never dies? My Bible says that it is imperishable. Folks, we could not create that new

seed, that new nature, so how on earth do we think we could extinguish it? We must understand that the Holy Spirit indwells us when we are born again, and therefore perpetually, for the rest of our lives and eternity, infuses us with spiritual life. The Word of God says we are born again unto eternal life. Born again, perfect tense. It means a past action with continuing results.

Notice furthermore the inspired apostle's reasoning for the permanence of our new nature. He says in verse 23, "you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God." Because we are born of God, our newborn spirit that is now united to Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is imperishable. Why? Because it originated "through the living and enduring word of God." Even as God and His Word endures forever, likewise we who have been given new life through God and His Word, will endure forever. That's the glorious truth that is ours. In James 1:18 James describes this incredible divine act of regeneration through the power of His Word. There he says, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth." He brought us forth by the word of truth. Why? "...so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures."

First fruits among His creatures literally means the first evidence of God's new creation, a preview of the new life that will ultimately be manifested in the realms of glory. And then to add even more reinforcement to this truth, of the permanence of the new nature infused by God through the Word in contrast to the perishable nature of all other life, Peter reaches back into the Old Testament into Isaiah 40:6, 8. There we see how Isaiah elaborates on the transience of all human, animal and plant life. That life is just here today and gone tomorrow. Notice Peter says in verse 24, for "all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever." Here's the point, and you will find great comfort here: all human life, whether it's ordinary life like the grass, or noticeable and grand like the flower, all of it will ultimately wither and die. Whether you are a peasant or a prince you are in a state of decay and ultimately you will disappear from the face of the earth. In Psalm 103:15-16 the psalmist says, "As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer."

So friends, what Peter is saying here through Isaiah is reminding us that if we never bloom, if we are like the common grass, or even if we bloom with great beauty like the flower and stand high above all the other common folks, regardless, all of us will eventually shrivel up and die. But the magnificent reality for those of us who have been born again, is that we have a seed that is not perishable but imperishable. Like the imperishable, living and enduring seed of the Word of God, which Peter describes here is the power source that God has used to cause us to be born again, whether we are a peasant or a prince in our life, we will never die spiritually if we have been born again. That's the glorious truth of this. In fact, Peter likens us to the Word of the Lord which endures forever.

Finally he concludes this amazing call for Christians to be sincere and fervent in their love for one another by reminding us that this very word of the Lord that endures forever was, in verse 25, "the word which was preached to you." Those of you that know Christ, this was the word. Here, the word 'word' is *rhema*, not *logos*. Usually the term is *logos* referring to all Scripture as a whole, but here it is *rhema*. That term literally refers to a specific word, or a specific statement of Scripture. Here it's referring to the actual saving gospel of Christ. We know that because it says "the word which was preached to you." The word 'preached,' *euangelisthen*, it comes from *euangelidsain*, which means

‘good news.’ In Greek the word is *euangelidso*, which means ‘to share the good news.’ We get our word ‘evangelize’ from that. The word that was preached to you, the specific word that was preached to you, namely the gospel, the good news of the gospel that was proclaimed to you, is what God has used to transform you. That is the Word of the Lord which endures forever, and by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God you believed the gospel, that specific word that was preached to you, and miraculously you were born again and given an imperishable seed that will never wither and never die.

Therefore, and here’s the point of it all, because of your new life in Christ, you have the capacity to love one another with a sincere and a fervent love like Christ loved us. I challenge you to examine the extent of your love for the brethren. Is it a love that can somehow be compared to the things that are perishable? Things that are frail and dying? Or is it a love that can be likened to the imperishable seed of your divine nature, a love that is sincere and fervent and from the heart? A love that is obedient to the admonitions of Scripture and consistent with the eternal power of the gospel that the Spirit of God used to transform us? Oh would that we all manifest that which we are capable of manifesting, namely an undying love for the brethren.

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