We Are Family
Message 6 in I Peter Sermon Series

Scripture Text: I Peter 1: 22-25

This morning as we continue with our series from the Book of I Peter I would like for you to please turn with me in your Bibles to I Peter, chapter one.

READ: I PETER 1:22-25

PRAYER

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Introduction

Up to this point Peter has reminded us of our RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD and how that relationship gives us HOPE and COURAGE whenever we face the trials and troubles of life, such as the early Christians were facing.

But now as we come to VERSES 22-25 Peter reminds us of another relationship that is vitally important to our survival in this hostile world. And that is our relationship with one another.
I don’t know that any of us fully realizes just how much our spiritual family means to us until we face a time of trouble or sorrow.

As tough as life can be at times can you imagine facing your trials and troubles and sorrows and losses without the prayers, the love, the support, the encouragement and the comfort of your spiritual family?

The fact of the matter is we need each other. We are FAMILY now. And we will be FAMILY for all eternity. And therefore we Christians have got to “stick together” in this fallen, sinful world.

In today’s scripture text, PETER reveals two things that create an inseparable bond between us as Christians.

I. We Are Bonded Together By the LOVE of GOD (v. 22)

v. 22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart.

1. There is no greater force on earth than love. If two people truly love each other they will do anything for the other. This is especially true when it comes to the love between Christians.

2. As I was writing this message I couldn’t help but think of those of the Islamic religion who are bonded together by their mutual hatred of Jews, Americans and especially Christians. And that hatred fuels their violence against innocent human beings.
3. Now contrast that with Christianity. The most distinguishing mark of Christians is our love for one another.

   JOHN 13:34, 35 “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.” ---Jesus

4. In verse 22 Peter describes two kinds of love we should have for one another as brothers and sisters-in-Christ.

   (A) First of all, we should have an AUTHENTIC love for one another.

   v. 22a Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have SINCERE LOVE for your brothers........

   The word Peter uses for LOVE here is the word phileo from which we get the word Philadelphia.

   PHILEO is “brotherly love.” It means we accept all true fellow Christians as our brother or sister in Christ. It means we love each other like family.

   -You and I do not share the same biological parents. But spiritually speaking, everyone of has the same FATHER.

   -You and I are not “blood relatives” biologically speaking, but spiritually we are “blood relatives” through the blood of Jesus Christ.

   To love one another with an authentic or sincere love means we NURTURE one another like family. We look after each other. And even if we don’t always agree or see eye-to-eye, when push comes to shove we stick together like family.
But not only are we to have an AUTHENTIC love for one another.....

(B) Peter tells us we are also to have an AGAPE love for one another.

Here Peter takes us to a whole different intensity of love.

AGAPE love is an unconditional, sacrificial love that mirrors the love that GOD has for you and me.

AGAPE love is not humanly possible. It is only possible when one has the Spirit of God living within him.

AGAPE love literally means “love that is stretched to the very limits.” It conveys the meaning of “a horse at full gallop, stretching and extending his legs as far as they will go.”

That’s how Peter says we are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER. We are to “love one another DEEPLY from the heart.”

AGAPE LOVE is not sentimental love. It is not a sentimental, sensual or emotional love based on feelings.

AGAPE LOVE is not based on the worth or value of the other person to us, but upon their worth and value to God.

AGAPE LOVE desires the highest good for the other person regardless of whether they deserve it or not.

AGAPE LOVE looks beyond the faults, the weaknesses, and the short-comings of the other person and sees the SOUL Christ died to save.

AGAPE LOVE is patient. AGAPE LOVE is kind. AGAPE LOVE does not envy. AGAPE LOVE does not boast. AGAPE LOVE is not proud. AGAPE LOVE is not rude. AGAPE LOVE is not self-seeking. AGAPE LOVE is not easily angered. AGAPE LOVE keeps no record of wrongs. AGAPE LOVE does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. AGAPE LOVE always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. AGAPE LOVE NEVER FAILS.
But not only are we BONDED TOGETHER BY THE LOVE OF GOD.

II. We Are Bonded Together By the LASTING WORD of God (v.23-25)

All Christians don’t live in the same country or the same part of the world. All Christians don’t even go to the same Church. So what is our common ground? What is the one thing all Christians stand upon? It is THE LASTING WORD OF GOD.

(a) **Obedience to THE LASTING WORD of GOD BIRTHED us into the Family of God. (v.23)**

v. 23  For you have been BORN AGAIN, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the LIVING and ENDURING WORD OF GOD.

It is impossible to be SAVED or BORN AGAIN apart from the word of GOD.

**ROMANS 10:14,15,17**  How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

v.17  Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**
ILLUSTRATION

A skeptic once told Gaylord Kambarami, the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Zimbabwe, “If you give me that New Testament I will just roll the pages and use them to make cigarettes.”

Gaylord said, “Fine then. But promise me you will read the page of the New Testament before you smoke it.” The man promised Gaylord he would. He gave the man a New Testament and that was the last Gaylord saw of the skeptic for 15 years.

Years later, while attending a Christian Convention in Zimbabwe, the speaker on the platform spotted Gaylord Kambarami in the crowd and pointed him out to the audience.

He said, “This man doesn’t remember me, but 15 years ago he gave me a New Testament. I told him I would just use the pages to roll cigarettes. Well I smoked Matthew…..and I smoked Mark…….and I smoked Luke…….but when I got to John 3:16, I couldn’t smoke any more. That verse changed my life.”

It was through his obedience to the life-changing, transforming word of God that skeptic was born into the family of God. And the same is true of you and me.

But not only does OBEDIENCE to the LASTING WORD OF GOD BIRTH US INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

(B) OBEDIENCE to the LASTING WORD OF GOD BONDS US AS FAMILY FOREVER! (v. 24, 25)

v. 24 For, “All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,

v. 25 but the word of the LORD stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.
Peter now contrast that which is **temporary** with that which is **eternal**.

When man builds his life on something other than the **lastling foundation of the word of God** his earthly glory soon passes away just like grass and flowers.

- Who can name the **Olympic gold medal sprinter in the 100 meter race** from just 10 years ago?

- Who can name last year’s **Miss America** or last year’s **Miss Universe**?

- Who can name **five Rhodes scholars** or **three Nobel Prize winners** or won an **Emmy Award as Best Actor** or **Best Actress** just five years ago?

**Look how quickly man’s earthly glory fades away!!!**

The only way our lives can have any lasting meaning is to live in obedience to the lasting word of God.

Look around this room. Look at all your brothers and sisters-in-Christ. These people aren’t just your family here on earth, these people will be part of your family for all eternity.

**Why?** Because we were all BIRTHED into the same family by obedience to the word of God. And because we are all BONDED together with Christ and with one another as family through obedience to the word of God.
CONCLUSION

THE APOLOGY OF ARISTIDES

I want to close my message this morning by sharing with you something I came across the other day that I believe summarizes everything Peter has told us in our scripture text today.

This was written by Greek Philosopher, Aristedes in the year 125 A.D. Aristedes had done extensive research on all the religions of his day. He found all of them to be filled with idolatry and lifeless rituals. But when he began to study the lives of Christians he immediately noticed something refreshingly different. Listen carefully to what Aristedes wrote in his report to Roman Caesar Hadrian:

O King, the CHRISTIANS have found the truth; and as we learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations. For they know and trust in God, the Creator of heaven and of earth, in whom and from whom are all things, to whom there is no other god as companion, from whom they received commandments which they engraved upon their minds and observe in hope and expectation of the world which is to come.

Wherefore they do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honor father and mother, and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man; and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them, they do not to others; and of the food which is consecrated to idols they do not eat, for they are pure. And their oppressors they comfort them and make them their friends; they do good to their enemies; and their women, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest; and their men keep themselves from every unlawful union and from all uncleanness, in the hope of a recompense to come in the other world.

Further, if one or other of them have bondmen and bondwomen or children, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction. They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them; and they love one another, and from widows they do not turn away their esteem; and they deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly. And he, who has, gives to him who has not, without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him in to their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother; for they do not call them brethren after the flesh, but brethren after the spirit and in God.
And whenever one of their poor passes from the world, each one of them according to his ability gives heed to him and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity, and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free.

And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food. They observe the precepts of their Messiah with much care, living justly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and every hour they give thanks and praise to God for His loving-kindnesses toward them; and for their food and their drink they offer thanksgiving to Him. And if any righteous man among them passes from the world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God; and they escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another near. And when a child has been born to one of them, they give thanks to God; and if moreover it happen to die in childhood, they give thanks to God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And further if they see that any one of them dies in his ungodliness or in his sins, for him they grieve bitterly, and sorrow as for one who goes to meet his doom.

What Aristedes has described here is CHRISTIANS who are BONDED TOGETHER like family by their mutual LOVE FOR GOD (and each other) and their mutual obedience to the LASTING WORD OF GOD.

May we leave here this morning realizing that no matter how tough things get in the coming days, we as Christians have got to stick together through thick and thin!

Why? Because “We Are Family!”