

UNSHAKABLE: An Unshakable Loveⁱ

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is so very good to see you this morning. Thank you worship Team, Joey, for leading us today. It is always awesome to worship The Lord together with our church family.

I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the New Testament book of 1 Peter. We began a new teaching series a couple weeks ago, that we have called Unshakable. We are working our way by studying 1 Peter as we want to discover how we can have an unshakable faith, even in the midst of a chaotic world. So far, we've talked about an unshakable hope and an unshakable walk. Today we come to the topic of developing an unshakable love.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: The World is Desperate for Love

This is such an important topic as I believe the one thing that our world is desperate for is love. I know that being loved is an important thing for me and I know you have felt that very same desire, to be loved. It has been said many times by a lot of different people the world's greatest need is to be loved. Even more than starving and a need for food, even though that is a major problem in our world, that the world isn't just starving for food, but it is starved for love.

Jackie DeShannon first recorded in 1965 and made popular the song, "What The World Needs Now is Love." You're welcome for giving you a song that you won't be able to get out of your head this week. But the lyrics of the song paint for us exactly what I am talking about. "What the world needs now is love, sweet love, It's the only thing [isn't that interesting? The only thing] that there's just too little of. What the world needs now is love, sweet love, No not just for some but for everyone."

And when you really look at the lyrics, it's kind of a prayer. She says, "Lord, we don't need another mountain. Lord, we don't need another meadow." And, "Listen Lord, if you want to know, the world needs love."

Besides being a popular song in the 60s, and one that is readily known today, it is an expression of a longing that is rooted deep inside each of us. I think that's why the song is so popular. It strikes a chord with us.

What Peter is driving at in his letter, in the section that we are going to zoom in on today, is the answer to the world's desire for love. In fact, Peter takes his cues from the Lord Jesus.

In John 13:34 and 35, Jesus says, *"³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have loved you, you also **are to love one another**. ³⁵**By this** all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* Jesus is saying that His disciples should be markedly different in the world, should stand out, and one of the characteristics that should stand out is the love we have for one another. It's a new command that Jesus gave to us.

Can you imagine what would begin to happen in our neighborhoods and schools and marriages and our politics and in our community and nation and around the world if Christians were to say, "It doesn't matter what the world is doing or teaching, we are going to love with the love of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit"? It would be transformative.

And this is exactly what Peter is driving at in our passage this morning. 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 22 through chapter 2 verse 3 will be our focus this morning. An unshakable love is defined, is deeply rooted, and is defended. That is where we are headed this morning.

BACKGROUND:

Again, as a background, Peter is writing to a group of people that have been scattered because of persecution that was landing on the believers here in the first century. And he is urging them to be the Church. They have an unshakable hope because of the resurrection of Jesus. Their salvation has been purchased and secured by the precious blood of Christ. As a result, they are to live above their circumstances, live differently from the world, and display a love and unity among one another that is powerful and attractive.

MESSAGE:

So, let's begin by looking first at unshakable love...

1) Defined.

The first thing Peter does when he comes to this section of his letter is to define what love is. The kind of love that Jesus commanded us to have. Let's look at it. Chapter 1, verse 22. *²²**Having purified your souls by your obedience to the***

*truth for a **sincere brotherly love**, love one another **earnestly** from a **pure heart**.* A couple of things that I want to point out here in this verse.

First, Peter uses the phrase, “Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth.” Having purified is a participle written in the perfect tense. What that means is that it is a past action with ongoing consequences.ⁱⁱ So, Peter is pointing back to what he has already mentioned, salvation. He is saying, “Since you have been saved by the preaching of the truth, the gospel, there are incredible effects that flow from your salvation.” One of those effects, he says, is brotherly love. A love for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. It is impossible to love Jesus and not love His people. If there is one place love should flourish, it ought to be in the Church. That’s what Peter is driving at.

Now, after stating that fact, Peter uses key words to describe, to define, the brotherly love we have for one another. Words like, “sincere, earnest, and pure.” These words give us clarity on the type, or the degree, of brotherly love we are to have for one another. Let’s dig into those words as we continue to define the love that Peter is talking about.

The first word he uses is the word sincere. We are to love sincerely. The word translated, “sincere,” means to be genuine or without hypocrisy.ⁱⁱⁱ It is describing a love that is free from hidden agendas.^{iv} In other words, we love simply and solely for love’s sake. We love because we were loved first by God.

The second word Peter uses to define our love is earnest. *“Love one another **earnestly**,”* Peter says. By the way, the word translated as “brotherly love,” is the word, phileo, where we get the name Philadelphia. The city of brotherly love. But the word translated love when talking about earnest love is the word agape. It is the idea kind of love. We are to have an unconditional love for one another that is expressed earnestly.

Now, the term “earnestly,” in the original language, is an athletic word. It means to stretch a muscle to the furthest limit.^v It means to go all out. We are to love one another with a limitless love. God is our example here. Think about the extreme limits of His love for you and me. For God so loved the world, that He gave, His one and only Son, talk about stretching limits! Is there a limit to our love toward one another? So, we have the words sincere and earnestly.

The third description Peter uses is a love that is from a pure heart. In other words, it cannot be motivated by an external law or requirement. The love we have for fellow believers is one that compels us from the inside, from the heart. A forced love is not love at all.

Though it is a command in the sense that Jesus said, “A new command I give to you: love one another.” It is also a compulsion of the heart because when we are saved, rescued from our sin, the Holy Spirit indwells us. And The Spirit’s coming produces spiritual fruit. And one of the fruits of the Spirit is love. In fact, it is the first fruit of the Spirit mention in Galatians 5. Not that order means significance. But my point is that one of the clearest pieces of evidence that you have been saved is that you love God and love His people.

ILLUSTRATION: Vince Lombardi^{vi}

Legendary coach, Vince Lombardi, coach of the Green Bay Packers, was once asked what it takes to make a winning team. He said, and I quote, **“First you teach the fundamentals. A player’s got to know the basics of the game. Next you got to keep him in line, that’s discipline. The men have to play as a team. Third, they’ve got to care for and love each other. The difference between mediocrity and greatness is feeling that these guys have a love for each other. When you’ve got that sort of team spirit, you’ve got a winning team.”**

To be the people God has called us to be, we have to develop an unshakable love for each other. The second thing Peter teaches is unshakable love is...

2) Deeply rooted.

What I mean by deeply rooted is the reasoning behind why we should be a people that love the way Peter mentions. Look with me at verses 23 through 25. *“²³since you have been born again, **not of perishable seed but of imperishable**, through the living and abiding **word of God**; ²⁴for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵but **the word of the Lord remains forever**.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”* Several things that I want to point out.

Peter says that we have been born again, given new life in Christ. In fact, Jesus, in John chapter 3, said that being born again is a requirement to enter the Kingdom of God, heaven.

Peter also says that being born again is the result of two things, imperishable seed and the abiding word of God. Now, if you are taking notes, I want you to jot this down.

When Peter talks about seed, he is drawing our attention to that which is the source of life. Everything that comes to life begins in seed form.^{vii} That's true in both the plant and animal kingdoms. But the seed in terms of earthly life is perishable, that is that it eventually dies. But, Peter says, that being born again is the result of an imperishable seed. In other words, it is eternal, lives forever.

The question is, "What is the imperishable seed?" Peter answers immediately. It is the living and abiding Word of God. Most scholars agree that the term that Peter uses here for the Word of God is a specific reference to the gospel.^{viii} So, it is by way of the gospel that one receives Jesus as Lord, by faith, and is born again to new life in Christ. And it is at that point, Scripture says, that the Holy Spirit indwells the believer which is the guarantee of eternal life in Heaven.

Now, I also see that while the living and abiding Word of God is the gospel, it also certainly applies to the entirety of God's Word. God's Word, The Bible, is powerful. Romans 1 says that The Gospel is the power of God for salvation.^{ix} And the entirety of God's Word, Hebrews says, living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.^x So, the whole counsel of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures, is the powerful Word of God, which Peter quotes Isaiah 40 says, remains forever. Grass withers, flowers fall, but God's Word remains forever. That which is perishable falls, but that which is imperishable endures.

This is so vital for us as believers. Listen, the flourishing of our souls is dependent on the study of God's Word. It is like an indispensable food to our soul. It is the very thing that feeds that which is imperishable.

I'm convinced that Satan's number one goal with believers is to keep us away from The Word of God. Why? Because he knows the power of God's Word. He does not want us to live in power. Instead, he wants us to live in defeat.

It almost seems like a tangent Peter takes here. He defines love, the love we are to have for one another, and then he talks about the enduring Word of God. How do these relate to each other? Well, our love is deeply rooted in the truth that God so loved us that He gave us His son, and He demonstrated His love

for us by dying on the cross in our place. And since we are recipients of this amazing love, we are a people that love in return.

That's what Peter's saying. He defines brotherly love and says it's deeply rooted in God's love. Thirdly, Peter teaches that an unshakable love is...

3) Defended.

To have such a precious love, it is one that we are to guard at all costs. This is why I have included the first three verses of chapter 2 in our study today. Let's look at it. 1 Peter, chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. ***1**So **put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.** **2**Like newborn infants, **long** for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— **3**if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Peter says, we are to defend the love we share for one another. He says to, "put away." The term here means to renounce, to give up.^{xi} It carries the idea to ruthlessly removing things from our lives. Why? Because they are enemies of love. Let's look at each item he mentions.

First, malice. The word means ill-will.^{xii} It means to rejoice in someone else's hurt. Malice must be put away because it will destroy harmony in the Church.^{xiii}

Secondly, Peter says to put away all deceit. It is a word that means to bait someone, to use a decoy to ensnare someone.^{xiv} It carries the idea of telling half-truths for self-serving purposes.

The third word is similar, hypocrisy. It refers to someone wearing a mask.^{xv} Being one way in front of someone and another behind their back. Deceit and hypocrisy destroy trust.

Fourthly, Peter says to get rid of envy. This word means to be jealous to the point that you become bitter.^{xvi} Wanting what belongs to someone else so much so that you're bitter because you don't have it.

Finally, Peter says to do away with slander. This word means evil-speaking about someone, to back bite and defame.^{xvii}

Peter's saying, "We have to ruthlessly defend our love and unity. There is an enemy that seeks to divide us. It takes effort in putting these things away."

There are many more things that I am sure Peter could have added to this list, but these things, malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, tears apart the love we have for one another. So, we have to defend against that.

He goes onto to say, instead of pursuing the things that divide the Body of Christ, long for the things of God. The word translated, long, in the original language means to crave something.^{xviii} It is a very strong word. It is such an intense craving that it consumes you. Like a newborn baby longs to be filled with milk, we should, in the same way, long for the feeding of the Word of God.

When we put all of this together, chapter 1, verse 22 through chapter 2 verse 3, we see that we are a part of something amazing. We've tasted God's love and have seen that it is good. And when we are saved, we are adopted into a family, God's Family. We experience a love that is impossible for the world to replicate. A love deeply rooted in the unconditional love of God. But our Family, The Church, is under attack. There is one that seeking to divide us. We must be aware of the ploys of the enemy so as to defend the unity we have in Christ.

You know, I know people, I'm sure you do as well, that long to stir the pot and stir up dissension. But hear me, that isn't a mark of a believer. Believers long for the things of God, protecting the love and unity we share with one another at all costs. When we crave the Word of God, we come to understand its teachings to love one another, and the Bible's instructions on how to resolve conflict and disagreement. It is naive to think that we wouldn't have conflict. But The Bible tells us to not feed upon one another in those cases, but instead feed upon the pure Word of God.

Scripture is very clear in how we are to handle disagreements with one another. I want to show it to you. Matthew 18, verse 15. Again, this passage is preserved in Holy Writ, I'm convinced, so that we would have tools in how we defend our love for one another. Matthew 18, verses 15-17.

15"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, [on social media. No? That's not what it says? Sorry, tell about his fault during prayer requests in small group. Still no? I'm so sorry. Tell his fault to other people so that they can be sad with you? No. Go and tell him his fault] *between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.* [That's the first step in defending our love for one another. But what if that doesn't work? Well, we have more instruction. Verse 16.] *16*But if he does not listen, [then blast them on

social media and tell all their terribleness. Still no? If he does not listen] *take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.* [If you can't work it out between the two of you, then involve a very small one or two to help see what is going on and seek resolution. And if that doesn't work, verse 17.] *17*If he refuses to listen to them, *tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector* [an outsider].

Now, I would think that if the first steps are done in the spirit of love, you will resolve conflict and rarely make it to the last step. And keep in mind, the last statement assumes that others have identified sin in the other person. In my experience, though, conflict is the often result of both parties offending. And the seeking of resolution in a godly way promotes reconciliation.

I think you see the point here. Listen, it takes work to maintain godly relationships. But what we gain is something that is amazing, other worldly, supernatural, heavenly. And this is something that our world longs for. And the way we pursue such a love for one another is a testimony to the world.

CONCLUSION:

Peter's whole premise is that we experience these things flowing from a personal relationship with Jesus. Apart from knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, we do not experience the love of God's Family.

If you are here today and you have not been born again unto a relationship with Jesus Christ, I want to invite you to visit with us. Scripture tells us that we are all in the same boat, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. In other words, we are separated from a holy, perfect, and righteous God.

But Scripture also tells us that God loves us, even in our sin, and desires a relationship with us. He so loves us, that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin, in our place, that by faith in Him and Lord of our lives we are forgiven of our sin and our relationship with God is established. The question today is have you placed your faith in Jesus as Lord? If not, we want to visit with you today...

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude: Vol. 37*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 2003; Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Paul A. Cedar, *The Communicators Commentary: James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, Word Books: Waco, 1984; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Peter*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, 2004; David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: 1 Peter 1 – Living Like You Are Born Again*, Enduring Word, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-peter-1/>; Troy Rackliffe, “Stand Firm in Your Faith: Messages 3 & 4,” preached at Glade Community Church, notes given by Troy Rackliffe; Skip Heitzig, “Rock Solid Love,” sermon taught at Calvary Albuquerque, November 10, 2013, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/175/sermon/2375>; Michael Gossett, “Anchored in Love,” message preached at Green Acres Baptist Church, September 4, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.gabc.org/episode/anchored-in-love-anchored/>.

ⁱⁱ Schreiner, p. 92.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cedar, p. 131.

^{iv} Strong’s Concordance, 505, anupokritos.

^v MacArthur, p. 90.

^{vi} Illustration taken from Skip Heitzig.

^{vii} MacArthur, p. 92.

^{viii} Schreiner, p. 95.

^{ix} Romans 1:16.

^x Hebrews 4:12.

^{xi} Strong’s Concordance, 659, apothithémi.

^{xii} Schreiner, p. 98.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Strong’s Concordance, 1388, dolos.

^{xv} Ibid., 5272, hupokrisis.

^{xvi} Ibid., 5355, phthonos.

^{xvii} Ibid., 2636, katalalia.

^{xviii} Ibid., 1971, epipotheó.