“A Fervent Spirit”

April 26, 2015

The Author of your Bible is God. He wrote it. Yes, He wrote it through human beings and He did it for good reason. If we didn’t have direction from Heaven, we’d be continually making choices and doing things that will ruin us and ruin the lives of those around us.

God sent us His word so that we could see His viewpoint on things. He wrote it so that we’d obey it. He wrote it so that we would learn to trust Him. And yet, it’s often quite convicting. It’s historical. It’s scientific. And, most of all, it’s practical.

Please open your Bible with me to I Peter 1:1. *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,”*

Peter was one of the Twelve. The Holy Spirit used him to write two of your NT Books. They are the Epistles of First and Second Peter. Epistles, remember, are simply letters.

Now, the more you read and study the Epistles, the more you realize that a lot of the NT was written as simple instructions to Christians on how to live the Christian life. And did you notice the recipients of this first epistle of Peter? When I read the Bible, I look for the ones who would have received the letter.

Who did Peter write to? As you can see from this map, the Christians who received these two Epistles lived in what we know today as Turkey. [Use pointer] Bithynia, Pontus, Asia, Galatia, and Cappadocia.

And Peter wrote these letters in the year 67 A.D. We know this from the fact that Peter died by crucifixion while Nero was the Emperor of Rome. Nero, we know, died in 68 A.D. And so Peter had to have written them earlier than 68 A.D.

Now, sometimes when you read the Bible, you see exactly what the LORD wants you to do. That’s what you find here in this first chapter of I Peter.

And, so, my heart is filled with just one idea today. It’s the idea of “The Fervent Spirit.” And this comes from two passages. The first is found in the Book of Romans. Romans 12:11 *“Not slothful in business;* ***fervent in spirit****; serving the Lord;…”* The second one is Acts 18:25. *“This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being* ***fervent in the spirit****, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, …”*

The passage refers to a Jew named Apollos, who came to know the LORD. Apollos became a man who “mightily convinced the Jews and that publickly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” (Acts 18:28).

“Fervent in spirit.” That’s what’s on my heart today.

So, I’ve titled today’s message “The Fervent Spirit.” Shall we pray?

As I prepared this sermon I realized just how practical this is. Look with me at I Peter 1:18 *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

*(20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

*(22) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart* ***fervently****:…”*

The term “fervent” means “to boil, to glow, and to be very hot.” So, “to be fervent in spirit” “to be burning with spiritual zeal.”

Someone once said that there are only three alternatives in life: one, to be God; two, to be like God; or three, to be miserable. Number one won’t happen. Number three is certainly not appealing; nor is it something you’d strive for. But number two is what makes life worth living. Live so that you become like Him. So, as we take a look at these verses today, consider them in light of what it means to be “like Him.”

Now, if you were asked to boil down the Christian life to just one major responsibility; one main task; one thing that God calls you to do, what would you say? Just one thing; Christians, as you know, are commanded to do many things. But if you had to narrow it down to just one of those many things, what would it be?

You already know the answer to this question. Do is have to do with your behavior? Your attitudes? How about your thought life? How about your speech? How about your relationships?

Well, Peter speaks plainly about it. And he compares this one thing to a fire. Can you see it now? Look with me at verse twenty-two. I Peter 1:22 *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:…”*

Did you notice that this is the one specific primary task the LORD gives to you and me? *“…See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:…”*

Now, what’s so wonderful about the Bible is that you can take it in its normal, ordinary sense. You read the Bible just like you would any other article or story or book. So, if I want to understand what Peter is saying in verse twenty-two, I’ve got to consider the context, which, in this case, begins at verse eighteen.

So, verse 18. I Peter 1:18 *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;*

Here in this 18th verse Peter points to the power of the Cross of Christ. You’ve been redeemed. The work of Christ in His redemption is the only thing that could remove you from the slave market of sin and place you into the family of God.

Here it is in a nutshell. The only way to even desire to have a fervent spirit; the only way to love others, is to be part of the Family; God’s Family. You’ve got to *be* a brother or *be* a sister in Christ to even *try* to do what verse twenty-two commands; to love.

“Forasmuch as ye know…” Today you’d say “since” ye know. What do you *know*?

First, do you *know* you’ve been redeemed? So, it’s obvious that Peter is writing to those who have been saved. Today we stress “saved.” But the Christians in the early Church stressed “redeemed.”

“Redeemed” describes what happened to you on the day you received Jesus as your Savior and LORD. Every Christian has been redeemed. And the word simply means “bought, paid for, and delivered out [set free] from the slavery to sin.” It wasn’t that long ago that the normal use of the word redeemed was this. It’s something *we* do in order to obtain something else. For example, we used to “redeem” coupons for a portion of the price of something. But “redemption” is God’s work completely. His redemption is what occurred at the Cross.

Jesus’ death was the Redemption Price.

So, first, Peter says that a Christian *knows* that he’s been redeemed. Do you know that? Do you have assurance in your heart that you’ve been redeemed?

Second, what were you redeemed from? Look again at Peter’s words; *“from your vain (empty) conversation (lifestyle) received by tradition from your fathers (your parents and your forefather).”*

The work of Jesus is the answer to what was only religion in your parents and their parents; all your ancestors. Tradition implies “we just did it because our parents did it.” We did it because we were taught to do it. That’s not a basis for living a life with God. So, the LORD gave to us His Only Son in order to redeem us out from that empty world of tradition. Hallelujah! I’ve been redeemed.

First, do you *know* that you’ve been redeemed?

Second, what were you redeemed from?

Third, on what basis were you redeemed?

Look again at the Scripture. I Peter 1:18 *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,… (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

Isn’t redemption amazing? It isn’t based on anything in this world; no matter how expensive those things might be. Actually the most expensive things; the silver and gold of this world; are just one thing when they are compared to your eternal redemption. They are “corruptible.” They don’t last. Both gold and silver are two of the most valuable metals known to man. Yet, they don’t last. Silver tarnishes and gold is so soft that if it’s not plated to another substance it wears away very easily.

The redemption of a person’s soul couldn’t possibly be dependent upon even the most expensive metals known to man. Instead, redemption is based upon *the* *most precious* commodity in the universe. It’s based upon what Peter calls “the precious blood of Christ.”

There is nothing more valuable than the Blood of Christ. There is nothing more powerful. God have provided one thing for your soul’s redemption; the blood of His Son.

So, when Peter writes his epistle, he’s writing to people who “know” the Redemption of the soul. They “know” that they’ve been redeemed by this precious blood, the blood of the Lamb of God.

First, do you *know* that you’ve been redeemed?

Second, what were you redeemed from?

Third, on what basis were you redeemed?

Now that we’ve been redeemed, we can *do* what the LORD command in verse twenty-two. I Peter 1:22 *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:…”*

You see, at the moment of your salvation, a lot of things took place. One; your soul was purified. That precious blood of the Lamb of God cleansed your soul. He washed you. He purified your soul.

Two, you “obeyed the truth through” the work of the Holy Spirit in you. Even at the very moment of your salvation, the Holy Spirit was enabling you. Proof positive that the work of salvation is purely a work of God, no mixing of faith plus works; no mixing of *your* goodness and God’s goodness. Salvation is by faith alone.

And the moment you obey His simple command to “believe on the LORD Jesus Christ,” the Holy Spirit transfers you from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

So now you’re in. Now what? Verse twenty-two. I Peter 1:22 *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto* ***unfeigned love of the brethren*** *…”*

Again, at the moment of your salvation, you gained something that is impossible to achieve apart from Christ. You gained “unfeigned love of the brethren.”

Sometimes these old English terms need a little updating. Here’s how this same word is translated in James 3:17 *“… without hypocrisy [free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity]”* At the time you were converted to Christ, you this huge gift from the LORD’s heart -- “unhypocritical love of the brethren.”

Where could you possibly find something like this? Apart from Christ, you can’t. You see, the LORD has given us so much in Christ that we sometimes feel like the words of Psalm 23:5 were written just for us personally; *“my cup runneth over.”*

Now, with all this in your possession, what is this one command, this one responsibility that the LORD gives to every Christian? Look again at those last eleven words of verse twenty-two. *“…see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:…”*

Can you see the importance of a fervent spirit? “To be fervent in spirit,” remember is “to be burning with spiritual zeal.”

And what area of your life is the LORD commanding you to be burning with zeal? Jesus gives us the answer. He tells us that there’s one thing that will strike the world at its heart. Here’s what He says. John 13:35 *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

Folks, love is the measure of your walk with Christ. Love is the essence of what it means to belong to the LORD. The world to this very moment needs to see someone whose love burns brightly. The Church should be lit up with one primary light; the fervent spirit of Christ’s love.

And look with me at the key. It’s right here in verse 22. I Peter 1:22 *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:…”*

According to the Holy Spirit in Peter, this sort of love is a long ways away from half-heartedly. Peter says *“see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”*

You’ve been called to be a practical Christian. So, let’s be practical. Can you love with a pure heart? Can you do it fervently? Or, is the big question in your heart “How can I possibly do that?”

The answer is this. Go back to the Source; go back to the beginning. Go to the top first. Then, work your way down. The first and most critical realization in your heart needs to be the true nature of God. Here’s *His* true essence. “God is love.”

How many times have you seen, read, and heard these words? I John 4:8 says *“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”* I John 4:16 says *“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”*

You’ll never get to love well; let alone “be fervent in spirit” if you don’t start at the right source. The one and only source of your love is God Himself. That’s His basic nature. And He showed you that love personally by giving you the greatest gift He could give. He gave you His only begotten Son.

A number of years ago I did a study on the Mississippi River. I found out that it travels through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana; almost the entire route from Canada to the Gulf. I found out that it’s over 2200 miles long.

Now where the Mississippi begins? It begins in the state of Minnesota; in Lake Itasca. Most of us have never heard of Lake Itasca? But whoever thinks about Lake Itasca? All we ever hear or read about the River itself. But Lake Itasca sits some 1,475 feet above sea level. If you dropped your little home-made sailboat into the river in Minnesota, it would take you ninety days to get down to the Gulf. Today, though, there are forty-three dams that slow the Mississippi down. But can you imagine what it was like when I was discovered back in 1542 – with no dams and no bridges.

Folks, in order to obey the words of I Peter 1:22, you’ve got to go up to the source. You’ve got to go to the love of God Himself.

First, a fervent spirit goes to the top first.

Second, a fervent spirit is found first at Calvary. The greatest demonstration of love came at the Cross of Christ. John 3:16 says *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (17) For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”*

Third, a fervent spirit dwells in you now that you’ve put your trust in Christ. I John 4:16 says *“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”*

Here in this chapter Peter says *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were redeemed…”*

And, here’s where a lot of us fail. We “try” to love someone. We try to love the unlovely. But, because we can only operate inside of what we know, we fail. Not only does a child of God *know* that God is love; not only does he know that he’s been redeemed; not only does he know that his soul has been purified; not only does he know that his soul has been purified unto unhypocritical love. He *knows* that the one thing that makes him most like God is when he looks to the Source of that love to enable him.

So, don’t even try to obey verse twenty-two if you don’t *know* the Source of that love.

First, a fervent spirit goes to the top first.

Second, a fervent spirit is found at Calvary.

Third, a fervent spirit dwells in the child of God.

Now fourth, take time today to pray that this kind of love will be evident in and through you. And, along with this prayer for yourself, add it to your prayers for your spouse and your children and your grandchildren and for the members of Emmanuel Baptist Church and for the Church of Christ in Old Saybrook.

Haven’t you noticed that oftentimes the Christian life is so elusive to you while it’s so evident to other people? Here’s why. Those “other” people have taken the words of the Scripture for their own personal walk. They’ve believed the word. And they’ve prayed these things into their lives. When you begin to put I Peter 1:22-like verses into your personal life and into the lives of those around you, you will find that both prayer and the Bible come alive like you’ve never seen or known before.

And why? Because God will not refuse your prayers for His will. If it’s His will that you “love one another with a pure heart fervently,” and it is; then, you can be sure that your Heavenly Father will see to it that that request is handled a.s.a.p.

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Fourth, take time today to pray

Now, last, what Christian doesn’t truly want a fervent heart?

It’s a heart like God’s heart. It’s much more than half-hearted love. It’s more effective when you deal with people. It’s fiery both for you and for others.

The LORD commands you to “be fervent in spirit; to love one another fervently.” Now, do it fervently.” Do it with a glowing heart. Do it with great intensity. Do it with froth and feeling.

When was the last time you got really angry; angry with froth and feeling; angry with great intensity? Well, if you are able to get that angry, wouldn’t it be much more effective if you were looking to the LORD to enable you to be “fervent in love”?

In closing, let me turn you again to the Surrender Prayer I ask you to pray each Sunday. Consider it carefully. Pray it from your heart. And look for the LORD to fill you up with love so that you are truly “fervent in spirit.”

Here’s how it goes. “LORD, I surrender everything that I am, and have, and ever will be. I take my hands off of my life and release every relationship to You--every habit, every goal, my health, my wealth, and everything that means anything. I surrender it all to You. And by faith I take my place at the

The Cross, believing that when the Lord Jesus was crucified, according to Your Word, I was crucified with Him. And from this moment on I am trusting You to live Your life in me and through me that You might receive all the glory. I thank You now by faith for accepting me in the Lord Jesus.” Found on [www.gracenotebook.com](http://www.gracenotebook.com) in “The Selfer’s Prayer” by John Woodward].

Are you willing to pray this prayer today in light of what you’ve found here in I Peter chapter one verse twenty-two?

This is how to live the Christian life.

Extend invitation.

Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”