



The First Letter of Peter
Bible Study Session 6
1 Peter 1:22-25



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Greek NT

22 Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον ἐκ καρδίας ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε ἐκτενῶς, 23 ἀναγεγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου, διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος· 24 διότι πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος, καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῆς ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν· 25 τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

Gute Nachricht Bibel

22 Habt ihr eure Seelen gereinigt im Gehorsam der Wahrheit zu ungefärbter Bruderliebe, so habt euch untereinander beständig lieb aus reinem Herzen. 23 Denn ihr seid wiedergeboren nicht aus vergänglichem, sondern aus unvergänglichem Samen, nämlich aus dem lebendigen Wort Gottes, das da bleibt. 24 Denn »alles Fleisch ist wie Gras und alle seine Herrlichkeit wie des Grases Blume. Das Gras ist verdorrt und die Blume abgefallen; 25 aber des Herrn Wort bleibt in Ewigkeit«. ¹ Das ist aber das Wort, welches unter euch verkündigt ist.

NRSV

22 Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. 23 You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." That word is the good news that was announced to you.

NLT

22 Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts. 23 For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. 24 As the prophet says, "People are like grass that dies away; their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of wildflowers. The grass withers, and the flowers fall away. 25 But the word of the Lord will last forever." And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

¹(Jesaja 40,6-8)

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Introduction to Study.

In this third unit of the opening set of admonitions in the letter body (vv. 13-25), Peter focuses on brotherly love inside the community of faith. The text is understood either as three separate sentences (UBS 3rd rev. edition) or as a single compound sentence (N-A 27th rev. edition & the SBL-Greek New Testament). In either understanding the basic units of text are perceived largely the same way: the admonition (vv. 22-23); the scripture proof (vv. 24-25a); the linking of the two (v. 25b). The text clearly builds on the preceding concepts and advances the idea of brotherly love beyond the previous allusions.¹ The expansion elements provide a rich and profound understand-

¹"The section is full of echoes; compare ἡγνικότες with ἄγιοι (15), ἐν ἀγιασμῶ (2), τῇ ὑπακοῇ with τέκνα ὑ. (14), ἀναγεγεννημένοι with ἀναγεννήσας (3), φθαρτῆς with φθαρτοῖς (18), εὐαγγελισθὲν with τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων (12). It should be compared throughout

ing of the nature of this responsibility. In the fragmented society of today's world, such an admonition possesses vital importance for believers learning how to work together for the common cause of Christ.

I. Context and Background²

Both the historical and especially the literary background play important roles in correct understanding of this text.

a. Historical

External History. The stability of these verses over the first eight or nine centuries of being copied by scribes is relatively strong. Two places in the text have word variations that extend the meaning of the text more than anything else. In verse 22, most ancient manuscripts read “obedience to the truth through the Spirit” (ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας διὰ πνεύματος). But the most important and the earliest manuscripts omit διὰ πνεύματος.³ The more likely principle of mss copying is that this phrase was added later rather than being dropped, since there is no reason to drop it, but clear reason to add it for clarity's sake. The addition doesn't change the meaning of the text, just expands it.

Also in verse 22, again most ancient manuscripts read “out of a clean heart” (ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας).⁴ Again good manuscript evaluation principles suggest that the shorter text is usually preferable over the longer text, simply because the copyist scribes had a well documented tendency to add words in an effort to try to make the text clearer to their readers.⁵ The weight of external manuscript evidence is more equally divided here making it less clear whether καθαρᾶς was in the original copy of First Peter. The idea of a sincere motivation for action, which both readings express, the longer one more directly than the shorter one, is present which ever reading of the text is adopted as the original.

As is evident from the above the variations of wording in the text do not alter the meaning of the text at all. Thus we can confidently interpret the text before us as the original wording of Peter's writing through Silas.

Internal History. The time / place markers in this text are more indirect than direct, and are derived from the connections of the verbal expressions to one another. The admonition is expressed as emphatic present time duty through the use of the Aorist imperative verb. The two perfect tense participle modifiers, ἡγνικότες (have purified) and ἀναγεγεννημένοι (have been born again), assume a prior conversion commitment that stands as the basis for the admonition. This past / present time sequence plays an important theological role in understanding the passage. The use of the Greek perfect tense is significant because it asserts a decisive action that has ongoing consequence. In other words, this prior conversion was life-changing and

with Eph. 4:18–24.—τὰς ... ἡγνικότες from Jer. 6:16, “see what is the good way and walk in it and you shall find purification (ἀγνισμὸν LXX) to your souls. ἅ. usually of ceremonial purification in LXX. Compare Jas. 4:8, ἀγνίσατε καρδίας δίψυχοι (cf. ἀνυπόκριτον).” [J.H.A. Hart, “The First Epistle General of Peter,” in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Volume V: Commentary (New York: George H. Doran Company), 52.]

²Serious study of the Bible requires careful analysis of the background and setting of the scripture passage. Failure to do this leads to interpretive garbage and possibly to heresy. Detailed study of the background doesn't always answer all the questions, but it certainly gets us further along toward correct understanding of both the historical and contemporary meanings of a text. This serious examination of both the historical and literary background of every passage will be presented in summary form with each of the studies.

³“The majority of MSS add here the words ‘through the Spirit’ (διὰ πνεύματος), but the most important early MSS (p⁷² & A B C Ψ) and the most ancient versions omit them. There is no reason why they would have been dropped if they were original; more likely they were added by scribes to accent the role of the Spirit in conversion (cf. ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος in v 2).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 72.]

⁴“On the strength of P72 & C 81 614, a majority of the Committee preferred the reading ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας, but, in view of the absence of the adjective from A B vg, thought it best to enclose καθαρᾶς within square brackets. The singular reading καρδίας ἀληθινῆς (nc) may have arisen through confusion with the following ἀλλήλους.” [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 618.]

⁵“The tendency toward expansion can be seen in one MS of Rom 6:17 (A, which preserves, ironically, the shorter reading in our passage) where ἐκ καρδίας becomes ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας. It is likely that the latter, an early expression of Christian piety found in 1 Tim 1:5 (with ἀγάπη) and 2 Tim 2:22 (cf. also Ps 23[24]:4; Matt 5:8; Herm. Vis. 4.2.5, 5.7; Sentences of Sextus 46b), has influenced the manuscript tradition here on a fairly wide scale. On the other hand, if ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας is original, the shortening of the text was probably accidental, triggered by the similar κα- beginning of the two words.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 72.]

altered the way of living for these believers.

The content of this passage has faint echoes in forms of Judaism current in the first Christian century. One of those groups is the Qumran community, as Michaels notes:⁶

The strong and repeated emphasis on initiation into the Christian community coupled with the requirement of brotherly love among believers recalls the Qumran *Manual of Discipline (Community Rule)*, with its stipulation that those who enter the community must “love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in God’s design, and hate all the sons of darkness, each according to his guilt in God’s vengeance” and must “purify their knowledge in the truth of God’s precepts and order their powers according to His ways of perfection” (1QS 1.9–11, 12–13 [tr. G. Vermes, 72]).

This historical backdrop can throw additional light on Peter’s meaning, mostly by way of contrast in approach to brotherly love.⁷ The most obvious contrast to Qumran is their command to both love and hate, while Peter’s admonition is only to love. Their acquiring of greater knowledge of divine truth is by their efforts, while the role of the Holy Spirit is significant in believers. Knowing whom to love and whom to hate builds off spiritual arrogance, something abhorred in Christian tradition.

b. Literary

Literary Form (Genre). From the broad genre aspect, this text is a part of three admonitions in the beginning of the letter body. Considering the text from a narrow genre aspect, only verses 24–25a take on an identifiable literary form as a scripture quote from Isaiah 40:6–8.⁸ This same OT text surfaces also in James 1:10–11 in somewhat similar usage.⁹

Literary Context. The literary setting of 1:22–25 is suggested in the chart on the right. As mentioned in the Introduction, this text stands as the third sub-unit stressing the ideals (vv. 13–25) of holy living (1:13–2:10). Believers were first called to hope and holiness (vv. 13–16), then to fear (vv. 17–21), and now to brotherly love (vv. 22–25). These admonitions will be summarized and grounded in the language of the new people of God in 2:1–10, as Peter sets forth the Christian concept of holy living, in contrast to the conceptualization of this in contemporary Judaism of that time.¹⁰ All of these provide deep insight into living as a believer in the community of faith while surrounded by paganism of many different varieties.

The connection of hope/holiness/fear to love is basic to the Christian faith that is built off the vertical / horizon relationships concept central to the Hebrew religious expression of the Old Testament. In order to be properly related to God, one must be properly related to others around him/her. Without the latter, the former doesn’t exist. This understanding is desperately needed in modern Christianity today. Christians today all too often see their religion purely in the false thinking found

⁶J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 73.

⁷As Michaels rightly points out in his commentary, this does not, however, provide a basis for the theory of First Peter being constructed from a supposed baptismal liturgy. Such is simply not possible to conclude.

⁸NRSV: 6 A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹NRSV: 10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

¹⁰“If the emphasis in the earlier verses of this unit dealt primarily with the conduct of the individual growing out of his or her redemption, the emphasis in these verses shifts toward the community, and the responsibility of the individuals to their fellow Christians, in anticipation of the further development of this theme at the conclusion of the body opening (2:4–10*). In that way it serves as conclusion for the first half of the body opening, and as anticipatory introduction to the theme of the second half.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia—a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 136.]

Outline of Contents in First Peter:

Praescriptio: 1:1-2

- *Superscriptio, 1:1a*
- *Adscriptio, 1:1b-2a*
- *Salutatio, 1:2b*

Proem: 1:3-12

- *Core, 1:3a*
- *Expansion, 1:3b-12*

Body: 1:13-5:11

- *Holy living 1:13-2:10*
 - *Ideals 1:13-25*
 - *Privileges 2:1-10*
- *Obligations 2:11-3:12*
 - *Civic 2:11-17*
 - *Haustafeln 2:18-3:7*
 - *Social 3:8-12*
- *Persecution 3:13-5:11*
 - *Encouragement 3:13-4:11*
 - *Explanation 4:12-19*
 - *Proper Conduct 5:1-11*

Conclusio: 5:12-14

- *Sender Verification, 5:12*
- *Greetings, 5:13-14a*
- *Benedictio, 5:14b*

in ancient Greco-Roman paganism: all one needs to do are a few religious actions occasionally in order to pacify deity so that he/she will leave us alone. Just as the religion of the Old Testament and apostolic Christianity repudiated such thinking, biblical faith today still rejects such reasoning as heresy, and as a sure fire path straight into eternal damnation.

Literary Structure.

The block diagram of the text, as reflected in the English translation below, visually highlights the inner connectedness of the ideas and the movement from one idea to another.

1.22 Having purified your lives
 in obedience to the Truth
 in unhypocritical brotherly love
 from your hearts

5 **love one another**
 eagerly

1.23 having been born again
 not out of corruptible seeds
 but out of incorruptible
 through the living and abiding word of God;

1.24 wherefore **all flesh is**
 as grass
 and
 all its glory is
 as the flower of grass;
 the grass withers
 and
 its flower falls off;

1.25 but
 the Word of God remains
 forever.

 And

6 **this is the word**
 which was preached to you.

The structural design of these verses is relatively clear. The beginning admonition to brotherly love (# 5, vv. 22-23), is re-enforced by a scriptural proof taken from Isaiah 40:6-8 in statements 6-10 (vv. 24-25a). The final declaration in statement 11 (v. 25b) applies more directly the scripture proof to the admonition with a reminder to the readers that this message had already been proclaimed to them.

This organizing structure frames our study of the passage below.

II. Message

If believers claim to love God, they must love one another for their claim to have legitimacy. This core principle forms the theological foundation for this passage. The OT vertical / horizontal religious principle is critical here.

a. Love one another, vv. 22-23

22 Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, **love one another** deeply from the heart. 23 You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

22 Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον ἐκ καρδίας **ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε** ἐκτενῶς, 23 ἀναγεγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου, διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος·

Notes:

Study of these verses begins with examining the core admonition and then the expansion elements.

Core: ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε. The Aorist imperative verb form stresses emphatically the importance of this admonition. The verb itself stresses self-sacrificing commitment to others, not just a positive feeling. “One another” focuses on the Christian community that the individual believers belonged to.

Against the backdrop of various ancient Jewish sects stressing the importance of communal devotion to one another,¹¹ what was going on among the churches that Peter wrote to? Clearly the Old Testament heritage of Lev. 19:17-18¹² and related texts on loving one’s neighbor lay in the background. Jewish members of these congregations would have clearly understood the importance of serious commitment to one another in a religious community. The non-Jewish members could possibly have grasped some of this from membership in trade unions etc. that stressed group loyalty. Does the emphasis here imply disunity in these churches? Hardly, since nowhere in the letter does the theme of disunity surface. Peter did not feel compelled to place high emphasis on brotherly love, since this theme is present only here and in 2:17.

The Bible student need not resort to an assumed problem in order to account for this theme in the letter. Much more likely this emphasis is a logical climax of this unit in vv. 13-25 that found relevance in congregations made up of Jews and non-Jews, slaves and freedmen, rich and poor, reflecting a very diverse background. Their new Christian faith had brought a highly diverse group of people together in a single community of people. Loyalties would tend to naturally reach back into their non-Christian heritage, rather than focusing on their new spiritual family. The formation of a new community framed by sacrificial commitment to one another required serious effort and commitment.¹³ Peter was deeply aware of this and felt it important to stress this theme early on in his letter to them. Peter’s theme is also grounded in the teaching of Jesus on brotherly love.¹⁴ Remarkably it was this very commitment to love one another that gave early Christianity its greatest witness to the outside world, and made it attractive even in times of intense persecution.

Peter qualifies this core admonition with five sets of modifiers that add profound richness to the idea of loving one another.

Expansion 1: Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον. This lengthy participle phrase centers on the conversion experience of purification, ἡγνικότες.¹⁵ In the Jewish temple, rituals of purification were central to worshipping God, but these focused on the outward, external aspect of life. Peter underscores that in conversion God cleaned up not just the outward life, but more importantly the very core of existence of believers, τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν. This purification was thorough and complete, unlike that done in the temple.¹⁶

The means of this profound purification was their obedience to the truth¹⁷ of the gospel, ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς

¹¹“The emphasis in Qumran on the loyalty among community members based on communal love has also been proposed as the background for the sentiment expressed in this verse.³⁴ It has even been suggested that a sayings schema of Essene tradition was taken up here into the Christian tradition and given a new content to adapt it to the situation of the Christian communities.³⁵” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia—a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 138.]

¹²**NRSV:** 17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

¹³Anyone involved in church life for any length of time understands the challenge of a basic sociological principle: *the greater the diversity of the group, the harder it is to develop group loyalty*, and the converse is also true. When a church is made up of folks from similar backgrounds, that church finds building unity much easier. For those ministering to internationally based congregations, the challenges are enormous at times. The wide diversity of background in such a congregation presents substantial challenges to developing unity and group loyalty. Theologically, such becomes possible only in a willingness of the members to sacrificially give themselves to others in ministry and service.

¹⁴Compare John 13:34-35 and 15:12-17. Through Silas’ influence Peter could possibly have picked up aspects of this from the strong emphasis on brotherly love in Paul’s writings, cf. Rom. 12:10, 13:8; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2; and 1 Thess. 3:12, all documents written most likely before First Peter.

¹⁵ἡγνίζω...**2. to cause to be morally pure, purify**, fig. ext. of 1: καρδίας Js 4:8; ψυχὰς 1 Pt 1:22; ἑαυτὸν 1J 3:3. Pass. ἁ. τῇ ἀφέσει τ. ἁμαρτιῶν become pure through forgiveness of sins B 5:1. Also ἁ. ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν 8:1. [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12.]

¹⁶For NT references to temple purification, see Acts 21:24 and 24:18.

¹⁷“The term ‘truth’ (alētheia) occurs only here in 1 Peter, but in 5:12 its adjective, alēthēs, is used to accentuate ‘the grace of God’ as ‘true.’ ‘Truth,’ in contrast to lie or falsehood, is that which corresponds exactly to reality. In Christian conceptualization,

ἀληθείας.¹⁸ Obeying the requirements of the Torah was key to Jewish purification, but for believers the Gospel as the expression of divine truth is critical for this deeper, life-changing purification. The objective of this purification and obedience is εἰς φιλαδελφίαν¹⁹ ἀνυπόκριτον, ‘for unhyprocritical brotherly love.’²⁰ What God had in mind when He cleaned us up in conversion was to enable us to genuinely love fellow believers.²¹ This overcomes all the cultural, language, social etc. barriers that would divide us and make us suspicious of one another.

This purification has an enabling power from God linked to it to help believers achieve this goal. Without such prior purification, efforts toward brotherly love are doomed to be superficial at best and can never successfully overcome the many barriers that culture and heritage throw up against loving someone very different than we are. Peter’s point is that God set up this goal in our salvation and enables us to love one another; now the challenge simply is, “Do it!”

Expansion 2: ἐκ καρδίας. The second qualifier of the admonition stresses deliberate decision as essential to loving one’s brother. The phrase literally means ‘out of the heart’ and given the figurative meaning of ‘heart’ in the ancient world as the source of choice and decision, the resulting image stresses deliberate and intentional decision to love one another.²² Their decision to love one another then must originate from deep

God is the ‘father of truth’ (2 Clem. 3:1; 20:5), whose word is truth (John 17:1) and who has spoken ‘the word of truth’ in Jesus Christ and the gospel (Col 1:5; Eph 1:13; 4:20). Thus, to become a Christian is to be ‘brought forth by the word of truth’ (Jas 1:18) or ‘to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 3:7; Heb 10:26; cf. 1 Tim 4:3; 2 John 1) and to be given the responsibility of ‘obeying the truth’ (Gal 5:7; cf. Pfizner 1970). In 1 Peter, ‘truth,’ like ‘grace’ (cf. 5:12), summarizes in a single term that to which Christian believers have been introduced as a result of their rebirth and that reality by which their actions are controlled. For children born of God and the word of good news, truth has replaced ‘former ignorance’ (1:14; cf. 2:15), and believers, now grounded in the truth, are henceforth to love one another with sincerity (v 22a) and purity of heart (v 22b) and to rid themselves of insincerity or hypocrisy (2:1). Thus, ‘truth’ in this context is synonymous with the ‘word of God’ (vv 23–25). ‘Obeying the truth,’ like ‘obeying the word’ (cf. 2:7–8), is a marked feature of the obedient children of God (1:14).” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 383-84.]

¹⁸For Paul the phrase commonly is ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, obedience of faith, as expressed in Rom. 1:5, 16:26, when a qualifier of ὑπακοῆ is added. That is, the obedience that faith produces (Greek subjective genitive case). For Peter, the qualifier is either τῆς ἀληθείας (v. 22: obedience to the Truth) or εἰς ὑπακοὴν...Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (v. 2: obedience to Jesus Christ), in the Greek objective genitive case use.

¹⁹‘Brotherly and sisterly love was urgently promoted in early Christianity (Rom 12:9–10; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb 13:1; 2 Pet 1:7; cf. Sedlaczek 1894). Its Christian accentuation reflects not only the importance attributed to action that assured the cohesion of the community but also the movement’s understanding of itself as a new family of God. In 1 Peter, philadelphia and its related terms philadelphoi (‘loving of brothers [and sisters],’ 3:8), philoxenoi (‘hospitable,’ 4:9), and philēma (‘kiss,’ sign of familial affection) express the behavior that, like love (1:22b; 2:17; 4:8; 5:14), compassion (3:8), mutual respect (3:8; 5:6), and mutual service (4:8–11), is encouraged to enforce the emotional and social bonds within the ‘brotherhood’ (adelphotēs, 2:17; 5:9) or ‘household of God’ (2:5; 4:17).” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 385-86.]

²⁰‘Purification leads to sincere love for fellow believers. Literally, the expression used here is ‘sincere brotherly love,’ which was formerly used to refer to the love between actual brothers and sisters. In the New Testament, however, ‘brothers’ has come to mean fellow believers. The adjective sincere means negatively, free from hypocrisy or deceit, and positively, ‘genuine’ (Phps, Brc), a love that comes directly from the heart. To have a sincere love for your fellow believers may be rendered as ‘to really love your fellow believers.’ Such fellow believers may be rendered as ‘those who believe even as you do.’” [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 46.]

²¹One should not forget that the verb translated as ‘purify’, ἀγνίζω, carries also the meaning of being set apart in dedication to God uniquely as His children. The commonly adjective ἅγιος, ἴα, ον, usually translated as ‘holy’ or ‘saint,’ designates one set apart to God, The noun ἡ ἀγιότης, -ητος specifies ‘holiness’ as a fundamental character trait; the noun τό ἅγιασμα, -ατος designates a holy place such as the temple that is dedicated to God; the noun ὁ ἁγιασμός, -οῦ designates either the process of becoming holy, or the resulting state of ‘having been made holy,’ that is, dedicated to God. The use of this set of words from the common root ἀγι- is extensive throughout the New Testament. For a helpful online discussion see M. William Ury, “Holy, Holiness,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* at <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/holy-holiness.html>.

²²‘In a similar way, the phrase ἐκ καρδίας corresponds in meaning to ἀνυπόκριτον (cf. Rom 6:17 and Note b*), so that the entire clause, with the exception of the adverb ἐκτενῶς, echoes the previous reference to genuine brotherly affection. Peter’s point is that having purified their souls for the express purpose of displaying genuine affection for each other, they must do exactly that.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002),

down inside them.²³

Expansion 3: ἐκτενῶς. This third modifier is the first one to come after the verb; the above modifiers have stood at the beginning of the sentence in a position of heightened emphasis.²⁴ The post-field location after the verb doesn't suggest that it was unimportant, but rather that it is not as important as what comes in front of the verb. The adverb ἐκτενῶς stresses intensity either of passion or of sincere motivation.²⁵ Consistency is a major element emphasized here. Thus brotherly love is not to be spasmodic or occasional, but constant and consistent.

Expansion 4a: ἀναγεγεννημένοι οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς ἀλλὰ ἀφθάρτου. The first perfect participle ἡγνικότες, 'purified,' alluded to one's conversion experience. The perfect participle here, ἀναγεγεννημένοι, 'born again,' alludes to the same conversion moment. Thus conversion is both a purification and a new birth. The verb ἀναγεννάω is only used twice in the NT, both in First Peter (vv. 3, 23).²⁶ Thus brother love stems from a spiritual birth that transforms.

The source of that spiritual birth is defined first negatively and then positively.²⁷ One should note the use of the Greek preposition ἐκ here. The significance of this preposition is to denote source or origin. In the sexual language used here especially with σπορᾶς (seed), the concept of 'siring' or the male source of creation is primarily behind the imagery.²⁸ New birth doesn't originate οὐκ ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτῆς. Here is an emphatic denial that spiritual birth has any human or material origins. Human effort or activities cannot under any circumstance produce spiritual birth! Peter clearly affirms that we have nothing to do with the spiritual transformation of new birth in conversion. Ours is merely a faith response to what God alone accomplishes. The imperishable seed used to produce the new birth comes exclusively from God alone.

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²³Note that the variant reading of this text ἐκ καθαρᾶς καρδίας defines the idea as a decision to love that is clean, and thus free from impurities of phoney motivation etc. The latter addition of καθαρᾶς could perhaps have been motivated in part by what the copyists at the time noticed among their readers. Certainly insincere expressions of brotherly love certainly abound in our day.

²⁴The sentence pre-field in ancient Greek is the primary place to place words etc. when special emphasis is given to them. The extensive use of spelling endings, suffixes, on almost all Greek words allowed for such placing of words anywhere in the sentence, unlike English where sentence location determines grammatical function and is rather fixed. The suffix spelling attached to words achieved this for Greek.

²⁵ἐκτενῶς adv. of ἐκτενής (q.v.; Aristot. +; Polyb. 31, 14, 12; Diod S 2, 24, 3; M. Ant. 1, 4; Vett. Val. p. 187, 5; ins [s. ἐκτένεια]; POxy 2228, 40; PMichael 20, 2; LXX; Jos., Ant. 6, 341) **pert. to being persevering, eagerly, fervently, constantly ἀγαπᾶν 1 Pt 1:22.** Of prayer (as always in LXX: Jon 3:8; 3 Macc 5:9 al.) προσευχῇ ἐ. γινομένη **Ac 12:5.** βοᾶν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐ. 1 Cl 34:7.—Neut. of the comp. of ἐκτενής as adv. ἐκτενέστερον (Agatharchides: 86 Fgm. 6 Jac [in Athen. 12, 527c]; SIG 695, 66): ἐ. προσεύχεσθαι prob. relative very fervently **Lk 22:44.**—M-M. Spicq." [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 310.]

²⁶Related terms are ἀρτιγέννητος (newly born) and παλιγγενεσία (born again).

²⁷"The means by which God beget his people is 'imperishable' rather than 'perishable seed.' The terms used here are among Peter's favorites. The heavenly inheritance of believers is 'imperishable' (aphthartos, 1 Pet 1:4), and God is pleased when women have the 'imperishable' (aphthartos) qualities of a 'gentle and quiet spirit' (3:4). On the other hand, believers are redeemed with Christ's precious blood, not with 'perishable' (phthartos) things like silver or gold (1:18). The human sperm of a father is perishable and earthly, and even if it produces children, they too will die eventually. The seed God uses to beget his people, on the other hand, is invincible and incorruptible. The term Peter used (spora) can be translated as 'sowing' or 'origin,' and some scholars understand it to have this meaning here.¹⁶⁹ It makes better sense in the context, however, if the term refers to that which is sown, namely, seed, and so we should not distinguish the meaning from the usual term for 'seed' (i.e., sperma)." [Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 37, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007), 94-95.]

²⁸σπορά, ᾧς, ἡ (s. σπείρω and two next entries; Aeschyl. et al.; ins, pap, LXX; TestSol 5:3 P; TestReub 2:8; Philo, Joseph., Just.; Tat. 11, 1; Ath. 22, 6 and R. 1 p. 48, 6) prim. 'the activity of sowing' and fig. 'procreation', then by metonymy 'that which is sown' (Eur., Andr. 637; pap; 1 Macc 10:30; Jos., Ant. 2, 306), whence it also comes to mean **seed** (SIG 826c, 15 [117 B.C.] μήτε σπορῶν μήτε καρπῶν; Herm. Wr. 13:2; PGM 1, 32; 13, 176), which is generally accepted for **1 Pt 1:23** (cp. θεοῦ σπορά Ps.-Callisth. 1, 10; 13), though ESelwyn, 1 Pt '46, 307 prefers origin or sowing.—DELG s.v. σπείρω. M-M. TW." [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 939.]

This is the only use of this word in the New Testament. Much more common for 'seed' is τὸ σπέρμα, ατος, with a very similar meaning. The thrust of the scripture quote that follows from Isaiah may have dictated the choice of σπορά over σπέρμα, but certainly as to the reason is not possible.

Expansion 4b: διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος. What is this seed, i.e., *sperma*, used by God? Peter's answer is 'the living and abiding Word of God.' This phrase is introduced by the preposition διὰ designating the means by which something is done. The seed comes from God and as the Word of God it becomes the agency of new birth.²⁹ The qualifiers ζῶντος...καὶ μένοντος are not completely clear as to whether they modify λόγου or θεοῦ.³⁰ Clearly they function as a pair and thus go back to the same reference. And since μένοντος more appropriate goes back to word rather than God, most likely both then qualify λόγου. The scripture quote from Isaiah that follows strongly favors this understanding.

Peter's point is to stress that God's Word in the Gospel is both dynamic and enduring. Thus as the agent in producing the new birth, this gospel message actively worked to produce spiritual transformation, and an enduring word it continues to play a dynamical role in transformation of the believer. The reason for such spiritual power is that the word comes from God, rather than coming from human imagination or fantasy.

One should note that the emphasis is upon the orally proclaimed gospel, rather than written documents, as the final comment at the end of verse 25 make abundantly clear. The New Testament is the written record of the Gospel, but is not synonymous with Gospel as the orally proclaimed message of salvation. Though the difference is not huge, it should be remembered and the two terms, gospel as preached message and as written record, should not be treated as synonyms.

b. The scripture proof, vv. 24-25a

24 For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord endures forever."

24 διότι πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος, καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῆς ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν· 25 τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

Notes:

The subordinate causal conjunction διότι introduces the scripture quote as the fifth expansion of the admonition to love one another.³¹ Peter reached out to the prophet Isaiah for an affirmation of the enduring quality of the word of God, and he found one in Isaiah 40:6-8. He shortened the quote and modified some of

Isaiah 40:6-8

1 Peter 1:24-25a

6 A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

7 The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
but the word of the Lord endures forever."

²⁹ A few scholars think the 'word' (logos) refers to Christ as the divine Word, a meaning that clearly is found in John (John 1:1, 14). We can be almost certain, however, that Peter used the term 'word' (logos) to refer to the gospel. It often has this meaning in the New Testament (e.g., Eph 1:13; Phil 2:16; Col 1:5; 4:3; 1 Thess 1:8; 2:13; 2 Thess 3:1; 2 Tim 2:9; 4:2; Titus 1:3; 2:5; Heb 13:7; Jas 1:21) and bears this meaning elsewhere in 1 Peter (2:8; 3:1). Grammatically we could translate the last phrase as 'the word of the living and enduring God.'¹⁷⁰ But context indicates that the NIV is correct, 'the living and enduring word of God' (cf. also Heb 4:12).¹⁷¹ [Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 37, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007), 95.]

³⁰ It is debated whether ζῶντος should be taken with λόγου or θεοῦ. A first impression is that the fixity of the phrase 'the living God' in biblical literature is decisive in favor of the latter. It appears that the purpose of the designation here, as in Acts 14:15; 1 Thess 1:9; and Heb 9:14, is to contrast God with the dead idols of paganism. Because the accompanying participle (μένοντος) seems redundant with 'God' and more appropriate with 'word' (cf. especially the end of the Scripture quotation in v 25), many commentators and most English translations have taken both participles with λόγου: 'the living and enduring word of God' (see especially La Verdère, 89-94; for the participle ζῶν with λόγος, cf. Heb 4:12). [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 76-77.]

³¹ **3. marker used to indicate why someth. just stated can reasonably be considered valid**, used in place of ὅτι (TestAbr A 11 p. 90, 6 [Stone p. 28]; TestJob 49:3): **for Lk 1:13; Ac 10:20 v.l.; 18:10; 22:18; Ro 1:19-21; 3:20; 8:7; Gal 2:16 v.l.; 1 Th 2:18; 1 Pt 1:16ab (v.l.), 24 (ὅτι P72); 2:6.** [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 251.]

the wording but the essential idea remains the same.³²

What was the point made by Isaiah? And how does that compare with Peter’s use of Isaiah’s words? The conjunction διότι clearly sets up Isaiah’s words as the justifying basis of what Peter has just said about the word of God.³³ Michaels has helpful observations here:

The first part of the quotation can be understood as a comment on “the planting of perishable seed” to which he referred in v 23: “all humanity” (lit. “all flesh,” a common OT expression) is seen from the standpoint of its mortality, and human mortality is underscored by the metaphor of grass. Because the life cycle of plants is relatively short, and the perishability of plant life is more obvious and visible to humans than their own mortality, grass and flowers become appropriate metaphors (to Isaiah and Peter alike) for the human condition.

If πᾶσα σὰρξ refers to humanity generally, πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῆς is probably intended to focus on the outward attraction or splendor of pagan society and of the “way of life that was your heritage,” a way of life that Peter has already characterized as “empty” (v 18; cf. Hort, 94). He does not deny the external beauty of pagan culture; it is as beautiful in its way as the wild flowers that God placed in the grassy fields, but it is also just as fragile and short lived. ἄνθος χόρτου is the LXX’s free translation of a Hebrew phrase meaning “flower of the field” (for a more literal rendering see Ps 102[103]:15), and refers to actual flowers, not to the tiny blossoms of the grass.³⁴

Thus the first part of the Isaiah text serves mainly to set a backdrop for the final statement on the durability of the word of God, which is Peter’s main point in his writing. The temporary and uncertain nature of human life stands in stark contrast to the durability of God’s word in the gospel. Thus, the admonition to love one another grows out of the purification and spiritual new birth accomplished by God’s message of salvation. And that salvation message will stand forever! Thus we have powerful reason to love one another.

c. This applies to that, v. 25b

That word is the good news that was announced to you.

τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

Notes:

This last segment could be termed ‘applicational.’³⁵ Peter reminded his initial readers that this word of God alluded to in Isaiah ultimately was the message that had been ‘gospelized’ (τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν) to them. Several aspects of this short sentence are important to understand.

τοῦτο, ‘this,’ refers back to the Isaiah quote, rather than to any single word in the quote.³⁶ The quality of endurance of the word of God mentioned in Isaiah applies to the gospel message of Jesus. τὸ ῥῆμα, labeled τὸ ῥῆμα κυρίου in Isaiah, stresses an orally spoken word. Whereas ὁ λόγος, used in v. 23, is broad in mean-

³²Comparison of the two texts in Greek reflects a similar pattern, as does the English translation:

Isaiah 40:6-8 (LXX)	1 Peter 1:24-25a
<p>⁶φωνὴ λέγοντος Βόησον· καὶ εἶπα τί βοήσω; Πᾶσα σὰρξ χόρτος, καὶ πᾶσα δόξα ἀνθρώπου ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ⁷ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν, ⁸τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. [Septuaginta: SESB Edition, ed. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), Is 40:6–8.]</p>	<p>²⁴ διότι πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος, καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῆς ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν· ²⁵ τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.</p>

³³“Peter follows the LXX closely. His two deviations in v 24 (first, the use of ὡς before χόρτος, making the phrase a simile rather than a metaphor; and second, the substitution of αὐτῆς for ἀνθρώπου in agreement with the Hebrew) are probably to be attributed not to Peter’s editorial activity but simply to his use of a LXX manuscript tradition different at small points from that reflected in modern critical editions (cf. Hort, 94).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 77.]

³⁴J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 78.

³⁵This is one of the hundreds of instances clearly illustrating the faulty versification of the scripture text in the late 1500s. The placing of the verse marker in the middle of the quote rather than at the end most likely reflects that Robertus Stephanus, i.e., Robert Estienne, failed to recognize where the quote ended and Peter’s comments began, when he set up the verse reference system that is universally followed today. For more details, see “Chapters and verses of the Bible: Verses,” Wikipedia online.

³⁶“To Peter, the message of Jesus and the message about Jesus are the same message, just as they are to Mark (1:1, 14–15) and to the author of Hebrews (2:3–4). The gospel is an eternal gospel that promises eternal life and demands eternal love (cf. 1 John 2:17).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 79.]

ing and can include both written and orally delivered words, τὸ ῥῆμα is restricted to orally delivered words. The historical setting makes it clear that the apostolic preaching of the gospel was what Peter had in mind, since none of the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus had yet been written when this letter was produced. τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν εἰς ὑμᾶς, with the Aorist passive participle verbal, makes it clear that this salvation message about Christ had already been proclaimed to the readers and they had positively responded to it in conversion. Additionally, Peter may have been further motivated to pick up on the verb idea of εὐαγγελίζω, since this verb was used in verse 9 of the Isaiah text just beyond Peter's quote.³⁷

What Peter had to say in vv. 22-25 is both powerful and relevant to us. Disunity and lack of harmony often dominates much of Christianity in our day. Establishing unity, unfortunately, has been attempted too frequently by adopting the lowest common denominator of belief to the sacrifice of important truths of the biblical message. Peter's solution to achieving harmony and togetherness in a community of faith is simple: commit yourself to loving your brother and sister in Christ. Let the powerful dynamic of God's Word enable you to move that direction. When you have experienced the life transforming new birth and purification of the gospel in conversion, you have all the needed tools in order to love fellow believers. Now use them!

³⁷LXX: ἔπ' ὄρος ὑψηλὸν ἀνάβηθι, ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος Σιων· ὑψωσον τῆ ἰσχύι τὴν φωνήν σου, ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος Ἱερουσαλημ· ὑψώσατε, μὴ φοβεῖσθε· εἰπὸν ταῖς πόλεσιν Ἰουδα Ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν.

[Septuaginta: SESB Edition, ed. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), Is 40:9.]