Daily Devotion #208

**Love from the Heart**

**1 Peter 1:22 (NASB)** *“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart*.”

Sometimes people are hard to love. We often know we should love people but at times they make it very difficult. It could be because you have reached out to them and they didn’t respond or because they just won’t take the time to reciprocate the love you are trying to show them. Sadly when that happens or the relationship is seemingly going no where, we quit. We move on. We look for someone else to return love as we have tried to show it.

But when our hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit, love becomes an obligation to be fulfilled, not so others will return love to us, but so we can be examples of how Jesus loves us. That’s why Jesus came. Yes, He came to rescue us from the penalty of our sin which leaves us eternally separated from God if we do not confess our ungodly hearts and surrender ourselves to Him, but He also came to show us what real love is.

Love is not something that is like bait on a hook that is cast into the world hoping someone will bite. No, the love that God has is a love that reaches into the hearts of people simply because He wants to give what the person doesn’t have. Perhaps the better way of describing love is to see it as a person, not a thing or an idea or concept or even a feeling. Love is God. (1 John 4:8). God is the very essence of love. All that He is, is bound up in love. So for Him, love is not difficult. That’s why God sent His Son - to show us His love, to teach us what love is, to teach us about Himself. When our souls see Him as God and the God who is love, He puts into us the ability to love even those people who are “unloveable”.

What does all that mean? Simply, God pours Himself into everyone who surrenders their hearts to Him. When that happens the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to truly love, to give love that reaches out to even those who reject us. That’s what Peter is saying in our verse for today. Notice how the Spirit has Peter phrase this truth. I’ll paraphrase: Because you and I have obeyed God and turned to Him as the truth of life, He purified or washed us of our sinfulness, a sinfulness that keeps us from loving others. But since we have Him in us, we have the ability to love people fervently, not from our heads or intellect but from our hearts. Fervently means to reach out, to stretch for. So you and I are to reach out, to do all we can to love others from the depth of our hearts.

Admittedly it is difficult when we our attempts are rejected. But that’s when we are to remember that we don’t love because we want something in return. We love because we are filled with our heavenly Father’s love, which is a love that loves no matter the circumstances. Listen to this verse, **1 John 4:10-11 (NASB)** *“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* Or **1 John 4:19 (NASB)** *“ We love, because He first loved us.”* Do you see beloved? Our love for others should be what we do because it is what our Father wants from us. To be like Him. Even when He was rejected by those who hated Him, He loved them. That’s why He said from the cross, **Luke 23:34 (NASB)** *“ But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves*.”

Are you struggling to love someone? If so, step away from your feelings about the situation or the relationship and let love come from your heart, not so you will be loved in return, but because you belong to your heavenly Father. He loves you with an infinite love. What He wants from you is to let His love for you pour into the soul of someone who is lost or who is living by their fleshly feelings. Maybe God will turn that relationship around. But if not, you can rest in knowing that you are living obediently to the One who saved you.