

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Dedicated To Love?

by Dan Trygg

“Having purified your natural-lives in the hearing-under-obedience of the truth unto an unphony mutual-affection-of-one-another, out from clean hearts y'all choose-to-esteem-and-demonstrate-value-for one another intensely.” I Peter 1:22

Wow! This is a power-packed, watershed verse! If you process these words, and embrace what they are saying, you will never be the same. *This* is the focal point of where our faith and relationship with God are supposed to bring us, and yet it is the direction that most of us never really come to invest ourselves. **We are called to love one another intensely and unremittingly.** It is the "other shoe", which is intended to follow the "first shoe" of our faith (Matt. 22:36-40), so that we can *walk out* the will of God. But so often in church life we choose to sit around, *talk about* and *polish* the first shoe! God gave us *both* of these shoes to wear on our journey in life. We are to put them on and *walk* in them, ...not erect a shrine to them or simply contemplate them. What am I talking about? Simply this, Peter draws us to the exact same emphasis we have seen repeatedly in the NT, namely that **servicing God is expressed in loving and serving one another**, ...not in surface conversations or plastic smiles or a "How are you?" exchanged on Sunday mornings, but by a real *commitment to show love* to one another, both emotionally and volitionally. **You want to worship God? This is the kind of worship He wants from us!**

Let me remind you of the context leading up to this verse in the paragraph before. There were three main verbs used *there* that are critical for understanding what is being said *here*. **Peter commanded us to hope completely in the grace of God** revealed in Jesus, as children of hearing-under-obedience **to become dedicated ones in all our habitual conduct, and to habitually-conduct ourselves with fearful-awe during the duration of our journey as exile-strangers here in this world.** These are concepts that lay a critical foundation for what is said in verse 22. We will not be able to walk out the admonition to love one another unless we truly have processed and committed ourselves to the concepts of the preceding paragraph.

First of all, our self-perception must be on the alert to keep us setting our expectations on God's grace in Jesus Christ, not in being conformed to old strong desires that would cause us to look elsewhere for fulfillment.

Secondly, we must be listening for the whisperings of God, and be willing to respond without second-guessing the outcome of His leadings, as we choose to see ourselves as ones set apart to live for God. Our inheritance and treasure are *not* here. Let us choose to live as if they are not, and commit ourselves to radically obey God.

Third, God has paid a very dear price for us to be freed from old patterns of life that were empty and foolish. We are commanded to establish new patterns of living that reflect God's wisdom and purposes.

We are to live in the tension of both His great commitment of love, and also the deep sense of accountability that He is the impartial judge of all. We will answer for what we *do* with what we *know* of Him.

We have not been liberated from bondage to sin so that we could live our own selfish lives! We have been freed so that we could join with the efforts of His kingdom here on planet earth. Yet, as the paragraph ends, our meditation on the commitment of God's love to us in Jesus, ...a love prophetically prepared for through the centuries, and now made available to us in Christ..., is to result in our placing our trust and hopeful expectation toward God, ...*not* people, possessions, status or any other temporal, earthly thing.

That brings us up to verse 22, "having dedicated the natural-lives of y'all in the hearing-under-obedience of the truth toward an unhypocritical mutual-affection-sibling-love, out from clean hearts choose-to-love (*agapē*) one another fervently". Let's take it apart piece by piece:

The verbal form, "having dedicated" is from the same root as "holy" (vss. 15,16). **Holy means "set apart from common everyday use to dedicate to a special purpose"**. In those earlier verses, we were commanded to "be holy", or "be dedicated ones", as we live out our habitual lives. Here, Peter returns to this same word picture to draw out another application. The form here emphasizes action that happened in the past and has ongoing result. In other words, we are ones who have dedicated *ourselves* to God *in the past*, ...and we are *still* consecrated to His will at the present time. **We have set ourselves apart from the common human life, and are committed to God's service.**

Where did this commitment to consecrate ourselves come from? We gave heed to the truth. We obediently-responded to the reality that God revealed to us. **This hearing-under-obedience is not only how we got into this commitment, it is also to be the characteristic of our hearts as we attempt to live it out.** In vs. 14, Peter wrote, "as children of hearing-under-obedience, do not be conformed to former lusts..., rather be dedicated-ones in all your habitual conduct." **It is this attitude of responsiveness to revelation from God that will make us different.**

We have dedicated our *selves* (Gk. – *psuchē*) to God, but the specific application of what that means is that we have committed our natural, earthly life to His service. What else could it mean to "give myself to God", except that I give Him *all my days* and *all my ways*, ...i.e., all my choices in my earthly life. **This covers the entire realm of my natural-life here in this world, ...my thoughts, desires, choices in life, and the extent of my days, my resources, and my strength.** This is the same word Jesus used in John 12:25, "The one loving his life (*psuchē*) ruins it; and the one hating (i.e., disregarding it in favor of obeying God) his life in this world will guard it unto age-type life." Often, we have missed the point of Jesus' words. Our focus is on the idiom "hate", which in our ears sounds so extreme. We come away confused as to what the Lord wants. Am I supposed to hate my "life", or my "self"? **In the Middle Eastern culture, "love-hate" was less about emotional attachment than it was about priority decision-making. The one you loved had first-place in your decisions.** You could strongly "like" someone else (we would still call it "love"), but if you chose to disregard them in any way in favor of the other person, you were said to "hate" them. So, in this verse, Jesus is saying, "If you delight-in-and-follow-the-leads of your natural-self, you will ruin your self; but if you disregard-the-immediate-desires-of your natural-life in favor of obedience to God, you will safely-preserve your natural-self unto life that is qualitatively of God's Kingdom."

The goal is not to destroy your natural-self, but to preserve it and to introduce to it the vitality of Kingdom-life. **This will not happen if we listen to and delight in our natural-selves as our guiding source. Why? Because we do not have the necessary perspective.** We always tend to go for "dessert", instead of eating our "vegetables", to use a word-picture we can all understand. We must dedicate our natural-selves (*psuchē*) to God, in order to preserve and discover the fulfillment of who He created us to be. **God is the Ultimate Coach. He sees our potential and will help us achieve it, if we will listen to Him.** Of course, any good coach will push his players to do things they would not do on their own. There are the drills, the conditioning program, the practice sessions, and the game strategy which are overseen and directed by the coach. **In order to be a good player, you must be obedient to the Coach, who knows more than you.** He has wisdom and a perspective you do not have. The Bible says that we are His workmanship (His fine craftsmanship), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He prepares beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). We must dedicate our thoughts, desires, choices in life, and the extent of our days, our resources, and our strength to what God is asking us to do.

What is He asking of us? If we are dedicated to God, **what are we set-apart to do?** Peter's words: "unto a delighting-love-of-our-siblings without hypocrisy". Whoa!! **You mean that devotion to God indicates that I am to dedicate myself toward liking my fellow Christians? Yes.** Sorry, that is part of what it means to serve God. You cannot love God, and not love His kids (1 Jn. 4:20-5:1). **If you are going to worship God in spirit and truth, you cannot refuse to delight in what His Spirit delights in, nor can you be phony about your love.** Pretense is the opposite of "walking in the truth". You say, "But I *don't* like some of these people." Then, you have some work (or *growing*) to do! The Greek word for love used in "love-of-the-brethren-and-sisteren" (*philadelphia*) is *phileō*, which describes a mutual affection, an enjoyment, a delight in. Certainly, there are people we do *not* connect with immediately, and some that we would avoid, *if we were to follow the inclinations of our natural-selves*. Nevertheless, ***phileō* is a verb.** It is *not only* an emotion; it is *also* an action. **As a verb, there is a component of choice involved. It is important to see that we do not start out there, necessarily, but we are to dedicate ourselves toward a mutual-affection-love-for-our-siblings.** There is something of God in each person. **There is something beautiful, something to be treasured in each brother or sister in Christ. It is up to us to discover what these delightful things may be, and to truly, honestly begin to enjoy that brother or sister.** People can tell if we are emotionally distant. **God is calling us to commit ourselves to establish a brotherly-love, an emotionally warm affection for one another.**

This word, *philadelphia*, occurs in four other passages in the NT (Rom. 12:10; 1Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; and 2 Peter 1:7 [2x]). In all but the Hebrews passage, **there seems to be a relationship between *philadelphia* and *agapē*.** While ***agapē* is not dependent upon feelings, or affection,** in that the word itself describes an act of the will, a choice instead of an emotion, **...it is definitely *easier* to choose to prefer and benefit someone you care about.** So, the unhypocritical-*agapē* of Romans 12 produces people who are devoted-like-family in brotherly-affection. The Thessalonians do not need to be instructed in brotherly-affection, because they are God-taught to *agapē* one another. (This statement seems to imply that if you have *agapē* for someone, you will also probably also have affection for them.) In 2 Peter, our good-devotedness to God provides a foundation for brotherly-affection, and it would seem that brotherly-affection provides a growth-foundation on which *agapē* can be added. David in Psalm 16:2,3 wrote, "I said to Yahweh, 'You are my Lord, I have no good besides You.' As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight." He had the good-devotedness of heart toward God, and he chose to appreciate the other people who were devoted to his Master. Similarly, **God wants us to *appreciate* and *enjoy* our brothers and sisters in Christ.**