



Valley Forge Baptist • April 27, 2025  
 Pastor Scott Wendal • [swendal@vfbt.org](mailto:swendal@vfbt.org)

**The First Step to Love**  
**Matthew 22:36-40; I Peter 1:22-23**

Christians can Rejoice even in times of Suffering because:

- 1) We have a \_\_\_\_\_ Hope, v. 3.
- 2) We have a Heavenly Home, v. 4.
- 3) We have Divine Protection, v. 5.
- 4) We have a \_\_\_\_\_ Faith, v. 6-7.

*"Love is a feeling of strong attraction and emotional attachment to a person, animal, or thing."*

- **Merriam Webster Dictionary**

Ancient Greek philosophers identify five forms of love

Family Love (storge)

Friendly Love (phileo)

Romantic Love (eros)

Self-Love (philautia)

Guest Love (xenia) or hospitality

Divine Love (agape) or unconditional

Peter says you cannot truly love God and others until you are born again.

Jesus said the #1 command is to Love God.

Jesus said the #2 command is to love \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus command is "Ye must be born again!"

The First Step of Love is \_\_\_\_\_!

*"Being born again...."*  
**1 Peter 1:23a**

Unsaved people can attempt to show sacrificial love, but their motive is marred by their spiritual darkness - they don't know God.

The motive for "doing loving things" by unbelievers is not for the glory of God. Why then do unbelievers often do so many loving and sacrificial things for others?:

- 1) To make themselves \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) To earn credit to get to heaven or burn off years in purgatory.
- 3) To do \_\_\_\_\_ to pay for past sins committed.

But as Christians, we submit the way we think to the Word of God. According to the Bible, without God in your heart, all your sacrificial acts of love are superficial. In fact, God calls them filthy rags.

*"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."*  
**Isiah 46:2**

Paul's Salvation Story, Romans 7

*"I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women."*  
**Acts 22:4**

But on the road to Damascus, Jesus appears to him in a blaze of glory and asks, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?" And Saul of Tarsus is saved and becomes the apostle Paul. Paul shares the details of his salvation story in Romans 7.

*"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."*  
**Romans 7:7**

Paul says, "The 10th commandment showed me that sin wasn't just what I did with my outward actions, but it is also my inward attitudes. I realized that my coveting, my lusting, my desire for things not my own was sinful in God's eyes."

The Holy Spirit used the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" to bring conviction or guilt to Saul's heart.

*"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [lust]. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."*  
**Romans 7:8-9**

Paul says, "The law showed me my sinful corruption in my heart. I thought I was okay; I thought I was good. But reading the law was like looking in a mirror and I saw for the first time that all my robes and rituals and good works did nothing to forgive my sins."

*"When the commandment came - I realized for the first time that I was not a good person, I was actually a bad person in God's eyes - a sinful man deserving of the wages of sin - eternal death."*

As Paul was walking to Damascus, he was under great guilt and conviction by the Holy Spirit. He was searching for a way to have this huge load of guilt lifted, and he wasn't finding it through rules, rituals, robes, lighting candles, or repeating prayers over and over. It didn't work for Paul and it won't \_\_\_\_\_ for you.

Jesus came to set us free from religion. How? Put your faith in Christ alone. Exchange your religion for a relationship.

*"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."*  
**Romans 10:17**

### My Salvation Story

*"What is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

**Matthew 22:36-39**

As I read Jesus' words during a Sunday morning sermon, "Love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind AND also to love others" it was like God turned on a bright light in my heart and all I saw was that I was a sinner. I loved myself. I did what I wanted to do. But in that moment, I knew that I knew about God, but I did not really know Him. But I knew I needed Him. Right there during that invitation prayer, I asked Jesus to come into my heart and become my Lord and Savior.

### Your Salvation Story

- 1) Do you have a salvation story?
- 2) If you do, have you shared it with others?
- 3) If you are saved, have you been baptized?

Your baptism is the \_\_\_\_\_ in sharing your faith with others.

What does it mean to be saved?

*"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit..."*

**1 Peter 1:22a**

Peter wrote this in the “perfect tense” which means a past action with present continuing results. He says, “Now that you have purified your souls by getting saved, I want you to love one another.”

An unbelieving soul cannot love the way God wants you to love. Soul simply means the \_\_\_\_\_ - your personality and your consciousness. At the moment of your salvation, v. 23, you have the capacity to love with a divine agape love.

In 2 Peter 1 he says, you have a new nature with new \_\_\_\_\_. Those new desires not only include putting sin out of your life, but to begin to do new things like reading your Bible, praying, going to church, investing treasure in heaven by giving, and sharing your faith. We need daily cleaning to restore our fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

**1 John 1:9**

Maybe you are having a hard time loving because you’ve been hurt.

“Hurting people \_\_\_\_\_ people.”

Some people are just nasty because they’ve been hurt and they have convinced themselves that they are justified to hurt others.

There is only One person who can heal your heart and fill it with love – and that is Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 13:34... “I love you and because I love you, you are to love one another.”

**Questions to Help you Grow:**

1. Do you have a salvation story? If not, receive Christ today.
2. Are you purifying your life? Did God convict you of a sin today to forsake?
3. Are you obeying the truth? Is it time for you to exchange worldly thinking for Biblical thinking?
4. Is your heart broken? Are you hurting? Come to the God of all \_\_\_\_\_ and let God heal your heart, 2 Cor. 1:3-4.