

Theme: Faith in Exile – I Peter 1:17-19

Title: Essential Loves – I Peter 1:22-2:3

Aim: The vital importance of loving one another & the Word of God.

Intro: Try to picture in your mind the Jewish Christian exiles to whom Peter wrote his epistles. They had been forced out of their homes, in many cases, & essentially thrust into lands not their homeland, among people they didn't know. Essentially they had to start their lives over. Perhaps they were asking themselves, "Who am I, now?" & "On whom/what can I rely?" It would have been easy for them to adopt a "me 1st" attitude, which it seems Peter addressed here in our text this morning. It would have been easy & understandable for them to doubt God & His Word, because here they were: living as exiles in a foreign land. Perhaps in the circumstances of our lives we sometimes feel the same way. "Life is hard; I need to take care of myself & my family. Can I even trust God or take Him at His word?" Theme: Faith in exile. How do we live in exile? We've already seen that God calls us to live holy, set-apart lives, remembering what God has done for us in Christ, living w/the fear of the Lord – living w/God in mind. As we complete I Peter 1 & begin chap2, we see that Peter challenges his readers (including us) to 2 essential loves: love for one another & love for the Word of God. I Peter 1:22-2:3 [READ]. Remember that Peter had exhorted them to prepare "your minds for action" – think about it & act accordingly. Here in our text he gave them/us an action plan to follow, remembering that love is an action verb. Love is something you do! The 1st essential love to which we're called is to 1) **Love for one another**. As Christians – believers in & followers of Christ, we have been born again into God's family – redeemed by God as a gift/act of His grace. But tho God has done it all – Jesus paid it all, the Holy Spirit has quickened us to faith, the Father has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world – yet there is a human/personal part to this. We must obey the truth, the

gospel. To obey the gospel is to submit to it, comply w/it, to embrace this good news by faith & respond to this truth w/the surrender of our lives to Christ as Lord. The result of God's gift, Christ's work, the Holy Spirit's application of this truth to our hearts & our obedience to this truth, the gospel, is the purification of our souls (being). We are "washed in the blood," cleansed, justified by God. Being cleansed, we are ready to be filled. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom.5:5). W/new life in Christ, the Holy Spirit w/in us, we are freed to be who God wants us to be & to love as God wants us to love. It seems that Peter was concerned (perhaps he heard reports) that many of these exiled, persecuted believers had chosen to hunker down, isolate themselves & take care of themselves & their families the best they could. Never mind others; it's everyone for his/herself. He realized that the very best thing for them to do was to join together & worship together & work together & care for one another. He called them to "a sincere brotherly love," to "love one another earnestly from a pure heart." Being redeemed & loved by God, we are freed to love. As the song writer put it, "I am loved, I am loved, I can risk loving you, for the One who knows me best loves me most. I am loved, you are loved, won't you please take my hand? We are free to love each other, we are loved." David Gudzik wrote, "Holy living (to which God thru Peter calls us) is incomplete if it is not accompanied by love. Such love (sincere, fervent) is only possible (& to be expected) for those who have been born again by the eternal word of God." Peter reminded them again that they had been "born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living & abiding word of God." This is the word of the gospel, the good news of Christ's life, death & resurrection on our behalf. Again, it is by believing this word that we are saved & cleansed. But, as Gudzik wrote, "The word of God not only gives us new life. It also tells us to

love one another.” According to Strong’s, to be born again is to “have one’s mind changed so that he/she lives a new life, conformed to the will of God.” It is the will of God that we come together as believers, love one another, support one another as exiles in this world not our home. It is essential that we exiles love each other sincerely (openly, not held back) & earnestly (w/purpose & intensity – everything we’ve got) – loving God & being channels of His love to one another. The 2nd essential love to which Peter calls us is II) Love for the Word of God. As we have seen, it was by the word of God – truth of the gospel – that they were, we are saved. It is also by the word of God that we must live. But even as they may have struggled w/their faith in Christ they may also have struggled w/believing the word of God. Essentially this is a matter of believing God, because it’s His word. Maybe you struggle w/doubt. Can God be trusted? Can we take Him at His word? Peter tells them that the word of God is “living & abiding” Christianity is not an old man’s book club. This book (Bible) is not passe’. It is alive & relevant as much now as when it was 1st written. Every word (in the original) was/is breathed out by God (II Tim.3:16) & is used today by the Holy Spirit to shape our lives to be like Christ & direct our steps on a right path. It is abiding – enduring. Throughout history kings & governments have sought to wipe out the word of God, but have failed. It has been kept, intact & unchanged. Peter quoted Isaiah 40:6-8 – ***“All flesh is like grass & all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, & the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.”*** Peter used 2 different words for “word.” The 1st (vs23 – living & abiding word of God) is “logos,” which seems to denote a body of work – the whole word of God – all that He has said, communicated. The 2nd (vs25 – the word of the Lord) is “rhema” seems to denote a specific word, such as the words of Jesus in any particular passage. They are essentially the same, which I believe is Peter’s point. All that God has said, whether vocally to

the prophets, or thru the Apostles or Psalmists, or all that Jesus said, all that is contained in this book is the word of God which remains forever & will not change & will not falter nor fail (like all flesh will eventually). This word is certainly the gospel preached to them & to us & it is more. Gudzik wrote, "We have this eternal, always potentially fruit-bearing seed (gospel) in us (have heard & received it), thus we have both the obligation & ability to sincerely love our brothers & sisters." We can live out the word of God as He works it in us. So, Peter exhorts, "put away" all that is not love – "malice" – ill-will, desire to injure, wickedness, depravity; "Deceit" – trying to hide who you are to supposedly protect yourself; "hypocrisy" – pretending to be something you're not, like an actor on stage; "envy" – jealousy, wanting what others have & angry about it; "slander" – back-biting, evil speaking, defamation. How these Christian exiles must have struggled! It was affecting their treatment of each other & surely affecting their witness. Those same ways of thinking & acting can invade our lives as exiles as well, if we aren't careful. Thinking of ourselves 1st will surely lead to that. "Put those things away," Peter urged & "instead love the Word of God." "Long for" – desire, to pursue w/love. "Pure spiritual milk" – unadulterated, unmixed, word – basic truths of Scripture. We should love the word of God just as a newborn baby loves his/her mother's milk. Have you ever seen a baby reacting to a bottle when he/she is hungry? They are just like a baby bird. Can't get enough! We Christians are to desire the word of God in that same way – wanting to hear from our Father God, wanting to read the words of Jesus, wanting to be ministered to by the Psalms, to be challenged & taught by the writings of Paul, etc. As the gospel received by faith gives us life in Christ, so the rest of Scripture taken in & acted upon causes us to grow. We grow in our understanding of the salvation God provides thru Christ, in our understanding of who we are in Christ, in our understanding of our

hope in Christ, in our understanding of how God wants us to live & how He enables us to live by His Holy Spirit working in us, etc, etc. As those exiles needed to grow together & love each other, so do we. Peter closed w/an interesting thought: “If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” What did he mean by that? To taste is to personally experience. Have you tasted that God is good? Have you personally experienced God’s goodness? Then don’t you want more? Commentator Wayne Grudem wrote, “To drink the milk of the Word (of God) is to taste again & again what He (God) is like.” As we taste God’s goodness over & over we can’t help but love those He loves & tell others of the offer He gives. Love for one another & love for God’s word are essentials for the Christian exile. It all takes a life of faith – faith in exile.