

## “Just Visiting”

### By General Pastor Peter F. Paine

### Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Isn't it a great worship today? I'm very thankful to be here with you. I love and appreciate you all very much. I'm humbled to be in your presence, and—please be seated—I want to apologize to Julia Rose Roman and her family for not having the names proper. It's important, it really is, and I don't take it lightly. Jason, thank you for saving me, because that's very, very—I did a wedding once, and it was a Navy man that was stationed there, and I got to know him very well, and his fiancé lived back home, where he came from, and she was flying in for the wedding, they chose to do it where he was stationed, where I was the pastor, at the time. It was actually here in Waukegan—our church was on Belvidere Street at that time—and, so, it was winter, there was a snowstorm, and his fiancé and the family were delayed in their arrival, so they couldn't be there for the rehearsal Friday night, so I couldn't get to meet them Friday. I'm meeting them at the ceremony. I mean, literally, they arrived at the church, and I'm meeting them at the ceremony. However it happened—I don't know exactly; it might have been my fault in the way I read it, or it might have been written wrong on the sheet—what I do know is, we were about two or three minutes into the wedding ceremony, and she was starting to cry, and it wasn't tears of joy. And, so I said, “Am I calling you the wrong name?” And she said (sobbing), “Ye-e-es.” I was calling here her mother's name, and a bride should be called by her name, at least on her wedding day.

Names are important, and we're going to talk a lot today about the name of Jesus. I want to talk to you—I don't know if I really have a message, today. I want to visit with you, though, I know that for sure. And I feel like God's laid something on my heart to share with you. Pete S. keeps track of the verse, and he said, “Do you have any Scriptures for today?” And I said, “Well, First Peter four, verses eight through ten,” that's your theme for the month. And I said, I might go to First Corinthians thirteen,” and he said, “What verses?” I said, “I'm not sure. And I might go to Luke chapter fifteen,” and he said, “What verses?” I said, “I'm not sure.” So, that's what I've got. But I know First Peter four, eight through ten, so turn with me if you would, and we're going to look at the words of Peter as he speaks to—let's go to First Peter one, one, because I like to set it up with this. I think it's helpful for us to see...

**1 Peter 1:1** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*

Hmm. Strangers, scattered about. And, yet, he's going to speak to them, and he's going to remind them, “Hey, there's a way to live, and I'm going to tell you about it. There's a way for this love of Christ to be expanded; I'm going to share it with you. In First Peter chapter four, we read these words—and, when I was talking with Parrish and Andy, before I came, I asked the what the theme of the month was, and they told me these verses, and I got as far as ‘fervent charity,’ in verse eight, and that was as far as I could go. But, I'm going to read eight through ten, and I'm going to ask you to read it. If you have your Bibles, just read it silently with me, as I read it out loud, please.

**1 Peter 4:8-10** *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Let's go back to verse eight: “... above all things have fervent charity...” When you look up fervent, you realize that it means unending. Fervent means it's non-stop; it has no end. Fervent charity. When

you look up charity in the context of this, it comes from the word ἀγάπη (ag-ah'-pay). That's God's love. That's God's love for man, man's love for God, man's love for his wife, there's other kinds of love the Bible talks about, but this is ἀγάπη love; this is the highest, purest form of love that we can know. God's love. IT's God's love for us. Christ—when we read in Scripture that men ought to love their wives as Christ loved the church, it's ἀγάπη love we're hearing about.

And I want to talk to you today about what it would mean if we can live out the words here: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves..." The Bible says do good, especially to them of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). Now, as you hear this message today, it's my prayer—I think I said it wasn't a message; I just want to visit with you a little bit. As you hear these words today, I hope that you'll think of your natural family—husband, wife, children, parents—and I hope you'll think of your church family, and, what would it look like, what would be different, if each and every one of us—and I'm receiving this message as I share it with you—that we should have fervent charity one for another. That we should have fervent charity in everything we do. Unending love; unending God's love. God's love, without end in everything we do.

So, there was this woman, and she was caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11), and these religious, pious people brought her to Christ, and they said, "This woman was caught in the act of adultery—in the very act!" Well, how did they know that? Sounds like a set-up to me. Sounds like there ought to at least be another person involved, doesn't it? She was caught in the very act, and they didn't bring anyone else. I don't think you can do it alone. And, so, there she is, before Jesus. They didn't care about her. They weren't so concerned about the Law as they were finding fault with the Lord. Well, you know the story; He asked a question. He said, "Which of you?—you without fault, cast the first stone." He wrote on the ground, and He looked up. From the eldest to the youngest, they left. I think it's cool that the eldest left first, like, "Wow! Yeah, this thing—I don't know but this wouldn't be the right time for me to leave." And, so, the youngest get to watch this, and they're thinking, "Yeah. Good idea, because if he gets to say something else, it might get worse." And, finally, they're all gone, and He says, "Woman, where are your accusers?" She said, "I have none." He said, "Neither do I condemn thee." Then he said, "Go and sin no more." This fervent charity, this unending God's love, that we should have in our lives, that we should be able to live, in our families, in our church family, in our lives... You know, the easiest thing to find in a church is fault. The easiest thing to find in a family is fault. It's real easy to find fault with others; is there any here that—listen to the question, because I don't want you to get tricked on this—is there anyone here today, you think you're sitting in church without fault? You're perfect in every way? The Bible said to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:4); that word, 'perfect,' means complete. Be perfect and entire, wanting nothing: Have everything you need. Have everything you need to live this Godly life; don't just lack anything, in needing to live this Christian life. But, when we use the word perfect, in this context, it means, "I don't have any flaws. I don't have any faults. God, I mean, I'm His favorite; I'm His best. In fact, I live like Christ lived on the Earth." Anybody want to stand up for that one? I don't; it makes me want to sit down. It's easy to find fault, isn't it?

You know, when I went in the Navy, a hundred and twelve years ago, I went in, and, because my older brother was in the Navy, I sort of knew what to expect. I mean, you know, because I'd heard a little bit about it, from someone that was a peer, so to speak. He's a few years older than me, but, you know, I sort of knew what to expect. And, so, before I went into Boot Camp, I was—you know, I was in athletics in high school a little bit, and I knew what it was to work out, and to get ready for the season and all that stuff. And, so, before I went to Boot Camp, I was doing more push-ups and sit-ups and running, and getting ready, and I got a short haircut. They were going to do that for free; I didn't need to do that. But, it was sort of funny, because I went in the Navy in 1972, and long hair for guys was the style back then. And, so, you know, a lot of guys showed up for Boot Camp with their long hair. It was sort of funny, because we sat down, and one of the first things they allowed us the privilege to do was get our hair cut off. And, so, we sat down, and the guy had these real close trimmers, probably a number one or whatever

it is, you know. It didn't take him long to cut everybody's hair. And, so, as he started from the back of the head, at the top of the neck, and he went right down towards your nose, right down the center. It was sort of funny for those with long hair, and they were facing the mirror, and, as he made that first buzz, from the neck to the nose, he said, "How do you want it?" Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzt. Do they still do that today? "How do you want it?" Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzt. But I had already cut mine short, because I went into Boot Camp sort of expecting this. And, so, when they told us to run, I ran. When they told us to climb the rope, I climbed the rope. When they told us to climb over that wall, I climbed over that wall. When they told us to carry our rifles, I carried my rifle. When they told us to march, I marched. And then we get back to the barracks, and these guys are complaining, and I'm thinking, "What did you think you were coming to? Did you misunderstand? Did you think this was summer camp?" So, I wrote a letter home, and I said, "Dad, I'm loving Basic Training. The Company Commander wakes us up about nine or ten every morning. It's really nice, and then he says, 'If you're tired, I'll come back later.' And we usually say, 'No, no, we're okay.' And we get up, and he says, 'What do you want for breakfast?' and he makes a nice meal, and he brings it bedside for us. And, after we've eaten that, then he clears the dishes for us. And then, most mornings we golf." My dad wrote me back, and he said, "Are you in the hospital, son?"

"What do you expect in life? Do you expect to live a life with no challenges, with no discipline, with no hurt? Is that what you signed up for? "I want to be a Christian, but I want to be the kind that never has to sacrifice. I want to be the kid that never has to go the extra mile for anybody. I want to be that kind of Christian. I want to be the Christian that gets all the money. I want to be the Christian that gets all the blessings. I want all my children to be healthy. I want my wife to admire me, every day of my life." Aww. "Yeah, that's the kind of Christian I want to be. And I want to drive one of those Christian Rolls Royce's. Yeah. Sign me up for that Christian life. Yeah. And all my neighbors, when I come out of the house in the morning, to drive to Starbucks for coffee, because I don't need to have a job, because God's just pumps money into my bank account. But I'll sometimes just go to Starbucks, mid-morning, and I want all my neighbors to wave, and say, 'Hello, neighbor! Hi Christian!' That's the kind..." We all live those kind of lives, don't we? Is that what we signed up for, or, is it possible that there's supposed to be some trial, tribulation, and challenges that our Christianity is supposed to make the difference. People are supposed to see God in our lives when we go through trials and heartaches.

Debbie and I have a rental car while we're here, and I parked it in the wrong spot, and I got it towed, yesterday. And, so, when I realized what had happened, I called the towing company. As I was dialing the phone for the towing company, the Holy Spirit said, "Remember who you are." The lady answered the phone, and said, "Hi, Dianne. T-N-T Towing." I said, "Dianne, my name's Pete. I parked in the wrong spot, and you have my car. What do I need to do to retrieve it?" There was a little bit of a pause. She started tapping her phone, at least, that's what it felt like. "Who is this guy?" She said, "Two hundred dollars cash by one o'clock. No one will be in the office after one. If you don't get it today, it's forty dollars a day extra charge. Any questions?" No, Dianne. Thank you very much. I'll be there before one. Thanks for taking my call." So Debbie and I arrived, and we were doing the marriage seminar, that was our lunch break. When we walked in, I hadn't given it much thought, but I had my Christian Fellowship shirt on, with the logo on it. She said, "Christian Fellowship. Aaaah! I remember Christian Fellowship. Pastor Davis did my son's funeral. Oh, my goodness." She started to tell us about the testimony of Christian fellowship, and the difference it had made in her life. She went on to say that Pastor Davis did her wedding. She said, "He was so kind to us. And he didn't ask for anything, in fact, he offered us a gift, for doing our wedding, and he gave us a gift. And then the church bus picked up her children for children's church. And she said, "Wow! Christian Fellowship!" And then I'm thinking, "I'm so glad I was nice." You know what I mean? "Hey, you towed my car!" It wouldn't have changed the fact that it was two hundred dollars by one, you know, forty dollars a day. That was the reality of it. I parked in the wrong spot. Now, I parked where somebody told me, "Don't worry about it," but, you know what? Life happens, doesn't it? Life happens. I wish I could tell you I've always reacted perfectly. I wish I could tell you I've never

mishandled a situation, but that would be a barefaced lie. I've mishandled situations. I've—I was in Orlando, Florida—no, not Orlando. I apologize. Miami, Florida. I had been visiting our church in Ft. Lauderdale; I was flying back to Chicago. There was a blizzard in Chicago, and very few planes were getting out of Florida to Chicago, and there were hundreds of us in the airport. At the time this incident happened, I had been in the airport for, I think, thirty-two hours. It was just one of those long, painful waits. And, you know, we could have left, and got a room, but the problem is, you don't know when you might get on that next flight that—because, every few hours, a flight went. And every time a flight went, you had to get on the will-call list again. And, so, we were all waiting in line, and the line was about three hours to get to the ticket counter to get on the list for the next flight out. And I waited about three hours in this line, and I was the next person. And, out of the corner of my eye, I see a gentleman come from the outside door, and he walks right up in front of me, and he lays his paperwork down on the counter as the person in front of me stepped away from the counter. And I forgot that I was a Christian. And I went up, and I leaned over the counter, so that I could get my face in front of his, and I said, "Did you notice the line, friend?" And he said, "Yeah, but it's okay; you see, I've got a limo." So I got off the counter and I said (raising arms to get attention), "Ladies and Gentlemen!" to all the people waiting in line, "Don't think this man's rude! He's not rude; he just got in front of all of us because he's got a limo!" It gets worse. So they all applauded. They think this is fun. At the moment, I did, too. But then, I got on the flight, and guess who I sat next to. You can't make this stuff up. I turn down the aisle, let's say I'm in 17B, and who's in 17C? Limo boy. He looks at me, and I look at him, and I think, "Oh, this is going to be a long flight." And I had this sudden common-sense moment, and I said, "You know, if I don't make this right, right now, one of us isn't going to make it to Chicago." And, so, I stuck out my hand, and I said, "I'd like to start over, and apologize for the way I reacted." He said, "No, I understand. You were right." And we shook hands, and we didn't talk after that, but we sat next to each other and played nice. Both of us made it to Chicago. I guess I tell you that story to tell you that we don't always do it right, do we? Maybe you've always done it right, but there was—here I am telling you I don't always do it right, we don't always do it right. I wish I could say—my wife's here, or I might tell you that I've always done it right. And, I have a few other stories that are as bad as that one, but I won't tell them today. My kids do love the one about the time I told the State Trooper that he couldn't see my license, because another guy in a silly outfit just like his took it yesterday. My kids love that story. And then the State Trooper, he said this to me: "Mr. Paine, how would you like to spend Christmas in jail?" It was December 23<sup>rd</sup>. I remember that, because he offered me a Christmas suite. I said, "Officer, it occurs to me that I have mishandled this situation, and I would welcome the opportunity to start over."

And, when we talk about fervent charity today, you know, sometimes we need to welcome the opportunity to start over. Sometimes we need to say, "Okay, God, I need You to be the center of my life. I need You to help me see it through your eyes. I need You to show me how You want me to handle this situation. I need You to show me how You want me to treat my sister, my brother, my boss, my next-door neighbor," but it really begins in the church. And he says, here:

**1 Peter 4:8** *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity [what?] shall cover the multitude of sins.*

I don't often quote politicians, certainly not in sermons, but I did capture a quote, and I put it on my phone, because I didn't know how else to do it for today's purposes. I hope I can retrieve it real quickly; I think I can. The quote is from the John F. Kennedy Museum; Senator Robert F. Kennedy said, "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." And I will tell you that fervent charity is stronger than that. Fervent charity, in the church, is

stronger than that. When we really seek God's unending love; when we really seek to act in a manner that—and I told some stories, so that you could laugh at me. “Wow, he's really a mess!” And that's okay, because, you know what? We're all a mess, in some way or another. I don't mean that as a put-down, you know I don't. I mean that as a wake-up call to say that we all need more fervent charity in our life. We all need more of God's love in our life. We all need more of God's perspective in our life. We need to say, “God, how would You handle this? What would You do?”

In Luke chapter fifteen, there's three parables. There's a parable of a lost sheep, there's a parable of the lost coin, and then there's the parable of the prodigal son. Often we look at the parable of the prodigal son, and we really think about the son and all that he did, but, for a moment, I'd like to focus on the father. If you're not familiar with the parable, it's a parable of the younger of two sons who had a wealthy father. He says to his father, “I'm fed up with this.” This is a paraphrase. “I'm fed up with living here. I'm fed up with your rules. I'm fed up with life here. I'm done!” And he says, “Give me my portion of the inheritance.” Now, in that day, the elder brother would have gotten two portions of the inheritance, and the younger brother wouldn't be without an inheritance, but he would have gotten a smaller part. So, if there were two sons, he would have gotten one-third, because the older brother would have gotten two-thirds. So, the younger brother takes his, and he goes to town, in the King James, it says he wasted it with riotous living. He just had a great time with a lot of friends. When the money was gone, the friends were gone. He came to himself, and he said, “I've got to go home.” And, now, I want to focus on the father. Because we're talking about fervent charity, today. We're talking about unending love of God. And we can have it in our lives; we can have it as the center-piece of our lives if we choose to. But, it won't happen by accident, and here's why it won't happen by accident: The reason it won't happen by accident is because we're human beings and we have human natures. And human nature fights against the leading of the Holy Spirit, and we have to decide, every single day, what will be on the throne of our lives. In Colossians, we read these words:

**Colossians 3:15** *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...*

Let the peace of God rule in your heart! Let it be on the throne of your life every single day! Let it be on the throne every day of our life. Every day of our life, we've got to choose to put that on the throne. Amen? In our country, we get to vote. We get to choose—in some respect, we get to choose our leaders. I'm not going to go further than that right now. We get to choose what's on the throne of our life every day. Do you put peace on the throne of your life, or do you put your interests on the throne of your life? Do you put your desires on the throne of your life? Do you put your “I want's” on the throne of your life? It's okay to want. The Bible said, “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7-8) It's okay to want. It's okay to want, but make sure it's God's will, because Jesus said, in Matthew 6:33, “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God...**” “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**” If you read that in context, you realize that ‘all these things’ are food, and water, and clothing, and protection, a place to stay. It didn't mean all your desires, but it meant all your needs. If we put God first, I believe He can give us our needs. I also believe He can give us our wants if we keep Him first. I've led a truly blessed life. I really have. I've led a truly blessed life. But, I believe the reason God can bless—I don't mean this arrogantly; God forgive me if this sounds arrogant. I don't mean it that way, but I believe the reason that God can give me all the things He's given me is because I keep Him first. And, if you're struggling today, I don't know who I'm speaking to today, but if it's yours, please take it. If you're struggling because you don't have the stuff you want today, focus on God. And, while you're focusing on God, let Him know you want some stuff, but say, “God, I'm going to put You first. I'm going to put You first, and let You work it out.

We just came from a marriage week-end; you heard that earlier. You know the best way to change your spouse? For those of you who are married. The best way to change your boss? The best way to change your neighbor? The best way to change anybody is to change yourself. You know that?

My brother came to me one day. He lives in a beautiful home, a million dollar home. And he's anew Christian. He came to me, and he said, "Pete, I want your advice on something." He said, "I— My brother's real fussy about his house and his yard. He said, "My neighbor has this ugly bush. He thinks it's a tree. I don't think it is." He said, "It hangs over on my property, and I don't like it, because it's ugly! I mean, anybody would know this is ugly. Stevie Wonder would know this is an ugly bush." Some young people don't know who Stevie Wonder is. "I kept asking him, 'Would you cut it down?' and he wouldn't cut it down, so I went over, and I cut it down." And I went, "Oh, Jim! How did you get to be so wealthy?" He owns a few businesses. He's doing fine. And I said, "Oh, Jim!" And he said, "What? You think I was wrong?" I said, "Oh, yeah!" He said, "Okay, well, what do I do now?" You know, he's calling me up to ask me this question, his little brother, the pastor. He said, "I think I might have made a mistake." He said, "Well, what do I do now?" I said, "Well, you walk over with your bare face hanging out—don't take a weapon—and walk right up to your neighbor's door, and start with these words: 'I owe you an apology.' Jim, don't say, 'Hello,' don't ask him how he's doing, don't comment on the weather, just start with those five words, 'I owe you an apology.'" He said, "Really? I should apologize?" I said, "Absolutely! You need to apologize." Have you ever felt like that? Someone's telling you you need to apologize, and you're like, "Really? Really? Are you kidding me? But she burnt the roast! All I did was I pointed it out to her! Why would I apologize to her for her burning the roast?" My dad came to visit when Debbie and I were newlyweds, and we sat at the table for about fifteen minutes, and, finally, he said, "Debbie, I'm sure you're going to make Pete a fine wife, someday, but, right now, we've got to go out to dinner." She said, "Thanks, Mr. Paine." Sometimes we don't think we owe anybody an apology. He called me back about four hours later, he said, "Pete, the coolest thing just happened." I thought, "Well, Pete, he knows these things. He reads that book." I'm so glad to be with you today. I don't think you're getting us up out of the Word, today. He said, "Pete, you won't believe what just happened." And I said, "What?" And I'm thinking somebody got shot. He said, "I went up, and I rang my neighbor's doorbell, and he answered the door. I said, "Hi, I owe you an apology." And, at first, he was really upset. He said, "Yeah, you do." I said, "I was wrong. I shouldn't have cut down your tree." I'm thinking, "Jim! You go, buddy!" He even called it a tree. And he said, "I shouldn't have cut down your tree." And the neighbor said, "You're right, you shouldn't have. But, you were right; it was ugly. So, let's be friends." And they're friends. They figured it out. But it started with an apology.

And I said all that, I took you down that path, to say to you, "Maybe you need to apologize to somebody." "...Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves." I really believe, and I'm going to come down the pipe with these comments: I really believe that if we can work on having fervent charity with those we work most closely related to, or with our church family, that it will be ripples on a pond, and people at the towing yard, or your neighbor who has a bush, or a police officer who pulls you over and you're not pleased with it, the idea of him giving you a ticket to days in a row, that you're going to have an opportunity to let the light so shine that God has put in you—Matthew 5:16. Jesus said these words:

**Matthew 5:16** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

I'm going to go to First Corinthians chapter thirteen, it's often referred to as the love chapter. The word that's used here, in the King James, is 'charity.' That's ἀγάπη love. Some versions use the word, 'love,' and I think that's fine, because it is love. This charity that's referred to in First Corinthians, this is God's love. And it says—this is Apostle Paul, and he's writing to the church in Corinth, and he says, "You

know what? There's something that's more important than anything else. There's something that's more important than anything else, and it's this." And he sets the scene so beautifully. He's talking to a church that, really, has got very high marks for being religious. Very high marks for looking good, smelling good, doing good in the community. They were probably well known for their fundraisers and their helping out with others. But they've lost something. This church in Corinth, it's a good study to see what Paul has to say to them. These churches in Corinth, they had lost their first love, in a way that they weren't full of God's love as the centerpiece of their life. They wanted to look good, but, it was not the centerpiece of their life. And he says:

**1 Corinthians 13:1-13** *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

And that's what we've been talking about today, this fervent charity that God wants as the centerpiece of the church. He wants it as a centerpiece of our life. He wants it as a centerpiece of everything that we do. He wants us to have fervent charity. He wants us to live fervent charity. He wants us to apologize when we need to apologize. He wants us to love when we need to love. He wants us to go to the mirror when we're finding fault, and find it there first. Now, if someone's finding fault with you—sometimes I would say to our children they were wrong, and they would say, "You know, you're finding fault with me," and I would say, "That's my job! I'm helping you become a better person." But, it's got to be done in love. Don't reject that. Don't reject it when somebody who loves you is showing you a better way. It never feels good when someone is showing you a better way. It never feels good when someone is telling you you didn't do your best, that you missed the mark, but, if someone's doing it in love, receive it. And my prayer is—as I close—that fervent charity will abound in our lives, in our homes, and in our church. God bless you.