

Growing in Christian Love
1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 2 Peter 1:5-7

1 Thessalonians 4:9 - *But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*

Love: Greek **Agapeos**, seeking the best for another ("*but concerning brotherly love....*")

Brotherly love: Greek **Philadelphia**, the affection for a brother ("*taught by God to love one another*")

It is not natural to have brotherly love. It requires spiritual effort and discernment. Why is it so important? Let us consider Paul as an example. Paul suffered greatly for the Gospel: Shipwreck; Imprisonment; Torture; ultimately death. Why? 2 Corinthians 5:14 - *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died.* Why is love so important? It can accomplish great things. The "love of Christ" that compelled Paul was that Christ's love is not just for me.

Let us consider how Paul applied the purpose of love to practical problems. 1 Corinthians 13 is often called the "love" chapter and is read at weddings. Yet the book of 1 Corinthians is really one theme: spiritual immaturity. This immaturity was manifested by immorality among them, division among them, error in worship, and differing doctrines on marriage and meats. 1 Corinthians 13 is THE SOLUTION to the problem. Love is the solution to spiritual immaturity. It solves the personal and doctrinal disputes. It grants peace and patience. However, it is also the case that love requires effort and diligence to perfect.

What can I do to increase my love? This is where our second passage needs to be seen: 2 Peter 1:5-7
2 Peter 1:5-7 - *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, know ledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

Note that 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 BEGINS with love; 2 Peter 1:5-7 ENDS with love. The difference is important; 1 Corinthians 13 points to the way we know we have love, while 2 Peter 1 lays out a path to reach love. We DO NOT JUST HAVE LOVE, it requires effort to achieve it. Let us "mash up" these passages to see how we manifest and achieve brotherly love.

The Faith of Love

Hebrews 6:9 - *But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.*

Love believes the best of things; it does not think evil. Love hopes for all things. We are growing our love and exercising it when we choose to believe not the worst but the best in our brethren.

The Virtue of Love

1 Corinthians 10:24 - *Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's wellbeing*

Love does not seek for itself, and love does not boast; Love is not puffed up. When we act and have brotherly love, we are not selfishly minded.

The Understanding of Love

Proverbs 10:12 - *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins*

Paul understood that Jesus had died for all sinners, not just him. He comprehended that God looked at all men with the same love. An understanding love does not envy, and does not rejoice when bad things happen.

The Control of Love

Ephesians 4:2 - *with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,*

We are to add to our understanding self-control. Love is a pure exercise of our self-control. Love is not easily provoked, and love does not behave rudely.

The Perseverance of Love

1 Thessalonians 5:14 - *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all*

How we might express our love is by our patience. Love is patient. Love endures all things.

The Godliness of Love

1 John 4:16 *We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

Perhaps chief among the characteristics of God is that of the love we seek. Love rejoices with the truth; since God is truth, we rejoice and love the truth as well. This is the godliness of love.

The Kindness of Love

Colossians 3:12 - *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

While it may seem repetitive to call love brotherly affection, we would be accurate to say that love is the tender, merciful kindness we offer to one another. This is the last step of perfecting love.