

Building Character: Brotherly Kindness

2 Peter 1:7

Next to last in Peter's list for building Christian character to guard against the very real possibility of falling away is "*brotherly kindness*" (2 Pet. 1:7). Generally we think of brotherly kindness as something we manifest for the sake of others, but in this context it is something we must manifest also for our own sakes in order to avoid the fall referred to in verse 11. So brotherly kindness is not only for the welfare of others, like the other traits listed with it, it is good for the soul. Also note that this is no lesser trait, nor is it any more optional than the others, but it is essential to the adding of love (*agape*: selfless love that always seeks the good of others), without which it is impossible to be born of God or to know Him (1 Jn. 4:7-8). So you see that it is impossible for anyone to maintain that he or she is a lover of God and yet fail to be one whose life is characterized by "brotherly kindness."

What is brotherly kindness? It is from the Greek word "*philadelphia*" which means literally: "love of the brethren." In 1897 brother N.T. Caton put it this way: "Brotherly kindness is love of the brethren, love of the saints, members of Christ's body-the church. This love is active, showing itself in kind acts continually, without questioning and without hesitation, as to cost or labor." In the setting of Christ's great example of service, illustrating the greatness of His love for all and expressing His desire that His disciples be like Him, He said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (Jn. 13:34).*" Who will say that Jesus' love was not active? It carried Him to the cross! It never failed, it never faltered, it serves as our example and it is essential to the saving of our souls. Hate, spite, contempt, derision are the tools of Satan; reservations called ahead to Hell. Brotherly kindness, brotherly love, is a characteristic of those who are on their way to Heaven. "Let brotherly love continue (Heb. 13:1)."

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