

## **Building Character: Love** **2 Peter 1:7**

In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we have seen a beautiful model of Christian character. As we consider the final element, love (charity - KJV), let us also consider our own state of completeness as a Christian. Remember that it takes all of these elements to make up a whole disciple. To what extent might I be handicapped? Where must I give attention to building my own character that Christ might have a whole person?

Love is the greatest commandment (Mat. 22:36-38), the bond of perfection (Col. 3:14), the very nature of God (1 Jn. 4:8). In the context of 2 Peter, love is not what we do, it is a fundamental part of what we are as Christians! Love is the great motivator of the obedient (Jn. 14: 15; 1 Jn. 5:3). Although lesser motives may compel obedience to a few commandments, nothing short of a character capped by love would move anyone to keep them all. Love is a sacrificial giver; not a lender, not a sharer, not a seller, but a giver. We love God because he first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19), and it was His love which gave us His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16). Our love gives ourselves to God, a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2). The Savior, out of His own love for us, gave His life for us (Jn. 15:13), and we, out of our love, give our lives wholly to Him (Mat. 10:37-38).

Two questions are nearly always asked when a lesson on love is taught: "How do you define love?" And "Do I have to love everyone?" First, God defines love as patience, kindness, contentment, humility, self controlled, unselfish, stable, pure in mind, saddened over iniquity, happy in truth, steadfast in enduring hardship, utterly faithful, utterly hopeful and never ending (1 Cor. 13:1-8). There is nothing that the human mind can add that will improve that definition. Second, what soul is not worth being saved, and even if there were one, how would we judge its value? God "...so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16)," Jesus commissioned the preaching of the gospel "...into all the world (Mk. 16:15)," wills that "...all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)," and "...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4)." How can a faithful child of God (Eph. 5:1) love or do less? Love should never be approached as an obstacle to be hurdled, but always as a desirable element of character to be added to the Christian who would never fall. Love is the capstone of Christian character without which we can never serve, and we will never be saved.

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