

2 Peter 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Analysis

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Peter concludes the virtue list with two relational qualities. "Brotherly kindness" (philadelphia, φιλαδελφία) denotes the warm affection and loyalty characteristic of family bonds, applied to fellow believers. The early church's radical unity across ethnic, economic, and social barriers astonished the pagan world. This familial love for fellow Christians demonstrates that godliness (v. 6) isn't isolated mysticism but community-shaping devotion.

To brotherly kindness add "charity" (agapē, ἀγάπη)—the distinctive Christian love that extends beyond natural affection to sacrificial, self-giving commitment modeled by Christ (John 13:34-35; 15:13). While philadelphia focuses on fellow believers, agapē encompasses all people, including enemies (Matt 5:44). This is the summit of Christian virtue—God-like love that gives without calculation of return, loves the unlovely, and seeks others' good at personal cost.

The progression from faith (v. 5) to love (v. 7) mirrors Paul's triad of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13), with love as the greatest. Authentic faith necessarily produces love; profession without love exposes spurious faith (1 John 4:20). Peter's list brackets moral transformation (virtue, self-control) and theological growth (knowledge) within relational love, revealing that Christianity is fundamentally about loving God and neighbor. This directly counters false teachers whose doctrine produces division, selfishness, and exploitation (2:1-3, 13-14) rather than sacrificial love.

Historical Context

In the ancient world, loyalty to one's ethnic group, social class, or philosophical school was common, but the Christian call to love all believers across traditional boundaries was revolutionary. Roman society was rigidly stratified; Jewish identity centered on ethnic and religious distinctives separating them from Gentiles. The church's practice of philadelphia—slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, men and women united as siblings in Christ—challenged social structures and attracted both converts and persecution.

Agapē love wasn't unknown in Greek literature but was relatively rare compared to erōs (romantic love) or philia (friendship). Christians elevated agapē as supreme, defining it by Christ's self-sacrifice and applying it universally, even to persecutors. This ethic of enemy-love distinguished Christianity from surrounding philosophies and religions. Early church communities practiced radical generosity, caring for widows, orphans, and the poor regardless of social status—a witness to gospel transformation. False teachers undermined this unity by creating factions, exploiting the vulnerable, and promoting selfish indulgence (2:10-14).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does your local church community reflect—or fail to reflect—genuine brotherly kindness across demographic and preference differences?
2. Who are the people you find hardest to love with Christ-like agapē, and what might Spirit-enabled love toward them look like?

3. How can you identify false teaching by examining whether it produces self-sacrificing love or self-serving exploitation?

Interlinear Text

ἐν	δὲ	τῇ	εὐσεβείᾳ	τὴν	φιλαδελφίᾳ	ἐν	δὲ	τῇ
to	And	G3588	godliness	G3588	brotherly kindness	to	And	G3588
G1722	G1161		G2150		G5360	G1722	G1161	
φιλαδελφίᾳ			τὴν	ἀγάπην				
brotherly kindness			G3588	charity				
G5360				G26				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:1 (Love): Let brotherly love continue.

Romans 12:10 (Love): Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (Love): And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Galatians 6:10 (Parallel theme): As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Colossians 3:14 (Love): And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

1 John 4:21 (Love): And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

1 John 3:16 (Love): Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 3:14 (Love): We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

1 Peter 2:17 (Love): Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

1 Peter 1:22 (Love): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

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