

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 6/13/04
The Illustration of Virtue in Greek Drama. Part 3.
Brotherly Love and Impersonal Love. 2 Peter 1:5-9**

2Peter 1:5-7 *Now for this very reason also, making every effort, by means of your doctrine supply [epichoregeo] virtue, and in [with] your virtue [supply] knowledge [gnosis, referring to biblical academic information] and in your knowledge, [supply] self-control, and in your self-control, [supply] perseverance [endurance or consistency], and in your perseverance, godliness [living the spiritual life], and in your godliness, [living the spiritual life], [supply] **brotherly kindness...***

“Brotherly kindness” is the sixth member of the *chorus line* we have been studying in the subject of Greek drama. Here we have the Greek noun *philadelphia*, meaning *brotherly love*. Without this love, you will never be happy or have capacity in life. This “brotherly love” is not the phony “love” found in many churches today. It is not calling each other “brother” or “sister,” or standing up and turning around to tell people you love them in church. The church is not a “lonely-hearts club”; we are here to learn Bible doctrine. In the perception and metabolization of Bible doctrine, real **impersonal, unconditional love** is developed, and this is love for all believers. It is an objective, unbiased love that emphasizes the **subject**, rather than the object of the love.

In **1Jo 4:21** we are given the command that “*the one who loves God should love his brother also.*” When a believer metabolizes Bible doctrine, he receives motivation to love God as well as believers. Believers without Bible doctrine can sing and talk about God, and yet not love God at all. Your love for your fellow believer is to be even greater than your love for members of your own earthly family. This does not mean that we neglect our families and our responsibilities, but we are not to let our earthly family interfere with the Royal Family of God, our true family.

In **Mat 12:46** we read, “*While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.*” Our Lord’s mother and brothers apparently came to Him for reasons found in **Mar 3:21**, “*And when His own family heard of this [that He claimed to be the Son of God], they went out to take custody of him; for they [members of His family] were saying, ‘He has lost His senses.’*” His own family, including His mother, thought He was crazy! They were standing outside; they did not even wish to even come inside and listen to Him, **Mat 12:47-49**, “*And someone said to Him, ‘Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you.’ But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers!’*” The Lord Jesus Christ taught that His followers are even closer to Him than His natural family and closest relatives, **Mat 12:50**. The will of God is summed up in one verse, **1Ti 2:4**, “*He wills all men to be saved and to come to the [epignosis] knowledge of the truth.*”

Joh 3:14-18 shows the importance of brotherly love: *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? O Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”*

Personal love is not in view in **2Pe 1:7** because personal love is without virtue, **Mat 5:46**, *“For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?”* Impersonal love requires virtue because the one who loves is doing so from virtue within, not for overt reasons. Personal love is directed toward a **few** with whom you are compatible, while impersonal love is directed toward **all**. When someone says, “I love you,” because they love your beauty, personality, sense of humor, money, etc., there is no virtue in that love.

Virtue is found in **impersonal love**, and a person who has virtue will also have the capacity for personal love. Virtue love is found in **Rom 5:5**, *“And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* It is the power of God the Holy Spirit that enables the believer to have the virtue needed for *“brotherly love.”* The only personal love that has any real virtue is personal love for God, which is the function of your royal priesthood. Virtue-love toward God is personal, while virtue-love toward man is impersonal. In **personal love toward God** we have virtue as a priest, and in **impersonal love for mankind** we have virtue as an ambassador. Personal love for God is motivational virtue, **2Co 5:14**.

1. “Brotherly love,” or virtue-love, is necessary to fulfill divine mandates such as **Mar 12:31**, *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*
2. This love covers sins and does not repeat them to others, **Pro 10:12, 17:9; 1Pe 4:8**.
3. This love gives us the ability to fulfill doctrinal standards such as **Mat 5:41-42**, *“And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”*
4. This love compels us to treat one another as we would treat the Lord, **Mat 25:34-40**.
5. This love is a revelation to others that we are the students or disciples of the Lord, **Joh 13:13-15, 34-35**.
6. This love is revealed by an unselfish desire to lose one’s life, **Joh 15:12-13**.
7. This love is without hypocrisy and is manifested by affection, **Rom 12:9-10**.
8. It is not a love of independence or self-preservation, **Gal 5:13, Eph 5:2**.
9. This love comes exclusively from divine power, and not from human emotion, **1Th 3:11-12**.
10. This love is manifested by a relaxed mental attitude and is absent of mental attitude sins toward anyone—those you know or do not know and those who are friends or enemies, **Luk 6:27-28**.

Brotherly love, the sixth member of the chorus line, is a **system of thinking**. We do not need to experience any kind of special feeling to manifest this love for members of the Royal family of God, but we must avoid mental attitude sins in order to fulfill the

command, “*Love one another.*” **Rom 12:10** says, “*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.*”

Brotherly love insures the serenity of mind that lays the foundation for toleration, flexibility, courtesy, and thoughtfulness of others. These manifestations of virtue become stronger and more consistent as the believer advances in learning Bible doctrine under the power of the Spirit. In the absence of doctrine, the old sin nature dominates the inner spiritual conflict for control of the soul, and the apostle Paul warns us about this in **Gal 5:13-18**.

By giving doctrine top priority in your life, you will rise above the pettiness that promotes mental attitude sins toward others. The perfect example of virtue-love of course was the Lord Jesus Christ who never committed a mental attitude sin, and never departed from His impersonal love for His followers and for all mankind, **Joh 13:1**, “*Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*”

The difference between personal and impersonal love must be noted in detail:

1. Impersonal love emphasizes the subject; personal love depends on the attractiveness, capacity, and response of the one who is loved. Personal love emphasizes the qualities in the one you are loving.
2. Impersonal love does not require intimacy, friendliness, or even acquaintance with the object of love. With impersonal love, a close relationship between the subject and the object is not necessary.
3. Impersonal love is simply the **consistent function of your own integrity** toward other people. In fact, it is a declaration to others that we are the students and disciples of the Lord.
4. Personal love requires that you know the object with some degree of intimacy, and the object of personal love must be attractive to you, share basic values with you, and have capacity to love you in return. This is why *phileo* love (*philadelphia*), which is personal love in the Bible, is mentioned before *agape* (impersonal) love.
 - a. You should be closer to some members of the Royal Family (*philadelphia* love) than members of your own earthly family, **Mat 12:46-50**.
 - b. If you cannot love your fellow believer whom you can see (*philadelphia* love), you cannot love God whom you have not seen, **1Jo 4:20**.
 - c. If you do not love God, than you cannot love yourself properly, **1Jo 4:19**.
 - d. If you do not have love for yourself, you cannot love your neighbor, **Mat 19:19**.
5. Only a few people qualify as objects of your personal love, whereas all mankind is the object of your impersonal love, **Mat 5:43**.
6. Personal love is designed for interaction with a few, while impersonal love is designed to benefit the human race.
7. Personal love is conditional; impersonal love is **unconditional**.
8. Personal love creates weaknesses, because both people bring their own problems into any personal relationship. The problems, shortcomings, and faults of two people are combined and multiplied by personal love. Personal love can cause subjectivity and mental attitude sins of jealousy, self-pity, and bitterness.
9. Personal love is never stronger than the integrity of those involved in the personal relationship. Impersonal love is the integrity that alone can strengthen and stabilize personal love. The most important function of impersonal love is **the control of your own mental attitude**.

10. Personal love may lead to compromise of the norms, standards, and values of the individual, when you give the person you love higher priority than Bible doctrine. Impersonal love, however, never compromises its virtue and integrity.
11. In **1Co 13:13**, impersonal love is proclaimed the ultimate Christian virtue. Impersonal love is commanded, and personal love is optional.
12. Personal love is legitimate and potentially wonderful, but it is virtue-dependent, hinging on the virtue of impersonal love, which represents the highest degree of integrity the soul can attain.
13. Impersonal love also produces independence. A believer with impersonal love does not rely on the object of his love for strength and support, but rather is sustained by the Bible doctrine in his own soul. The believer who, over an extended period of time, learns to apply doctrine can solve or cope with the problems of personal love and maintain a marvelous relationship with others.
14. Impersonal love does not depend on emotional stimulation or attraction. This is the genuine and honorable independence of the believer who is spiritually self-sustained. The Lord said in **Joh 13:34**, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*” This is a new commandment because this is a love that requires the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit enabling the believer to love.

Your exclusive personal love cannot be given to rude, arrogant believers, nor should you burn up your nervous energy trying to do the impossible, which is “love all Christians with a personal love.” The only love you can have for most individuals is impersonal love based on the strength of your own character. Through *impersonal love*, your *brotherly love* toward everyone will be basically the same, manifested by courtesy, thoughtfulness, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and tolerance and flexibility in non-essential areas of disagreement or dispute. This is the love that honorably represents the Lord Jesus Christ in the devil’s world.

The key to this virtue-love is personal love for God, for that is where real virtue begins; you do not begin by adjusting to mankind. You do not solve the problems with people and interaction with mankind from psychology or philosophy or any other new gimmick; it must come from your personal love for God. True virtue only comes from truth, and it is only personal love for God that will ever develop the “inexpressible happiness” of **1Pe 1:8**. Without personal love for God, the believer will react to injustice and unfair treatment, and his happiness will depend on how people treat him. Reacting is simply the result of preoccupation with self.

In **2Pe 1:7**, the seventh member of the chorus line mentioned is the Greek word *agapen*, meaning impersonal love for all mankind: “*And in your godliness [living the spiritual life], [supply] brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, [supply] love.*” We now have the entire seven members of the chorus line:

1. Virtue (respect, loyalty, and devotion).
2. Knowledge (perception of doctrine).
3. Self-control (organized life).
4. Perseverance (endurance and consistency).
5. Godliness (living the spiritual life).
6. Brotherly love (love for members of the Royal Family).
7. *Agape* love (impersonal love for all members of the human race).

We now see what the chorus line accomplishes in **2Pe 1:8**, “*For if these qualities [the dramatic seven of the chorus line] are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus.*” The dramatic chorus line will prevent you from becoming useless (ineffective) or unfruitful (unproductive). Through the dramatic chorus line (the seven qualities), you will fulfill your very own personal sense of destiny. Our whole Christian life centers around how much knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ we have, because the key to the Christian life is proper motivation.

Metabolized doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ gives the believer the proper motivation for living. We must be motivated, not by our love and respect for people, but by our love and respect for the Lord Jesus Christ. Proper motivation means being occupied with the person of Jesus Christ. Doctrine is the mind of Christ, and that is all that matters.

In **2Pe 1:9**, Peter goes on to say, “*For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.*” The cosmic believer, who has only mere morality, has no understanding of how spiritually blind he is. He is blinded by either arrogance or animosity toward doctrine, or by indifference or apathy toward doctrine.

Satan has two main systems that he uses against believers. In his first system arrogance blinds the believer, and in his second system animosity toward truth blinds the believer. The target of Satan’s first system is the believer’s **ego**, resulting in pre-occupation with self to the exclusion of reality (as it happened to Satan himself in **Isa 14:12-14**). The target of Satan’s second system is **truth** (Bible doctrine), resulting in antagonism toward Christ, His body, and doctrine itself. One system emphasizes self over God; the other emphasizes human viewpoint over divine viewpoint. One system was developed by Satan before the human race began, which is simply living for self rather than God. The other system was developed by Satan at the fall of the human race, which is human viewpoint over divine viewpoint.

The true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ will protect us from Satan’s deceptions, “*in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes*” (**2Co 2:11**). And as the seven members of the chorus line in **2Pe 1:5-7** continue to function in our life, a drama will unfold that will bring glory to God before all the angels and the human race.

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