

CONSEQUENCES OF LOVE

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Peter encouraged his readers to embrace holiness: *"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."* Because it is written, *"Be holy as I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:15-16 NKJV, quoting Leviticus 11:44). Peter identifies the church as a priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5 and 9). Much of the content of his letter is given to defining holiness in the lives of Christians. Just as the tribe of Levi was set apart for its particular work, we are to be set apart from the world to do God's will in our time. Peter helps us understand the power, practice and purpose of holiness in daily life of the Christian.

An important aspect of holiness is love. Peter wrote, *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit into unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently"* (1 Peter 1:22 KJV). He also wrote, *"Love the brotherhood"* (1 Peter 2:17 KJV). It is impossible to over emphasize the importance of loving one another. We remember Jesus' words in John 13:34: *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (KJV). Peter had received spiritual instructions on this subject from the Lord; we can be sure that he never forgot it (John 21:17). Love as a concept and teaching was important to Jesus and His apostles; it cannot be less important to us.

It is clear that God wants us to love one another and thus to love the church. If God wants it, it must be good. And indeed it is good...just think of the consequences of love for and in the lives of Christians. What will happen if we do a better job of loving one another and the brotherhood?

Conflict will diminish. It is well known that human beings have a tendency to fuss. Families fuss. There are fuses at work. And, yes, there are church fuses. Brothers and sisters get agitated with each other and say all manors of things they should not say. We want to fuss about politics and money. We fuss about our kids. We let envy and jealousies get a hold of us and turn us into children of the devil (1 Peter 5:8) instead of children of God. But and if we allow love for each other to grow and get stronger everyday, these petty conflicts will diminish, perhaps even go away.

The church will expand. In John 13:35, Jesus said that this love for one another would be a signal to people who are not Christians that we are Christians. Our world is not a happy place. Folks are looking for answers, they want satisfaction and they are not able to find either where they are looking. They look to pleasure, money, and power...but these are all pitiful and empty dead-ends. Everybody needs spiritual satisfaction whether they know it or not. And the only place to find that is in the love of God. It is up to us to manifest this love for each other so most people can see it in us, desire it, and obey the truth to attain it (1 Peter 1:22).

We will keep our children. It is common to bemoan the church's loss of young people. Some will be lost because free-will moral agents make wrong decisions. But we "help" some to be lost because they see a lack of love in us. Young people need to be loved and need to love somebody. They must see this love at home. And if they do not see it at church they will likely go elsewhere. Love will help us to keep them. A lack of love will run them off.

Jesus Christ will be exalted. This is the purpose of holiness. We live so as to praise and honor God (1 Peter 2:5, 9). When we love one another and when we love the brotherhood, we are doing just as Jesus would have us do (John 13:34). And we are following his example (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Without love life is a hopeless mess. With love everything is just fine. Such are the consequences of Love.