

Doctrinal Summary of
Love: Necessary in the Body of Christ

In 1 Peter 4:8 Peter identifies that unconditional love covers a multitude of sins.

“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

The phrase “Above all” is translated from the Koine Greek phrase πρὸ πάντων (“pra pan-tohn”) which more literally means, “toward of all, being initiators.” It identifies a mindset that believers are to be oriented toward having that is expressed toward all those who are a part of the body of Christ as a result of initiating God’s saving of them through relying upon God’s grace provision of a Savior (cf. Eph. 2:8-9).

The phrase “keep fervent in your love” is translated from the Koine Greek phrase ἀγάπην ἐκτενῆ ἔχοντες (“ek-te-ne ex-on-tes”) which more literally means, “performing the continuous type of action as a matter of principle to have as your own possession based on your own initiation outstretched unconditional love that manifests itself in being given regardless of the response it receives, based on response.” It identifies that each believer is to have as his own possession unconditional love that is outstretched towards other believers. Each believer must perform this action individually and from his own determination to unconditionally love other believers in the same manner as Christ unconditionally loved. It is to be a principle of operation for the believer that he has outstretched unconditional love towards his fellow believer. The principle is based on the reality that each believer is a part of the same body and family, having been forgiven by God through faith in Christ. Because of this, believers are to be continuously extending unconditional love to one another. The reason for this is because of what love can do.

The word “because” is translated from the Koine Greek word ὅτι (“ha-ti”) which more literally means, “on account of the fact that.” It introduces a supporting reality to a previous statement as an explanation for why the previous statement is to occur. Consequently, it provides an understanding of what extending unconditional love will accomplish in the body of Christ. It will conceal a multitude of sins.

The word “conceal” is translated from the Koine Greek word καλύπτει (“ka-lup-tei”) which more literally means, “it really performs the continuous type of action to conceal something so that it is no longer able to be known or seen.” It identifies that something which is known or visible is covered up by something so that it is no longer able to be known or seen. Though what is covered up has not gone away, its concealment renders it completely irrelevant to anyone or anything in its proximity.

Peter’s statement to believers is that they are to constantly be extending unconditional love to one another because of the fact that unconditional love works to make sins completely concealed. Anytime man sins, whether believer or unbeliever, he does so against God and God alone—even if it is in man’s sight (cf. Luke 15:18). Extending unconditional love to each other in the body of Christ allows believers to focus on providing what their brother or sister in Christ needs while letting God deal with the discipline. The continual extension of unconditional love in the body of Christ allows for pursuing what is best for another to take the forefront of believer-to-believer interaction. While having outstretched unconditional love for one another believers allow love to do its work to conceal the sins of their brother or sister in Christ. Consequently, having unconditional love that is extended to those in the body of Christ allows the body to function in harmony and unity as God intended. In this way, believers having unconditional love for one another is necessary in the body of Christ.