

UNDERSTANDING THE LOVE OF GOD SERIES

THE FOUR TYPES OF LOVE

We begin a new series on love. It is such a simple topic but there is so much in the Word of God on the topic of love. I just want us to see how important love is in the Word of God. If you can set a firm foundation of the love of God it is going to profit you down here and profit you in heaven.

I Cor. 13:1-3 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* It tells us in the Word of God that love is far above even tongues. We have taught on tongues and we do not undermine the importance of tongues. But at the same time we want to see what the Word of God says of areas that God considers important. It says you can speak in tongues morning till night but if you do not understand love and you do not operate in love, you are an empty can making a lot of noise. That would be what this verse one is talking about. It doesn't mean that you cannot pray in tongues loud. It is all right because some times you need to pray in tongues loud. In fact if you thought that praying in tongues loud is not all right then something is wrong with you.

Here the bible wants to emphasize love. And the background of it is in chapter 12 and chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 talks about the gifts of the Spirit. And chapter 14 Paul says *I pray in tongues more than all of you.* So he is a man who has been praying in tongues and who knows what it is to pray in tongues unceasingly and now he is telling you to go up higher than that. If you have not established yourself in tongues, you have to review that and establish yourself in that area before you can go higher.

In verse 2 *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* Even when Paul emphasize prophecy he said *I would love all of you to prophesy one by one that all may learn.* Paul talks about the importance of prophecy in the next chapter. He is not undermining prophecy. But Paul is emphasizing that love is the firm foundation of our whole New Testament Christian life. The love of God is far above prophecy; is far above understanding mysteries; its far above knowledge; its far above power and faith to move mountains. All of our prophesying; all of our faith; all of our understanding and knowledge is based upon God's love. How can I exercise faith in God? If I know that God loves me and I know in my heart that I am dedicated to God and I love God, my faith is on a firm ground. Do you know that if you have strong love, you have strong faith? Your faith comes forth from the source of love.

Lets look at some human love. For example, Albert loves his son James and James loves his father Albert. Because of the love between them Albert could say, "James I am going to do this for you. I am going to buy you a bible. It is going to come to you on your birthday." Because James loves his father and knows his father loves him, it is easier for him to believe what the father said. And James will go around saying, "I am going to get a bible." And he says, "I am going to get it soon." He could believe his father's word because he loves the father. Now lets take another example. Supposing that the relationship is strained. Supposing that his love is not established. Then the father said I promise to give you this or to do this for you. It makes it harder for him to believe his father's word. See love produces strong faith. And we need to be founded in love. It is far above all these things.

Verse 3 *If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.* In other words you can do good works and a lot things. You can give everything away. And you can even give your body to be burned. Now that would have brought a lot of attention to this world. It is not normal for a person to give his body to be burned. But yet you could do all these things without the agape love of God. It still comes to square one.

And at the end of this passage in verse 13 *So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.* Love is the greatest force far above faith; far above hope. Why

did the bible say? It's the greatest force. The reason is because with love you could reach into faith and hope. But with faith and hope alone you may not reach into love and develop your faith fully. See it's the greater force because it is greater. You could reach into faith and hope easily with love. We are talking about God's love. And if love is the greatest, then if we teach on the gifts of the Spirit, on all aspects on finances and faith and on other areas then we ought to teach on love too. If love is the greatest we must have a series of teaching on love.

In everything we do we have to learn. We have to be taught how to love. Love is not something that is automatic. We have to be taught how to love. People love not because they are not taught. Just as people don't function in the gifts of the Holy Spirit because they are not taught to function in that area. So people don't know how to move into the love of God and don't know how to relate in the love of God because they are not taught about God's love. All they hear is some wishy-washy kind of worldly love. And they associate it with the love of God. Sometimes they get some feeling and then they think that's the love of God. And when it comes to the body of Christ just because they cannot get along with another guy they cannot love them. The reason is they don't differentiate between the love of God and the love that is present in the world. They are two separate forms that we are going to see in the Greek word.

Love is eternal. That means that when you grow in love down here it will determine your position in heaven. If you develop your love greatly on this earth you may be unknown in the world but live a perfect life as far as God is concerned. Your ministry may not be in the international limelight. But if you develop love in your heart you are going to be in a position very close to God when you get to heaven. In heaven I want to stick close to Him. One thing we know to be close to God in heaven you have to develop love down here. Otherwise when you go up there the angels would tell you to please enroll in the nursery with all the other little children and begin your life in heaven by learning the ABC of love.

There are four basic Greek words for love. Two of these words are found in the New Testament and the other two are found in Greek literature. All four are found in Greek literature but the bible emphasizes only two forms of love. The first one is

the word *storge*. *Storge* means family affection. *Storge* means the love of a parent to a child and a child to the parent. *Storge* talks about family affection between family members. See the English has only one word for love. There is a certain sense of family affection that you have one for another because you are of the same family. Blood is thicker than water. So you have the inbuilt affection unless something comes in between. In the world today family affection is not strong. Brothers sue brothers in court and there are all kinds of family squabbles. But normally family affection runs strong with those of the same kin. That kind of family affection is the word *storge*.

The second word is the word *eros*. *Eros* speaks of physical love. It is physical love and physical affection as between a man and a woman. And that word has been used today in English literature to refer in that area. Now *eros* is not necessarily something evil. In the same way love as *storge* is not some thing evil. You wouldn't consider the loyalty of people to their own family as evil. In fact the bible says that you are to honor your father and your mother. So you don't consider *storge* evil. Neither do you consider *eros* evil. But *eros* has been perverted by the devil. And the devil has perverted it so much that when people think of *eros* they think of evil. But God has made it in the Word of God where in the book of Genesis chapter one God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. If they were to be fruitful and multiply, they had to have *eros*. And I want you to know they have not gone into Genesis chapter three yet when they met the tempter and fell. So God created *eros* or physical love or sexual love in order for mankind to be fruitful and multiply.

At one time in the church in the Puritan ages they considered anything that is of the flesh evil. As a result of that they have caused people to go beyond what God intended for them. God made you with a body. Your body has passions and desires. The passions and desires themselves are not wrong. If *eros* was wrong then eating is also wrong. But it is wrong when it is out of control. That is when it becomes wrong. Eating is not wrong. But if your eating habit goes out of control then you have a problem. So *eros* is not evil in itself. But when it goes beyond temperance and beyond control then it becomes evil. So the devil has perverted all the natural body appetites and caused it to look evil.

You must understand that in the original plan of God *eros* is not evil. So you must

renew your mind to realize this. I had to counsel many Christian husbands and wives who find that they cannot function in their physical love to one another because they feel condemned. But God has ordained that *eros* is a part of His total plan for the husband and the wife. You take it out of the context then it becomes wrong. But as long as that takes place between a man and his wife it is right in the eyes of God. The book of Hebrews says the marriage bed is undefiled. That means it is holy and that which the husband shares with the wife is sacred. Its sanctified and its holy. So *eros* speaks of physical love. It originates in God's plan. Even before the fall God told them be fruitful and multiply. They would have to experience *eros* in order to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis one. So it did not start in Genesis three. So *storge* is family affection. *Eros* is physical love.

Then we look at the third Greek word, which is the word *phileo*. *Phileo* speaks about friendship love. It talks about friendship that is established between various people. It can even go to the extent of a friend that is closer than a brother. So *phileo* speaks of friendship love. And it is a very broad word. It covers everything that has to do with the relationship of one person to another person with a friendly affection. *Phileo* speaks of being endeared, as a friend just like I am endeared to the whole church and the church would be endeared to me. So there is an endearment. And within the family they have *storge* love and *phileo* love. For example between a parent and a child as the child grows up and as they live together under the same roof *phileo* love comes in. So Albert has *storge* love for James. James would be able to respond to Albert and say, "I *storge* you." See *storge* is a family affection. As James grows up they not only become father and son, they become friends. Your father could be your friend too, someone to consult. So then James could also say to his father, "I *phileo* you." Albert could also say to James, "I *phileo* you."

So *phileo* love extends to cover all other areas. *Phileo* talks about being endeared to another person. It speaks of those nearest and dearest sometimes without the relation of blood. Jonathon and David in the bible had great *phileo* love for each other. They had so much love for each other that they made a covenant. That is *phileo* love working. And between a husband and a wife they could say to each other I love you. In Christian circles we are so used to say, "I love you," to each other. That when it comes to your special friend you have to add, "I love you very much." I remember when I was courting Amy who is now my wife, I had to tell her that she is more special to me than anybody. I had to put it as, "I love you very,

very much." I had to add in more adjectives to differentiate the quality of my love for her. See the English language is very limited. In the Greek they could have said it very easily.

Within the family they have *storge* love and between husband and wife they have more than *storge* love. They have *eros* love where they could open themselves up to one and another and move into a unity both of body and of soul. Then they have *phileo* love. So between husband and wife they could also say, "I *phileo* you." So I want you to understand how *phileo* love covers the other areas of *storge* and *eros* also.

And the same word *phileo* is the same word that has also been used to refer to how our Father loves Jesus Christ. We know that God loves Jesus Christ with *agape* love. But God loves Jesus Christ with *phileo* love too. *Phileo* love speaks of being endeared one to another. And the New Testament uses *phileo* a lot. The New Testament tells us to *phileo* each other. We express *phileo* to each other. When we have been together for some time because of *phileo* love you are endeared to one another and when you have to part you feel sadness there. That is because you have been endeared to the person you love. *Phileo* love covers all our relationship with each other. We would have to experience not only *agape* love with each other we experience *phileo* love with each other because we become friends with each other. You are my parishioners you are also my friends. I always treat all of you as friends. I don't introduce myself to you and say I am Reverend, pastor, apostle, evangelist etc. I may be a pastor but I am also your friend. A friend is someone who stands along side you. Let me tell you that this attitude is not only supposed to be in the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our friend. He is the King of Kings. He sits at the right hand of God all authority in heaven and earth and hell is in His hand. And yet He says I am your friend. If our Lord Jesus could do that, then how much more we also should do that.

That is why when I relate to another person whatever title they have like "Baron" or "Duchess" I will always relate to their position but also as friends. Of course you give respect where respect is due. You give honor where honor is due. I don't mean that you don't respect or honor. Those of you who are in business know it is one thing to have a business partner and it is another thing to have a business partner

who is also your friend. It is one thing to work for the boss, but it is another thing when the boss also is your friend. When *phileo* is not there in your office there will be stress coming in. So when the bible talks about *phileo* love it covers all areas of endearment, of one person with another with a friendship love.

Then we come to the most important. This word is called *agape* love. The word *agape* is a very special word. Very rarely was it used in the Greek literature. The word *agape* was only used a few times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). When Jesus and Paul came, the word *agape* became the most common word in the New Testament. The word *agape* is found all over your New Testament. Isn't it a wonder, its found all over the New Testament and its so seldom taught. We only take *agape* for granted but we are not taught what *agape* involves. So it is very important for us to develop *agape* love.

Agape love is something different from all the others. *Storge* love, *eros* love and *phileo* love are based on your emotion and affection. You cannot say, "I *phileo* you," to a stranger whom you have not been emotionally tied and linked with. When we are together and do things together we get linked together emotionally. If ten of you were to go to a camp, and you sit down and open your hearts one to another, you share and you pray, you cry and you laugh, when you come back there is an emotional bond. When the emotional bond comes in *phileo* love gets involved. And when people fall in love *eros* love gets involved. People of the same family have an emotional affection for each other. *Storge*, *eros* and *phileo* are based on emotional bonding. Which is something good also if it is positive. Its only becomes wrong when it is something that steps beyond the boundary of where it should be. So *storge*, *eros* and *phileo* are based on the emotion. That means its limited. You can only show *eros* love to the one life partner God chose for you. *Storge* love you can show among those in your family kin. *Phileo* love you can show to those whom you know and who had been endeared to you.

So when Paul was using the Greek to describe the love of God, he had to look for a word that goes beyond this love because God's love reaches beyond the people you know. *Agape* love not only reaches people you know, it also reaches to your enemies too. You cannot say, "I *phileo* you," to an enemy. You are not bonded to them

emotionally. So Paul in writing the New Testament reaches out for a word to describe this love great love that God has. And this love is described in Matt. 5 where it says God is good to the just and to the evil. God sends rain on the just and on the unjust. This is the type of love that God has for His people. This type of love is where God seeks the highest good. This is the kind of love that God seeks the best out of the person. It seeks the highest good, the best, whether the person is evil or good. The New Testament authors were struggling for a word to describe this kind of love.

If you have *agape* love, you can look at a criminal and ask, "What is the best good that I can do for this person?" Remember seeking the highest good does not mean that there will be no punishment. Let me give you an example. When a child misbehaves, like for example he has picked up foul vocabulary from their non-Christian friends, you know that if you let your child continue in that way, the child will grow up to be an infidel. So what do you do? The parents know that it is not good for this child. If this child goes this way the child will end walking in the path of destruction. The child will destroy himself. So the parents know that this is not for the highest good. And so the parents discipline the child. So this love that God has for His people and His creation is not love that is just saying love, love, love without punishment or judgment. It is the love that seeks the best good. When a chastening needs to come, the chastening comes forth. There is still punishment because of the highest good. But yet this love that God has reaches to those who love God and to those who hate God.

Storge could not describe this love. *Eros* cannot describe this love. *Phileo* cannot describe this love. It is a love that is not based on emotional bonding. Finally they found the word to describe this love, the word *agape*. The *agape* love of God is the love that reaches for the highest good. When you look at a person no matter what their weaknesses are, no matter what their bad points are, or their good points or their strong points, you always see and say, "What is the best good I can do for this person?" And God does that.

Agape love is firstly, universal. John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* God so *agape* the world; God so loved the world. It is a universal love. He loves

each and everyone. He doesn't love you for the color of your skin. He doesn't love just one race. He doesn't love a particular tribe or clan. He loves every race, every person in this world. He doesn't just love the Israelites. It says God loved the world. It did not say God loves the Israelites. God loves the Arabs too. God loves everybody. It is a universal love. And if your heart has not been touched by *agape* love, you will probably still be biased or prejudiced against another race. If you have a prejudice in your heart against another tribe or race or even people of different social position, your heart has not been touched by this *agape* love. All you have is *phileo* love. You could only love those who are emotionally bonded to you. You cannot love the *agape* love. There is where the body of Christ falls short. They are still basing their love on *phileo* love when God wants us to base our love on *agape* love; a universal love to everybody without prejudice, without consideration of their worthiness to be loved. It's a universal love.

Secondly it is an eternal love. It remains unchanged. You see *phileo* love changes. Sometimes when you are not with a person and you are relating with another one, your emotional bonding becomes stronger with the latter and weaker with the former. It changes from time to time. But *agape* love is unending. It is eternal. Look at Rom. 8:37-39 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothings present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love (agape) of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* You cannot stop this *agape* love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It keeps flowing from the heart of God. It seeks the highest good all the time. Nothing can separate you from this *agape* love of God. God sits on His throne with benevolent love for all and everyone. No wonder the hymn writer caught a glimpse of that love and he said *O the love of God where every man on earth ascribe and where every stork whose feathers they used for writing. And where the sky made of parchment to be the scroll to write on. And where the sea to be the ink bottle to write the love of God. And the sky cannot contain the love of God.*

The love of God is so great, so unending it never changes. Let me tell you Christians are basing their love on *phileo* love. When someone is good to them they are good to them. When someone is bad to them they are bad to them. What kind of love is that? *Phileo* love. It's the love that is based on emotional bonding. But the *agape* love of God says, "I don't care what you do. I don't care who you are. I will

love you. I will seek the best for you. I will seek the good things for you. I will seek to do the good things for your life. I will lift you up that will bless your life. I will make you a better person than you are. I want to make you better than you are." That is the *agape* love of God. It is eternal it never changes. And if your love changes to another person your love is based on *phileo*. It is not based on the *agape* love of God.

God demands that those of us who believe Him should exercise this *agape* love. Isn't it amazing among all the commandments of Jesus, like His command to go out and preach the gospel, His command to heal the sick, there is one main commandment He emphasize. Only one, love one another; Jesus used the word *agape*. Have *agape* love for one another. And this is the main commandment our Lord Jesus Christ emphasized. He emphasized it again and again. And how little it is taught. We are taught faith, we are taught deliverance, prophecy, gifts of the Spirit but the people of God are not taught *agape* love. They are not taught the strength and the love of God for His people and for one another. Because we are not taught, because we hear not we understand not we don't operate it.

God wants a revival in these last days. How do you think that the body of Christ is going to be one? Jesus has prayed for it and it will happen before He comes. Jesus said they would have love for one another. So the revival is not only the revival of power and miracles. It is a revival of the *agape* love of God. That's the revival that God is bringing forth, a revival of His love. Being in the ministry in the church and in the body of Christ many times people have come to me with their comments about other people. But many of them have no *agape* love. They don't understand the love of God. They only want to do what they want to do. They do not seek the highest good. Many times people seek revenge. It's a vindictive judgment. Not a benevolent judgment. If you understand *agape* love you will look at the person and say what is the best good for this person before you take any actions. You won't be looking at the person and say since this person has done this, therefore this course of action must be taken against him. This must be done to them. You won't have that attitude any more. You will look at the eyes of another person and say, "I want to seek your highest good," when you have *agape* love.

Thirdly *agape* love is an underserved love. Rom. 5:6-8 *While we were yet helpless, at*

the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. Up to verse 7 it would still be phileo love. Phileo love can bring you very far for someone whom you love very dearly you may even be willing to die. But to die for your enemies takes agape love. Its one thing to die for a good man and someone you loves. But it takes agape love to die for your enemies.

Verse 8 But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For, if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Only agape love will reach out to the enemies and say no matter what you do to me I still love you and die for you. And it is this same love that our Lord Jesus has for us while we were yet sinners who don't deserve such grace. We don't deserve it. But He loves us. He loves us and He seeks our good. When you seek the good of another person you don't count whether they deserve it. You only want to help them. God looked down on earth He saw the world dying. He saw the world going to sin and hell. Some were cursing God. Some of us don't love God. Some of us are rejecting God. All of us were enemies of God. Yet He says I will seek your highest good. He knew the best for us. He sent His only Son while we were His enemies. We never deserve it; it's the agape love of God.

And God tells us today when Jesus spoke on the Mount in Matt. 5 He says love your enemies. He is giving you a new covenant. In the old covenant it was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But in the new covenant which Jesus was describing in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. He says what good is it when you do good to another person. What difference is it from an unbeliever? But He says, "I tell you: love your enemies and do good." You see agape love seeks the highest good. Do good to those who hate you. That is why agape love is only possible when you are born again. It takes a miracle of the new birth. Unbelievers, non-Christians are not capable of agape love. It takes the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts to be able to love everyone, universally eternally and giving an underserved love. It takes the agape love of God to love as He loves. That is the standard of God's love. His Holy Spirit has shed abroad His love.

It tells us in chapter 5 of Romans verse 5 *Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* When you were born again the love of God was placed in your heart. You have been touched by the *agape* love. Then Jesus turns around and says go and love others too. Are you able to love those who are not emotionally bonded to you? Are you able to love those whom you never know? Only *agape* love can help you to do that. Are you able to love all equally? Only *agape* love can do that. It is "unfavoritism." He loves all equally. And the Father loves us as much as He loves Jesus. It is an equal love to all because it's the highest good of all.

I want you to bow your head in prayer and let the Holy Spirit search your heart this morning. What is the level of love that you have been walking and functioning in? Unless it is this love of God you fall short of His glory. You fall short of His standard. What is the level of love that you allow it to flow from your heart? God has already given His love. It has been shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. You can experience this love and you can share this love.