



Love In Our Life

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To understand Love is to attempt to get into the depth of God Himself, because in essence, God is love. In listing the three greatest virtues: faith, hope and love, St. Paul stresses the fact that of all the three, Love stands the greatest. This is because while faith and hope will one day cease to be, love never will; because God who is love is infinite, with no end.

What is faith?

In Hebrews 11: 1, St. Paul defines faith as “the evidence of things not seen.” So, when these things, get to be seen and fulfilled, faith ceases to exist. For example we believe in the existence of God, the saints, and eternal life, and when we see all these things faith will become functionless.

What is hope?

Hope by necessity deals with the future... For example our hope is to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Once we

reach eternal life and inherit the kingdom of heaven, then the substance of our hope is fulfilled, and consequently there is no hope any more.

What is Love?

The Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, provides four terms that convey the meaning of the word ‘love’ ... These terms are:

1. Eros:

This term refers to carnal or sexual love. This kind of love is characterized by selfishness, as it is usually demanding without thinking of giving. It seeks gratification of one’s own pleasure; ignoring the benefit of the other. An example from the Old Testament of carnal love is Samson’s. When he wanted to marry, he said about the girl he wanted to marry, “get her a wife for me for she pleases me well” (Judges 4:3) thus exhibiting his desire for pleasure only. Another example is Amnon, David’s son who loved his sister with an Eros love... After he had committed sin with her, this love vanished. (2Sam 13:15). So is the nature of the love that younger youth experience in their early dating relationships. It is essentially feelings in the Eros sense; as she or he “pleases me well”.

2. Philia:

This term refers to love that binds close friends together. This kind of love is mutual, condi-



tional, and ephemeral. It is always based on a condition: If you love me, I will love you. Many times the beloved has to earn the love of the lover. It is mutual, and reciprocal in nature contrary to Eros, which is only receiving. When we were in school, we had friends whom we loved and who loved us. However, now we might not even remember their names, that love and friendship were temporary, hence it ended with time.

3. Storage:

This is the kind of love, the blood bond love, is essentially expressive of family relationship. God planted this love in us, and therefore we do not take any credit for it. It is an instinctive love whereby a father loves his son, a mother her children, and the children each other. The purpose of this love is to keep the family bond as a strong support system in the life of any individual.

4. Agape:

This is the highest form of love that seeks the transcendental good of others. When our Lord Jesus Christ commanded to "love God with all your might and your neighbor as yourself", He used the term 'Agape'. The same word He used when instructing to "love your enemies". In Galatians 5:22-23 and 1Corinthians 13, St. Paul uses the same Greek term 'Agape' to describe the fruit of the Spirit. Agape is then the kind of love I express towards God, others, and also my enemies. If this is the kind of love I have to express towards everybody. It follows that Storage and Philia must ultimately grow until they both reach the level of Agape.



What does Agape do?

1. Resides in the atmosphere...

Those who have attained Agape will watch it permeate their atmosphere, and through it they move and have their being... St. Paul says in Ephesians 5:1-2, "Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma." Who is responsible for creating this atmosphere of love? No one else but us. We are responsible for initiating love or otherwise. As Christians, we are expected to always walk in the atmosphere of love that will ultimately become manifest in our actions, our work, and the way we serve each other.

2. Binds virtues together...

St. Paul likens virtues to the garments that we put on. Those garments need a tie to hold them together in place. If the garments of virtues fall down we will remain uncovered. What will then keep all these virtues bound together? It is the tie of love. In Colossians 3:12-14 St. Paul says: "Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you so you also must do, but above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfection."

3. Becomes the pivot of our actions...

In 1 Corinthians 16:14, St. Paul says, "Let all that you do, be done with love." Also in 1 Corinthians 13:3 St. Paul says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned but have not love, it profits me nothing." No matter how



much, how long or how well you serve in or outside church, if you do it without love, you will not reap any fruit out of it.

4. Shields our actions...

Love protects our freedom in Christ against turning into destructive selfishness. The New Testament says that the Son sets us free. Therefore it may seem that we are not under any obligation to pray or fast or go to church. However, we could easily abuse our freedom in Christ and drift away. What then protects our freedom in Christ? St. Paul in Galatians 5:13 says, "For you brethren have been called to liberty, only do not use liberty as opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Yes, Christ has set us free, but through love we will deliberately offer ourselves to be servants of all, and slaves to all. Then what makes us pray or go to church though we are not obligated? It is the love that we have received from God. Once we get to understand this principal, we will be able to apply it to any area in our relationship with others. Take submission for an example. Submission of a wife to her husband is understood by many women as being slavery. However, the church does not teach it that way. On the contrary, it is sheer love and out of total free will that a godly woman submit to her husband.

5. Seasons our speech...

Many people think that there is a contradiction between truth and love. God is both love and truth. So if God is the truth and God is love,



then there should not be any contradiction at all. In Ephesians 4:15 St. Paul says, "Speaking the truth in love." If we keep a balance between truth and love, and the truth is said and communicated with love, truth will never be a fault in your life. When our Lord Jesus Christ wanted to confront the Samaritan woman (John 4) he did that in a loving unoffending way, thus ending up winning her. If love characterizes every word we say, we will not lose anyone.

What is the Nature of Agape?

1. It is a willful love.

Agape is an emotion that rises in the mind and not in the heart. That is because it is a principle, a decision, and a freely made choice. Agape is the type of love with which you love your enemy. Therefore it cannot start in the heart. God would otherwise be unfair in asking us to love our enemies while knowing that our hearts cannot generate such demanding emotions. While Philia is a heart generated uncontrolled emotion towards the beloved, Agape is a concentrated exercise of the will. That is why training has to be established before we can exercise our will to love others. After Agape starts in the mind, it will be processed in the heart, and then emotions and feelings will develop. Who should be trusted more, the will or the emotions? In reality, it is the will that should be trusted more than the emotions because the latter could become influenced by some factors, but a decision made



with your will is a trusted decision.

2. It is a sacrificial love.

While Eros is a selfish love that receives only and Philia is a mutual love that receives and gives, Agape is always giving and caring without expecting or receiving anything in return. It is giving to the extent of laying down one's life for others (John 15:13). It is a readiness to go the extra mile and perhaps even shed blood for the beloved.

3. It is an unconditional love.

With Agape, the beloved does not have to earn their lover's adoration, but receives it as a free gift from the lover. This may sound far-fetched, and rather impossible; and we often pose the question: How can we possibly give our enemies our love for free? The answer resides with our Lord Jesus Christ. For while we were sinners and enemies to the Father, He loved us offering Himself on the cross for us.

4. It is a limitless love.

Agape is inclusive, not exclusive, in the sense that it does not differentiate among people based on sex, age, social status or ethnic background. It is expressed to everybody, and embraces all people.

This explicit definition of the nature of Agape may sound too difficult to attain, thus causing some to perhaps become discouraged in their pursuit of such a kind of love. There is a lot of truth in this negative response; because God who is Love, and who is infinite at the same time, renders this kind of love seemingly infinite; unreachable, and unattainable by anyone... It follows therefore that infinite time is required to achieve this infinite

love. The good news is that love has a lot in common with fire (Song 8: 6, 7), when we approach love, we grow in it, and although we will never achieve all of the infinite love, we will be ignited by its fuel and warmed by its warmth. On the other hand, those who do not practice love, will live in coldness and gradually experience emotional frost. The point here is that we all have to grow day after day in our love. Nobody can say I am done or that I have reached the infinite love with no more room for further growth. Even in eternal life we will grow in our love day after day. Growth in love becomes a target; and, whoever grows, and gets closer, will receive blessings in their life, and the coldness will melt gradually as they approach the source of the infinite love. The more you approach this love and grow in it; the more will your heart be warmed by it.

The nature and reality of Agape should not dishearten us nor make us hopeless of attaining it. On the contrary it should help us make it our goal to attain Agape and grow in it; day after day pressing toward this goal. St. Paul in his letter to Philippians 3:12 when talking about perfection, says: "Nor that I have already attained, or I am already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold on that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."

May the Lord of love fill all our hearts with His divine love and glory be to God for ever Amen.

