

The Superiority of *Agápē*
1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13, 2018-01-14A, #4

Introduction: One of our goals for this year is to help one another to grow in grace by practicing the one another commands. We have looked at encouraging one another and praying for one another. Today we will begin to examine the love that we are commanded to demonstrate toward one another. The Greek noun that is translated “love” is *agápē* (*ἀγάπη*) (1 Corinthians 13:13). The Greek verb is *ἀγαπάω* (*agapaō*) (1 Corinthians 13:7; cf. Matthew 5:44; 22:37, 39; John 3:16; 13:34).

The meanings of *agápē* (*ἀγάπη*): *Agápē* is a supernatural love that is produced by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22). *Agápē* is sacrificial. It sacrifices for the one loved. God demonstrated *agápē* when He gave His Son to die for sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Jesus also demonstrated *agápē* when He died a substitutionary death on the Cross for us (Isaiah 53:5-6; John 15:13; Ephesians 5:25). *Agápē* is superior to a number of things.

Today we will examine some of the things to which *agápē* is superior:

- I. *Agápē* Is Superior to All of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13).
 - A. Paul mentions five spiritual gifts:
 1. The gift of languages (v. 1; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10).
 - a. “Tongues” translates the Greek noun *γλῶσσα* (*glōssa*), which means “Language.”
 - b. The gift of languages was the gift most highly valued by the Corinthians, and the gift most highly abused (1 Corinthians 14:1-40)...
 - c. Paul said that speaking in different languages without *agápē* is just making noise (1 Corinthians 13:1)...
 2. The gift of prophecy (v. 2a; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10).
 3. The gift of knowledge (v. 2b; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8).
 4. The gift of faith (v. 2c; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:9; Matthew 17:20).
 5. The gift of giving (v. 3; cf. Romans 12:8).
 - a. “Bestow” translates the Greek verb *ψομίζω* (*psōmizō*), which means “to dole out” or “to give away bit by bit over a period of time.”
 - b. The greatest gift one can give is one’s life, but if not motivated by *agápē* there is no personal profit (v. 3; cf. John 15:13).
 - B. *Agápē* is superior to spiritual gifts because the gifts are temporal, but *agápē* is permanent (vv. 8, 13).
 - C. The gifts of the Spirit must be motivated by *agápē* for personal profit (v. 3; cf. Galatians 5:6).
- II. *Agápē* Is Superior to All Christian Virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13).

- A. Faith, hope, and love are three virtues that are frequently found together in the New Testament (v. 13; Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 5:5-6; Ephesians 4:2-5; Colossians 1:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8; Hebrews 6:10-12; 10:22-24; 1 Peter 1:3-8, 21-22)...
 - 1. The Greek noun that is translated “hope” is ἐλπίς (*elpis*), meaning a confident expectation that something is going to happen (1 Corinthians 13:13)...
 - 2. The Greek verb that is translated “hope” is ἐλπίζω (*elpizō*), meaning to confidently expect that something is going to happen (1 Corinthians 13:7)...
- B. The three marks of a mature church are faith, hope, love...
- C. In many of Paul’s prayers for the churches, he mentions one or more of these three virtues faith, hope, and love (Romans 1:8; Ephesians 1:15, 18; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4).
- D. A day will come when there would be no need for faith and hope (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)...
- E. Love or *agápē* will continue forever (1 Corinthians 13:13)...

III. *Agápē* Is Superior to All Other Loves:

- A. There are five Greek words for love in relation to relationships:
 - 1. The first word is *erōs* (ἔρως), which is romantic love. *Erōs* is spontaneous, sudden, subjective, and selfish. *Erōs* is produced without being planned. *Erōs* is sexual. It is from *erōs* that we get our English word “erotic,” which means, “tending to arouse sexual love or desire.” *Erōs* is concerned mainly with the body and with sex. *Erōs* is turned on by perfume and cologne. According to Dr. Kenneth Ulmer, *erōs* alone last from 3 to 4 years - 5 at most. *Erōs* alone will not sustain a marriage, because feelings fluctuate and appearances change. *Erōs* is good when it is blended with *philia* and *agápē*. *Erōs* is the love people fall into and out of.
 - 2. The second Greek word for love is *storgē* (στοργή) which is family love. *Storgē* describes the natural affection family members have for one another, especially a parent for a child and a child for the parent.
 - 3. The third Greek word for love is *philadelphia* (φιλαδελφία) which is brotherly love.
 - 4. The fourth Greek word for love is *philia* (φιλία) which is friendship love. *Philia* involves mutual sharing, sacrificing, and satisfaction. In the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Greek verb *phileō* (φιλέω) occurs in the Song of Solomon 1:2; 8:1. Your spouse should be your best friend.
 - 5. The fifth Greek word for love is *agápē* (ἀγάπη) which is supernatural, sacrificial, and superior to all other loves (John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:8).

B. A marriage relationship will be strong and healthy when these three loves are in operation: *erōs*, *philia*, and *agápē*.

IV. *Agápē* Is Superior to All Other Commands:

A. The command to love one another occurs more than any other of the one another commands: John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11; 2 John 1:5; cf. Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Galatians 5:14; Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:8; 1 Peter 3:8; 4:8; 1 John 4:12...

B. Jesus said, the greatest two commandments in the law are to love God and to love one's neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40).

C. Paul said: "Owe No one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8, NKJV). "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' You do well" (Galatians 5:14, NKJV).

D. James said: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,'" (James 2:8).

E. Some reasons the command to love is the greatest of all the commands:

1. *Agápē* motivates obedience to the other commands of God.

a. The first four of the Ten Commandments involve our relationship with God (Exodus 20:1-11)...

b. The remaining six of the Ten Commandments involve our relationships with others (Exodus 20:12-17)...

2. Jesus said in John 14:15, 21, 23, 24, New Century Version

a. "If you love me, you will obey my commands" (v. 15).

b. "Those who know my commands and obey them are the ones who love me" (v. 21).

c. "If people love me, they will obey my teaching" (v. 23).

d. "Those who do not love me do not obey my teaching" (v. 24).

V. *Agápē* Is Superior to All Other Evidences That One Is a Disciple of Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35)...

VI. *Agápē* Is Superior to All Other Evidences That One Is Saved (1 John 3:14; 4:7, 12, 13)...

A. Only the saved are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God (Romans 8:9)...

B. The Holy Spirit produces *agápē* which is supernatural (Romans 5:5)...

C. *Agápē* is the first on the list of the nine aspects of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

D. Jesus said: “You shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16)...

VII. Close:

Agápē is the love the Triune God has for us (John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:8; 8:35-39). *Agápē* is the love we are commanded to have for the Triune God and for others (Matthew 22:37-40; John 15:12; 1 John 4:7, 11).

Agápē is the love husbands are commanded to have for their wives (Ephesians 5:25).

Agápē is the love we are commanded to have for our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

We are commanded to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1)... We cannot imitate God’s omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience; but we can imitate His love and long-suffering (Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 4:8)...

Agápē is one of the virtues that makes us more like God than any other because God is love (1 John 4:8)...

Agápē is a fruit and therefore must be cared for in order to grow...

Let us pray for one another that God will give us the grace to grow in our love for one another, and let us also pray daily that God will give us the grace to practice *agápē*, especially at home and in the church.

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