

Agape Love

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Importance of Agape Love

If you could describe God in one word, what would it be? The answer, of course, is “love.” We are told in 1 John 4:8 that “God **is** love.”

The Apostle Paul spoke of three great qualities—faith, hope, and love—but he stated that the *greatest* of them is love (1 Cor. 13:13). Consider also verses 2–3: “And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have **all** faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have **not love**, I am **nothing**. 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**.” What a *powerful* statement concerning the importance of love!

When we read in Galatians 5 of the fruits of God’s Spirit, what is the very *first* fruit listed? Love! (verse 22).

Very plainly, then, “love” is extremely important to God. Again, God **is** love!

Yet, it’s vital to understand that the love being spoken of is not “human” love! Rather, it is *Godly* love—**agape** love.

“Agape” is the word used in the original Greek: “faith, hope and *agape*,” “but [if I] have not *agape*, I am nothing.” “God **is** *agape*.”

Different From Human Love

As the Apostle John stated: “This **is** the love of God that we **keep** His commandments” (1 John 5:3). Yet, agape love involves far *more* than just keeping “the letter of the law.” Agape is an *all-encompassing* attitude that we apply in *every* aspect of our lives! God’s love—His way of life—is the way of outgoing *concern* for others. It is the way of “give.” It is the attitude of *servicing* (Mark 10: 43–45). It is the way of helping and cooperating.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ showed that the Samaritan—unlike the priest and the Levite—went *far out of his way* to **help** the stranger in need. Christ ended the parable by telling us, “Go and do **likewise**!” (Luke 10: 30–37).

1 Cor. 13 is known as “the love chapter.” It describes the *attributes of* agape love. Of all the attributes discussed in this “love chapter,” perhaps the most *important* is given in verse 5, which states that agape “does **not** seek its own.” Instead of being primarily *self-seeking*, Godly love has its focus on others!

No, agape love is *not* self-centered. It does *not* seek its own. This is **not** natural, human love! “Agape” is *God’s* love; and the only way a human can *have* agape love is by receiving it

from God, as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 22).

God wants us to express His love to *all* men (1 Thess. 3:12). The Apostle Paul said, “As we have therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto **all** men...” (Gal. 6:10, *KJV*). This outgoing concern is to be a *way* of life—expressed at all times, and to all individuals.

Agape does *not* require reciprocation. We are to love others **whether or not** they love us in return! We are to love others even if we know we will receive evil in return! (Psalm 35:11–14). “**Love your enemies,**” said Christ, and “**do good** to those who **hate** you, **bless** those who curse you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6: 27–28).

Again, this type of love is *not* something we have naturally. It is only by receiving this love *from* God that we can come to feel and express this agape love to others!

An Active, Flowing CIRCUIT

It is only if a person deeply repents, **surrendering** his life in obedience to God—and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ—it is *only then* that the individual can have God’s Holy Spirit within him (Acts 2:38; 5:32). Then, God’s very **agape love** is poured *into* that individual’s heart **through** the Holy Spirit. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts **through** the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5: 5, *NRSV*).

Furthermore, God’s Spirit—God’s love—is *active*...flowing! It is poured out *from* God into **our** hearts, and then it proceeds forth **from** us: “...while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, “**Out of the believer’s heart** shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now **he said this about the Spirit**, which believers in him were to receive...” (John 7: 37-39, *NRSV*).

Yes, when a Christian *expresses* agape love, he is merely *returning* God’s **own** love *to* Him—or, is expressing God’s love *to* fellowman. God’s love is an active, flowing **circuit!**

When a person has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, he is a partaker “of the **divine** nature” (II Peter 1:4; Gal. 2: 20). Yes, the individual is then partaking of God’s very **nature!** And, the most important aspect *of* God’s nature, is *love*—Godly love—*agape* love!