

LOVE OF THE BRETHREN

Jno.13:34,35

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Love (in both its verb form [agapao] and its noun form [agape], is said to be “the characteristic word of Christianity”; that is, the distinctive, representative word of Christianity.
2. The fact of one’s love can be known only from the actions it prompts. Thus we have:
 - a. God’s love seen and known in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, 1Jno.4:9,10; Jno.3:16,17; Cf. Rom.5:6-10.
 - b. Love defined and illustrated for us in 1Cor.13:4-7 showing us what love is by what it does when and where it exists, which is true whether it is one’s love for God, for his enemies, or for his brother in Christ.
3. Love seeks the welfare of all (Rom.15:2), and works no ill to any (Rom.12:17-20; 13:8-10).
4. With this as the base to introduce our study of love of the brethren, we begin our discussion by noting that:--

II. DISCUSSION

A. THE GREEKS HAD FOUR WORDS FOR LOVE, ONLY TWO OF WHICH ARE USED IN THE N.T. SCRIPTURES.

1. Eros – not used in the N.T.
2. Storge – not used in the N.T.
3. Phileo – often used in the N.T., defined as: tender affection; emotional; an unselfish love; ready to serve; to be friendly to one; to have affection for; such as Jesus’ love for Lazarus, Jno.11:3,36; Cf. Jno.20:1,2.
4. Agapao (verb form) or agape (noun form) – used a multitude of times in the N.T.
 - a. To love in a social or moral sense.
 - b. This is the form of the word love that is recognized as “the characteristic word of Christianity,” and the word so often used in 1Jno. of the love of the Christians toward one another; or the love of the brethren.

- c. It involves seeking the highest good of another, not simply an emotion of feeling; it is “active good will.”
- d. This is the most common word translated love in the N.T. and is almost always, if not always, expressed by giving, or at least the idea of giving. Examples: Jno.3:16; Gal.2:20; Eph.5:2; 1Jno.3:1,16,18.

B. AGAPE LOVE IS COMMANDED OF N.T. CHRISTIANS AND THE PROPER OBJECTS OF IT ARE REVEALED IN THE N.T.

1. Our love for God heads the list of agape love, Lk.10:27. Cf. Mt.10:37; 16:24-26; 1Jno.4:19.
2. Love of our neighbor is also a required object of our love, Lk.10:27; Gal.5:14.
 - a. Who is our neighbor?
 - b. Answer: Whosoever needs our help is our neighbor. Anyone who needs our help, and whom we have the power and opportunity to help no matter who it iss.
 - c. Humanity is our neighbor.
3. We are even required to love our enemies, Mt.5:43-48. Cf. Rom.12:14,17-21.
 - a. Herein is that quality of love manifested known as “active good will.”
4. Spousal love is also a command, Eph.5:25,28,29,33; Col.3:19; Tit.2:3,4.
5. Finally, love of the brethren in Christ is a command of the Lord and a badge or mark and proof of discipleship of Jesus, Jno.13:34,35.

C. CONSIDER NOW SOME THE IMPORTANT TRUTHS REVEALED CONCERNING THE NEED FOR AND THE PRACTICE OF BROTHERLY LOVE, OR LOVE OF THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST.

1. Love of the brethren requires a willingness to sacrifice personal liberties in the interest of a fellow-Christian’s soul under certain circumstances, 1Cor.8:11,13; Rom.14:15.
2. It involves a willingness to come to the aid of needy brethren, even in distant places, by which to prove the sincerity of our love for each other, 2Cor.8:7,8,24.

3. We, as Christians, are called of the Lord to serve one another by love, Gal.5:13.
4. In walking worthy of the vocation or calling wherewith we are called we do so “with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing (bearing with) one another in love...”, Eph.4:1,2.
5. Being followers of God, as his children, we “walk in love, as Christ also hath love us, and hath given himself for us...”, Eph.5:2.
6. Our love for the brethren is not only that which is to exist but is to “increase,” to “abound yet more and more,” one toward another, Phil.1:9; 1Th.3:12; 4:9,10.
7. As brethren comforted in Christ our hearts are to be “knit” (joined, compacted) together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding...,” Col.2:2.
8. We are admonished as Christians to “consider one another to provoke (stimulate, incite another) unto love and to good works,” Heb.10:24. Cf. Heb.13:1 – “continue” or abide.
9. Being purified, born again, through the Spirit unto unfeigned (genuine, sincere) love of the brethren, by the word of God, the gospel, we are admonished, “see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently,” 1Pet.1:22-25.
10. While we are commanded to “Honor all men,” we are commanded to “Love the brotherhood,” 1Pet.2:17.
11. The Apostle John leaves no doubt about the fact that love of God and love of the brethren (agape love) are inseparably connected; that there is no such thing as love of the one without love of the other, 1Jno.2:9-11; 3:10-17; 4:20,21; 5:1,2.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Surely this impresses upon us why love (agape) is recognized as “the characteristic word of Christianity,” and of the utmost importance of possessing and practicing it one toward another as brethren in Christ.
2. Not only is it a command, but a privilege and a blessing to have brethren in Christ with which to share such love.
3. Think of both the present and the eternal blessings in store for one and all who possess and practice love of the brethren!