

Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.²⁴ And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

We continue with our study of the word “*agape*” for God’s divine love. It is very important to appreciate that this word does not refer to an emotional type of love of a love of deep, deep feelings for someone. People “fall in love” and then they “fall out of love”. The reason that they do that is because their love for someone was most likely based on feelings, on emotions, and when those feelings evaporated away, then their love also disappeared. Normally, when we think of the idea of love in our relationship with other people, it always has a very emotional element to it. For instance, my love for my wife certainly has this emotional element embedded within it, but it is much, much deeper than something emotional. However, even though that element may be present, it does not characterize the kind of love that God has for us. His love is one of His will, one of His choice to show love, and especially to people who do not deserve it. Even though emotion may very well be a part of God’s “*agape*” type love, it is not its chief characteristic. God’s love simply is not based on emotion. It is always a love that chooses to do something good for someone else, and from a pragmatic perspective on our part, we may not even know the person. I love a definition that I read by Ken Boa that stated that this kind of love could be defined as the “*steady attention of the will to another’s highest good*”.¹ It is a love in which one of its chief characteristics is that it is unselfish and benevolent to people who are in need, even to the point of sacrifice.

So, with this kind of love, what it means in a very practical way is that because of its sacrificial nature, it will voluntarily choose to experience things like inconvenience, discomfort, and even death in some instances, but it never expects something in return. [John 15:13](#) illustrates this kind of love when it says,

Jn 15:13 (NKJV) Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

[1 John 3:16](#) says,

1Jn 3:16 (NKJV) By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

I love **[1 John 4:9](#)** which says,

1Jn 4:9 (NKJV) In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

In **[Ephesians 5:1-2](#)**, as believers we are called on by God to love other people this way.

Eph 5:1 (NKJV) Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.² 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.

¹ Boa, ep.

The word for “walk” is the common Greek word “*peripateo*” which simply means to order your life in a particular way. People do this all the time. Athletes constantly train for their sport. They order their life by their diet, by their exercise regimen, by watching films of opposing teams, and by getting the proper kind of rest. It is a very deliberate decision to live a certain way. As Christians, a very major part of the kind of life that God has called us into is to demonstrate this kind of love to other people, and very often people that may at times be difficult. In [Matthew 22:37](#), we are called on to “*agapao*” God. In [Matthew 5:43-46](#), we are called to “*agapao*” even our enemies. In [Matthew 6:24](#) we are told not to “*agapao*” money. In [John 3:19](#) we are told not to “*agapao*” “darkness”.

In [Matthew 24:12](#), it is stated that in the end times that the “*agape*” love of many will grow cold.

Mt 24:12 (NKJV) **And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**

In [John 13:34-35](#), we find that the *agape* love of God is what actually characterizes a genuine Christian life.

Jn 13:34 (NKJV) **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

[Romans 14:15](#) is another very interesting verse on God’s “*agape*” love in that it states that when we fail to love other people that it may cause them to sin in some way.

Ro 14:15 (NKJV) **Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.**

[Ephesians 5:25](#) and [Colossians 3:19](#) say that husbands are to “*agape*” their wives.

What has to be appreciated about “*agape*” is that it refers to the love that is being developed, molded, and shaped in the believer by God as **the guiding principle of their Christian life.**² This is such a critical reality for the believer to understand and embrace. Becoming a Christlike believer means that we are being shaped by God’s love. It is always leaving its DNA, leaving its mark on our life. It is what God wants to define and characterize our life – that we love like He loved.

[1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) is probably the best known passage in the Scriptures describing this kind of love.

1Co 13:4 (NKJV) **Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

This is the way that the “*agape*” love of God behaves, this is how it is demonstrated in a person’s life. In fact, these attributes may be the most convicting list in all of Scripture. From a purely biblical perspective, this passage is the way that God’s “*agape*” love is described. For instance, the first quality is that the type of love that God wants us to have is a love that “**suffers long**”. It is the Greek word “*makrothumeo*” and it means to be “long-spirited”, to be forbearing with someone, to be patient with them. It means that we do not lose heart with them and are willing to persevere with them.³ This is one

² Renn, 611.

³ Strong, 1219.

of those attributes that can be very trying at times, especially if the person that we are dealing with is a very difficult individual. The issue, however, is never the other person, but us – how we respond. Are we personally willing to be patient and forbearing with someone that does not seem to merit that kind of response – and there are many people out there exactly like that. If I can say it this way, it means to have “long patience” which is not always easy. The prefix “*makro*” means long, and “*thumos*” means wrath and anger, and refers to our temper.⁴ It refers to a person being willing to exercise a prolonged restraint before reacting or over-reacting to someone or something they did or did not do.⁵ We are not going to go over each of these qualities here in [1 Corinthians 13](#), but suffice it to say that this is a very convicting list of godly attributes. There are 15 specific defining words or phrases depicting what God’s love is actually like, so this passage becomes a very strong model for each of us to emulate in our personal lives. When I read this passage, I can honestly say that it simply convicts me.

The enduring and godly attributes of these characteristics of God’s love cannot be overstated. They are what define the practical side of biblical Christianity in the most meaningful way. They are the substance, the evidence, and the crux of who we are and what we represent, and if these qualities are absent in our life, then we have simply missed what it means to be a Christian. Listen to how [1 John 4:8](#) states this,

1Jn 4:8 (NKJV) **He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

How strong of a statement is that? How do we address a verse like that – the person who does not show and demonstrate love in their life simply does NOT know God? You cannot make a stronger statement than this verse.

We have stated this before that [1 John 4](#) is probably the great love chapter of the Bible, and there are two very important themes that come from that chapter. The first obvious theme is that it is a very false statement and claim to say that we love God, but all the while we have no practical love for other believers. We can say in word that we love someone, but in reality, our love has to be demonstrated in very practical ways. So, if we say that we truly love God, then we must have a corresponding love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. For instance, [1 John 4: 7](#) and [1 John 4:11](#) say it this way,

1Jn 4:7 (NKJV) **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.**

1Jn 4:11 (NKJV) **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

[1 John 4:20-21](#) says,

1Jn 4:20 (NKJV) **If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.**

[1 John 5:1](#) says,

1Jn 5:1 (NKJV) **Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.**

⁴ Zodhiates, 939.

⁵ Verbrugge, 3429.

Honestly, there is no way to get around these kinds of verses. It simply is not possible. I am often staggered and amazed when I see how some Christians may treat other Christians, and how easily it is for some Christians to make mountains out of mole hills with other Christians. Being able to defer to others is a great quality. [Romans 12:10](#) says it this way,

Ro 12:10 (NKJV) *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another*;

What an incredibly great verse simply because it unites our love for one another with the willingness to defer to that person. Our tendency is to have to have our way, and sometimes we can easily misuse and hurt people when that happens. The word “**preference**” is the Greek word “*proegeomai*” and it simply means to lead the way for others, to show deference.⁶ It is the idea of being an example for them and displaying the love of God for them because the word carries the idea of “going before”. That is the way that it is translated in some of the Greek Interlinears. The primary one that I uses simply says “**preferring**”. This is the only place that this word is used in the New Testament. I love the way that the ESV, RSV, and HCSB says it. It says to “**Outdo one another in showing honor**”, and obviously it is applied as showing honor to the another Christian. The NIV simply says “**Honor one another above yourselves**”.

The second theme, and this may be the more telling of the two, is that it is completely bogus and spurious to say that we love God, but then refuse to obey His commandments and not to obey His Word. [1 John 5:2-3](#) says,

1Jn 5:2 (NKJV) *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments*.³ *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

[1 John 2:2-3](#) says,

1Jn 2:3 (NKJV) *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments*.⁴ *He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

In [John 14:15](#), Jesus encouraged His disciples with these words,

Jn 14:15 (NKJV) *"If you love Me, keep My commandments*.

As we have previously discussed, the only reason that we as Christians can actually love this way is simple. [1 John 4:19](#) gives us the answer when it says,

1Jn 4:19 (NKJV) *We love Him because He first loved us.*

The NASB, ESV, NIV, HCSB, ASV, ISV, and RSV simply says “**We love because He first loved us**”. The reason for the differences is because the Interlinears are different. The primary one that I use does not have the word “Him”, but the secondary one that I use does. God is the single source of this kind of love, but because we are now a part of Him, we too are able to love people unconditionally. We have a

⁶ Strong, 1334.

supernatural capacity that we previously did not have to love other people. I love Colossians 3:12-14 which says, and somewhat summarizes what we are addressing, when it says,

Col 3:12 (NKJV) **Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ 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*. ¹⁴ **But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.****

Now, as we go through the other “fruit of the Spirit” in [Galatians 5](#), I think that it would be correct to say that this “*agape*” love of God is the source and the stimulant for all of the other graces and virtues that follow in this listing. This quality is so rich and so powerful in what it accomplishes that no one but God could produce it in our lives, so it deserves our very highest attention to its outworkings in our life. In essence, to not love is to not know God.

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