**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**What Does It Mean To Love (Part 1)**

Thank you and good morning. Welcome to our program.

I think most people are aware of the fact that love is an essential quality in the life of a Christian. We cannot be a disciple of Christ without loving others. Jesus said to His disciples, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (John 13:34-35) We are commanded to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind (Matt. 22:37). We are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). We are commanded to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Husbands are commanded to love their wives (Eph. 5:25). These are just some of the passages that enjoin love upon us. But what does it mean to love? Some think of love as a sentimental feeling toward another that just happens. If the chemistry is right then love will occur. If the chemistry is not right then there will be no love. It is something we fall in to and we can fall out of it. But, this concept of love is NOT what our Lord means when He tells us to love Him and to love others.

This morning I want to talk about what it means to love.

The New Testament Scriptures were originally written in the Greek language. William Barclay, in his book *Flesh and Spirit* says “In English there is but one word for to love, and that word must do duty for many feelings. But Greek has four words for to love.” There is the Greek word “eros.” This is sexual love. Barclay says, “it always has a predominately physical side, and it always involves sexual love.” We get our word “erotic” from this Greek word. Now, “eros” is not found in the New Testament. That is not to say that there is no place for eros in the life of a Christian. There is, but it is restricted to marriage, between a man and his wife.

The second Greek word for love is “storge.” W. E. Vine defines this word “‘love of kindred,’ especially of parents for children and children for parents…” It was also used among the Greeks to describe the affection a child had for a toy. This word is only found in the New Testament with a negative prefix, “astorgos,” meaning “not this kind of love.” It is found in Roman 1 and 2 Timothy 3 where Paul is giving a list of those who were guilty of certain sins. Among them are those who are without natural affection, astorgos.

The third Greek word for love is “philia.” Barclay says “It describes a warm, intimate, tender relationship of body, mind and spirit.” Arndt and Gingrich define the word as “friendship,” “to have affection for, like.”

But the most common Greek word for love found in the New Testament is the word “agape.” This is the word that is used when we are commanded to love God, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to love our brethren, and to love our enemies. It is the word that is used when husbands are commanded to love their wives in Eph. 5:25. We learn what this word means by reading how it is used in the New Testament. What we learn is agape is not only a state of the feelings and emotions, but a state of the intellect or will. It is a choice. William Barclay says, “It is a state not only of the heart but also of the mind; it is a state not only of the feelings and the emotions but also of the will. It is not something which simply happens and which we cannot help; it is something into which we have to will ourselves. It is not something with which we have nothing to do; it is a conquest and an achievement.” The fact that love is commanded tells us that love is something that we can choose to have. As we mentioned earlier, some people think of love as something that just happens when the chemistry is right; it is something we fall in to and we can fall out of. Here is a husband who says he has fallen out of love with his wife. It just happened. This is not the case with agape. This can happen with lust, or with infatuation, but not with love. The husband who says he doesn’t love his wife anymore needs to repent, and choose to love his wife. You see, agape is consciously choosing to care for another.

And also agape is a love we can choose to have even for the unlovely. You see, we are commanded to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). There are those who think that only those who are deserving of love can be loved. Their idea is that man cannot expect to be loved if there is nothing in him to arouse affection. This is not the case with “agape.” Again, I like the way William Barclay puts it, “Agape is the spirit in the heart which will never seek anything but the highest good of its fellow-men. It does not matter how its fellow-men treat it; it does not matter what and who its fellow-men are; it does not matter what their attitude is to it, it will never seek anything but their highest and the best good.” In other words, there are those whom I may not be able to develop an emotional affection for, but I can still love them and care for them. For example, here is a blasphemer who ridicules God and the Bible and speaks evil of God and His people. I may not be able to have a deep emotional fondness for that person, but I sure can choose to care for him, and to seek what is in his best interest. I may not be able to have a “bosom buddy” type of love for a child abuser, or drug pusher, or for one who has injured my children, but I can volunteer my love, my desire for goodwill, seeking his good.

Now, loving the unlovely does not mean that we love their evil deeds, or that we condone their sins. No, we hate their sins, and because we love the sinners and want what is best for them, we encourage them to repent of their sins and find the salvation in Christ.

Another thing about the agape love is that it is active. This is true of the love that we are commanded to have for God. If we love God then we will show it by keeping His commandments. Jesus said in John 14:15, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* In 1 John 5:3, John defines what it means to love God. He says, *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”* I think a lot of people have a feeling for God, an affection for Him in their hearts, but they really don’t love Him because they don’t do what He says. It doesn’t matter how much affection I feel in my heart for Him, if I choose a lifestyle that is outside the will of God, then I do not love Him. Love is active. It will show itself by keeping the commands of God.

And when one who loves God does commit sin, what will he do? He will repent of the sin with godly sorrow and try to do better. He won’t continue in his sin. Why? Because he loves God and wants to please God.

Love is active. If I love my fellow man, I will then act toward him in a way that is in his best interest. First of all, I will do no harm to him. Paul said in Romans 13:8-10, *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”* Here is a married man who has an “affair,” and says, “I still love my wife and children, but sometimes these things happen.” This is nonsense. He does not love his wife and children because love does no harm to his neighbor.

Love will not only do no harm to his neighbor, but it will do good to his neighbor, even his enemy, where there is opportunity to do good. What did Jesus say, *“… love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”* (Matt. 5:44) 1 John 3:17-18 says, *“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

Someone says that he loves his enemy, but chooses to have nothing to do with him, and he rationalizes his decision by saying, “but I’m not doing any harm to him.” It is not enough to not harm an enemy, we must also do him good as we have opportunity. Galatians 6:10 says, *“as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* This includes doing good to our enemies.

This is the love God had for us. God sent His Son to die for us, even when we were in rebellion to Him. Paul says in Romans 5:7-8, *“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* God loved us even when we were not lovable. This is the kind of love we need to have in our hearts for our fellow-man, even our enemies. In Matthew 5:44 when Jesus commands us to love our enemies, bless them, do good to them, pray for them, He then says in verse 45, *“that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* It doesn’t take much to love those who love us, but to love those who hate us, takes the love of God in our hearts. Jesus said in Luke 6:32-36, *“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”*

There is a story of a girl who saw her mother, father and brother killed by a Nazi soldier during WWII.

Some years later this girl was now a nurse caring for wounded soldiers. One day this soldier who had killed her family was brought in, wounded. He was put under her care. Without the proper attention he would die. And so she was faced with a decision. Do I let my enemy die, or do I nurse him back to health? Because of her faith in Christ she decided to give him the care he needed. His health was restored. He later recognized her and remembered that he had killed her family. He asked her, “Why didn’t you let me die?” She said it was because of the love of Christ in her heart. He said he had never known of such love and he wanted to know more.

What does it mean to love? It means to love as God loves.

Our time is gone for today, but I want to talk more about this next week, and so we hope you will tune in then.

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