

Love

Peter said we must add love to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5-7). This is the last item he listed, but by no means the least. In fact, Paul said, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Without love, all is vain, even the highest sacrifice (1 Cor. 13:3).

The word "love" is translated from the Greek word "agape" and is defined as "affection, good-will...benevolence" (Thayer) and "probably love towards all, even enemies; not directed by sense and emotion, but by deliberate choice" (The Expositor's Greek Testament). Agape is distinguished from other types of "love." Eros is the fleshly or erotic feeling. Phileo deals with mutual affection. Agape is simply concerned with the object that is loved. This is the highest form of love.

Jesus expressed love when He came to earth to die for mankind (Eph. 5:2). He did not do it for His benefit, but ours. He left the glory of heaven, to live in the likeness of men and die a shameful death on the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). Even while on the cross, Jesus was thinking about others: His mother (Jn. 19:26-27); other men (Lk. 23:43); His enemies (Lk. 23:34). His actions were not contingent upon the response of men. Rather, He did it out of pure selflessness. Our love for others will cause us to selflessly sacrifice on their behalf.

Jesus also expressed His love for men when He confronted them with their sins. When Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman, His love compelled Him to expose her moral and doctrinal sins (Jn. 4:16-22). The woman reacted favorably, believing He was the Christ (Jn. 4:29). On another occasion, Jesus pointed out the sins of men, but they "began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him" (Lk. 11:37-54). Did Jesus lack love when He confronted these people with their sins? Certainly not!

John wrote, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:2-3). We will do this by sacrifice, service and helping others overcome sin. Let us add love to our faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and brotherly kindness.

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