

## Actions of Love

1 Cor. 13:1-8a

Introduction:

1. As you are probably aware the Greeks used four different words that might be translated with the English word “love.”
  - a. Agapaō is that self-sacrificial love described in Jn. 3:16 and Eph. 5:25.
  - b. Phileō is that brotherly love that Jesus had for the disciple in John 20:2.
  - c. Storge is the natural familial love. It’s negative is used in Rom. 1:31 and 2 Tim. 3:3 and is translated “unloving” in the NASB.
  - d. Eros references sexual love.
2. There were other words the Greeks used . . .
  - a. Mania—obsessive love. We might associate with stalking behaviors, jealousy and violence.
  - b. Ludus—playful love. We might associate with a crush or puppy love.
  - c. Pragma—the enduring love of commitment over time.
  - d. Philautia—The Greeks understood that in order to care for others, we must first learn to care for ourselves. Aristotle said, “All friendly feelings for others are an extension of man’s feelings for himself.”
3. Their distinctions are interesting and quite comparable to our own perceptions. Only the first two words are used in the N.T. The negative of “storge” is used in Rom. 1:31 and 2 Tim. 3:3 as already noted.
4. The word “agapaō” is the one used in 1 Cor. 13. Its definition is fleshed out in the identification of how love acts. In this lesson I want to note the individual actions and then discover how this variety of love fits in this context regarding the use of various spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. (In this first session we will focus our attention on verse 4.)

Discussion:

- I. Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous. Alternate translation: Love suffers long and is kind. Love envieth not. (We will consider the two positives: patience and kindness under this heading.)
  - A. The KJV translates “agapō” with the English “charity.” We will follow the more modern translation of “love.”
  - B. Different opinions exists as to whether the second “love” should go with “is kind” or “is not jealous” but it is not critical.
  - C. Our tendency is to see everything here in short three word sentences. This may cause us to miss some of the relationships between the concepts. For example notice where the NASB puts semi-colons. Does not change the overall meaning, but it does cause us

to think about the relationship between these clauses. Ex. verse 6: “Love does not rejoice with unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.” So it is good to look for relationships here.

- D. Note that patience, kindness, jealousy, etc. are ACTIONS. So the text tells us what love looks like behaviorally. Love may be a somewhat abstract concept, but the actions that demonstrate love are concrete. Don’t say that you love and fail to behave in a way consistent with love. Without such actions love is in question. There may be varying degrees of action. A little patience may indicate a little love. A little kindness may indicate a little love. Cf. Lk. 7:40ff.
- E. Love is patient (makrothumeō)—suffers long. The literal meaning is to be long tempered. It is used of Abraham who was given a promise and waited a hundred years for its fulfillment (Heb. 6:12); in 1 Thess. 5:14 of being patient with the unruly, the fainthearted and the weak. The Lord is patient, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Love is easy when it doesn’t require any suffering. It is more difficult when it requires suffering, and even more difficult when it requires suffering for a long time.
- F. There is some impatience evident in 1 Cor. For example in the eating of meats some would seem to ride rough shod over other’s consciences (1 Cor. 8:7ff).
- G. The second positive (in a whole series of negatives) is “love is kind” (chrēsteuomai).
  - 1. English equivalents: serviceable, good, pleasant, gracious, good of heart.
  - 2. It is used in Lk. 6:35 of God being kind to ungrateful and evil men. Ouch! Easy to love those who are kind to you. Not so much to those who are ungrateful and evil.
  - 3. It is used in Eph. 4:32 (note 31 and 5:1-2) and associated with Christ’s love for us.
- H. The Corinthians were admonished to pursue love (14:1). Love is something that grows (2 Thess. 1:3). Its growth can be evidenced in increased patience and increased kindness.

## II. There is now a series of negatives (4c-6a).

- A. Love is not . . . jealous, does not brag, is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness. (We will address jealousy, bragging and arrogance and the rest later.)
- B. Love is not jealous (zēloō). It envieth not (KJV).
  - 1. Some have distinguished jealousy and envy. Jealousy is an intense desire to keep what you have, while envy sees another with what you want. They are at least overlapping and both reflect an intense desire to have and to control.
  - 2. In Acts 7:9 the patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt.
  - 3. In Acts 17:5 the Jews became jealous of Paul and Silas and their influence in the synagogue of Thessalonica.
  - 4. Needless to say, Joseph’s brothers did not treat him kindly and the Jews were

neither patient, nor kind to the Christians in Thessalonica.

- C. There is evidence that the Corinthians were jealous of those with certain spiritual gifts in light of what Paul says in the Epistle of 1 Cor. Their jealousy is evident in their approach to leadership (3:3-9). Jealousy springs out of fleshly comparisons and sizing oneself up by comparison to others.
- D. Do you ever do this kind of thing? Love would appreciate differences and see them as gifts from God to be integrated with the gifts of others for the good of the team (1 Cor. 12:4ff). But when our fleshliness gets involved these differences become a source of self-diminishing, malice, envy and hatred (Titus 3:3).
- E. Do you see a relationship here between this way of thinking and bragging (perpereuomai) and arrogance (phusioō)?
  1. Why brag and why be arrogant, but to lift oneself up. What that means is feeling less than.
  2. And Aristotle's point may be on target here. He said, "All friendly feelings for others are an extension of man's feelings for himself." We might even say, "All unfriendly feelings for others are an extension of man's unfriendly feelings for himself."
  3. Arrogance corresponds to being puffed up in the KJV. That's what bragging does doesn't it? It puffs you up. Well why puff yourself up? You want to look bigger than you think you are.
  4. Read the following passages from 1 Cor. where the term is used: 4:6-13, 18,19; 5:2; 8:1. Seems to me that had a severe problem about their perception of themselves and it affected their relationships with one another.

Often we think of love as this "syrupy" emotional feeling and some shy away from it for that reason and others move toward it because it appeals to them. But this text examines hearts. It reflects on our feelings about ourselves and about our actions of self-diminishing. And it sees our relationships to others as affected by how we perceive of ourselves. Love suffers with others for a long time and it is kind because it understands and accepts itself and therefore acts graciously toward others. It is not jealous, has no need of bragging and puffing itself up. Indeed all these actions may be founded upon this same foundation. Read 1 Cor. 13:5ff.