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*Introduction:* (Review Greek words for Love)

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Remember our two Greek words for love?

**agape** (CWS-NT) – love **means** To love or to regard with strong affection. As referring to superiors and including the idea of duty, respect, veneration, meaning to love and serve with fidelity. (**obedience**) Used of those loving the Lord, meaning faithful disciples or followers of the Lord. This is not just a feeling but actions that go beyond feelings or emotions thus making it sub-stan-tive. (**To be sub-stan-tive is to be real rather than apparent.**) To esteem, or love, indicating a direction of the will and finding one's joy in something or someone. It differs from

**phileo** (CWS-NT) – love **which means** To have a personal love for someone or to have affection for someone, like with Christian love. It can be used to indicate the love of a thing, or to be fond of something, to like something. It is to love, indicating feelings, and warm affection. This is the kind of love sometimes expressed by a kiss, when a kiss is appropriate.

I want to review Peter's encounter with Jesus after the resurrection which we started to talk about last week because I believe it is pivotal in understanding these two kinds of love. Understanding these two kinds of love is important in all areas of our life, especially in our relationships with God and with other people regarding Christian love. Jesus has now come out of the grave and is asking Peter if he loves Him.

### **John 21:15-17 (NIV)**

[15] When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "**Simon son of John, do you truly love (agape) me more than these?**" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love (phileo) you." Jesus said, "**Feed my lambs.**"

[16] Again Jesus said, "**Simon son of John, do you truly love (agape) me?**" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love (phileo) you." Jesus said, "**Take care of my sheep.**"

[17] The third time he said to him, "**Simon son of John, do you love (phileo) me?**" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "**Do you love (phileo) me?**" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (phileo) you." Jesus said, "**Feed my sheep.**"

It is phileo love that Peter was feeling when he made a commitment to die with Christ if anything were to happen to Him. (Jn. 13:37) He meant every word of it. At that time, feeling a great amount of affection for Christ, Peter fully intended to use his sword to protect Jesus and even die for Jesus if necessary. Even in the garden he drew his sword out and started the battle to save Jesus from the mob that had come to arrest Him in the dark of the night. (Jn. 18:10) But Jesus grabs Peter's arm and tells him to

put his sword away. Then with agape love Jesus picks up His enemies ear, spits on it to clean the dirt off of it, and reattaches it to his head. Now think about how Peter feels at this moment. He has just laid his life on the line, just as he had told Jesus he would do. What do you think happens to that kind of passionate affection when it is cast aside like this? Clouded with misunderstanding, confusion and fear, Peter's passion grows cold. Is it any wonder that just a few hours later Peter finds himself in the crowd denying that he even knows Jesus?

A few days later, the resurrected Lord asks Peter if he loves Him with agape love. Peter answers, Lord You know everything, You know I love have phileo love for You. I took my sword out and tried to stop them, and You slapped me down and rejected my phileo love for You. You see as Jesus interacts with Peter after the resurrection he wants Peter to understand that he must love Jesus and His cause with agape love. **The kind of love that is an exercise of the human will aligned with the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause, or passion, or feelings, or affections, except that which lies in the nature of God Himself. (CWS-NT)** Peter must lead the church with the kind of love that goes beyond the feelings and emotions that can often cloud judgment.

It is only with this kind of agape love that Peter can lead the church that Jesus is placing in his care. Jesus' question, "do you love Me with agape love", is answered by Peter with the statement, "I love You with phileo love." Peter would not fully understand what agape love would mean to him as a leader of the church, or in his relationship with God, until after Pentecost. You see Peter, like most of us, thought that phileo love was the better love to express to Jesus. But in the long run it is agape love that will help us to have the kind of relationships God wants us to have with Him and with each other. That is not to say that we should not have phileo love. I am not trying to minimize phileo love in any way, it is very important. Phileo love has its place, but sometimes it cripples our judgment by clouding us with the feelings and emotions of the circumstances of the moment.

It took me a long time to understand this conversation between Jesus and Peter and their use of the two words for love. In the garden Jesus forced Peter to set aside his phileo love for Him by stopping Peter's attack. Jesus did this so God's greater plan for Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection could save the world. If Jesus had let His, or Peter's phileo love dictate the actions in the garden that night, God's plan of salvation would have been sabotaged. Now on the seashore Jesus questions Peter about his agape love for Him. I would like to propose that Peter still does not fully understand the kind of love he needs to have in order to lead the church, and have an intimate relationship with Christ after He has ascended into heaven. You see it is hard to have the kind of love expressed with a kiss, phileo love, when the object of that love is physically absent. In the aftermath of his denial, all Peter can think of is trying to let Jesus know that he loves Him with phileo love. So every time Peter responds to Jesus he uses the word for phileo love. In Jesus' last question to Peter He changes the word love from apape to phileo. "Peter do you love Me with phileo love?" In this conversation with Peter Jesus is trying to say, "if you love me with phileo love then you

need to set aside that phileo love, and love me with agape love as you lead My church." You see the church cannot be run by the changing feelings and emotions dictated by the circumstances of the millions of people that are part of it. Your personal relationship with Christ cannot be run by the changing feelings and emotions dictated by the circumstances of the moment. Satan will defeat you there. The church, each individual member of the Body of Christ, must follow God's will regardless of the circumstances around them. That can only be accomplished if we love God and each other with agape love.

Knowing the difference between agape and phileo love can mean the difference between a marriage that easily weathers the storms of life instead of one that falls apart. Knowing the difference between agape and phileo love can prevent an up and down relationship with God that battles over what I want and what God knows is best for me. Knowing what God's agape love for me means can bring a steadfastness to my relationship with Him that I have never know before. Knowing the difference between agape and phileo love can help me to understand God's command to love my enemy or to forgive those who hurt me.

*Wisdom From A Crab:* (Mankind's flaw.)

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J.P. Toomey writes a comic strip called Sherman's Lagoon. In his comic on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008 he shows a man and a woman standing near each other in chest deep water at the beach. Under the water a crab reaches out and pinches the woman who immediately turns around and slaps the man in the face. The crab remarks excitedly to the shark. "I did it! I started a pain reaction." The shark remarks, "A what?" The crab says, "It's a scientific fact that humans need to transfer their pain to others in order to feel better... The great unanswered question is this; how quickly does pain travel? If my calculations are correct, pain can circle the earth in approximately..." At that moment a rock hits the shark in the head and he yells, "OW!" The crab finishes, "28 seconds".

Could the crab have a real grasp of the reality about why we lash out against others who have hurt us? "It's a scientific fact that humans need to transfer their pain to others in order to feel better." I'm not sure about the science that the crab used but I am sure his creator has a grasp of observing human beings. Jesus said that the greatest love a man can show others is to die for them, and yes the word He uses there in (Jn 15.13) is agape love. This is the exact opposite of what the crab thought. You see agape love takes on or absorbs the pain of others. Look at the cross. I think we transfer our pain to others because we don't understand that we need to love others, and be loved by others, with agape love. The kind of love it takes to stop a pain reaction is agape love not phileo love because phileo love is usually controlled by the feelings and emotions of the moment. And when we have been hurt, our feelings and emotions are bent toward a pain reaction, as the crab in Sherman's Lagoon would put it. dgb

*Wisdom From The Word:*

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In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul helps us to understand agape love in a very practical way.

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NIV)

[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. (Now, you would think that to give all one possesses to the poor, or to surrender their body to be burned for someone else is the height of showing love for them. But Paul says that these amount to nothing. This sounds like an inconsistency in his reasoning. We can only understand the kind of love spoken of here when we understand that Paul is talking about agape love.)

[4] Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. [5] It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [6] Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. [7] It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

[8] Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. [9] For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10] but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. [11] When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. [12] Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

[13] And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

It is important to know that the word phileo is never used in this passage, which is commonly referred to as the love chapter of the New Testament? Paul wrote these words to the Corinthian church as part of a discussion to help church members discover their place of action in the church and in the Kingdom of God. He was trying to get them to understand that their priority in the Kingdom of God was not what their talent or gift or position of action or responsibility might be. He wanted them to understand that, always, the priority in the Kingdom of God is agape Love. He wanted them to understand the kind of love that they needed to have in order to be a successful part of the Kingdom of God is agape love. Look at the verses that lead up to 1 Corinthians 13...

## 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (NIV)

[27] Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. [28] And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. [29] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? [30] Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

[31] But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now **I will show you the most excellent way.**

Paul is telling the Corinthian church that there are different talents, gifts, and responsibilities within the church. Not everyone is the same; we are not carbon copies of each other. There is variety and diversity in the Kingdom of God and we must never forget that. However there is one thing that must be common to all members of the Body of Christ, and once we know what that is, we have found the most excellent way Paul speaks of here. From this statement, “**And now I will show you the most excellent way**”, he begins the love chapter. I want to read the love chapter again, and this time I’m going to insert the word **agape** where it is used or referred to in the original text.

“**And now I will show you the most excellent way**”

### **1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (dgb)**

[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not **agape love**, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not **agape love**, I am nothing. [3] If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not **agape love**, I gain nothing.

[4] **Agape love** is patient, **agape love** is kind. **Agape love** does not envy, **agape love** does not boast, **agape love** is not proud. [5] **Agape love** is not rude, **agape love** is not self-seeking, **agape love** is not easily angered, **agape love** keeps no record of wrongs. [6] **Agape love** does not delight in evil, **agape love** rejoices with the truth. [7] **Agape love** always protects, **agape love** always trusts, **agape love** always hopes, **agape love** always perseveres.

[8] **Agape love** never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. [9] For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10] but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. [11] When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. [12] Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

[13] And now these three remain: faith, hope and **agape love**. But the greatest of these is **agape love**.

Another example of the differences between these two Greek words for love is seen in the application to the love one has for life. Jesus talked about loving life with *phileo* love, from an undue desire to preserve it, forgetting the real object of living. This kind of love for life meets with the Lord’s criticism.

### **John 12:25-26 (NIV)**

[25] **The man who loves his life** (with *phileo* love) **will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world** (temporary circumstance) **will keep it for eternal life**

(permanent circumstance). [26] **Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.**

What is the real object of living? Probably one of the most asked questions, "why am I here, why do I have life, what should I do with my life?" Jesus said the answer is this, "the real object of living is the Kingdom of God; eternal life."

As time went on Peter came to understand the agape love that Jesus was trying to get across to him on that day by the sea after the resurrection.

### **1 Peter 3:8-12 (NIV)**

[8] Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. [9] Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. [10] For, "Whoever would love life (with agape love) and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. [11] He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. [12] For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

In his relationship with Jesus, Peter had learned that agape love was the more excellent way. This agape love that Peter writes about here is love that **consults the true interests of living. Here the word phileo would be quite inappropriate.** (CWS-NT)

### *Wisdom From Experience:*

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C.T. was my dog. I mean she was with me anytime I was at home and would do whatever I told her to do. If I was sitting in my easy chair watching a movie, she was in my lap. If I went into my office at home, she was there. If I was working in the yard, she was right by my side. If we were out of the yard and some distraction came to entice her to run after it, I only had to say NO! and she would come to my side. I had a great love for her, she had captured my affections like no other dog I had had before her. She had seizures and was on a medication that would control the seizures, and allow her to live longer, but the medication was slowly destroying her internal organs. In time she came to be so stressed by the poor condition she was in because of the medication, she became mean to our other dogs. One day she attack our dog stubby and tore her face open. It was only a matter of time before she might bite a human. I had to make the decision to have her put to sleep. As I stood beside the table in the vet's office and held her down as they gave her a shot to put her into a stupor, it took every ounce of strength and mental discipline I had to hold her steady. Not because she was struggling, because she wasn't. My phileo love for her, my affection and emotions for her, did not want to let her go. However my agape love for our household dictated that she be put down. I made a choice based on agape love for the greater whole of our family that required me to set aside my emotions and feelings of phileo love for this one dog. That's what agape love is all about, it is love for the greater good, it is love for the bigger picture, for the long run.

I know, she was just a dog, but most dog lovers will tell you that a dog almost becomes

like a child or a family member to those in the household. What about the love a parent must sometimes show a child to protect them? Sometimes parents must make tough decisions to take actions that ignore the passions, feelings and affections they have for that child in order to do what is best for that child. I have been with families who have had to make the decision to take a loved one off of life support. You will never be able to imagine what that is like unless you have had to do it to a love one of yours. But this is an example, all be it an extreme example, of where agape love comes into play in our lives today.

Most of the time when the New Testament talks about love it is talking about agape love. Agape love is used in 207 verses in the New Testament, but phileo is only used in 21 verses in the New Testament. I think Christ wants you and I to have, "the kind of love that is an exercise of the human will, aligned with the divine will, in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause, or passion, or feelings, or affection except that which lies in the nature of God Himself." (CWS-NT) You and I can only have this kind of love if we have decided to follow Jesus Christ in our daily life. This takes a life changing experience where I do more than ask Christ to forgive me of my sins and deliver me from the guilt and punishment of sin. This takes a complete surrender of my will to His will in my daily life. Then and only then can I live out the kind of love God demands in His Kingdom.

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