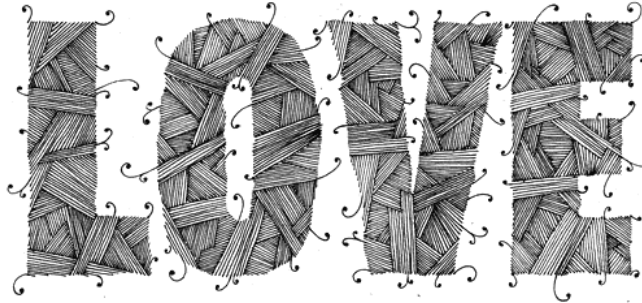


Attributes of Agape

“Love is not Arrogant”



Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: 1 Corinthians 13¹

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Series: Love the Church

Introduction: Open your Bible to John 13:35 and 1 Corinthians 13. We begin a series that I hope will be transformational in our church entitled “Love One Another”. Today’s message is entitled: “The Attributes of Agape Love”.

The defining evidence of a Christian – the mark that sets us apart as followers of Christ – what is it? Is it our intellectual greatness? Is it our spiritual gifts? Is it our kindly attitude? Is it our ability to articulate eloquent morality? None of these things define the Christian. The one thing that sets us apart is our LOVE.

John 13:35, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love we shall see, by definition, is self-sacrifice. It is defined by both John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16.

The essence of love is self-sacrifice

- **John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...”**
- **1 John 3:16, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”**

Love is not an option:

- Husbands are to love their wives.
- Wives are to love their husbands.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

- Believers are to love God.
- Believers are to love their enemies.
- Believers are to love their neighbors.
- Believers are to love one another.

1. The city of Corinth was full of murder, rape, greed, political corruption, and almost every kind of pleasure money could buy. And yet, in the middle of all that, the Lord had called out a people to be His own.

The church was full of just ordinary people who had spent most, if not all of their lives in the influence of their city and its vices. As Christians, they had even been given “gifts” to help them live that new life.

2. Paul said in **I Corinthians 1:7**. . **that they came behind in no gift**; et, they were having a tough time living it!

- There was backbiting and division in the church.
- Incest was being accepted and tolerated.
- Christians were suing each other in pagan courts.
- There was a great deal of sexual sin.
- Divorce rate was high.
- There was much "dishonor" within existing marriages.
- And even the Lord's Supper was made a mockery of.

We’ve already looked at four attributes of love, two that describe what love IS, and two that describe what love is NOT.

Attribute 1: Love is patient (putting up with others)

1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is patient”.

Definition: The Greek word translated “patient” means “long-tempered” and is the exact opposite of our expression “short-fused.” **Patience is the ability to control and restrain sinful anger or frustration.** Remember to love is to persevere in laying your life down for people when they are unreasonable and unworthy and ungrateful. Love bears up for a loooooooooooooooooong time. It suffers loooooooooooooooooong.

Attribute 2: Love is kind (giving to others)

1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is...kind”.

The word “kind” means useful. It means to lift the burden of another, to furnish what is needed. Kindness always puts others needs before one’s own.

Kind means to be useful or bear up under—to lift the weight for someone. Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 11:30**, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” The Greek word for “kind” in 1 Cor. 13 is translated here as “easy.” It’s the same word. Jesus bears the harness of life for us. We ought to bear it for others.

Attribute 3: Love is not jealous

1 Cor. 13:4, “love does not envy”.

Love is not zealous for “my ...rights, things, opinions, ideas, way, etc. at all cost.” Love puts others first and zealously wants them to succeed. Indeed we ought to be happy and eager to sacrifice ourselves so that others might succeed! We ought not to think of our selves but of others!

Attribute 4: Love does not boast

1 Cor. 13:4, “love does not...boast”.

This could be translated, “Love is not anxious to impress” or “love makes no parade.” Love does not seek to point out her accomplishments, but let’s other praise her, if at all. Love stays in the background and quietly serves. **Bragging takes the focus and honor off God and places it squarely on “me.”**

Attribute 5: Love is not arrogant

1 Cor. 13:4, “love...is not arrogant”.

I. Definition: To be **arrogant** is to be puffed up and self-focused. It speaks of someone who has a “big head.” Love doesn’t get it’s head swelled, it focuses on the needs of others. Among Christians, the worst pride is *spiritual* pride. Wesley says that if we are possessed by love, we are “*our souls are humbled to the dust!*”

This is an attitude of **superiority over others**. It is usually combined with a feeling of contempt or disregard for the other person.

Arrogance puts self at the center of one’s life. Love is opposite of arrogance. Love lays down it’s life for others. Love lifts others up. It not does, but actually thinks and believes that others are better and superior to themselves. It is not a low self esteem, but a realistic view of the smallness of self in light of the greatness of God.

This word “arrogant” is from the Greek word *phusioo* that means to inflate, blow or puff up. In the N.T. it is used figuratively of pride or self-conceit. This could be translated as follows. “Love does not put on airs.” “Love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.” A believer who lays down his life for the brothers does not expect life to revolve around himself.

The word expresses an attitude that is puffed up, inflated with pride, vanity and arrogance. J.B. Phillips paraphrases it: love does not “cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.”

Pride is an issue of the heart. Understanding how God describes you and Himself should help you toward conquering pride by putting on humility. God hates pride (Prov. 6:16-17). Learning to love means that you are humble about your gifts, abilities and place in life. You realize everything you have is a gift from God (Jms. 1:17). “*To whom much is given much will be required*”.

This word means, to blow, to puff, to pant; then to inflate with pride, and vanity, and self-esteem. Love prevents not only the boasting that comes from pride, but it chokes out pride itself. When a person loves, they see themselves as lower than every one else.

It's not worried about what other people think. The word could rightly be translated “puffed up”. Love is humble, meek, modest, unobtrusive.

Pride and arrogance are satanic. Satan was the first to demonstrate his arrogance by his proud statements: “I will be like the Most High”.

The person who loves does not despise others but has a compassionate, lowly, and humble attitude toward all people.

One sure fire way to know that you are loving is if you feel compassion for those around you. Arrogance is *contemptuous* of others, but love is *compassionate*.

It doesn't have to put on “airs” to be bigger than what it is! (HOT AIR). Love is not pretending to be something we are not!

II. Practical ways arrogance (or a spirit of superiority) is detected in the Body of Christ.

- *Being perpetually late to church demonstrates a proud or arrogant spirit* (unless you are providentially hindered). Some are late because they are new Christians and they are trying to work themselves into a better job so they can get to church on time. But if you are perpetually late, you must think there is a special exception for you. Everyone else is held to the standard that church begins at a certain time. If you are perpetually late, you need to see this as a sin of selfishness and pride.
- *A lack of a generous spirit in giving demonstrates a proud or arrogant spirit.* The sure sign of compassion and love for others is giving. Charles Spurgeon said “You should feel for others--*in your pocket.*”

Perhaps you ask, "Why should I have to give?" That is a spirit of superiority. You should not ask "Why me?" You should ask "Why not me?" God commands us to lay aside generously according to what we bring in. A tithe is a good place to start. And we are told that we should do this cheerfully. A proud person hates to hear me say that. A humble person wants to be the first one to give. Remember, love is self sacrificing. How better to demonstrate this than to give to the needs of the local Body of brothers and sisters in Christ.

I prefer never to speak of finances, and I am now speaking only to those of you who profess to be born again by the grace of God. I will be honest—I do not want to know what you all give. I do not look at the records. But I will say this, if you are in a position of leadership, you should be an example of generosity. If you are not giving according to what God has given you, and a tithe is a good place to start—then you should resign. If you are a teacher in this church and that offends you, then you should definitely resign. It is arrogant to come as a fellow member of the Body of Christ and to see people sacrificing—and to let them do all the sacrificing and you give nothing. If you have no desire to give, I wonder if the grace of God is truly in you.

Giving is not about how much you give, but how much you give in proportion to what you take in. "To whom much is given, much will be required". Do you think you don't need to give? That is arrogant. You are not sacrificing your life for the brothers.

Example of the poor widow who gave two mites: You might say, "Well, I'm poor". Well, God saw the widows 2 mites, and He said though she was poor, she gave more in proportion than anyone around her. Are you sacrificing, or are you just sitting and soaking. A person who lays down his life for the brothers is humble in finances and therefore generous.

Do you regularly give to people in need over and above your tithe? Do you regularly give to missions, or to people for benevolence? Do you see a need and say, "I need to meet that need"? or do you say, "Someone else will surely meet that need"? If so that is not loving, but arrogant.

- *To think you know it all is arrogant.* Remember what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 8:1**, "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." A person who walks into church and thinks they know what is best for the church is arrogant. I've seen various people come to our church the years, and they come on strong, as if they wrote the book on how churches should

operate. They want to change everything. Now I'm not against biblical change at all. But you ought not think that any one will listen to you unless you first lay down your life in humble service to the Body. If you think you know it all, then realize you know nothing. Demonstrate your love by how you serve others first, not by how much you know! What does John say in **1 John 3:18**, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

- *To never have people over to your home demonstrates a haughty and arrogant spirit.* If you don't want to put yourself out for others, it is a spirit of superiority. Humble yourself and be a servant to others. After a meal, Jesus washed his disciples feet as a household servant. You ought to have people over to your home and serve them! To not serve the Body is selfish and prideful and arrogant.
- *To hold grudges against people is proud and arrogant. Romans 8:35*, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Nothing! What should separate us from the love of other Christians? Nothing? But you don't know what he or she did to me! That's arrogance. What did you do to Christ? What did He do for you in exchange? Do the same!
- *To have an ungrateful spirit is a sure sign of a proud spirit.* Romans 1:18 says of people who are not born again, but under God's wrath, that "although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him". Proud people don't realize what a privilege it is to not be sent directly to hell. Proud people take for granted what others do for them. They are loafers. They are free-loaders. They do not give thanks or sacrifice of themselves, but think that everyone else should do the work. They are not grateful, but think they are owed. Love is not that way. Love is humble and amazed and thankful at all the gifts we get to enjoy in life! Humble people say thank you and show gratitude. It means a lot to recognize what others do for you!
- *A lack of service is a sure sign of a proud spirit. To not serve in any area of the church when you are asked is selfish and arrogant.* If you are asked to serve in the **Sunday School**, then you shouldn't let a second go by before you say yes. You may say, "It's not my gift". It might not be, but it is your responsibility. All of us are called to "make disciples" by teaching people. Are you exempt from that? If you are not ready to teach, you should at least be willing to be a helper.

You might be called upon as a lady to work in the **nursery**. You are allowing a young mother to hear a service.

You might be asked to serve as an usher or to do the sign ministry or simply to make the coffee or pick up the bagels in the morning.

- *A lack of church attendance is a sure sign of a proud spirit.* Hear me now because this is major. Look at our attendance on Sunday evening. Why do you not come back?
 - You say, "I'm busy." Do you not think that the people that are here on Wednesday nights and Sunday nights are not busy?
 - You say, "I have to work". Do you not think the people here Sunday and Wednesday nights did not have to fight to get off from work?
 - You say, "Sunday's my only day off", or "it's just too crazy during the week". Do you not think it is just as crazy for the others here? Do you not know that most who come on Sunday and Wednesday evenings also are sacrificing to come back. What makes you better than others that would sacrifice?
 - If you want to lay down your lives for the brothers, *you can start by sacrificing your time to be with them!*
- *To be overly sensitive of the criticisms of others demonstrates a proud spirit.* I think of a story from the life of William Carey.

William Carey: William Carey is known as the father of the modern missions movement. Christians all over the world know who he was and honor him. He came from a humble place; he was a shoe repairman when God called him to reach the world. Once, when Carey was at a dinner party, a snobbish lord tried to insult him by saying very loudly, "Mr. Carey, I hear you once were a shoemaker!" Carey replied, "No, your lordship, not a shoemaker, only a cobbler!" Today, the name of William Carey is remembered, but nobody remembers who that snobbish lord was! His love showed itself in not having a big head about himself.

When you are criticized, remember the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon:

"Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation, and you would be no gainer by the correction. If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth."

III. Consider Christ's humble, selfless example: God Himself when He walked this earth was so filled with love for the entire human race, that He did not think of Himself, but thought only of others. He thought of their great need. He did not arrogantly complain about what He deserved, what He was owed, but wept for the great need of the people. Their need was to be pardoned of great transgression. And all their transgressions were against Him. Yet He was not arrogantly ascerting His rights, but laid them down as nothing.

Love doesn't have a superiority attitude. It doesn't look at itself as better than others. It doesn't look down on others. It doesn't create class distinctions. It isn't puffed up.