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**As we go through 1 Corinthians 13, I find myself, asking myself at different times during the day: Was that charitable? Was that agape love?**

In all my actions and interactions, and in my conversations throughout my everyday life, am I showing agape love? Is agape love coming forth from Christ in me? If the "Love of God" is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you, shouldn't it be "being shed abroad" from your life to those around you? We should be living witnesses for Christ in what agape love looks like in the world. 1 John 4:7-8.

You are a Christian in an UN-Christian world! Be assured that the devil is ready right at all times to influence you away from Christ!

One of the devil's "often used wiles or methods" is to find something (in the world) that you feel very strongly about, and someone (in the church) that disagrees with you; that's when he will aim his fiery dart into your mind to incite and stir you up against your brother or sister in Christ!

If you take the bait, his work is done! While he's got you distracted, he's gathering up the good seed. Oh, he'll be ready right after the service...to get your mind focused on anything but the Word!

What should be spiritually normal for you, child of God is that you THINK and ACT upon the Word that was preached on the Lord's Day. You take care of it, and you hide it in your heart! Psalm 119:9-15, 48

Christian, that's how you grow and mature in the faith of Christ and in agape love; you believe what is written in the Word, you ask God to conform you to the image of Christ (that His love would be in you and come forth from your life); and then you obey God's truth so that you begin to be longsuffering, patient, and kind. You don't vaunt or brag about yourself, or pridefully boast. And when you behave disgracefully or selfishly, you remember the Word and turn from your sins to Christ. **Christ is to be being formed in you Christian!**

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8A

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**1 Corinthians 13:5: "Charity or Agape Love is not easily provoked"**

If you're someone who is "easily provoked to anger" EVERYONE around you knows it...but do you know it? Agape love is NOT easily provoked or irritated; agape love is NOT quick to anger or instantly exasperated.

How often do we un-gospel ourselves and betray Christ by how we quickly/sinfully react to something/someone in the world, when as Christians, our reaction should be the complete opposite; to NOT BE easily provoked to anger is the reaction of agape love!

Ecclesiastes 7:9, Proverbs 12:16, 14:17, 29, James 1:19

Once again, Paul teaches us what agape love IS, BY WHAT IT IS NOT. When you are provoked to anger, the love of Christ should be what comes forth from your life! The reaction of agape love IS Patience, kindness, graciousness, courtesy, and selflessness. Do you see how beautifully each virtue and each characteristic of agape love harmonize together?

You can't possess ONLY One of them; but agape love comes all packaged together. Remove one virtue of agape love and every aspect and attribute of it is compromised!

Remove Longsuffering; patience, the result is impatience, intolerance, and a short temper; remove kindness and rudeness ensues; remove humility and meekness and vaunting and pride is at the door; remove graciousness and comeliness and in comes disgrace and an ugly spirit. Remove selflessness and there will be selfishness.

When we are easily provoked to anger, we are demonstrating a want of every excellent virtue of agape love. Consider David, who had been anointed King in Israel, but who would not take the throne until Saul's reign ended.

Because Saul knew this, he was full of rage, envy, and jealousy against David, and so he was consumed with hunting David to kill him.

When David had golden opportunities to kill Saul, he would not, but humbled himself in obedience to the froward and rejected king. I would like to use David and an example of one FIRST, who was NOT easily provoked, but then, when he was in an unguarded moment of being easily provoked!

1 Samuel 24:16-22, 25:13-22

Could it be because David was constantly prepared against Saul's hatred? But this situation with Nabal happened in an "unguarded (unexpected) and unprepared" moment when David was NOT prepared! The result was he "easily provoked to sinful anger". SEE how important it is for us as children of God to NEVER let our guard down! Psalm 106:32-33

Leviticus 19:17-18, Romans 12:17-21,

Beloved, the more the love of Christ is cultivated in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, the more you "whelm yourself" in God's Holy and Sanctifying Word, the more of God's grace will be upon you so that you will be PREPARED and READY when you are unexpectedly hit with a sidewind and tempted to be easily provoked to sinful anger. (Watch for rogue waves!)

### **"Charity or Agape Love thinketh no evil"**

This virtue or characteristic of agape love is directly linked to "not being easily provoked to anger". Your mind/heart must constantly be in the Word, (the spiritual high ground); it is

there where you will be safe from the wicked one; in your mind/heart is where you must do the work of cultivating the good seed of the Word. Captivating every thought in obedience to Christ!

Agape love in you will cause you to think the best of others, of your brethren, your neighbors, and strangers, and to NOT have a judgmental or critical spirit, or always think the worst of others.

Remember Job was an upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil; but when he was tried and afflicted and attacked by the devil, his closest friends thought the worst of him, and not the best of him. Job 4:1-8, 5:1-6

How often do we IMMEDIATELY think evil of someone for reasons which we do not know to be true, because of something that "we heard about them" or because of something that "we perceive" about them?

Remember godly Hannah who was judged harshly by Eli, the priest, when she was at the throne of grace praying unto God! 1 Samuel 1:9-17

If we react (in our community of brethren and friends) like Job's friends did toward him in his affliction, or like Eli did toward godly Hannah, it's because we are woefully wanting of agape love!

The result of being thus spiritually bankrupt is we will be harsh and critical judges! What did some say of the apostles when they were filled with the Holy Spirit @ Pentecost? Acts 2:1-4, 12-16

John 7:24: "Judge NOT according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment". Proverbs 17:4, Psalm 15:1-3, 1 Timothy 6:3-5

**If agape love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will think the best of others not the worst!**

If you're going to "think evil" of someone or judge anyone, go look in the mirror, you'll find more than enough sin and evil in your own life to censure and be critical of. More often, than not, we hypocritically judge others for sins that we ourselves are guilty of!

Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 2:1-3, James 4:5-12

### **Philippians 4:8-9**

Charity/Agape Love: Is NOT easily provoked to sin or anger or ill-will; and Charity/Agape Love thinks the best of others, not the worst; agape love thinketh no evil.

1 Corinthians 13:6: "Rejoiceth NOT in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth!"

Here's what it all comes down to, where is your heart? What do you rejoice in this morning? In fulfilling worldly pleasures on the Lord's Day. Or rejoicing in the truth of the love of Christ; in this beautiful agape love?