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These Qualities

# AGAPE

2 Peter 1:7

The supreme virtue that glues all the other qualities together – “*and the greatest of these is…”* (1 Cor. 13:14)

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,

 he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was on him,

 and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

 each of us has turned to our own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

 the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:5-6

**WHAT**?—*love can really only be defined by its operation, its effects; its essence is a mystery.*

* God is love (agape) (1 Jn. 4:8).
* Agape is a free, selfless decision to act benevolently on behalf of another.

This is love: “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 Jn. 4:10; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:6-10)

* The goal of God’s loving action is a new humanity (1 Cor. 8:3).

By this the love of God was manifested in us—that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (1 Jn. 4:9)

**WHY**?--God’s love is what we have been chosen, saved, exampled, and empowered to bring to this world. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

* *By this* (love/agape) *all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* (Jn 13:35) – Creation demonstrates the general revelation of God (Rom. 1:19,20); the new creation depicts the specific revelation of God as love—the Spirit bears fruit in the real disciples life. (Jn. 20:31; Gal. 5:22)
* A command—a new command I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Jn. 13:34)
* Our sins have been forgiven (Lk. 7:47); it is who we now are—“releases a new and overflowing love” TDNT
* We need it forever. (1 Cor. 13:14)—*the greatest of these!*

**HOW**? –Agape is not a sentiment or feeling, it is a decision (call) to action toward an object.

* For ***God*** (Matt. 22:37) – total commitment and total trust proven genuine through obeying God’s commandments (Jn. 14:15, 23-24,31) and enduring persecution with loyalty (Rev. 2:4; 12:11).
* For your ***brother*** (1 Jn. 3:16-18, 23; 4:7, 19-21; Gal. 6:10) —offering trust and meeting needs.
* You can practice love without trusting, but you can’t trust without loving. Whatever is in the way of trust must be dealt with in order to meet God’s vision for his family.
* For your ***neighbour*** (Matt. 22:39) *Who is?* (Lk. 10:25-37)
* Anyone within range of your benevolence
* “As yourself”🡪 a comparative not an instruction or a way to avoid the command until you can get yourself there.
* For your ***enemy*** (Matt. 5:43-48)—*graduate level (48)*
* Because that’s how God is (Ps 145:9)
* That’s who we used to be!

The world knows only a “love” that brings destruction (eros), which only seeks to meet desires; the church was birthed by a love (agape) that gives. It is to this most remarkable love you have been selected.