

I. **Central Definitions of Racism**

- A. Racism can be defined as the belief that one people group is more valuable than another and the practice of distinguishing one people group as more important than another.¹
- B. “Fundamentally, racism has to do not merely with real or perceived differences between people groups but with the value and significance of these differences. It has to do with the presumption of superiority over other people groups and the conduct of personal and social life that manifest this presumption in personal, communal, and sociocultural ways. Racism has to do with beliefs, actions, and structures that centralize some by marginalizing others on the basis of supposed differences.”²
- C. Whereas the word racism is not in the Bible, the concept can be understood as a practice of unbiblical partiality (i.e. ungodly bias towards people groups that results in elevating one people group and demeaning another people group; **a respect of persons not sanctioned by God.**)

Key Point of Sermon:

The evidence that one has a genuine relationship with God will be revealed in in his or her love for others, which is not possible without first walking in love for God by obedience to His Word. One cannot to claim to have love for God and not love their brother or sister in Christ. Since God has saved people from all ethnicities, anyone who claims to love God but does not love their brother or sister in Christ who is Black, Asian, Indian, White, Latino, etc. is a liar and the truth is not in him (1 John 4:20). Let us make sure we know what love is according to God’s definition and function in that love accordingly.

A Fresh Dimension On An Old Commandment

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

¹ John Piper, *Bloodlines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 239. Kindle Edition.

² Douglas R. Sharp, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 52.

II. The Calling to Agape Love (John 13:34-35)

- A. The word *new* in the text means a “fresh dimension.”
- B. The “fresh dimension” to the old command was that love is to be given in the sacrificial manner that Jesus gave to the believers.
- C. The selfless service and sacrifice of His life as a ransom for others was altogether new, and consequently was to be the model for their love and the standard by which their love for one another was to be measured.
- D. In essence, we are called by the power of God to seek the highest of good of others unconditionally, no strings attached.
- E. We are called to respond to the condition and need of others above the attractiveness of others or our personal interest in others.
- F. We are called to have a genuine concern and benevolence towards others.

III. The Considerations of Agape Love

- A. Agape love is not something we have to work up to give; it’s something we work out through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- B. Agape love is not a continuum that flows automatically through us; it is developed through practice or derailed through disobedience to God. (1 John 2:9-11)
- C. Agape love is not given according to the character of the receiver but is given according to the character of the giver. (1 John 3:11-24)
- D. Agape love is an unlimited resource from the nature of God which we can draw from at any time. Therefore, we have no excuse not to love others with agape love. (1 John 4:7)
- E. It is hypocritical to expect agape love from others but not be willing to give agape love to others. We must be willing to give what we ask for. (Luke 6:27-36)
- F. The evidence of our Christianity is revealed by the agape love we demonstrate to others through the power of God. (1 John 4:15-17)

IV. The Confusion about Agape Love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

- A. Agape love is not merely using your spiritual gifts towards others.
- B. Agape love is not merely giving of your resources to others.
- C. Agape love is not merely sacrificing yourself for others.
- D. All these things can be done for the wrong motives.
- E. Ability, service, and sacrifice without agape love becomes a tool for self-promotion and self-advancement. (Luke 18:9-14)
- F. Ability, service, and sacrifice without agape love leads to self-denial about who you are and where God is with you. (Luke 18:9-14)

V. The Clarity of Agape Love:

- A. *Agape* – love that is based upon the power of God to seek the highest of good of others unconditionally, no strings attached.
- B. Agape love is concerned not with how we feel but how we choose to think and act towards another.
- C. Agape love responds not to the attractiveness of the other person but to the condition and need of the other person.
- D. Agape love's motivation is not the selfish desire to enjoy the other person but the selfless desire to benefit him.
- E. Essentially, agape love is concerned and benevolent toward others in attitude and action.³

³ James L. Boyer, *For a World Like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975).

Key Point: There is no use trying to do church work without love. A doctor, a lawyer, may do good work without love, but God's work cannot be done without love. Without love, our most extraordinary gifts and highest achievements are ultimately fruitless to the church and before God. Nothing has lasting spiritual value unless it springs from love.⁴ The evidence that one has a genuine relationship with God will be revealed in in his love for others which is not possible without first walking in love for God by obedience to His word. Therefore, anyone who has been delivered from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and soon the presence of sin, unto a right standing and right relationship with God, will demonstrate a love for God by obedience to His Word and love for others which works out in serving others accordingly. This will result in maturity in Christlike character and confidence before God in the day of judgement. If this is not happening, something is wrong. Each person must examine themselves to see where they truly stand with God.

⁴ Alexander Strauch, *A Christian Leader's Guide to Leading with Love* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 2006), 8, 16.