



The Meaning of Love

Love was the motivation behind the greatest sacrifice this universe has ever witnessed. Without love that provision *would not* have been made. Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3:16, that God had such an infinite love and compassion on the souls of men whom He created, **“that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”** The Apostle Paul recorded in Romans 5:8, how God, even down to this very day **“keeps on exhibiting and giving proof of His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”**

Spiritual love is the love of God, it is His love produced in us by the Holy Spirit. We must begin our study by recognizing that there are four words for love in the Koine Greek.

(Eros)-- is a love having its basis in passion. *Eros* was used by the pagan Greeks for *sexual* love; as a proper noun it was the name of the Greek god of love, the son of Aphrodite (Babylonian mystery of the mother and child). Its expression takes the form of blind impulse produced by passion. The Greeks defined *eros* as- *an overwhelming passion seizing upon and absorbing into itself the whole mind.*

(Phileo)-- is rapport and compatibility, the love of friendship and affection. It is based on an inner community between the subject and the object, such as desirability, attractiveness, stimulating personality, shared likes and dislikes, etc. Both subject and object have things in common, the one loving finds a reflection of his own nature in that which he loves. *Phileo* is a love drawn out as a response to the pleasure one takes in a person or thing. It is the love of fondness, the infatuation of which daydreams are made. Oftentimes relying solely on reciprocation to exist, it is inconsistent, unstable, and as weak as water, having no virtue and integrity of its own. For this ‘*personal* love’ to have virtue, it must reside within the integrity envelope of spiritual love!

(Storge)-- is familial love, the natural affection which exists between parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc. This is the love which animals have for their offspring, e.g., the care that a tigress shows for her cubs. This love is essentially the binding factor of social units.

(Agape)-- is divine love produced by God the HS, unconditional and sacrificial in nature. It is the love with which Christ loves us, a love of *complete self-sacrifice*, even to the point of death to self, a death offered in exchange for one who bitterly hates the one who loves. *Philein*-- from which we get the noun *philos* and the verb *phileo*-- in one of its various forms is used around forty-five times in the NT. *Agapan*-- from which we get the noun *agape* and the verb *agapao*-- is used over three hundred times. The disparity in usage between the two is due to the fact that *philein* was the common word for love in the classics, and *agapan* the uncommon.

However, when the Greek and Macedonian troops of Alexander the Great spread Hellenistic Greek over most of the known world, and it became the international language, *agapan* suddenly sprang into ascendancy. *Agapan* then became the common and general word for love in the time of the NT. These two words are not synonymous, nor are they used indiscriminately, therefore, whenever we see *philein*, or *phileo*, what it tells us is that the writer went out of his way to use a word that was not in common use because he desired to convey a thought *not* contained in *agapan*.

There is also another reason for the frequent use of *agapan*. *Agapan* was never what we might call a 'common' word in classical literature, although it was in use from the beginning and occupied a distinctive place of its own. In fact, the form *agape*, which is the one we see most often in the NT, does not occur at all. Its first appearance is in the Greek translation of the OT in the 3rd cent. BC. Owing to the infrequency of its use, it was the perfect vehicle to convey the new and higher concept of divine love which the NT presents.

Its relative emptiness, so far as the knowledge of the person who spoke Greek as his second language was concerned, made it the ideal receptacle into which the spiritual content of Christianity could be poured. It's important for us to understand that the pagan Greeks knew nothing of the love of self-sacrifice for one's enemy, nothing of the love which God displayed in His Son on Calvary's Cross. Therefore, they had no word for that kind of love. They knew nothing about the divine analysis of this love which Paul gives us in 1 Corinthians 13. So the NT writers, inspired by God the HS, seized upon *agape* as the one word that would express these noble-concepts.

Agape love and the attributes of God.

Love is an essential component of God's nature. The Apostle John says in 1 John 4:8, **"...God is love."** Love relates to all other areas of divine essence. Love provided the way for us to know God. It was love that made possible the plan of salvation. Sovereignty without love would be tyranny. Absolute righteousness and perfect justice-- God's Integrity, His Holiness-- without love would send all of us straight to an eternal lake of fire.

Eternal life without love, in comparison to man-- who is born spiritually dead-- would mean *no fellowship* with God. Each one of the omni-attributes without love would work to our definite disadvantage. God is immutable, humans are fickle and changeable; *inconsistent*. God is veracity or absolute truth and man, by nature, is a liar. The nature of man, being totally depraved, *instinctively* heads for the ways of the world-- the Cosmos Diabolocus, which is ruled by Satan, who is the **"father of lies."** Without love, we find nothing in the area of divine essence but condemnation for mankind.

Love is the great commandment of the Church Age, without it no other can be fulfilled. In John 13:34-35 of the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus, speaking in anticipation of the CA, said to the disciples, **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you [unconditionally and sacrificially], that you also love one another. By *this* [this**

uncompromising spiritual love for one another] **all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**”

Love is the true test of discipleship, not religious obedience! Not ritual without reality. The Pharisee’s had outward obedience and yet no love for anyone but themselves. Listen to the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:5-8, “**Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply** [he gives us seven things here; 1] **moral excellence** [*arete*- ‘virtue’], **and in {your} moral excellence**, [2] **knowledge; and in {your} knowledge**, [3] **self-control, and in {your} self-control**, [4] **perseverance, and in {your} perseverance**, [5] **godliness** [function of spirituality]; **and in {your} godliness**, [6] **brotherly kindness, and in {your} brotherly kindness**, [7] **love. For if these {qualities} are yours and are increasing** [through spiritual growth in / plan of God], **they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Peter is saying that love is the end result, the final product of virtue built into the soul through these seven steps of spiritual advance. This is *agape*, the love which Paul so often speaks of, the love which he took great pains to define for us in 1 Corinthians 13. It is not an emotion, it is not based on how you “feel,” it is a passion for man’s divine and ultimate good-- his salvation and his growth in grace. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:5 that “**the goal of**” **all “our instruction”**-- the *telos*, the objective, the end of the race, the final destination of the life of faith-- is *agape*. It is the greatest motivator, and the most enduring power in the universe. Everything else in life will fail, but love never will.

Love is the highest spiritual achievement and virtue. It is the *expression* of spiritual maturity. Love is the key to the Protocol Plan of God. Without love for God-- which is demonstrated by our attitude toward His Word and our obedience to it-- we will never fully see, understand or appreciate that *everything* that happens in life to the advancing believer is wrought together for the ultimate good. In Romans 8:28, Paul say’s that without a shadow of a doubt, “**...we know** [*oida*- with an absolute knowledge] **that God causes all things** [including pain, sorrow, rejection and loss] **to work together for the good** [*agathos*- divine good] **to those who love God** [mature and / or *maturing* believers], **to those who are called according to {His} purpose** [predetermined plan].”

Life in the spiritual realm is built on absolutes. Everything changes! The Cosmic System in which we live is order working its way out to disorder. In Greek thought and philosophy the opposite of *kosmos* is *chaos*. God’s character is absolute, His will is absolute, His plan is absolute and it never changes. Period! Here is the principle: *God’s Word is absolute; it is the Rock upon which we must anchor every aspect of life.*

Spiritual love *is* patient, and patience is a long-enduring of the soul *without* reacting or making bad decisions. Always remember, the spiritual battlefield is in your *soul*, not in external sufferings or circumstances! If you have spiritual love, the fruit of Christian virtue and integrity, then you *have* divine patience, and *if* you have divine patience, you can endure *anything* without defeat!