

Our Firm Foundation on Love

There is one very important reason why Jesus came from heaven to be tempted and tried like we are, then to give His sinless life to pay the penalty for our sins. There is one way the world can tell that we are Jesus' disciples. There is one thing more important than gifts and prophecy. That one thing is *agape*, the Divine Love of God. To have peace, joy, comfort and power in eternal life which, begins at the new birth, we must all be full of *agape* love.

GOLDEN TEXT:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
John 3:16

SCRIPTURE TEXTS:

Matthew 22:37,39; John 13:34,35; 15:9-19; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

MATTHEW 22:37-39

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

JOHN 13:34,35

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you,

that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.

JOHN 15:9-19

9 As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My Love.

10 If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love: even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12 This is My commandment. That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-8

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,

and have not charity (*agape*), I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

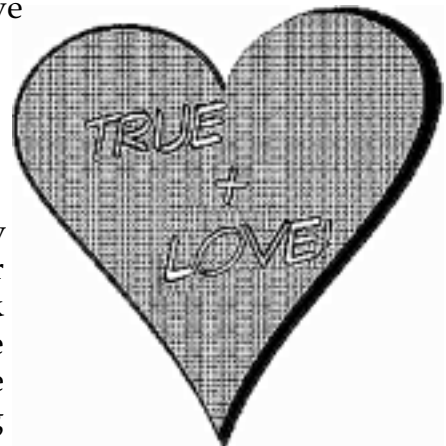
5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth

INTRODUCTION:

Even when our natural children violate every rule we give them, we **still love** them. If an offspring chooses to sever the ties with parents completely, moves miles away or commits crimes or renounces any connection with his parents, most moral parents will still love their wandering child and all he has to do to be once again in the family is to repent and come home. (The repentance is necessary from his side, else he will not choose to return.) Our heavenly Father certainly makes every effort to call us back to Himself with an everlasting, undying love. And as the recipients of His love, He wants us to love others. We cannot please and show our love for Him without having love for all our Christian brothers and sisters and a genuine concern (*love*) for the lost.



1. WHAT ARE THE MEANINGS OF THE WORD "LOVE"?

a) *Fondness or brotherly affection* (phileo).

The Greek word *Phileo* is translated "love" four times in John 21:15-17. Twice, Jesus asked Peter if he had *agape* love for Him and both times, Peter responded with, "Yes, I *phileo* love you." The third time Jesus only asked if Peter had *phileo* love. The word means: to be fond of, to have affection for, hold dear.

b) *The Divine Love of God* (agape).

This is the word used to describe the love God has for His choicest creation, man. This is that love that caused Jesus to give His sinless life to pay the ransom for His sinful creation. This is the love that goes the second mile, gives the last dollar to help someone more needy, spends the all time possible trying to win souls to Jesus, responds to the needs of strangers as quickly as to its own needs. This love completely embodies compassion, but it is much more. It is also more than concern or affection. In fact, it is beyond our human limited language to properly define, so we simply call it "*Divine Love* or the *Love of God*."

2. HOW DO WE OBTAIN THIS LOVE OF GOD?

a) *By believing God's Word*

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My Love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love: even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." (John 15:9,10).

While God loved all mankind with an undying love, and sent His only begotten Son into the world to live, be tempted suffer like man and then to die to pay the penalty for our sins, (John 3:15-17) he did tell us what we have to do to receive His free dispensation of love and grace. Those who reject His love become targets of His anger. (See John 3:36.). The dispensation of grace is the dispensing of the love of God upon us and is confirmed first by our receiving the Holy Spirit of which the first evidence in the Bible as today, is speaking in tongues. When we are filled with and full of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for us not to have a heart full of divine love for all our fellow man.

b) *By exercising our love for our fellow man.*

When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36-40), He replied that the most important was to love God and the next was like unto it, that we love our neighbor as ourselves. Unless we can and do obey these commandments of love, we cannot receive the love of God ourselves.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you," (John 15:12).

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

(John 13:34).

"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love (*agape*) one to another." (John 13:35).

3. HOW VITAL IS OUR EXERCISE OF GOD'S LOVE TO OUR OWN SALVATION?

a) *More important than the Gifts of the Spirit.*

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *agape* [here translated *charity*, but actually, *Divine Love of God*] ... And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *agape*, I am nothing," (1 Corinthians 13:1,2).

Here, the Apostle Paul points out that it is much more important for us to be full of the

Divine love of God than to have the gifts of Tongues or Prophecy or Discernment or even Faith enough to see mountains moved at our word. But why is this true?

Without God's Love in our hearts, the gift of Prophecy and the gift of Tongues and Interpretation and of Discernment may be misused to condemn and put down other brothers and sisters in the church, bringing resentment while the same prophecy or interpretation or word of knowledge given in a spirit of Love brings Repentance and a closer walk with the Lord.

And Faith, used in bitterness, envy or pride, may generate more bitterness, envy or pride, all of which may serve to separate us from our brothers and sisters in Christ and, even worse, from our Lord.

b) *More important than giving to "Charity".*

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (*agape*, the Divine Love of God), it profiteth me nothing."
(1 Corinthians 13:3).

Donations to "Charity" given without the Love of God may bring ungodly pride in the giver and may also bring contempt or anger if the recipient does not respond with the degree of gratitude and recognition the giver thinks is warranted. And the person or group receiving the charitable gift or gifts, may have a feeling of indebtedness or even enslavement.

But when given in the spirit of the Divine Love of God and meekness, the gift becomes something that draws the receiver and the giver together in love and honors and glorifies the Lord Jesus.

c) *Leads to bearing the "Fruits of the Spirit".*

Agape, (God's Divine Love) suffereth long, and is kind; ... envieth not ... vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..." (Galatians 5:22).

When our lives are motivated by the Divine Love of God, we will naturally be living examples of the Love of God, of which Jesus, Himself, was the only perfect example. We cannot help but be longsuffering, gentle, patient, joyful, content, and good. Because we love our fellow man, we cannot envy what he has, nor wish him harm, nor attempt to bring him under subjection to our own wills. It is part of being a "new creature in Christ Jesus..." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

4. HOW LASTING IS DIVINE LOVE?

a) *God's Divine Love is everlasting.*

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love: Therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31:3).

"Charity (*agapé*) never faileth..." (1 Corinthians 13:8).

From the time of Adam and Eve's sin, God's Love was making preparation for reconciliation between selfish, self-seeking mankind and Himself. Throughout Bible history, God's people were ever turning their backs on Him and rebelling against Him, yet whenever they would repent and cry out to Him for mercy, His Love responded with an extension of His Grace. And then, "...when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son..." (Galatians 4:4). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3:16).

b) Our Love for others never fails.

“*Agape*, (the Divine Love of God) never faileth...,” (1 Corinthians 13:8). The Apostle Paul here has been talking about the necessity of our having the Divine Love of God in our lives. It is in this same sense that he now declares that the Divine Love of God extended through us never fails. So long as we allow God’s Love to flow through us, it can never fail because His love is everlasting.

5. EVIDENCE TO THE WORLD OF YOUR SALVATION.

a) “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35).

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” (1 Peter 1:22).

Jesus declared that we shall be known as His disciples if our *agape* love to other believers is evident. Peter declared to the saints (in this case, strangers to him) in Asia Minor that he knows they are obeying the truth because of their love for the brethren and exhorted them to continue in that love.

Finally, it was to the church in Philadelphia, a name meaning “brotherly love”, that the Lord sent only blessings and commendation because they had kept His word. (See Revelation 3:7-13). While all the other churches were found lacking in one or more points, the church in the city of “brotherly love” was commended for having “kept My word” and had evidently so influenced their city that its previous name was forgotten because the majority showed “brotherly love”, an extension of the Love of God.

SUMMARY:

Wherever you are, it will be well to examine yourself. Does your community look upon your church as one which is an example of the Love of God through Brotherly Love? Are souls coming into the church because they see the fruit of the spirit, the evidence of Love in your midst? Is the Love of God driving the saints out into the byways and hedges between services with the urge to return with many new souls at the next service time? Is the Love of God causing you to reach out to help the fatherless, the widows, the destitute, the down-and-outer with material help as well as spiritual? Can the world at large tell that you are Jesus’ disciples because of your love one to the other?