

The Doctrine of Love

I. Preliminary considerations

- A. Love is described in scripture as an attribute expressed by both God and man.
- B. In both cases, for this attribute to be expressed, there must be an object animate or inanimate, to express it towards.
- C. It is the expression/assertion of love in the Bible that proves to be complex in understanding of its application.
- D. There are three distinct levels of application of love taught in Scripture:
 1. Divine Love
 2. Sexual/Romantic Love between man and woman.
 3. Affection Love of Friendship or Familial Love.
 4. Of the above forms of love, it is Divine love that completes all other love and ultimately places love within the parameters of Divine viewpoint and obedience to God. This is the type of love we are to espouse not merely toward the Royal Family but to all people (I Thess. 3:12).

II. Vocabulary

A. Hebrew

1. אָהַב/ahab: verb: “to love, desire, to long for, to have affection for” (Gen. 22:2).
 2. אֲהַבָּה/ahabah: noun, a cognate of אָהַב/ahab: “love” as in the concept of loving another (Gen. 29:20).
 3. חָשַׁק – (chashaq) verb: “to be attached to, to be joined to, to love” (Deut 7:7).
 4. אָגַב/agab: verb: “to have inordinate affection, to lust after. Used of love for idolatry (Ezek. 23:5).
 5. חֶסֶד - (chesed) noun: “goodness or kindness, loyalty, loyal love, loving kindness, faithfulness, unchanging love”, often used of God’s love toward believers (Psa. 18:51).
- B. Greek: There are only two word groups in the New Testament to define love. It is through the use of these two families of words that one draws a distinction in nuance of their application.
1. φιλέω/phileo: verb: “to love, to have affection for something or someone”.
 2. φιλία/philia: noun: “friendship, affection” (James 4:4).
 3. φίλος/philos: noun: “a friend, one whom is ‘beloved’” (Luke 11:5).
 4. ἀγαπάω/agapao: verb: “to love, regard highly, care for, have high esteem for”. This verb is used of God’s love. It may or may not include affection or

an emotional attachment. It denotes a commitment, fidelity, sacrifice and obedience towards the object. It is used technically for application of Bible Doctrine under the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit (James 2:8; I Pet. 1:22).

5. ἀγάπη/agape: noun: “love”. A cognate of ἀγαπάω/agapao, used for Divine love. It is the overt expression of Divine good (Rom.12:9). Again, when applied to men, it is love produced from Bible doctrine in the soul, in FHS (I Thess. 3:12).
6. It is in the gospel accounts that the clear distinction of nuance between phileo and agape love is presented.
 - a. John.15:13 Love (agape) is seen as an application of sacrifice; philo is translated as “friends” and denotes those whom the one who makes the sacrifice towards as being someone with whom there is a natural affection or emotional tie.
 - b. John.21:15-17: The word “love” in Jesus’ question to Peter is vss.15-16 is agapao while Peter’s response is phileo. In verse 17 Jesus changes “love” in his question to phileo love to emphasize that Peter’s affection is ok but not the “true/Divine love” that He is speaking of unless Peter fulfills the imperatives Jesus has presented.

III. The three levels of employment of love further defined.

- A. Sexual love refers to the sexual partnership as a legitimate expression of love between a man and a woman within the institution of marriage (I Cor.7:2; cp. Pro.5:15-20).
 1. God designed sexual love for both recreation and procreation as designated in the Old Testament (Gen.2:22-25; cp. 1:27,28).
 2. It is commanded for the husband and wife. (I Cor.7:3, 4).
 3. There is no specific Hebrew/Greek word used exclusively for this type of love. It stands to reason that both types of love, phileo and agapao should be present in an adjusted marriage between two believers.
 4. The omission of a particular “love” word in the N.T. in the context of sexual love is to highlight that the sex act in and of itself alone does not reflect “love”. Rather, it also requires the application of the married partners towards one another evolving around the communion that portrays sexual love fully. (I Cor.7:2-5).
 5. However it is also understood that with age the sexual aspect of the marriage may diminish (Gen. 18:2).
 6. Sexual love was designed by God not to be separated from soul love, but in addition to it (Gen.2:24).
 7. Sexual love is a bond and source of closeness and pleasure that is much abused by the cosmos. As with many of God’s gifts, people abuse/ruin it with their OSNs!

- B. Affectionate love (phileo) is love that focuses primarily on the feelings or affections that are generated by the object of the love. It is a natural response one has based on the affinity/fondness/attraction one has towards the object which may be animate or inanimate.
1. The object may include our brothers and sisters in Christ or be extended to those outside the Royal Family.
 2. Other than our affection for and devotion to our brothers and sisters in Christ, this love is not commanded (Rom.12:10 – no imperative of phileo; I Thess.4:9; Heb.13:1; I Pet.1:22; 2 Pet.1:7 (It is of interest to note that in the above verses in I Thess., I Pet., II Pet., agape is associated with phileo love.)
 3. Phileo stems from affinity based on a common/close relationship, common ideas or common desire in most instances.
 4. This love exists because of some actual, physical or emotional reason that prompts it; for example, a family relationship or something that the object does for the one who loves in this manner.
 5. This love often deals with emotions that are pleasurable.
 6. Due to this, it may be based on selfish reasons or motivations.
 7. Phileo can be good or bad depending on the reasons for its existence:
 - a. Negative examples – Matt.6:5; 10:37; 23:6; I Tim.6:10; 2 Tim.3:4
 - b. Positive examples – John.5:20; Titus 2:4
 8. God possesses this affection/natural bond for believers (John.16:27).
- C. Divine love (agapao/agape) is love that focuses on the object based on the attributes of the one expressing love. It is the most far-reaching kind of love. Emotions are not the motivator of this love. In fact, emotional considerations are neutral/indeterminate with regard to its application. This love does not depend on the merit of the object. Rather, it is comprised of the mental attitude willingness (deliberate choice) to set aside one's own ideas, plans, good welfare/advantage, feelings etc., and do what is in the best interest of the object, regarding what is right spiritually speaking.
1. Agape is an attribute of divine essence. (I John 4:8 "...for God is love.").
 2. It is equally present in all three members of the Godhead.
 - a. The Father: (John3:16).
 - b. The Son (Rom.8:35-37; Eph.5:2).
 - c. The Holy Spirit: (Rom.15:30).
 3. God's love does not exist apart from His righteousness and justice. Therefore, it is not a sentimental but a faithful love.
 4. Since God acts according to the standards of His own absolute righteousness (+R), His love is not motivated by personal considerations, nor is it based on the merits of the recipients. It is based solely on His own right and His own righteous character (Eph.2:4, 5; I John 4:10).
 5. God loves the human race at large based on agape love and it is this love, not affection, that led Him to create the God man, Jesus Christ and judge

Him for the sins of the world. He did this while we were his enemies (John 3:16; Rom.5:8-10).

6. Since each member of the Godhead is +R, it follows that each member of the Trinity loves the other (Joh.17:1-23).
7. The agape love of God is most closely resembled by the Hebrew word chesed. Chesed has the nuance of loyalty/faithfulness/fidelity/mercy/kindness/immutability. It is this word that emphasizes that which governs God's love:
 - a. Love is an extension of God's +R and +J. (Psa.89:14).
 - b. God reveals these three attributes together (Jer.9:24).
 - c. His love reveals His mercy and is consistent/immutable/unchanging (Mic.7:18).
8. Love is but one of the attributes of God's essence, which also includes Absolute Righteousness, Justice, Eternal Life, Immutability, Veracity, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Sovereignty.
9. Believers are commanded to have this love (Gal. 5:14; Luke 6:27, 35).
10. This love by believers originates in the soul under the filling of God the Holy Spirit and is demonstrated by the willingness/volitional choice to make whatever application is necessary within the parameters of Bible Doctrine.
11. Because Divine love originates from the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for unbelievers to possess it; it is also impossible for the believer who is out of fellowship and not therefore, ruled by God and Bible doctrine (Gal. 5:19-25).

IV. Agape Love for the Believer

- A. The believer's love for God is not dependent upon emotions or affection but evidenced by the intake and application of Bible Doctrine under the filling ministry of God, the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-24; I John 5:3; Luke 8:21).
- B. Love for God is to keep His commandments (Ex.20:6; Deu.6:5; 7:9,10,12,13; 11:13, 22; 13:3, Josh.22:5; Neh.1:5; 1Joh.2:5)
- C. Love for God is also called "occupation with Christ". (I Pet.1:8).
- D. Love is a characteristic of the filling of the Holy Spirit and is expressed in the commands to "walk in love" (Eph.5:2), "abide in love" (Joh.15:10), and "put on love" (Col.3:14).
- E. Agape Love is the fulfillment of the Law for the Church Age as it involves the application of our Royal Family Imperatives (James 2:8).
- F. There is a curse on the one who does not have personal affection for Christ (I Cor.16:22 - phileo).
- G. The manifestation of agape love has certain traits (I Cor. 13:4-8).
- H. Agape Love applied toward the Royal Family includes:
 1. Exercising patience toward them (Eph.4:2).
 2. Forgiving offenses both intentional and unintentional (Eph.4:32).

3. Helping them with physical needs (I John 3:17,18; James.2:16).
 4. Not “twitting” the new believer on doctrine who is weak (Rom.14:1, 14, 15).
 5. Separating from the errant believer. (I Cor.5:1-13; II Thess.3:6, 14, 15).
 6. Receiving back the one who makes a reversion recovery (II Cor.2:4-8).
 7. Holding the P-T and deacons in high regard. (I Thess.5:12, 13).
 8. Applying in areas of need in the local church (Gal.5:13).
 9. Showing hospitality (Heb.13:1, 2).
 10. Avoiding gossip and backbiting. (Gal.5:14, 15).
 11. Avoiding phoniness and hypocrisy (Rom.12:9; I Pet.1:22).
 12. Avoiding partiality. (James 2:8, 9).
 - I. Agape Love applied to the world at large includes:
 1. Loving one’s neighbor as himself (Luke 10:25).
 2. Not returning evil for evil (I Pet. 3:9).
 3. Blessing those who curse you (Rom. 12:14).
 4. Praying for those who persecute you (Matt.5:43-48).
 5. Avoiding revenge tactics and using opportunities to bless others (Rom.12:20, 21).
 - J. Positive volition is to love God’s word (Psa.119:47, 48 , 97, 113,119, 127,159,163,165,167; Pro.4:6; 8:17,21; II Thess.2:10).
 - K. Positive Volition loves the appearing of the Lord at the Rapture (II Tim. 4:8).
- V. Inappropriate objects of love.
- A. Lies (Rev.22:15).
 - B. Darkness (John.3:19).
 - C. The world (James 4:4; I John.2:15).
 - D. The details of life: (I John 2:15).
 - E. Money (Matt.6:19-34; I Tim.3:3; Heb.13:5).
 - F. Pleasures: (II Tim.3:4).
 - G. Yourself: (II Tim.3:2).
 - H. Your life: Rev.12:11

“He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” (John 14:24).

“Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible love (Eph 6:24).

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