

Lesson 24: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

This is My Commandment, That Ye Love One Another - John 15:12

I. Introduction

- a. God is love. His whole nature and perfection is love, living **not for Himself**, but to dispense life and blessing.
- b. In His love He begat the Son that He might give all to Him. In His love He brought forth man that He might make them **partakers** of His blessedness.
- c. Christ is the Son of God's love, the bearer, the **revealer**, the communicator of that love. His life and death were expressions of His love.
- d. Love is His life, and therefore must **be the life** He gives to the believer as He indwells him.
- e. The very first thought of the true Vine is love-living only to **impart** His life to the branches. He only lives to love, to live out His life of love in us, to give Himself in all who will receive Him.
- f. The branch is not only one with the vine, but with all its other branches; they drink one spirit, they form one body, they bear one fruit, they exhibit **one love**.
- g. No wonder that Christ said: "A new commandment I give unto you"; "This is my commandment"-the one all-inclusive commandment-"that ye **love** one another."
- h. For the 21st Century believer, a fundamental problem that needs to be addressed is that of understanding what is **meant** by the word "love" (agape) used in this commandment.

II. The First Hurdle

- a. The primary difficulty in our understanding the Biblical word (agape) is that the modern use of "love" to which our minds have already been **conditioned**, is so far removed from the intention of the Holy Spirit.
- b. In our modern understanding it is possible to "love" things, like soft drinks, a day at the beach, a nap on Sunday afternoon, etc. This merely means that we **enjoy** these things. This is not agape.
- c. We have also been preconditioned to think of romantic/sexual affection or attraction which produces a psychological effect and energizes a particular complex of neurons in the brain, as love, but this is **not agape**.
- d. Our language **fails** us as we grapple with trying to understand what this "love" is as we encounter it, until we examine how the word is used in Scripture.
- e. Here we see that agape is to be understood, not as some subjective psychological or neuronal experience but rather, it is most clearly understood by the behavior it **evokes** in the person who is living it out.
- f. Then and only then, as we see what Scripture reveals about how the word is used, the picture emerges that agape (while technically a noun in some cases) (person/place/thing/) is generally better understood as a verb. It is an **action word**.
- g. Those who "love" are invariably **doing** something that communicates that agape is in operation. When the believer is "loving God" his moment by moment behavioral choices reflect that he is extolling God's honor.
- h. Since agape is most recognizable from the **behavior** it evokes, it stands to reason that our search for understanding should include a composite view of what that behavior should look like.

III. Love as Action

- a. The **seat** of agape, is in the human will; it is a choice. Although love may have an emotional component and frequently reacts on our sensory faculties, still it is fundamentally a product of the rational will. *John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. KJV*
- b. Our love to God is shown in the **keeping** of His commandments, manifesting itself not only in obedience to known Divine commands, but also in a protecting and defense of them. *John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. KJV*
- c. It includes a **seeking** to know more and more of the will of God in order to express love for God in further obedience *Ps 119:2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. KJV*
- d. Those who love God will **hate evil** and all forms of worldliness, as expressed in the avoidance of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life *Ps 97:10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: KJV*
- e. This love is the antithesis of **selfishness**. The qualities which should characterize the love which we are to manifest toward our fellow-men are beautifully set forth in 1 Cor 13:4-8.
 1. It is patient and without envy; it is not proud or self-elated, neither does it behave discourteously; it does not cherish evil, but keeps **account** of that which is good;
 2. Love rejoices not at the downfall of an enemy or competitor, but gladly hails his success; it is hopeful, trustful and forbearing-and **never fails**.
 3. For such conduct there is no law, for none is needed; those who love this way have **fulfilled** all the law. *James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; ye do well: KJV*

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- f. Those who love do not render evil for evil, but contrariwise, **blessing** . The love of the disciple of Christ manifests itself in supplying the necessities, not of our friends only, but also of our enemies. *Rom 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: KJV*
- g. Our love should be "without hypocrisy; there should be no **pretence** about it; it should not be a thing of mere word or tongue, but a real experience manifesting itself in deed and truth" *1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. KJV*
- h. Genuine agape will find its expression in **service** to man: *Gal 5:13 "Through love be servants one to another".*
- i. Love bears the infirmities of the weak, does not please itself, but seeks the welfare of **others** . *1 Cor 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. NIV*
- j. Agape in operation **surrenders** things which may be innocent in themselves but which nevertheless may become a stumbling-block to others. *Rom 14:15 If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. NIV*
- k. Agape gladly **forgives** injuries, and gladly gives the place of honor to another. *Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. NIV*
- l. Agape is the **binder** that holds all the other graces of the Christian life in place and by the possession of such love we know that we have passed from death unto life. *Col 3:14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. NIV*
- m. Agape is the supreme test of our **abiding** in God and God in us. *1 John 4:12 If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. KJV*

IV. The Source

- a. Whatever agape there is in man, whether it be toward God or toward his fellowman, has its **source** in God *1 John 4:7 "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love"*
- b. Agape is born within the bosom of experiential Christian faith by the grace giving **gift** of the Holy Spirit. *Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, KJV*
- c. Only love in the regenerated heart can truly love as God loves; to this higher form of love the **unregenerate** can lay no claim. *1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. KJV*
- d. This is made possible in the heart of regenerate man because he is able to see his fellow-man **as God sees** him and to value him as God values him for his potential as an image bearer of God.
- e. It is also stimulated by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, more than anyone else, manifested to the world the spirit and nature of **true love** . *1 John 4:12 and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. KJV*

V. Application

- a. The path to learning the mystery of agape in our relations with others begins with the confession that we need to be brought to an entirely new mode of life. It is Christ's life in us that we must live; the branch lives in the Vine.
- b. If we are to learn to *Love one another, even as I have loved you-"Ye, even as I."* then that learning must begin with the surrender to be cleansed from all that is of self, and detached from all that is in the world.
- c. Often, as believers, we fail to live out agape with the persons with whom we ought to love most generously, those who are closest to us. To what extent are you living out the love of Christ in your relations with others?
- d. Next time you fail to live agape confess your error to that person.
- e. See that you obey this commandment. Let your "obey and abide" be seen in this: That you love your brethren. This is the way to abide in the love of your Lord. Let your vow of obedience begin here. Love one another.