

The Doctrine of Love

1. Introduction:

1.1 The Bible teaches in 2Pe 1:20 and 21 that we must study the Bible in categories and avoid eclectic treatments of Biblical subject matters.

2Pe 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

1.2 C. I. Scofield has footnoted this passage as follows: ... "Any private interpretation" might read "its own interpretation"; i.e. not isolated from what the Scripture states elsewhere."

1.3 The fact that the Holy Spirit inspired the Word using the personalities of men in their respective dispensations tells us there is need to do categorical studies from time to time. This lesson is my attempt to study the subject of love categorically.

2. Definition and Concept:

2.1 God is said to be love - **Agape** in 1Jo 4:8

1Jo 4:8 ... for God is love. **Theos** is the subject of the ellipsis and **Agape** is the predicate nominative. So the sentence can be reversed as follows "love is God".

2.1.1 You will never find this grammatical structure to describe man's love. Only God is love though man can love - but man must have an object to love; since God is LOVE God needs no object of His love.

2.2 The **Agape** kind of love depends entirely upon whom and what the subject is and not upon whom and what the object of the verb is.

2.2.1 Because **God** is love and can love with a divine love He always displays the right mental attitude toward all things.

3. **Agape** or virtue love can only come from a soul full of Bible Doctrine.

3.1 The **Agape** kind of love depends entirely upon whom and what the subject is and not upon whom and what the object is.

3.2 A case study from the Book of Philemon will help us better understand this concept of Love.

3.2.1 Paul is appealing to Philemon on the basis of love to accept Onesimus back as a fellow believer. This runaway slave who made his way to Rome became a believer and a great help to Paul.

3.2.2 When Paul discovered Onesimus belonged to Philemon, a well respected believer from Colossae, Paul decided to return the slave with a letter requesting Onesimus be treated with **Agape** especially given his new status as a Royal Family Member.

3.2.3 Paul had heard from Epaphras that Philemon was a mature believer therefore Paul anticipated Philemon would use **AGAPE** - the right mental attitude emanating from his soul - with reference to Onesimus.

3.2.4 That Philemon would imitate God from the depths of his soul is Paul's expectation.

3.2.5 Paul believed Philemon's soul was full of this special thing called love (**AGAPE**).

3.2.6 Paul was confident Onesimus would be treated well when he arrived in Colossae.

3.2.7 This ability to love without emotional hang ups, i.e always doing what is right - is what sets God's kind of love apart from the love of mankind.

3.2.8 To the extent that we can get the Mind of Christ into our souls by the consistent use of the two power options is the extent to which we too can in part "love without emotional hang ups, thus thinking and doing what is right."

3.2.9 **Agape** is divine love which we in the flesh cannot do; it is only when we grow like our Savior through the intake of the Word that we can begin to get an inkling of how to **Agapao**.

3.2.10 Philemon had been cycling the Word and thus was being singled out in Scripture as a man full of doctrine, a winner in the Christian life, a man capable of receiving a runaway slave back into his home without animosity, without revenge, and thus an example for millions to follow.

3.2.11 Maybe not with reference to the taking of a slave back but certainly with reference to just daily successfully living the Christian life.

3.2.12 To better understand **Agape**, let's look at that other word for love found in the Bible.

3.2.13 That word is **Phileo** in verb form and **Philos** in noun form. This love more often than not will include an emotion; it is based on whom and what the object is.

3.2.14 Mankind in one sense is always loved by God with **Agape** but only the believer can experience the **Philos** kind of love from God.

3.2.15 Believers are objects then of God's **Philos** kind of love, certainly not because we are or even approach perfection, but because of what Christ did for us on the cross; and this manifests itself in many ways especially to include His watch care and mediation for us from the Third Heaven.

3.2.16 We can understand how Philemon might love in the **Phileo** sense any number of dutiful and efficient slaves who live there in Colossae and serve him with distinction.

3.2.17 Such love of the those loyal servants, daily performing their assigned duties would be easy because Philemon's love would be based upon whom and what they are.

3.2.18 In this case however Paul purposefully begins this verse using **Agape**. Do it because it is right says Paul, use your doctrine - love Onesimus based on whom and what you are; that's the message from Paul to Philemon.

3.2.19 **Philos** love is not the issue here but instead it is virtue love, **Agape** love, that love which can only come when the Christian moves in the direction of Christ's likeness.

3.2.20 So Paul says to Philemon "I call on you to receive Onesimus back with a love based upon whom and what you are and not whom and what Onesimus is."

3.2.21 I appeal not to your emotions says Paul but to your soul where resident doctrine can be reverse processed and right conduct mustered. Paul however did not order Philemon, he leaves it with Philemon's volition.

4. When we, in our humanity, speak of love, it is temporal and dependent on certain things. Usually we are responding to conduct on the part of our spouse, friends, children etc.

5. Our love is incapable of reaching the pinnacle of love as God knows love.

6. The spirit is often willing but the flesh is "oh so weak". Rom 7:21-8:1

Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

7. This, for many, makes difficult our understanding of the "love" of God toward the unbeliever.

8. Since God is love - **Agape**, says 1Joh 4:8 the question immediately arises.

8.1 What does it mean?

8.2 If God is love, omnipotent and sovereign how could he create hell for the devil and his demons and then let man choose to join the devil and the demons in a lake of fire to burn forever.

Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

8.3 How could God hold sin against the woman when she was deceived, after all she only thought she was doing right.

1Ti 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

8.4 We have a problem with this concept because of our lack of righteousness and His perfect righteousness.

8.5 God cannot stand sin regardless of its motivation.

9. **Agape** is God's right mental attitude from His essence toward the world.

9.1 He had the right mental attitude toward the devil's world and sent His only born one into the world not to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. Joh 3:16

10. Divine love is far distant from the concept of human love.

11. Human love depends on the conduct and actions of the object of the love.

12. This is not true of divine love.

13. Since there never was a time when God learned anything; His wisdom like His love, has always been; accordingly God has always been and has always known all things; there never was a time when God ever learned anything.

14. God never had to learn to love because He is both wisdom and love, a concept foreign to our mortal natures and human limitations.

15. There are so many Christians who know nothing about God's love and His protocol concerning the application of loving others.

15.1 None would be so bold as to say "I hate the Word of God and His wisdom" but their lack of consistency and interest in the things of God declare their apathy.

15.2 Thanks be unto God, the Lord does not react emotionally to the negative believer but from His omniscience and love He does that which is good, that which is best and though it may be a ton of discipline, such discipline is for our benefit. Heb 12:6-8

Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Heb 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

Heb 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

16. Secular love with rare exception always involves emotion as a response toward the object. In the flesh we can love no other way.

16.1 God's love will involve emotion only as an anthropopathism.

The dictionary says of the word anthropopathism: "The attribution of human feelings to non-human beings, objects or natural phenomena." A related word is anthropomorphism which according to the dictionary is "The attribution of physical characteristics to an object not possessing same..."

16.2 In the case of God He often has elected anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms to communicate with man.

16.2.1 Thus God is said to have a hand, head, be in heaven and yet He is omnipresent, He is said to love, to hate, to repent, to be jealous etc. For example:

Joh 10:29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my **Father's hand**.

Joh 10:30 I and my Father are one.

17. How else can God relate to man except He use our vocabulary, concepts, idioms, analogies, body parts, metaphors etc.

18. Normally God's love is said to be "**Agape**" meaning the right mental attitude which in most cases has little to do with emotion or attraction.

19. For example Joh 3:16 which most of us memorized at some point in our life says:

Joh 3:16 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.

19.1 Doubtless the devil's world was no object of God's affection-in fact it would be blasphemous to ascribe to God a love for this miserable world in which we are temporarily residing, a world called of God "Satan's World."

20. The word translated love Joh 3:16 is "**Agapao**", the verb form of "**Agape**" and it would be better "For God had the right mental attitude toward the world based on all of His essences and attributes."

21. God never loved the **Kosmos** i.e. the devil's world in a **Phileo** sense. The Prince of this world was never, in his fallen state, the object of God's love.

22. In the Scripture love applies to five categories of life:

- * Category I is a love toward God.
- * Category II is a love toward Right Man or Right Woman.
- * Category III is a love toward Friends.

* Category IV is a love toward others with a relaxed mental attitude even if you have no positive feelings toward them.

* Category V is a familial love between parent and children.

23. This concludes our categorical study of Love.