***"Agape" Love  
  
Colossians 1:3-8  
  
COL-032***

Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," segment number 10, in Colossians 1:3-8.

The apostle Paul, in this passage, has expressed thanksgiving to God for the Colossian believers' faith in Christ Jesus. And we read that in verse 4: "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus." Paul, here, we pointed out to you from the Greek language, is actually referring to the sphere in which the Colossians are living their daily lives. He is not simply praising God and thanking God for the fact that these people have placed their trust in Christ (have placed faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation). He is talking about their lifestyle. When he's thanking God for their faith in Christ Jesus, he is talking about their lifestyle in the environment which characterizes the Lord. That is the word "faith" used as a summation of doctrine – the principles that reflect Christ. The Colossians not only exercised faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, but, as Christians, they also practiced the faith of Christ Jesus, meaning doctrine.

We have pointed out to us in the gospel of John 14:15, this principle, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." The issue is: "I am a Christian. I am devoted to Jesus Christ. He has my affection. He has my devotion. He has my loyalty. If that is really true then I will be obedient to His commandments."

John 14:21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father. And I will love Him, and will disclose Myself to Him."? Here again, this means living in the whole sphere of the Word of God. And the result is love for Christ.

Notice John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him. And he will come to Me and make Our abode with him." To be able to have fellowship with Jesus Christ; to be able to live with Him; and, to be in the sphere of the life of Christ is what is in view here. It is very important that we understand that.

So, Paul, here in Colossians 1:4, is referring to his gratitude to God for the practice of faith (the practice of doctrine), rather than the presence of faith as in salvation in the city of Colossae. The Colossian Christians are doing, in short, what Jude 3 calls upon all believers to do. Jude 3: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation (and we looked at this in detail last week), I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once-for-all delivered to the saints." We are called upon to defend boldly and clearly the true doctrines of Scripture, and unashamedly expose false doctrine. Now, we do this in love. The Bible commands us to do that. But it is incumbent upon us to know that this is our calling in life. We're to defend the faith. We are to defend the body of doctrine.

The purpose of Jude's admonition is to alert us to the fact that contending earnestly for the faith is actually exercising faith in Christ Jesus. He, the Lord, is represented by the whole body of revealed commandments. So, God here has entrusted to us for safekeeping the completed Bible as the faith representing Christ Jesus. Our purpose and our mission to know doctrine, and to be able to explain it, and to proclaim it as the full counsel of the Word of God. And that is not a simple thing.

The average Christian is comparatively ignorant of doctrine. If you ask him to explain to you the doctrine of the blood of Christ, he wouldn't know what to say. If you asked him to explain to you the doctrine of the "kenosis," he wouldn't know what to say. If you asked him to explain the doctrine of the hypostatic union, he would be blown out of the water. If you asked him to explain to you the doctrine of grace salvation, he'd get it all botched up. If you asked him to explain to you the grace system of perception doctrine, he would know what you're talking about. If you asked him to explain to you the system of the structure of a human being in body, soul, and spirit, and how those relate to his contacts with other human beings, he'd look at you with a blank stare.

**Promise Keepers**

What is out there in the Christian community is horrendous. And as the prophet of old (Hosea) said, in Hosea 4:6, "My people die for lack of knowledge." And while we are having a big rally at the stadium, even now as we speak, by the great Promise Keepers organization, most of those men are totally ignorant of the promises of the Word of God, so they don't know what they're supposed to keep. Most of them are thinking about keeping their promises that they make, but they cannot keep their promises if they cannot keep promises that God has given them, that they're responsible for. And they don't know how to be keepers, because most of those men don't know the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They draw a blank on that. They don't know what it means to be in eternal fellowship, and what it means to be in temporal fellowship. They don't know what it means to be in the outer circle or in the inner circle of relationship to God. And if they don't know the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, they don't know how to keep anything – period. So, there'll be a lot of froth, and a lot of hoopla, and, unfortunately, the instruction that is really needed is going to be absent, and the whole thing will blow over.

So, this is no small thing when Jude says to us: "Believers, know the Word; apply it; live it; have positive volition toward it; and, then you contend for it. Do not tolerate people misrepresenting the Word of God and what God thinks.

So you can see why Paul was quite pleased when Epaphras brought him back the word that these people in Colossae not only have trusted toward Christ (that's one Greek preposition for salvation), but they have trusted in Him as the sphere in which they live. That is a very big difference. They are saved, but they're living like saved people because they know what it is to be saved, and they understand the principles of the Word of God – living in the faith.

It is a popular phrase to encourage people to do something good to say, "Keep the faith, baby." Well, the problem is that baby doesn't know the faith, let alone how to keep it.

**Faith Rest**

We pointed out to you that Abraham was one of the all-time great examples of knowing what it was to live in the sphere of the faith of the Word of God. At 75 years of age, he was promised salvation, and he was promised great blessing to himself and his posterity, and to all mankind if he would believe God, and launch out on the promise of God. He did. He believed God. He was saved, and he journeyed to the Promised Land. However, to fulfill that promise that God gave him, which we call the Abrahamic Covenant, Abraham had to have a son as his heir. 25 years passed before the heir arrived in God's good time. In all that time, Abraham functioned on a doctrine of faith Rest.

He believed what God had told him. He accepted the promise. He lived in the sphere of that faith, and then he rested upon God to carry it through and execute. He had his ups and downs, but all the while he lived in the sphere of the execution of that promise. But during the years of waiting (during that 25 years of living in the faith of God's promise to him), he was maturing spiritually. That's what was important to realize – that God's time is the time for us to develop into something great.

Romans 4:18-21 puts it this way, speaking of Abraham, "In hope against hope, he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken: 'So shall your descendants be.' And without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waiver in unbelief, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was also able to perform. Therefore, also it was reckoned to him for righteousness."

What a great thing for anybody to be able to say about us. What a great thing to have recorded for all centuries for Abraham – a man who got a promise from God. Then he had the capacity to have the manhood to rise to live in faith in that promise. And the result was that God carried through.

**Learning Spiritual Things**

We have to learn things in the right way. There are three ways to learn things. Two of them are wrong, and most of the world pursues them, including the religious world.

1. **Empiricism**

One we call empiricism. Empiricism is learning things through your senses. You cannot learn spiritual things through your physical senses. Please notice I Corinthians 2:9: "But just as it is written, things which eye has not seen; ear has not heard; and, which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." This verse is sometimes quoted in reference to the great things that God has in the future for us – the prophetic truth. But this verse does not apply to the prophetic future. This verse applies to what is now. It refers to all the great doctrines of scripture, particularly of the church-age. That's what he means by "eye has not seen; ear has not heard; and, has not entered the heart of man." You understand the word "heart" means "mind in the Bible:" "All that God has prepared for those who love Him." You have to use the grace system of perception to be able to grasp the deep things of the Spirit of God. Otherwise, you're just scratching the trivialities of the surface. 1 Corinthians 2:9 tells us that you cannot learn things by empiricism. It is a no-good system.

1. **Rationalism**

The second system of learning things is rationalism. And rationalism is through human reason. Can you learn spiritual things through rationalism? 1 Corinthians 1:19-20: "For is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world, through its wisdom, did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." You cannot learn spiritual things through reasoning your way to the truth. You will not reason your way to what is truth in the scriptures.

Now, in the Middle ages, one of the fathers of the Roman Catholic Church, Thomas Aquinas, made an enormous mistake that influenced the Roman Catholic Church, which has led it far astray so that it is a hybrid and pagan system today with a veneer of Christianity. But at the heart of it is nothing but the ancient Babylonian religion of Nimrod from the Tower of Babel. Thomas Aquinas said, "Everything in man was contaminated by the fall, but not his mind. His mind was still capable of reasoning itself to what God believes; to what God thinks; and, to what is right and wrong and spiritual things." And that was a great mistake. He missed this passage which clearly says you cannot reason yourself. You cannot use rational to learn spiritual things. It won't work. So that system is out if you're going to live in the faith.

1. **Faith**

There is a third system for learning spiritual things, and that is appropriately called faith. Faith is believing some authority. And the only way that you can learn spiritual things is by believing an authority outside of your senses, and outside of your rational processes. And that authority is the Bible (the Word of God). Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that (subsequent salvation) is not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one should boast."

It is clear here that salvation is not by some effort on your part. It's not through working your senses. It's not through working your mind. It is an act of faith. Faith is a non-meritorious system which is open to everybody. People are saved through hearing the word of the gospel. And because the Bible says that this is God's Word and God's plan and God's method, they make the decision (positive or negative) to believe it or to reject it. Our authority is the Bible which we trust as being, by its own evidence, the inherent Word of God. The value of our faith is the object in which we place it. And because the Bible has demonstrated, over the centuries indeed, confirmed to be the inherent Word of God, we have a proper object for our faith.

So, the result is that we know what God thinks. And because we know what He thinks, we can learn spiritual truth. That's the only way you'll get it. And that's why that grace system of learning spiritual things through the local church ministry, where you are taught by a pastor-teacher with the gift of being able to communicate spiritual things, and lay out the doctrinal implications of Scripture – that's the only way that you can grow spiritually. Empiricism will credit your keen sense. Rationalism credits the level of your IQ. But faith only credits the truthfulness of God.

The second thing for which Paul thanks God for the Colossian Christians, after their life of living in the faith, is what he calls their love. Colossians 1:3: "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus (we thank Him for that), and now the love which you have for all the saints."

**"Agape" Love**

Consider yourself fortunate to be here today. You are about to learn a dramatic distinction about the Greek words for "love" in the Word of God that will remove a great deal of confusion; hocus-pocus; and, misapplication, if you pay attention. The word "love" here in Colossians 1:3 is the Greek word "agape" (ag-ah'-pay), A G A P E. This word connotes a mental attitude. Put that up front. It does not connote an emotional attitude.

**A Mental Attitude**

When the Bible speaks about agape love, it is speaking of something of the mind. And what it connotes is freedom – a mentality which is free from bitterness or ill will. It is a mental attitude of goodwill which is willing indeed to express itself in sacrifice for the object of your love. Very often, you will hear people defining "agape" love as "sacrificial love," but that's the other end of the line. Why is it sacrificial? It is because I don't have any bitterness; I don't have any hatred; I don't have any ill feelings; and, I don't have any mental reservations against you. I don't have anything on which I am opposed to you. I just don't have any bitterness toward you. And that mental attitude is the reason that I'm willing to put myself out for you. There's nothing that causes me not to like you, and not to help you. Because I have no ill will toward you, I indeed am willing to be sacrificial in your behalf. I'm willing to put myself out at my own expense for your blessing – a mental attitude of goodwill.

This, of course, is the product of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the believer, which is described in Galatians 5:22-23 as part of the fruit of the Spirit. And it is produced when the Christian when he's born-again, and he enters a temporal fellowship circle within his eternal fellowship. Here he is in the position where the Holy Spirit is running his life. And while he is there, this marvelous quality of "agape" love just flows out. You don't crank it up. Nobody tells you to do it. Nobody encourages you to do it. It possesses you. Your mind is flushed out of all that bitterness. When you sin, you step out of that inner circle, and you've lost your walk with God, and you've lost your contact. Praying is useless, and blessing is gone. You're still in the eternal fellowship of salvation, but now the old sin nature is running the show. And you have zilch (nothing) when it comes to love.

Now you have to shift to old sin nature love. Now it's what you produce. This is what the average person does when he loves. This is what's characteristic of the Hollywood entertainers and rock stars. They know nothing about Holy Spirit-led love. They only know about this sin nature love. Consequently, their lives are shattered. They can't even stay married to the same person, because they have no divine love. They have no sacrificial content. It's all self-oriented.

Of course, as you know, when you use 1 John 1:9, and confess those known sins that took you out of fellowship, you pop right back into that temporal fellowship, and now all is well, and you're moving on ahead in your life.

So, this love we're talking about is not natural to us. It has to be given to us by the Spirit of God. It is crucial, however, for you to be able to think divine viewpoint thinking (according to divine viewpoint principles), and for you to act according to those principles. For this reason, Hebrews 12:15 makes a point of warning us against the spirit of bitterness which will destroy this mental attitude goodwill love. Hebrews 12:15: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." What a great tragedy it would be for you, as a Christian, capable of the love of God, which is what "agape" love is, to flow through you. and the grace of God which makes possible for you to rise to the highest echelons of being a prince and princess in the royal family of God – to ruin it all by a spirit of bitterness which cancels out all mental attitude love.

Christians are very often indifferent to the fact that they have a spirit of bitterness because they feel that they have a good cause for it. They justify themselves: "This person did this to me. That was wrong. I was mistreated. Therefore, I don't have a feeling of cordiality toward that person, and I have a right to be bitter toward that person. They have never even confessed and admitted their wrong to me." And there are plenty of Christians who go round like that, and they don't realize, in heaven's name, you've just walked out of all contact with God. You've just walked out of all contact with God. Now you've shifted to imitations. You have a veneer. You go through motions. Oh yeah, you go to church; you smile; and, you say all the things that are supposed to be said, but you're out of any contact with God, because the root of bitterness has destroyed the key point of contact: agape love. And every Christian priest can take this attitude if you choose, but it will destroy your spirituality.

You are out of the inner circle of temporal fellowship. You cannot have a spirit of bitterness. Is it possible that you've been abused? Yes. Have you been mistreated by a Christian? You betcha. You've been improperly put upon? Yes. You've been ignored, and you've been mistreated? Yes indeed. But whose problem is that? It's not yours. It's a problem of that individual who's guilty – between that individual and God. And you leave that person to God. What you do is keep your own nose clean. You keep your own sins confessed, and you do not allow a spirit of ill will, even toward a person who has mistreated you, to arise in your heart for one second. What bitterness does is destroys one of the major facets of spiritual maturity – the relaxed mental attitude. And when the relaxed mental attitude is undermined with bitterness, you will pour forth a stream of mental attitude sins. One sin will light another.

God's grace forgave us. We must do the same. Leave the discipline to Him. Our grievances, however, are often ill-conceived. We think that somebody has said something or done something, and they didn't say it and they didn't do it. And we don't have any reason for complaining to begin with. We haven't really been mistreated. Or, if we have, the price of falling out of the grace of temporal fellowship isn't worth it. Just leave it with God, if you have a genuine case. Living in the faith of Christ Jesus, in terms of living in the body of doctrinal truth, is the essential base of our capacity to love people. If we do not live in the faith, we cannot love people.

So, when he commended the Colossians for the fact that they lived in the faith of doctrine, he was also thankful because the thing that naturally followed was mental attitude love. When you live in the sphere of the faith of the Word of God, you will have mental attitude love. He thanks God for the mental attitude love which you have for all the saints.

Now, the word "all" indicates here, each individual Christian, wherever they are, which means that some of the Christians, for which they had a good spirit toward, were unattractive people. I don't know if you've ever met an unattractive Christian. We have lots of them here, so you shouldn't have any trouble. They have their great moments, and they have their high moments, and they have their terrible low moments. But there is never a moment when that unattractive Christian does not have your goodwill – not if you have mental attitude love. It's just automatic. And do you know what happens? You will look at that person and say, "I wish you wouldn't act like that." And you will look at that person and say, "I can't believe you're acting like that. I can't believe you're doing this to yourself. You act as if you had never been taught anything. How can you, after all this, time not know better?

**Saints**

However, while you may observe that, they're still your family, and they still have your total affection without any bitterness and without any resentment, because these people you see are called "saints." The word "saints" here looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's "hagios" (hag'-ee-os), H A G I O S. That word means "holy." And the word "holy" means "set apart." These people are "the set apart ones." They have been set apart to what? To their position in Christ. Because they are in Him, they are holy. Because He is the beloved, they are in the beloved. Because they are beloved to God, they must be beloved to us. So, all who are believers are in Christ, and they are saints. And the object of the mental attitude love of the Colossian Christians were for Christians everywhere – all the saints. Jesus Himself taught that mental attitude love given by the Holy Spirit is the basis for all Christian unity, whether it's in the body of Christ as a whole, or in any local church.

He pointed this out in His great high priestly prayer in John 17:20-26. Jesus says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You did send Me. And the glory which You have given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one just as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity; that the world may know that You did send me; that You did love them even as You did love Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am in order that they may behold my glory, which You have given Me. For You did love Me before the foundation of the world. O Righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known that the love, wherewith You did love Me, may be in them, and I in them."

The whole point here that the Lord stresses is that the unity of believers with one another, and with their Father in heaven, is based upon "agape" love. If you don't have "agape" love; you have no unity with Christians, and you have no unity with the Father. Christians should always, therefore, have a special place in their hearts for believers as family members, in contrast to the unsaved. The Bible repeatedly calls our attention to that – a special place for those church members you're associated with, and for those believers at a distance that you're associated with that are your family members, in contrasts to the unsaved.

John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you; that you also love one another." And in the Greek Bible, every one of those words for "love" there is "agape" – mental attitude love.

Please notice the book of Philippians 1:7-8: "For it is only right for me to feel this way about all of you because I have you in my heart. Since both in my imprisonment, and in defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness. How I long for all of you with the affection of Christ." The apostle Paul is expressing his own personal deep affection for the Philippian Christians, and how comforting it was to him to have that affection when he himself was in prison.

1 John 4:7-11: "Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." The word for "love" there is "agape" mental attitude love. "The one who does not love does not know God. For God is love. By this, the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love – not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the satisfaction) for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

So please get rid of that bitterness; that irritation that you have for some family member; and, that aggravation that you have brought into your life, because you are paying a terrible price. Without mental attitude goodwill love in your life, you have nothing. Do you want to spend your whole life like that? Do you want to pretend to be walking to Christian life? Do you want to keep playing church? Do you want to walk into heaven someday, and when they call you up before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they find that you're poverty poor, with no rewards, because you've lived your life outside of the inner circle of guidance of the Spirit of God based upon "agape" love? It isn't worth it.

One of the things that was obvious from the first in the Christian community in New Testament times was that the pagans have written how they observed how the Christians loved one another, and how they treated each other as family, whether the family was good or bad. Love apart from functioning in doctrine is a false emotion without genuine quality. The world cannot produce this love. Unless you are living by the principles of doctrine, you cannot be related to the Holy Spirit so that divine love is produced in you. But the more mature you are in the faith of the Word, the easier and the deeper you'll find will be your love for other people, even the most unpleasant ones. Believers who love their brethren in Christ Jesus, do not spread or listen to scuttlebutt (gossip) about them. They love the believers, and they treat them accordingly. So, if you find that it's so easy for you to pick up somebody's hot-scoop scuttlebutt, and listen to it, and pass it along, you have a problem with agape mental attitude bitterness.

1 Peter 4:8 says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." And it shuts your mouth, and it closes your ear to the things that you should not be willing to listen to about another person.

From time to time, I have been humbled by how some of the people of my congregation have come and said, "Somebody said this to me. They said that you said this, and I wasn't there. And I knew that you wouldn't say this. So I jumped on him." And I said, "No, you're wrong. You're mistaken. You're misrepresenting. He wouldn't say that. And he wouldn't do that. And then they'll come, and they confirm to be sure they're right. And I think, "Boy, what loyalty. What an example of mental attitude goodwill love." They go right after the attacker and say, "I know who my friend is, and my friend is Christ Jesus, and all who represent Him and who are loyal to Him. And I'm not going to stand around and listen to somebody's scuttlebutt for whatever reason." That will destroy your mental attitude love. Peter says, "Above all, keep your fervent "agape" for one another, because it will cover a multitude of sins.

Also I Corinthians 13:4-7 give us a good insight on this. This is the great chapter on love. Please remember that when you read this chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, whenever it uses the word "love," it is a word that represents the filling of the Holy Spirit. It is a word that represents being in the inner circle of temporal fellowship.

In Galatians 5:22, we have the fruit of the Spirit, and it has several elements to that fruit. The first one is love. The word "love" represents the whole fruit. And here he uses the word "love" in that respect – that it is a person who is filled with the Spirit. He has this mental attitude love. Verse 4: "Love is patient; love is kind; and, it is not jealous. Love does not brag, and is not arrogant. Love does not act unbecomingly. It does not seek its own. It is not provoked. It does not take into account a wrong suffered. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bares all things; believes all things; hopes all things; and, endures all things." There it is. Between those two passages in 1 Peter and 1 Corinthians, you have the whole case presented. This is mental attitude love. This is where our life is as believers.

Now, there's one other thing I think we need to point out. There are two words in the Greek language for "love." You can't tell that from the English translation unless you have a notation that gives you that, but usually you don't. That's where you have to have a pastor-teacher who explains that to you so that you know which word is in a particular passage, because that is very significant. We have two Greek words. The nature of each love is determined by what that word means. How do we know what these words mean? Well, we do have a way of knowing that. I want you to understand that when we say, "This Greek word means this," we're not just imagining that. We're not just making that up.

Anybody who has studied New Testament Greek knows that one of the great outstanding authorities on defining Greek words is a man named Trench – Archbishop Trench. And Archbishop Trench is the final word when you want to know what a word means in the Greek language. Archbishop Trench noted that there were Latin equivalents which were used by the Latin writers for the two Greek words. And one of the earliest translations of the Greek New Testament was by a man named Jerome. He translated the Greek Bible into Latin, and he lived right up there close to New Testament times, within a couple of centuries.

**"Diligo" Love in Latin**

Therefore, he knew in great detail what the Latin meant, and he knew which Greek word to use to give exactly the same meaning in the Latin. In fact, his translation was so significant that, for years, the Roman Catholic Church translated all their Bibles into whatever language from the Latin Vulgate, which meant the common language – the Latin Vulgate. Well, that introduced a lot of errors, of course, but nevertheless, this was a dramatic production by this man. And this man was a great scholar. And what he found was that there was a Greek word (and this is very simple). There's a Latin word "diligo." "Diligo" was a Latin word for love, and it is love which is based on mental esteem for its object. It's a mental attitude love. It's not emotional. And anybody who knew Latin, whenever he wanted to talk about love that was up in the head, and not in the emotions, he would use the word "diligo." They all knew what it meant. It was very clear.

**"Amo" Love in Latin**

There is another word called "amo," A M O. That also means "love" in Latin. And those of you who are used to study Latin, this is one of the words to conjugate the verb. I forget how it went, but we used to rattle this thing off for the verb endings for the first person, second person, and third person. So it's a common word if you've ever studied Latin. It refers to emotional love. "Diligo" was mental love; and, "amo" was emotional love.

Now, knowing that gives us a clue to exactly what the Greek words mean. Now, just to illustrate this from Latin writings, the writer Cicero once wrote to a friend about another friend. And Cicero said, "I do not esteem (and he used the word 'diligo') the man merely, but I 'amo' him.' He is saying, "I love him." He is saying, "There is something of the passionate warmth of affection in the *feeling* with which I regard him."

Now, that is a very important sentence. Cicero said about this friend: "I don't merely have a good mental attitude toward him (I don't just have mental goodwill toward him0, but I have an emotional attachment to this man. There is something of passionate warmth in the affection and the feeling with which I regard him." So, these two words are very clear.

**"Agape" Love**

Now, when Jerome has to translate the Greek Bible, and he has to deal with the two Greek words, which does he attach to these Latin words which gives us a clear clue as to what these words meant in New Testament times? When he came to the word "agape," he related it to the word "diligo." Every place he had "agape" in the Greek, he translated it with this word. That meant mental attitude love. We know exactly what he meant. It is very clear. And Archbishop Trench had pointed this out and researched this for us. Anytime he had something that was emotional, then he used a different Greek word called "philos," P H I L O S. Every time he had the word "philos," he used the word "amo," because it's an emotional word. So, mental attitude love is "agape." This word connotes a mind free of any ill will; jealousy; bitterness; vindictiveness; hatred; unforgiving spirit; a guilt complex; or, competition. This connotes love, which is founded on admiration; veneration; or, mental esteem, but not on emotional attachment. So, there is no one that you cannot have agape love toward. There is no one for whom you cannot have this love produced by the Spirit of God within you, no matter who that person is, and no matter how unlovely that person is.

This is why, when Jesus says, "Love your enemy, He does not use 'philos.'" That would be nonsense. Who can command you to love, with an emotional attachment, somebody who is your enemy? You may not choose to have any bitterness toward him. . ., but you're not necessarily going to have a warm emotional feeling toward him.

Furthermore, you can see how you can be in combat as a soldier, and you can kill your enemy unto the glory of Christ. And you have no bitterness toward that person whose life you're taking in behalf of your nation's protection, defense, and liberty. You are treating him with mental attitude love while you are taking his life in the execution of your duty as a soldier. But you do not have "philos" love (emotional love) toward that person at all. You don't even know him.

So this "agape" love means a mind which is kindly disposed towards someone so that you wish him well; you're concerned for his welfare; and, you will sacrifice in his behalf. This cannot be humanly produced. It cannot be maintained by human effort. It is a product of the Spirit-filled life. It is the result of being filled with the Spirit. It is used to describe God's mental attitude, which provided His salvation for us through the death of His Son. John 3:16 uses "agape" as the love that is described there. It is used of the mind attitude of Jesus Christ toward sinners when He died for them. Galatians 2:20 indicates that Christ died for those who are sinners. And when He died for them, He died for them as those that He loved. Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me, and delivered himself up for me."

While Christ was condemning our sin, there was no mental attitude bitterness on His part toward us. This kind of love cannot be humanly produced or maintained. It also describes the Lord's attitude of mind when He washed the feet of His disciples. That incident is in John 13:1. It's very significant. It used this word: "Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come, that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who are in the world, He loved them to the end." He had this great mental attitude goodwill for them such that He wanted to serve them. And at the end, He said, "Now I must show you how to be a servant. I'm going to wash your feet. I, Who am the Master – I'm going to perform this work of a servant. And I'm doing this because I love you." People who love you will teach you the Word of God. People who don't really love you will give you a good time; they'll give you good laughs; and, they'll give you the cob on the corn after they've shucked off the good stuff. But they will not give you the full counsel of the Word of God.

Christians are commanded to have this type of love in three directions: toward God, in Matthew 22:37; toward your right marriage partner, in Ephesians 5:25; and, toward your friends, in John 15:13, which is what we're dealing with here. This was love toward other saints; toward other believers; and, toward their friends.

We are told in 1 John 2:15, not to love the world or its details. 1 John 2:15: "Do not 'agape' the world nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That's kind of startling. You should not have a goodwill attitude toward the world's society; toward what Satan has created; or, toward the evils from government on down that come into our society. You should not just smile and wink at it. You should not love it. You should hate it. And as David said," He who hates my God is my enemy. I hate those," David said, "who hate my Lord." And what David is saying is: "I do not have 'agape' goodwill toward those who are evil in what they do. I treat that evil with the hatred it deserves. So, we distinguish as always between the poor guy who's caught up in the evil, but we do not condone the evil.

**"Philos" Love**

Now, to complete this contrast, this brings us to the tricky word that is the one that people really mean when they talk about love – the "philos" word, which is the word for emotional love. This word has a very distinct meaning. And it is fascinating to look into a verse in the Bible here and there, and these two words will be used in proximity to one another. And suddenly, the whole verse becomes illuminated like a neon sign. That is because, when you know what the words "agape" and "phileo" mean, you know what the Holy Spirit is saying. Next time, we'll begin with the study of "philos."

Father, we thank you for Your Word.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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