***The Nature of True Love

M-2A***

Our subject in this session is the nature of true love. The batting average for most Americans is very poor indeed when it comes to finding the particular person which God has designed for each in marriage. This is evidenced by thousands upon thousands of unhappy miserable marriages because two people, with nothing wrong with either one of them, but when put together, form an undesirable unit. Yet, God has provided a particular man for a particular woman for each to form a one flesh unit.

Matthew 19:3-6 says, "The Pharisees also came unto him testing him and saying to him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any reason at all?' And he answered and said to them, "Have you not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they too shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more. But one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

God has created, from the beginning, male and female, which indicates one for one--a particular one for another particular one. The Bible warns in the Proverbs many times against entering a bad marriage because of selecting the wrong mate. Proverbs 11:22 says, "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who is without discretion." Proverbs 12:4: "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, but she who shames him is as rottenness in his bones." Proverbs 19:13: "A foolish son is the calamity of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." Proverbs 21:9: "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house. Proverbs 21:19: "It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman."

A woman who is mated to the wrong husband becomes a very complicated problem. She becomes a very unsympathetic and offensive person to have around. That's what's behind these verses in Proverbs. The trouble stems from a lack of orientation to the mind of God when it comes to choosing a marriage partner. An orientation to God's thinking requires a knowledge of the principles of divine truth, the doctrines of the Word of God.

The marriage conflict is also created by false views that people have on the relationship between sex and love. Religion, not Christianity, but religion distorts sex with the idea that it has to be limited to reproduction. Religion also promotes asceticism with the idea that there is something dirty, offensive, undignified, and improper about sex. So, it distorts sex just as much as lasciviousness and unabandoned sensuality. The unbiblical views of religion unfortunately are often ascribed to the Bible and to Christianity. Nothing is farther from the truth. The Bible doesn't teach any such views concerning sex or its relationship to love. The Bible does have a Christian doctrine concerning sex. Sex within God's plan is a good thing to be enjoyed with thanksgiving. However, sexuality and being in love are not to be equated. The use of sex is simply one small portion of the expression of genuine love.

The world's standards relative to sex are really perversions. The biblical standards of chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage are expressions that are true to nature. This view conforms to reality. The godly use of sex begins with the right attitude of mind which is based on information gathered from the Word of God. We found that there are three reasons for sex. One is companionship or recreation between husband and wife. The second reason for sex is for having children. The third reason for sex is the use of sex within marriage, and marriage as a controlling element upon the proper use of sex.

The basic problem for a woman is that she is empty by divine creation until she finds fulfillment for her being through her right man. Whatever else she may be, whatever capacities she may have, she is an empty vessel until the right man comes along and fulfills her. The Bible gives vital information, therefore, about understanding the nature and the structure of women. They are only complex, whether you want to believe it or not, when they are frustrated through a breakdown in their relationships to their right man.

When a woman fails to marry her right man, God and grace provide solace for her empty vessel, and the same for the man. Therefore, it is not necessary for a woman to become emotionally unstable, for her to become tyrannical, to become a man-hater, or to become domineering. These are often characteristics which signal, when you see them in women, that this woman is not being fulfilled by her man. She's married to the wrong man, or her right man is not coming through for her. This condition that she may unfortunately suffer from a breakdown in her relationship with her right man does not give a woman license to run off home to mother. Her body belongs to her husband as his body belongs to her. She is committed to him for better or for worse. She does not leave and fly the coop when the difficulties arise. Nor does this give her license to run off with some other man--even her right man, whom she may have found too late.

So, an understanding of the nature of true love is essential to making a proper selection of a husband or wife and for marital happiness. The quality of love, from the biblical point of view, is what we are interested in pursuing in this session. Love originates as part of the essence of God. Satan is everywhere trying to distort the quality of true love. True love is part of God's basic nature, and therefore it's His possession. Disorientation on the meaning of love is expressed in the world through such concepts as brotherhood--we're all brothers and everybody loves one another; don't resist communist aggression with force because you might make them mad; don't execute premeditated murderers; tolerate the sexual perverts--give them understanding; and, don't look down upon gay people, and the bestiality people, and so on. All of this is satanic distortion of love.

The nature of true love is illustrated by God's appeal to his unfaithful wife, Israel. Israel in the Old Testament was viewed as the wife of Jehovah. In Jeremiah 3, God is making an appeal for the return of his unfaithful wife, Israel. They've gone into captivity and they have been in captivity for ten years. Yet, God's love is of such a quality that He could reach out for this people who had been so spiritually adulterous and unfaithful to him. Jeremiah 3:12: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, 'Return you backsliding Israel' said the Lord, 'and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful' said the Lord, 'and I will not keep anger forever.'"

**Forgiveness**

One of the qualities of the love of God is that it is forgiving. It does not keep anger. There is a way back. The love of God basically is an attitude of mind. When the mind is free of ill will, and that's what divine love is--a mental attitude free of ill will, we are not plagued with self-pity or with ideas of how we've been mistreated. True love is always relaxed therefore because it's a relaxed mental attitude. People who are in a bind make very poor lovers. But as with Abraham and Sarah, a relaxed mind free of ill will enabled Abraham to call her "princess," and for her to call him "my lord."

**Philippians 1:9-11**

In Philippians 1, we have a very good analysis of what the Bible means by love. In Philippians 1:9, the apostle Paul says, "In this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Now this is a prayer by the Apostle Paul for the Philippian Christians, and this prayer stresses a petition that they may enter into what God means by love. This is a very important declaration that he's going to make to them. Therefore, in the Greek Bible, this verse begins with the Greek words which signal that something very important is coming. Then he used the Greek word for prayer, "proseuchomai". This word connotes praying for someone else. So, Paul is saying, "I am praying for someone else here (namely you Philippian Christians), and I am about to tell you of a very important prayer request that I'm offering up in your behalf." The whole general theme of this book of Philippians is the subject of personal happiness. Personal happiness requires the experience of true love.

**Agapao**

Then he says, "This I pray that your love may abound," and "your love" introduces his prayer requests for the Philippian Christians. In the Greek bible, the word love here is "agape." The nature of love, in the biblical sense, has to be determined from the meaning of this word. This is a matter of etymology. Archbishop Trent was a noted scholar who noticed a significant relationship between the Latin and the Greek words for love. He observed that there were certain Latin equivalents for the Greek word "agape" (or "agapao") and "phileo," which were used in the Latin Vulgate version, the translation of the Scriptures by one of the Church Fathers, Jerome, near the end of the fourth century. He noticed that every time the Greek bible used the word "agapao," the Latin Vulgate version would use the Latin word which refers to a love which is based on esteem for an object. It is a mental attitude, and the word does not have any emotional connotations. "Agapao" is the equivalent of this Latin word, and it is a non-emotional love. It is an attitude of mind free of ill will.

**Phileo**

The other Greek word that we have in the New Testament is "phileo," and Archbishop Trent noticed that whenever "phileo" came up in the Greek bible, the Latin version used a different word which refers to an emotional, unreasoning, spontaneous affection. "Phileo" is equal to an emotional love. "Agapao" is a mental attitude free of ill will. This is very noticeably brought out in a quotation that Archbishop Trent gives from Cicero. Cicero is speaking about one friend to another, and he says, "I do not esteem ("agapao") the man merely, but I love ("phileo") him. There is something of the passionate warmth of affection in the feeling with which I regard him." So, in using these two distinct words, what Cicero is saying here is, "I not only have a mental attitude free of ill will toward this man, but I have an emotional attachment of affection (a feeling) with which I regard him as well." This single sentence is a beautiful illustration of the difference between "agapao" and "phileo."

Jerome, near the end of the fourth century, lived at a time very close to the New Testament. Therefore, he had access to the meaning of these Greek words in the times in which they were used. So, when he came to these Latin words which have clear and definitive meanings, he was qualified to know which Latin word should be equated to which Greek word.

So, love, here in Philippians 1:9, is a mental attitude of esteem free, therefore, of all ill will. It's not some superficial sentimentality; it's not being nice to someone; and, it is not a physical thing (sex). Such love is not an emotional appeal to tolerate criminal activities, sex perverts, or the things that lead to the destruction of a nation. This love in Philippians 1:9 is a love for which the apostle Paul is earnestly asking God in behalf of these Christians at Philippi. This love is a mental attitude condition. Paul says, "I pray that this may abound." "Agape" love cannot be contained or dismissed. It is something that grows. The word "abound" is "perisseuo." It is in the active voice which indicates that it is choosing its own object of affection. This is a love which is abounding in such a way that it is choosing its own affection. Avoid the impression of having such a love for someone just because you were reflecting other peoples' choices. Avoid the impression that you're in love with someone because somebody else thinks you should be in love with them in this sense. You must live out of your own soul when it comes to true "agape" type love.

Paul says, "That this may abound." So, it's subjunctive in the grammar here which means it's a potential experience. You may possess this kind of love and you may not. You may be developing as a believer. You may be expanding with a mental attitude or you may not be. Paul says, "I want this mental attitude type of love to develop and to grow yet more and more, which is a strong expression for a deeper and broader outreach of "agape" love among the believers.

How can you grow in this kind of love? Well, not by permissiveness toward the wrongs that you see in Christians or in unbelievers, and not by physical experiences. It says, "That you may grow more and more in this type of love in knowledge." The Greek word for "knowledge" here is "epignosis." This word means full knowledge or full understanding. So, we may translate this actually as "by means of:" "This I pray; that your love may abound yet more and more by means of full knowledge." We have already learned that full knowledge is Bible doctrine which your mind has learned and has grasped, under the filling and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as you have sat in church and been instructed by a pastor-teacher. Then when you exercise positive volition toward this truth--you respond and believe it--this is an act of faith. This what you have learned in the mentality of your soul is now transferred into your human spirit which acts as a warehouse, a storage place, of divine understanding from which God the Holy Spirit guides the totality of your soul--your emotions, your will, and your thinking.

We won't take time to go over this particular structure of our being, but you can study these scriptures on your own: In Romans 8:16, Paul says that it is the Spirit of God who witnesses to our spirit, our human spirit, that we are the children of God; and 1 Corinthians 2:12 says, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world." The spirit of the world are the rational processes (learning things by reason or by empiricism or by our senses). 1 Corinthians 2:12 continues, "But the Spirit out from God" (the proper translation). This is not God the Holy Spirit, though you have a capitalized "Spirit" there in the King James translation. The Greek says, "But the Spirit out from God." This is speaking of our human spirit, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. In verse 11, you have, "Even so the things of God no man knows," and there it is in the possessive, indicating that it is God the Holy Spirit. It is the things of God the Holy Spirit. However, this is not the possessive case here in verse 12 when it speaks of the Spirit out from God. This is what God the Holy Spirit gives at the point of regeneration. So, we are told here that God the Holy Spirit and our human spirit combine to enable us to know the things that are freely given to us of God--from God.

Paul says, "I am calling for a love that is going to develop, that is going to abound, and it is going to become deeper because you are receiving Bible doctrine." Your capacity to love, to love God, to love your opposite number, and to love your friends are all going to be determined by the extent of full knowledge ("epignosis") in your human spirit. *Your effectiveness as a lover is not a matter of experience.* This is important. It is a matter of Bible doctrine in your human spirit. You people who think you are real Don Juans have picked up a very false notion from the world. If you want to be a real lover, get with the Word.

Continuing with Philippians 1:9, Paul says, "That you may abound more and more by means of knowledge in all judgment." The word judgment is "aisthesis," and it means perception. Bible doctrine in your spirit expands your capacity to love because it gives you discernment and right direction for your whole being. This includes perception to know when to change your opinion about a marriage prospect, for example. This is why it's important to have Bible doctrine in your soul if you are going to pick the right person. The test of genuine love is the discernment that comes from it.

Verse 10 then says, "That you may approve things that are excellent." Here's the wisdom of love. Notice that there are two uses of the word "that," in this verse. The first "that" is that you may approve things that are excellent. The second "that" is that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ. The first "that" is the basis of the fulfillment of the second "that." You have two purpose clauses. The first is "eis," and the second is "hina." This shows that the results of the second one depends upon the first. In other words, if you are going to be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, it is because you have been able to do the first part of verse 10--approve things that are excellent. The word "approve" is "dokimazo," which means to accept after testing in order to find what is genuine. Your love is able to tell the real from the fake. The means of testing is your discernment which comes from the full knowledge in your human spirit. This again is the active voice which indicates that each of us must decide from our own soul, and not operate on someone else's evaluation--fitting into any old program.

Love thus is able to be directed toward things that are excellent and to bypass the things that are inferior--that you may approve by testing to show the genuine as a result of the knowledge that you have so that your love can be expressed toward the things that are excellent so that you may be sincere ("eilkrines"), which means to judge by sunlight. Here it is the light of doctrine. "And that you may be without offense ("aproskopos"), and this means that you feel no stumbling block within your own being, your own conscience, that would cause another to stumble--that you may be sincere; that you may be judging in the sunlight of doctrine, and therefore find nothing in yourself which would cause another to stumble, even unto the day of Christ, which is the day of the rapture, the day that Jesus Christ returns to catch up the Christians, the living and the dead, to be with him in heaven.

**Pleroo**

Verse 11 gives us then the result of love, of this kind of divine love: "Being filled consequently with the fruits of righteousness." The word for "being filled" is "pleroo." Here are some important grammatical points that you should understand about this word. It is in the perfect tense, passive voice, and the participle mode. Perfect means that the results of true love are permanent, being filled with something that is permanent. Passive means that these results from true love are obtained because the word of God is acting in us. We are the beneficiaries of something within our spirits which is guiding us. A participle indicates that here is a permanent principle of life.

Now there are four certain basic meanings to "pleroo" that we should be aware of which apply here:

1. "Pleroo" means to fill up a deficiency. We have a need of producing fruits of righteousness. That is the word used here in verse 11, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness." We have a deficiency, and that deficiency is the production of divine good. The knowledge of the Word will enable our love to express itself in such a way that we produce not human good but divine good. God never rewards us for any human good we do, but at the judgment seat of Christ He rewards us eternally for our divine good.
2. "Pleroo" also means to possess fully. The goal of divine good is to absorb and motivate the believer.
3. "Pleroo" means to influence fully. All areas of life are controlled by love for God and productive of divine good. This is not operating on a substitute of programs and gimmicks or pep talks. This means being influenced by doctrine, not by some human agent.
4. "Pleroo" means to fill up with a certain quality. Love which stems from doctrine is an ennobling love, and that's the quality of God's love. Thus, true love in the mind is the product of the Word of God which then produces divine good in all of our relationships.

Now let's make an application of love. First, we'll consider love for the opposite sex. Love in this class, one man for his one woman, was designed by God in eternity past for the expression toward one particular person only. There are exceptions in the case of celibacy or in the case of eunuchs. For these, the Word of God and service replaces the particular person that God has designed for each. In the Song of Solomon, we have some indications concerning the expression of love for your own particular opposite number. Love for your own particular one is powerful. Song of Solomon 8:6-7: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. For love is strong as death. Jealousy is cruel as Sheol. Its coals are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be rejected." The love of the right man for his right woman is "strong as death." This means that it's final and irreversible. The burning of true love cannot be quenched by any pressures. Once the particular one is in the soul of the other, the image returns. You may be separated. You may not approve of something they do, but you never forget them.

**Death**

Death terminate false love, but there is something strange about the effect of death upon the love of a right man and his right woman. Ecclesiastes 9 indicates that there is a continuing quality to the love of a particular man and his particular woman. Ecclesiastes 9:5: "For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything. Neither have they any more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love and their hatred and their envy are now perished. Neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." The only things that are destroyed are the things that are false and what are mental attitude sins. Their love and their hatreds and their envy are perished. But that which was genuine in love, that continues. That has a quality where the one takes in his soul almost to the grave the love of the other.

The particular love is exclusive toward one person. Proverbs 5:18-20: "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant doe. Let her breast satisfy you at all times, and be ravished always with her love. And why would you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?" In the nature of true love, it cannot go out freely to anyone except the particular one that God has designed for you. All others are excluded. Genuine sex love and genuine sex happiness are found only in one opposite number. It's a soul-to-soul relationship, a particular soul to a particular soul. It is foolishness to seek to find love in any other one. So, the idea in Proverbs here is that that particular wife is the one in whom alone you can find sex love and sex happiness. This incidentally, a soul-to-soul relationship is the way God designed sex to operate on the right man and his right woman. This eliminates auto-erotism, homosexuality, and adultery as any possible grounds of genuine and full sex happiness.

A particular man or a particular woman's love is a very satisfying and a perfect happiness. Proverbs 15:17: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." Each sustains the other. It's not dependent on anyone or anything other than themselves. It's an all satisfying happiness. Also this kind of love between two people is protective. Song of Solomon 1:13 indicates that it is protective when they are separated and when they're together. Song of Solomon 1:13: "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts." This is indicating a pouch bearing herbs which have an aromatic quality to them, and which remind this woman of her particular love. While he is away from her, she carries this on a string around her neck, and it brings back fragrant memories of him, and these have a protective, soothing, encouraging quality to her.

Song of Solomon 4:6: "Until the day breaks and the shadows flew away, I will go up to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense." This again indicates when they are separated. Now when they are together, in Song of Solomon 2:4, it is a different kind of protection: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." There the man's protection is on the scene with her, providing.

Then, the love of a particular man and a particular woman is illustrated by the intimate relationship of the Lord and the Christian. This was true of Israel in Jeremiah 3 that we read about earlier, and Ezekiel 16:8, 23. It's also true of the church in Ephesians 5:22-23. The relationship of intimacy between God and His people reflects the relationship of a right man and his right woman.

**Jealousy**

Mental attitude sins stifle the expression of a particular man and a particular woman love. They don't fully enjoy each other, and then, suddenly, one dies. Then they realize how their love had been stifled. As a matter of fact jealousy is singled out as a destructive force to a particular man and a particular woman's love. This is a particularly devastating sin. It would be good if we stopped for a moment here and had a summary of the doctrine of jealousy. There are several points that you should understand about jealousy which is supremely destructive of genuine marital love.

1. Jealousy removes all happiness from the Christian.
2. Jealousy creates its own misery.
3. Jealousy brings out all the ugly features in a person's temperament. Whatever your weaknesses are, when you play the role of a jealous person, the worst is going to come out.
4. Jealousy destroys a relaxed mental attitude, which is the basis of a friendship with a person. You can't be friendly with a person toward whom you have this mental attitude of jealousy. As a matter of fact, it is a sin which is so great that there was a Levitical offering provided for it alone. You can read about this in Numbers 5:11-31. This was a special offering for this particular sin.
5. Jealousy will neutralize the love between a particular man and his particular woman (Song of Solomon 8:6).
6. Jealousy destroys a person's wellbeing (Job 5:2, Proverbs 14:30).
7. Jealous is the strongest of the mental attitudes sins (Proverbs 27:3-4).
8. It was jealousy that split the nation of Israel. Ephraim was jealous of Judah (Isaiah 11:13).
9. Jealousy is what motivated those who crucified Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:18, Mark 15:10).
10. Jealousy motivated the selling of Joseph into slavery by his brothers. Act 7:9.
11. Negative volition to the Word manifests itself in jealousy (Romans 1:28-29). People who are negative toward doctrine show it in jealousy.
12. Jealousy rejects the teachings of Bible doctrine (Acts 13:45 and Acts 17:5).
13. Jealousy motivates revenge (Proverbs 6:34).
14. Jealousy takes real or apparent wrongs out of the Lord's hands, and intrudes on the divine prerogative of exercising judgment. Jealousy wants to be its own executer of justice (Romans 12:9, Deuteronomy 32:35).
15. Finally, false doctrine produces jealousy (1 Timothy 6:4). Here the words envy and jealousy are synonymous terms. So if you are absorbing false doctrine, you're exposing yourself to jealousy. Absorbing sound doctrine stabilizes your mentality and enables you to handle the quality of jealousy.

The love of a particular man and a particular woman is a grace gift from God. Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." Now the translation is not exactly right here because a person who finds a wife does not necessarily find a good thing. Many people are ignorant concerning the nature of true love, which is a mental attitude free of ill will, which is the divine quality of love, which is the basis of marriage. People who don't understand this are very prone to pick people who are wrong marriage partners. So, a man may get a wife who is not the wife that God has designed for him, and he's not going to find a good thing. He is going to find a very miserable thing.

The translation here should actually read: "Whoever finds the right woman receives grace from the Lord." The right woman is a grace gift from God. That's the only way you receive the right person--as a grace gift from God. That's the way Adam received Eve, because God prepared her and brought her to him. And, that's how you're going to find the right one that God has for you. You don't have to hustle around. You don't have to experiment. You don't have to run around and constantly be looking under every bush and every rock to see what you can find. When God, in His time, is ready, He will bring together you and the person he has designed for you. It's a grace gift.

God has set aside time in each life for the love of a particular man and a particular woman, this special kind of love. In Ecclesiastics 3:8, we have the expression, "There is a time to love." God supplies a person and the time, and this provision can be ruined by your refusing to wait for the right one. It can be ruined by drugs. It can be ruined by premarital sex. It can be ruined by a mental attitude sins. All of these attack your soul and can destroy what God intends for you to have.

Marriage sanctifies and is the framework of a particular man and a particular woman's love. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and in honor." Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled. But fornicators and adulteries God will judge." So marriage sanctifies, and it's the framework of this kind of love.

Finally, a particular woman's love is the glory of her own particular man (1 Corinthians 11:7). In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, we have some marks of mental attitude love, and that's what we've been talking about--the nature of true love. Here are 15 identifying marks of mental attitude love:

1. It endures long.
2. It is kind.
3. It is free of jealousy.
4. It is not conceited.
5. It is not unmannerly.
6. It is not self-seeking.
7. It is not irritable.
8. It does not demand its rights.
9. It does not take pleasure in injustice.
10. It sides happily with the truth.
11. It covers up.
12. It has unquenchable faith.
13. It always maintains hope.
14. It endures without limit and it never fades.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to get these 15 marks of mental attitude love clearly in mind so that they will be programmed into your being as a guide for your own direction and your own experience as you meet, in time, the one that God has for you.

So what we have said is that when the Bible speaks of love, it is not the same thing as sex. Love here in the Scripture is a mental attitude. It is a quality that God calls upon us to have. The Bible never tells you to love your enemies with the "phileo" emotional love, because you cannot command emotions. But the Bible does say to love your enemies with this "agapao" (the "agape" type of love). This love is a mental attitude, and over this we have control. We are to function on sound doctrine, and that means daily intake of the Word of God so we live on it, as Jesus said, "By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," just like a person lives by bread on a daily basis. When we are functioning on the Word of God on this basis, we are programmed to be able to express this kind of love. Out of it comes our physical expression which reaches its maximum pleasure and blessing and happiness when that expression is found with the particular person that God has designed for you to share this mental attitude love. Learn the nature of true love. It's the beginning of a lifetime of happiness.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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