***Divine Good Works and "Agape" Love

RV17-01***

Please turn in your Bibles to Revelation 2:18-29. This is the third section on the letter to Thyatira. The local church in the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor had developed a set of conditions which brought both great commendation and great condemnation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Thyatira, we have indicated, has reflected the period in church history which is known as the Dark Ages. This was a period during which the Roman Catholic Church developed and assumed a domination over the religious world. The Roman Catholic Church itself was a mixture of Christianity and paganism, and was a product of Satan, and is used by Satan, to keep souls in religion, but to keep them lost, and to keep them thinking they have a relationship with God, when in fact they do not.

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to the Thyatira congregation as the Son of God who is approaching the members in judgment. He has the full knowledge of omniscience about the spiritual condition of the Thyatira church. The local churches, which often see themselves as dynamos of success, are in fact seen by the Lord Jesus Christ as the wretched failures they indeed are. Just because a local organization has people crowding its pews, and more money than it knows what to do with, and sophisticated leadership, and prestige membership, does not mean a thing with God. Those churches are often a calloused front for a deep-seated contamination of the flesh which expresses itself in very subtle ways. So it is not easy to look at a local church and say, "There is where God's blessing resides." There God's blessing does not reside. You can't determine that in terms of externals. That is a purely human viewpoint conclusion.

**Divine Good Works**

The Lord Jesus Christ, however, does view local church organizations as very important, because they are His channel of divine viewpoint communication to the world. The church in Thyatira is commended, first of all, we found, for the nature of its works. Such works were commended because they were divine good works rather than human good works. Divine good production is the will of God for the children of God. The purpose of this is to achieve the bottom line of Christianity, which is storing treasures in heaven. Don't you kid yourself with whatever hotshot preachers may have to say to you that there's something else that is the ultimate purpose of your Christian life. Do not be deceived by that. The ultimate purpose of the Christian life is storing treasures in heaven. The Bible is very clear about that. The Lord Jesus was very clear about that. The epistles of the New Testament are very emphatic about that. When Christians catch hold of that, and realize that there is coming a judgment and evaluation day for performance, then the Christian life comes into perspective, and not before that. The bottom line is storing treasures in heaven.

That means that we are going to stand in heaven, and it is possible that we are going to get some surprises when it comes to the distribution of those treasures in heaven – to discover that some people that we thought should do better did very poorly, and that somebody who perhaps was not a particular personality and making a particular splash, but was going about the business of producing the divine good for which the Lord commended the Thyatira church is going to be greatly rewarded in heaven. It will be a surprise. Some of us are going to be embarrassed, and some of us are going to be encouraged.

So those of you who do not take seriously the matter of your personal works and your personal life and what you do with your time, better give it some consideration. You're your own priest. You do as you please. But I'll guarantee you, there is coming a time when you're going to regret having been so sloppy in your Christian life. You people who can't find yourselves into the assembly of the Lord very often, and who can't keep your children into the things that they should be doing in various ministries that they're engaged in, and who, in an indirect way, teach them to be sloppy believers and to be sloppy in their lives, are encouraging them to be paupers in heaven when it comes to reward, just as you are going to be. So some of you parents need to back off and decide whether you really want to teach your children to be the sometime Charlies that a lot of these kids are. We never know when some of them are going to show up in band. We know that some of them are always going to show up in band. We never know when some of them are going to show up in club. We know that others are always going to show up in club.

You need not kid yourself, because if there's one thing that comes through in Revelation 2:19, it's that the Lord Jesus Christ is highly pleased with people who are in the business of producing divine good works. If you'll drop your eye to the last part of that verse, one of the things (that we're going to come to later) you'll discover that pleases the Lord so much is that their works have increased. They're doing more than they did before. So those of you who are getting weary in the Lord's work, and those of you who have so many other wonderful things to do with your lives on Sunday morning and Sunday evenings and during the week, think it over again. You may have cause to regret it for all eternity. I remind you once more that what you do this side of the grave bears consequences with which you will live for all eternity. You cannot correct the loss of salvation (the lack of salvation) once you die. You cannot do anything about it. There's no second chance. So you cannot correct slovenly Christian service and the kind of service which is not in the form of divine good production. You cannot correct that once you die. You're going to be out there; you're going to be embarrassed; and, you're going to be a pauper. Don't you kid yourself that at the feet of Jesus Christ, everybody is equal. We're not equal here, and we're not going to be equal there. If there's anything that the apostle Paul tried to convey to us, it was just that very point. There are going to be people who get great rewards and people who get zilch.

Divine good is based on Bible doctrine principles. Consequently, what is produced is not mere human viewpoint values. The apostle John was writing as the scribe of this letter that Jesus is dictating to the Thyatira church. The Lord says, "I know by my omniscience the nature of your human doing (your works)." Organized churches are filled with activities today in behalf of humanitarian causes. These are causes which are pure human good, and they are in conflict with doctrinal principles. Such causes are an investment of a believer's time; of a believer's money; and, of a believer's energy, and they are investing in what is an evil work of human good. These worthy causes are the creation of Satan to make unsaved people and carnal believers feel that they are doing something for God, and that they are worthy to meet God.

So a local church organization has a great deal of responsibility relative to what kind of programs it does indeed conduct. Human good works are pure hay, wood, and stubble, and they are rejected by the Lord Jesus Christ as dead works. A local church is derelict in its duties and in its responsibilities when it encourages its people into hay, wood, and stubble works. Hebrews 6:1 says, "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on into perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." If you're a believer, go on to living works. Go on to divine good production. Get over the babyhood stage of still producing the same kind of human good works that you did before you came to a knowledge of Christ. In Hebrews 9:14, we read, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works (human good) to serve the living God?" It is a great thing when you get cleaned up as a believer from all that dead work debris that hangs onto us. A lot of the hotshot churches today are shot-through with dead works programs, and they are encouraging their congregations in it.

This group of people in Thyatira were commended because their works were divine good production, and it's obvious that it was a substantial production. Again, we remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ knows full well what His local churches are doing as an organization, and He knows full well what we do with the provisions He gives us. The Lord Jesus knows full well what we do with the spiritual gifts He gives us to work with. He knows full well what we do with the money He gives us. He knows full well what we do with the building He gives us, our facilities, and our caravan. He knows full well what we do with the vision He gives us. As an organization, as well as us as individual believers, we should be very much aware that the Lord Jesus Christ knows exactly what's going on.

A church program of divine good production is under constant threat of the flesh within the members of that congregation. These members want to add to the program. They want to modify, and they want to substitute, so as to convert what is being done into human good works. A program in itself can be a bad thing, but it is foolish for us to pretend that as a local church we don't have a program. All local churches have programs. Some of them get so hung up in the program, however, that it's all human good operation, and there is nothing of God in what is going on. The emotional domination of the soul draws a church into human good under the guise of compassion. But love is not love unless it is walking by means of the truth of doctrine. A lot of the human good which is done under the name of compassion is purely rejected by God because it is not structured upon the truth.

2 John 6: "But this is love: that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment that you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. This is love: that we walk after His commandments." Do not talk about love if you are not walking according to biblical principles. There is nothing but an emotional orgy being expressed if you do not function on the principles of the Word of God. These human viewpoint people, who infiltrate a local church congregation, push for human good programs which in fact prostitute the real work of the church by promising services people should provide for themselves. This is one of the things we always have to fight in the local church. A church which is functioning in a program which is divine good production, where people are really storing treasures in heaven, is always under fire because somebody comes along and has got some wonderful idea. Somebody comes along and says, "Hey, listen. We've got several young ladies in our church. They're not married. Why don't we have an unmarried young ladies club? You know, they need to have some fun. They need some social life. We could send out notices to the churches around us that we have an unmarried ladies club, and get some unmarried young men. Maybe we could get something started."

Well, I haven't found any place in the Bible where Lonely Hearts Clubs are part of the local church ministry. If you think that's funny, you're mistaken. I have constantly been barraged (over a period of years) by one hotshot idea after another because somebody has got some kind of a need, usually of a social nature. I've had people come up to me and say, "I just wish we had something more social at Berean church." I say, "Why?" They say, "Well, people never invite me out to anything." Usually I can see why myself. Nevertheless, that is not our responsibility, and it's not up to us to be providing social things for you. And we've only got so much capacity; so much strength; so much mental capacity; so much emotional capacity; so much financial capacity; and, so much physical capacity. When we've invested it, it's shot, and it's gone. Do you really want to invest it in something as trivial and temporal as taking care of somebody's social life, or taking care of the social life of your high school teenagers with parents that ought to be doing for themselves? Of course you wouldn't, if you understand what's involved.

We are dealing with divine good production. As a church, we are under constant attack to be dissuaded from that and to be brought into some kind of a program that people should be providing for themselves. Of course, the outside non-church organizations pose a major threat to a church continuing in its divine good production. Every now and then, as we get new people into this ministry, one of the first things they do is come in with some terrific hotshot idea about some non-church organization that was raised up and maybe is doing a good work. But now it is to be incorporated into our ministry, and maybe we don't have the people to do that; we don't have the time; we don't have the capacities; and, we don't have the energies. How many churches are running Christian day schools as they ought if they had any decent self-respect? We do. How many churches are providing youth day activity programs such as Brigade and Pioneer Girls? That takes a monumental amount of investment of time and of professional capacity and of ability to direct that into real spiritual production so that it's not just another miniature YMCA. We do it. How many people are engaged in the outreach through the printing and the taping ministry? That takes a huge amount of time and a huge amount of investment on the part of many people, so that every time we open our mouths in this auditorium, thousands of people hear after us what is heard here. We bear that responsibility on our shoulders.

But there are many churches who are nothing but social clubs. Let them do these things. Let them provide these outside non-church organizations with the support that they need. These organizations are usually pirates who are roaming around to try to siphon off capacity from the Lord's people who are already doing the Lord's work. So do not be quickly dissuaded. Do not be caught up because somebody comes up and says, "Hey, here's a real wonderful program I've just heard about. This church down the road does it." Well, this church down the road doesn't do anything else. That would be a good program for them to engage in, especially when some influential leader comes along. He's got a great dream – somebody who's going to reach the world in the next ten years. Everybody in the world's going to hear the gospel in the next ten years.

People get caught up with this. Here we have some hotshots coming here to the stadium: "We're all going to get together, and we're going to make a wonderful time for the Lord. You people here in the local church: we need your support. We need you there because on a certain night, we're all going to light a match and hold it up for Jesus to show how illuminated we are." And they go out and drag off capacity from a local church. People just eat up that bunko.

Or they say, "We're going to have a day of fasting and prayer." That's a wonderful one. Boy, that warms the cockles of the heart. But I don't think you ought to expect any spiritual results from that. It's only these organizations that are coming up with programs that they think are going to change something. What kind of a day of fasting and prayer will you have with believers and unbelievers all mixed together like a mongrel company with people who are disoriented to the Word of God? Do you think God has got something wonderfully important that He's going to do for you? This is like standing at the public school football games while everybody stops and prays. The same guys who were cursing and using the Lord's name in vain in the locker rooms, and telling foul stories, are out there with their heads bowed, and their helmets under their arms while they pray. That's the kind of thing that is pure-gutted human viewpoint production, and God hates it. When he finds a church that's involved in divine viewpoint production, He says, "I love it, and I want you to keep doing it. And I want you to know that the devil is after you to dissuade you from it, and to get you sidetracked, and be on guard against it."

**Dorcas**

The pattern of Christian works is exemplified for us in the Word of God, for example, by Dorcas. Please turn to Acts 9:36. This is an example of the pattern of divine good works that should characterize us, and what indeed will result, if we are engaged in divine good works: "There was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas." This woman was full of divine good works and alms deeds which she did. "And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died; whom when they had washed, they laid in an upper chamber. And Lydda was near to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there. They sent to him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth and kneeled down and prayed, and turning to the body, said, 'Tabitha, arise.' She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up, and he gave her his hand, and lifted her up. And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive."

Notice the thing that had happened. Here was this woman engaged in divine good production in the provision of material needs in the way of a clothing type of thing that people needed, and which the Lord led her to do and was enabling her to do under the Spirit's guidance. When she died, they missed her. That is the characteristic of people who are in divine good production. The people who are generally in divine good production, if something happens to you, we're going to miss you. And the people who are not, if something happens to you, and you go off to be with the Lord, we're going to be surprised to find it out some weeks later when we discover you're not around, because we never missed you in the process. That's divine good and human good production. So now you might want to take a look at yourself and see whether you'd be missed or not.

The supreme pattern, of course, is found in 2 Corinthians 8:9, for those of us who want to follow in the tradition of the Thyatira Christians of divine good work production: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake, He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich." That is what characterizes divine good production.

The fact that you and I can waste our lives in human good produced by the flesh within us is, of course, not to be taken lightly. That's part of what I'm trying to do here – to impress you that that is a serious problem, and one that could be very costly. It is one that we should view with considerable concern. Philippians 2:12-13 say, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." What he is talking about is working out your lifestyle of good works – not working out your salvation in terms of achieving salvation, but working out the salvation you already possess with fear and trembling: "For it is God who works is in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And there is the key. If it's divine good, it's God who has brought it about in you. It is God who has led you to this, and it is God who has enabled you to do this, particularly God the Holy Spirit who indwells us for this very purpose. So divine good production is something that we are to be concerned about, and that we work out with considerable concern – "fear and trembling," the Scripture says, because you can blow it. Indeed, you can blow it. You can blow it very badly, and find a great disappointment someday when you stand at the "bema," the Judgment Seat of Christ.

For this reason, the Word of God tells us never to get weary in a life of divine good production. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 puts it in these words: "But you, brethren, be not weary in well-doing." And by "well-doing," he means divine good production. Do not get weary of producing divine good. Furthermore, in order to not miss what God has for us, we ought to encourage other believers to be in the habit of producing divine good works. In Hebrews 10:24-25, we read, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." He says, "To provoke unto a spirit of love and to good works." That's one of the things that Christians should do for one another – to encourage each other to divine good production. When somebody who's doing something that does have upon it the stamp of God's divine good, it's something you should encourage. You should encourage by helping them. You should encourage by removing obstacles for them. It wouldn't be even too bad for you to encourage by your commendation and your expression of appreciation and your awareness. They don't need that. They don't need that for them to be serving the Lord. But it's an encouragement to be aware of the fact that believers are being benefited by what we do. That's an encouragement.

Verse 24 says, "Let us provoke each other to good works." Verse 25 gives us the ground upon which this can be done: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." If the human race has ever lived in a day when we see the day of the return of Christ approaching. I'll guarantee you it's today. Most of you are probably never going to see physical death, but you're going to see the rapture. So all those long-term plans you have of someday getting around to putting your life on the line to counting something for the Lord are going to be a sad disappointment to you. It's going to make you poor in treasures in heaven. People should be encouraged to get with it, and to get with it now. Part of the way we do that is when we gather together in these services for the public instruction so that we can get oriented to what God thinks and where history is moving. Somewhere along the line, the nature of every Christian's work is going to be revealed in heaven for what it is, whether it was human good or divine good.

For this reason, the classic passage in 1 Corinthians 3:13 says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest." That is, his Christian life production shall be made manifest. "For the day shall declare (the day of the rapture), because it shall be revealed by fire (that is symbolic of divine judgment), and the fire shall test every man's work of what source it is." If it's a precious metal, it will simply be the more refined. If it's trash, the trash of human good, it will be burned up.

One of the reasons that human good production is so profitless is that it never works. Acts 5:38 indicates to us that human good does not achieve the goals that people hope for it to achieve: "For now I say to you, refrain from these men, and let them alone. For if this council or this work be of men, it will come to nothing." Here was the advice on the part of Gamaliel to the ruling authorities in Israel who were antagonistic toward the Christians, and Gamaliel said, "If this thing is of God, you better not buck it. But if it's not of God, leave it alone, and it's going to destroy itself." So what Gamaliel was saying was, "If this is a divine good work, you're not going to stop it, but if it is mere human good, it will destroy itself."

That's the problem that we see whether, it's on a national scale or in our personal lives. We have governments which are attempting human good production with one kind of program after another, and none of them work. You constantly are coming across this liberal mentality which believes that governments can violate scriptural principles for government, and form a policy of confiscation and redistribution from the producers to the non-producers, and somehow there will be something for everyone; there will be prosperity; and, God will bless. That's the one thing God will never bless. The congregation is a great beneficiary when they are oriented to divine good production. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 makes this exhortation: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." I like that: "Esteem them very highly in love." Be in love with local church leaders. For what reason? Because they have a scintillating personality? Because they're so amusing? Because they're so oratorical? Because they're so learned? No, because of their works. That's the thing that counts with God. Because of their divine good work production, which in turn makes you the beneficiary of enlightenment that brings you into producing treasures in heaven.

Part of the Christian's divine good production that is very important in the eyes of God is earning your own livelihood. Under God's provision, welfare is basically a human good evil that God rejects. Welfare is basically a human good evil because it violates the basic principle that governments (civil authorities) are only designed by the institution of human government to act as umpires in the field of human relationships. They are to keep it possible for people to relate to one another and to function with one another. Government is never authorized in the Scripture to be either a creator or a distributor of wealth. That is left for individual families; for husbands and wives; and, their children and homes (family units) – to be the producers and the distributors of the wealth that they produce.

So the Word of God says to take care of yourself if you are able to take care of yourself. To provide for your own livelihood is part of divine good production. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 say, "And that you study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you, that you may walk honestly toward them that are outside, and that you have lack of nothing." Go about your own business. Go about your own productivity, so that you have what you need. Paul follows this up in 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12 when he says, "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but wrought with labor and prevailed night and day that we might not be chargeable to any of you – not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort for our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread."

That is a capacity of divine good production to provide by one's efforts, as you are able, for your needs. The Lord Jesus Christ, for these reasons, highly commended the Thyatira Christians because their work of the divine good kind. That's the bottom line for determining the value of your life. If your life is not a life that is engaged in the production of divine good works, then your life isn't worth very much. The quality of your works becomes part of your eternity. So that is a very important matter.

**"Agape" Love**

We'll now look at the other factors of commendation to the Thyatira church. (Yes, it had got some very serious problems. If you haven't read ahead, you won't believe what you're going to find was going on in this church.) Jesus Christ had six fine things to say about this church, but the first one was people engaged in divine good production. The second thing: Jesus says, "I know by My omniscience your love, and." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai." It's indicating the addition of another thing that the Lord Jesus knows full well about the Thyatira Christians – their love. The word "love" is "agape." "Agape" here is a noun.

There are basically two words in the New Testament for love. There are three words in the Greek language for love. One of them ("eros") has to do with physical sexual love. The Bible does not use that word. But the Bible does use the word "agape." That's one word. It has another word for love. The noun form is "philos." The word "agape" is matched by the verb "agapao." The word "philos" is matched by the word "phileo." These are two nouns and two verbs dealing with the concept of love. They have distinct meanings, and maybe it would be well for us to review this again so that you understand what these words mean. If you understand what these words mean, I'll tell you one thing. You're going to get pretty sick of listening to local church Christians talk about love; the love that they have for one another; and, that the love that they pretend to exercise with one another. Most Christians don't have the faintest notion in the world what the Bible means by the word "love." They don't have a glimmer (a foggiest notion) of what the Lord Jesus Christ is so pleased with concerning the Thyatira church – that He is commending them that they have this quality of love.

**Archbishop Trench**

In order to find out what these words mean, we have, provided by God in the form of Christian scholarship, a great scholar whose name was Archbishop Trench of England. Archbishop Trench is viewed as among the supreme authorities on the meaning of strategic New Testament Greek words. He has written a book called The Book of New Testament Greek Synonyms. This is a book which has analyzed specific meanings of important New Testament words. Archbishop Trench researched the Latin, and he was an excellent Latin scholar. And because he knew Latin, he studied the Latin words for love.

**Jerome**

He studied this particularly through a man who lived in the 4th century A.D. This man was named Jerome. He took the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament and translated them into Latin. The translation of Jerome was called the The Latin Vulgate. Vulgate means "in the common language." It doesn't mean vulgar in the bad sense, but it meant the vulgar – the ordinary Latin language that people spoke. It was what we would call a "Koine" Latin just like "Koine" Greek is the ordinary, everyday language that people spoke in the New Testament world.

The Latin Vulgate became the basis for all translations into other languages of the Roman Catholic Church for many years. This is one reason that the Roman Catholic Church translations into English, for years, for example, were very poor, because it was really a translation of a translation. In any case, the thing that's important about Jerome is that he lived in the 4th century, and therefore he lived at a time very close to the full functioning of New Testament Koine Greek language. Therefore, he was in the position to know Latin, and he was in the position to know Koine Greek, and the meaning of words as they were related from Latin to Greek.

So when he translated the Greek New Testament, he came across these two words: "agapao" and "phileo." And he had to translate them into Latin. It struck Archbishop Trench that if he could determine precisely what the Latin word meant, he would know precisely what the Greek word meant, so far away from Trench's day. Latin had been preserved, and had come down because it continued to be used in the Roman church. So that's exactly what he did. He identified the meaning specifically of the Latin words that Jerome used to translate these two Greek words for love. Here's what happened:

One word in Latin is "diligo." This is the word "love" in the Latin language which means a mental attitude. It has no emotional content. And Trench, studying this word in the Latin language, discovered that Jerome had used "diligo," and he knew that "diligo" was a love which was based on mental esteem for its object. It was this mental attitude, non-emotional love. It was simply an attitude of mind toward someone or something. And when you wanted to say that, you used the Latin word "diligo".

Then there was another word. You Latin students will more likely remember this one: "amo." We used to have to study our Latin conjugation, including our first conjugation of "amo." That's a very familiar one to Latin students. "Amo" is also a word for love. But Trench realized that this was a word full of emotional connotation. "Amo" is an unreasoning, spontaneous feeling of affection. So when you wanted to express an emotional love, you used "amo." But when you wanted to express a mental esteem, you used "diligo." So in "amo," you have feelings; in "diligo," you have mental outlook.

**Cicero**

This was clearly exemplified by a quotation from a great Roman orator Cicero. Cicero, in one of his writings, made this statement: "I do not esteem," and he used the word "diligo", which has to do with a mental attitude. That is what "esteem" means. "I do not esteem the man merely. I love him." Here he used the word "amo," which has emotional connotations: "There is something of the passionate warmth of feeling with which I regard him." When Trench discovered this, here you had a clear demonstration of what these two Latin words meant: "I do not esteem the man merely (just have a mental goodwill toward him), I have a love for him." Then he goes on and says, "There is something of a passionate warmth of feeling with which I regard him," and he is explaining what he means by "amo." He has a feeling for this man.

Well, this was a great breakthrough, because now Trench went back to the translation of Jerome of the Greek New Testament to see what Greek word he would translate by "diligo," which was mental attitude; and, what Greek word he would translate by "amo," which was emotional love. Sure enough, that is exactly what he discovered – that the Latin word "diligo" was equivalent to "agapao." Every time Jerome came to "agapao," he used the Latin word "diligo" which was a mental attitude. Every time he came to "phileo" in the Greek New Testament, he used the word "amo" which connoted an emotional attachment. So here we have a marvelous preservation by God the Holy Spirit to give us a clue for the meaning of these critical Greek words.

So immediately you see that the Lord Jesus Christ is referring to the Thyatira Christians in commending them for their metal attitude love. The Ephesian church, you may remember, was condemned for the fact that they lost this quality that they first had of mental attitude love. In time, they cooled off from it. But here was something that you could say about this church: They really had a mental attitude love. That is, mental attitude love is a love which is basically a mental attitude of goodwill. It refers to the mind as being free from ill will – things such as jealousy (a mental attitude); bitterness (a mental attitude); vindictiveness; revenge; hatred; an unforgiving spirit; grudge-holding; and, a spirit of competition. All of those things are mental attitudes, and all of those things are the things that an "agape" love is not guilty of.

In Romans 13:10, we read, "Love ('agape' love) works no ill to its neighbor. Therefore, 'agape' love is the fulfilling of the law." There you have, right in Scripture, a definition of "agape" love. "'Agape' love works no ill to its neighbor." It is free of mental attitude sins. Mental attitude love is founded on the mental qualities of admiration, veneration, and esteem. That's why it is non-emotional. What is the basis of mental attitude love? Admiration for the object; veneration; and, esteem. It's an attitude of mind, and therefore it is capable of being commanded to the believers toward such objects as one's enemies.

Has it ever bothered you that the Bible tells you to love your enemies? Oh, how many times we have had the Word of God attacked as pure nonsense when people have gone to the Sermon on the Mount, and they have pointed out that the Lord Jesus Christ requires such a thing as loving your enemies. Matthew 5:43: "You have heard that it has been said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say unto you, 'Agape' your enemy." So here is again strong evidence of a mental attitude which is free of ill will and bitterness. You can indeed be commanded to have that kind of an attitude toward those people who are your enemies. But you can obviously see that God the Holy Spirit, never, under any condition, could ever tell you to "phileo" your enemies, because "phileo" your enemies means to have an emotional attachment for them. You can't tell anybody to "phileo" anybody. You can't even be told to "phileo" your wife or "phileo" your husband or "phileo" your children. You can't even be told to "phileo" God, because emotions cannot be legislated. This is a quality again which God the Holy Spirit must produce in us.

But "agape" love is also produced by God the Holy Spirit in us. We can have this quality within us. This we can have on a field of battle, facing an enemy whose life we are going to snuff out. But we have no personal ill will, mental attitude, bitterness toward him. It is an execution of a divine institution under the situation of the principles and the doctrine of warfare.

So here is a splendid example of what the Lord Jesus Christ is telling us. He is so pleased concerning these people in the Thyatira church. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I'm delighted that you have demonstrated a mental attitude which is free of bitterness and free of the mental attitude sins. That makes you a winner in the Christian life. It enables me to prosper and to bless you. It also tells me something else about you. You cannot have 'agape' love functioning in your soul unless you were in the condition of being filled with the Spirit, because only God the Holy Spirit can produce 'agape' (mental attitude), free-of-bitterness love."

So if you have this love, you are telling all the world that you are also a believer who is filled with the Spirit, and who is under the control of the Holy Spirit (that's what that means), who is functioning under His direction. And thus you are a person who is in a position to produce divine good. These things are connected together. So first He says, "I'm delighted that you people produce divine goods in your works. Your works are characterized by that quality. I'm also delighted to discover that you people have among you generally the mental attitude free of bitterness."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)