

Biblical Loves

Eros, Storge, Phileo, Agape

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The English language is a sponge. Or maybe I should put it in the simile form that it is like a sponge. It is not literally a sponge, but it does absorb useful words from everywhere, from every contact that English people have. Over its more than 1,000 year existence, it has agglomerated so many words it has become the world's largest language in terms of vocabulary. *The Oxford English Dictionary* contains over 200,000 words, and that does not even include most slang terms and non-standard words. And English is just merrily, cheerfully accumulating words at a steady rate. They are constantly adding new words to dictionaries. Every year some sort of news cast will say, "the word of the year was," X, and it has now been added to the dictionary as a good English word to use.

This fact that I just said, that English is the largest language in terms of vocabulary, can be disputed. And the reason why it is disputed is because linguists themselves are not agreed about what constitutes a word. Can you believe that? Intellectuals not agreeing about something. But generally, I could say that English is considered the world's largest language.

Now this is a wonderful thing for English speakers and writers and thinkers because it allows us to communicate more precisely, or it should. I am not saying that it always does. We have a lot of instances where we misunderstand one another. But just add a few well chosen nouns, verbs, adjectives, or even an adverb every once in a while, and we should be able to describe or explain just about everything. Because with all those words, you can slice them very fine and give nuance that is helpful for another person to understand.

Pick up a good thesaurus—that is not a dragon of any kind, that is a real book—and we find dozens or even scores of words under a general category that are just within mere shades of meaning of one another. So we can be very precise about what we want to say. And so a writer, let us say, can

choose the perfect word for what he is trying to get across, the one that fits his thoughts most accurately.

On the other hand, how often do you hear somebody, an English speaker, say, "I have no words." It happens a lot because, I do not know, brain problem or simply just being so amazed or whatever that they just cannot think of a word to use.

Now perhaps you noticed in my opening paragraph, I used three different words for the concept of gathering. I used absorb, like a sponge. I used agglomerate, which you probably wondered what in the world does that mean, and I used the word accumulate. They all mean "to gather," but just in a slightly different way. I could have used one of many others like accrue, acquire, aggregate, assemble, amass, augment, collect, gain, garner, and heap (heap up treasure). I might have used agglutinate, and you are probably wondering again, what does that word mean? It just means gather in a slightly different way, but I decided against using it because 1) most of you probably have no idea what it means. And 2) was that it is actually a step away from the meaning that I wanted to give to you in that opening paragraph.

So each of these words that I have used or could have used mean slightly different things. Just a little bit different, maybe used in a different context, but basically all mean "to gather."

In English, with all these words that we have, 200,000 of them, there is little excuse for not being able to say just what you mean. It might take a little thought, but that is the facts. We have so many words that you can be very precise in your meaning. Not that that has reached Twitter or X or any of those places. People are always misunderstanding what other people mean even if they use the right words. But that is an example of what I am going to talk about next.

Most English speakers have a bad habit, a very bad habit, at least from my point of view as a speaker and a writer, of overusing the same few thousand words. Most of us have a vocabulary of around 22,000 words, just over 10% of all the words out there for us to use. So these are 22,000 words that we generally recognize and could give maybe a vague definition of so we can

follow somebody who is speaking or writing without having to run to the dictionary on those words.

But our working vocabulary, which is basically the ones we use when we speak or when we write, is around 15,000 words. So that is about 7,000 words that we know but we do not use very often. And language teachers basically look for about 10,000 words to be able to judge somebody as fluent in a language. So if you want to learn French, you have to learn about 10,000 words to be able to go over to Paris and sound like a native except for your accent, which will be atrocious.

But here is the kicker in all this. Ninety-five percent (95%!) of our common speech that we use with one another consists of only 3,000 English words. That is one-third of fluency. We use just 3,000 English words most often. So this means that most of us know at most about 10% of our available words, while most of our conversations and writing regularly use a mere 1.5% of our language's words. Hearing that almost makes you feel dumb.

Now, I have given you all this because I have a purpose for it. The upshot of all this is that we tend, just in general, and it actually does not matter what our educational level, to use the broadest terms that we can and leave unused most of the nuance that our language, the English language, provides. For instance, we will use the word "run." We will use it a lot. I ran there to get pick up some milk. I ran over here. I ran over there. And so we will just use run, a very common word. That is the word that you learned at like four years old when you have the "Dick and Jane" books. You know, Dick ran to the store or Dick ran down the block or whatever it was, or probably it started with Dick ran. So it is one of those base early words that we know and we use a lot.

But why did not we use sprint or jog or race or charge or career or tear or dash; hurry, rush, speed, flee, bolt, dart, gallop, trot, scoot, scuttle, scamper, or maybe scurry. All of those are fun, picturesque words that mean more than just run. They tell you *how* the person ran fast. Slinking along could even tell you what the attitude was of a person who was running. Really interesting when you start using words that are beyond the base words that we learned when we were kids.

Now that was a verb. How about noun: house. Dick ran to the house. Well, why did not the writer of that "Dick and Jane" book use a narrower, but maybe more descriptive dwelling like residence, domicile, habitation, bungalow, chalet, condominium, cottage, manor, manse, mansion, ranch house, townhouse or villa or duplex? Or you could go on and on with different kinds of houses.

I am a writer; I love using words that are a little off the base to be descriptive. And you can be very interesting by doing just that. Picking an uncommon verb and an uncommon noun and maybe an uncommon adjective to make sure that it conveys something very nuanced but correct and helpful to make a picture in a person's mind. Unfortunately we are not all writers, we are not all public speakers, not all of us are educated that way, and we just tend to fall back on those base words.

But one problem that that brings us in church, in theological, spiritual areas is that we use base terms in those situations as well. We use them in theological matters. Many of our theological terms, you know, ones that we pull straight from the Bible, are base words that, over time, people have only a vague or a general idea as to their meaning. Faith, hope, love, along with kindness, meekness, joy, three letters in that word, and we have a hard time pinning down what it means because it is much too vague. Even patience, peace, and I can go on with several other significant words that fall into this group of theological terms that are base terms also in our language, that because of culture and other things that have happened in our lives, we do not actually know what they mean, not precisely.

This is why preachers have to do word studies to explain what these words are implying beyond the vague base meaning. And what is ironic, at least to my mind, is that these theological terms that we lift straight from the Bible, have Greek equivalents that come from Koine Greek. You may have heard that term before, maybe you do not know what Koine Greek implies, but Koine Greek means that it was common street Greek. It was not literary Greek like the philosopher's wrote. So these words that we have a hard time understanding, the Greeks knew quite well what they meant, because they actually used them in pedestrian conversation. The Greek that comes out of

the New Testament is mostly low brow, everyday Greek. And that low brow, everyday Greek in the New Testament has spawned literally tens of thousands of books trying to explain what these particular words mean.

Now, this sermon is going to focus on the English word "love," one of those broad terms that needs explaining because it is just too unspecific in our own minds, in common everyday use, and also because the world has narrowed its meaning to an emotion that does not quite fit what is in Scripture.

Now, Greek had four different words that expressed shades of meaning that appear in Scripture at least in one form or another. And these four words differentiate related but actually dissimilar concepts. That is why they had different words for them. Because we translate them all as love or something like it, but the Greeks did not. They used different words to identify these very various concepts that have a slight similarity between them.

The four Greek words that contain intimations of love (I will give you them here right at the top), are *eros*, *storge*, *phileo*, and of course, *agape*. While we might want to call these words synonyms, that would be a grave mistake. Though they all contain what we might call the kernel of care or attachment to something, they connote radically different ideas. Now they all fit along a spectrum of attachment or of devotion, but they are not the same. They are far enough away from each other that we can say with confidence that they have actually very little in common. Some of them do, some of them overlap a little bit, especially the first one, *eros*. *Eros* is different from the others. But I have to say that they are, in the end, distinct concepts. That is why the Greeks gave them different words.

We are just going to take these one at a time: *eros*, *storge*, *phileo*, and *agape*, and I will give you an example of them and explain their background, maybe give you an illustration or two so that we can start to form these distinctions among them in our own minds.

The first one, *eros*, is the easiest to define of the four because we know what *eros* is. One of our words that comes from that is erotic. It expresses sexual and romantic attraction. The word derives from the name of the mythological Greek god of love. His name was Eros, and so they just use that that name or maybe it was the other way around. They made up a Greek god to fit the

term of *eros*. He personified sexual desire, physical attraction, and physical sexual activity.

The word does not appear in New Testament Greek. It is not there at all. Not the word—and there is a reason for that. The concept is there. It is quite present but mostly negatively because the apostles were against it, if you know what I mean, for the most part. The Roman world at the time was licentious and sexually perverse to a shocking degree. If we were made to time travel back to that time, I think even we with all that we have gone through in the past 30, 40, 50 years would be shocked at the way the Romans and the people of the Roman Empire behaved.

Now the word's connotation from the time that it first came into a Greek mind to call this *eros*, it had degraded so far by the first century that the apostles would not apply it even to proper sexual attraction and relations between a husband and wife, which it could stand for because there should be sexual and romantic attraction between husband and wife. But they would not do it. 1) because the word came from a Greek god and I am sure they would try to avoid that. But 2) they also knew that the use of the word brought up very negative images in people's minds. It brought the idea of debauchery to mind rather than proper sexual love between a man and his wife. That is how far the word had fallen by that time.

So what did the apostles do when they wanted to name this kind of love? Well, they did not. You know what they did? They used euphemisms or various symbols or ideas that could be used in its place. Let us go to Hebrews the 13th chapter, verse 4. Here the author of Hebrews euphemizes the concept as he is trying to teach these people, the Hebrews, try to encourage them toward godliness. And here in the 13th chapter of Hebrews, he gives, I believe it is, seven encouragements, seven admonitions about how they should conduct themselves within the church, and this one is number four in the 4th verse.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

So Paul, if he was the author of Hebrews, and I believe he ultimately is, decided to use a euphemism, and the euphemism is the idea of the marriage

bed. Rather than using *eros*, which had the very negative connotations at the time, he just used the idea of the marriage bed and anybody with a couple of brain cells that could rub together could understand what he meant.

Elsewhere in the New Testament (we will not go to these places, I will just give you some verses that you can go check out) various apostles used the ideas or the concepts of becoming one flesh, which was borrowed from the Old Testament from Hebrew and most of the apostles were Jews, so they were very much accustomed to using that sort of language. Another one that Paul uses is being joined to one's spouse. Paul uses in I Corinthians 7, the phrase "rendering due affection," as another euphemism for this. So here are those verses if you want to go check them out: Matthew 19:5-6; Ephesians 5:31; I Corinthians 6:15-17; and I mentioned I Corinthians 7:2-4.

So what happens here in Hebrews 13:4 is the author says sexual activity between spouses is not defiling at all. It is not sinful. He uses the term here undefiled and honorable, so he places it on a high level. This is a necessary part of one's marriage. Now he moves quickly from that to give you the opposite. He says that sexual activity outside of marriage brings on God's judgment. That is sinful. That is directly from the Ten Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery." So, this is actually in the majority of the places where the concept is found in the New Testament where it is spoken of in its negative aspect, as sinful.

It is usually mentioned in the Greek words *pornea*, which means fornication at its base, but it can be used for any kind of sexual immorality, which is often how the *New King James* translates it. Or *moicheia*, which specifically means adultery. So here he uses both words, fornicators and adulterers, that is, *pornea* and *moicheia* that he is talking about there. And he says those sorts of things will render one, put one under the wrath of God as sinful, and one would need to seek repentance if one did anything like that.

Now, sadly, our current English word love is tainted by the undertones of *eros*, or maybe I should say the overtones of *eros* in the way it is in our culture these days. And our word love leans heavily toward sexual expression. And if not sexual expression, then certainly romantic expression. And increasingly, the word is being used more and more to connote things outside the bonds of marriage and even outside the created order of man and

woman. This is why our word love is practically useless in terms of speaking of theological things. We have to add some sort of an adjective to it to differentiate what kind of love we are actually talking about. Because if you just use the word love, there is no telling what people will think you are talking about.

Let us go on to *storge*. This is the second Greek word that they regularly used. It is also not used in the New Testament, at least not in its base sense. However, it is used twice in the negative sense, *astorge*. A is the Greek particle for negative no, not, -un. So here is *astorge* and it literally means "not storge."

Let us go to Romans 1, verse 31. If you know your chapters, this is one where Paul talks about the judgment of God after men turned from Him and went their own way, and so He gave them over to a debased mind. So by the time we are getting to verse 31 here, we are deep into his explanation of just how bad it has gotten. So we have here a list of things. Let us just go back to verse 28 so we get an idea of what he is talking about here.

Romans 1:28-31 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting [And now he is going to give us a list of things that are not fitting, which are debased, which are sinful, which are anti-God, anti His way of life.]; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality [there you have have *pornea*], wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers [We had commandments 6, 7, 9, and 10 in that one verse there], backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents [that is number 5], undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful [that word unloving is *astorge*].

Let us just flip forward to II Timothy 3, verse 3. Some of you who were at the Feast in Myrtle Beach back in 2023, remember my sermon on "The Handwriting is on the Wall," which was the opening sermon, and I came to this verse because I used an illustration of somebody who had no love for his parents.

II Timothy 3:1-3 But know this, that in the last days perilous time will come: For men will be lovers [that is *phileo*] of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents [there is number 5 of the commandments again], unthankful, unholy, unloving [*astorge*].

And he goes on. So Paul says that this type of thing, one not having any *storge* type of love would be a sign that we are getting to the end. It would be manifest here at the end times that a lot more people would have this lack of love, this particular love. In both places, it is translated as unloving, and that is, to my mind, a rather mediocre translation. I mean, it is literal, that is literally what it means, "not loving." But it does not explain anything because it uses the word loving. And loving—love—is the word we are trying to get a better idea of here.

I strongly prefer what is in the *King James* version here. It renders *astorge* as "without natural affection." That is far, far closer to its actual meaning in Greek. The *Amplified Version* reads "without natural affection, callous, inhuman." Those are interesting synonyms for this idea, callous and unhuman. That they would have no affection even for their families. In its narrowest sense, then, the word *astorgas* means "without family love." Because at its center, if you are going to reduce *storge* down to its ultimate meaning, *storge* means "the natural bond of love or affection in a family." That is, for parents to each other, you know, spouses, parents for children, children for parents, and children for their siblings. You take the nuclear family, you have mom, dad, and the kids, and they all love one another because they are in a family.

Now, the parents may have different reasons for their love for each other, but they still love each other because they have made a family. And they of course have love for their children. They produced them and they have been raising them and you would hope that the child rearing would have been good enough that the children love their parents and want to please them.

And of course, kids, however many there are, their first playmates, so they are their own brothers and sisters, and they know because they were there, especially the younger ones where they knew their older siblings were there

when they first came on the scene, and so they have this idea that they have always been around, they are just like them. They are a product of mom and dad. And so they have this love for one another that comes naturally. A family setting is where we learn to have fondness and affection for those who are close to us. And of course, you know the phrase "blood is thicker than water." We have a natural affinity and natural affection for those who share our blood, especially those who are the most closely related, and those would be our siblings and our parents.

Now *storge*, this family affection, can be stretched a little bit to include our affection for those who are not blood relatives but who we care for as if they were. That would be, think of a person who is adopted into the family. They are not blood relations but done right they become just like a natural sibling or child. Now, oftentimes it is not done right and so we have problems. That is just human nature coming in. But also, let us say, somebody else lives with the family for a long time and they become absorbed into the family culture and everybody just thinks of that person as auntie or uncle or whatever. They know that he or she is not a blood relative, but they treat them as if they are blood relatives. So you could have *storge* love for that kind of person.

And it is natural, I guess you could say, for a person to care for those who are related to one another by blood and the time spent together, but those are not necessarily weighted fifty-fifty. Sometimes we do not like people who are related to us by blood and at other times, we really like people who are not related to us by blood. Those things develop over time, but the natural course of things, all things considered and not having any terrible outside influences, we should have a natural affection for those who we grow up with in our family.

So, yes, we can have *storge* love for people outside the family. We talk in this way every once in a while. Let us say there is a woman who was close to the family, always there, always doing things for the family, and later on somebody could say she was always like a mother to me. That is a reflection of this kind of love. Or even, this is more philadelphia-type of love, but we have talked about men especially becoming blood brothers or having gone through some sort of experience, let us say it is a sports championship or

battle or something, where we can say, after this, they became blood brothers. This is also an element of *storge* love. But, like I said, it leans into the philadelphia-type of love, love of brothers.

I am going wrap all this *storge* discussion up. I will give you a definition here. *Storge* is a close intimate affection and care for, a warm familiar comfortableness, and unspoken unity with and faithfulness to another without any hint of sexual or romantic feeling. And this takes place naturally in a close family. So if you want the short version: natural, close family love or affection.

We need to get on to *phileo*. That is the third love in the Greek New Testament. If you want to look this one up and do a word study of your own, this is *Strong's* #5368. Now this love, *phileo*, signifies a personal warmth, affection, and regard for another, and that covers things like friendship and any kind of real warm fondness for another outside one's family. And this is where I said you have some overlap between *storge* and *phileo*.

Phileo love can be very powerful. And in fact, we could say that other than the intimacy, the honorable intimacy between spouses, it could actually be the highest form of human emotional love. This is the kind of love David had for Jonathan. But people, even theologians, try to say that that love between David and Jonathan was a sexual love, a homosexual love. But what they were actually expressing was this deep *phileo* love, where they honored one another, they felt personal warmth and affection for each other. They had such a high regard for one another that they became as brothers. Like I said, it is an emotional love. But we could also say that it is the foundational emotional aspect of a sound mutual relationship. And these are people who are not related by blood in most cases, a vast majority of cases.

And so *phileo* love describes a sense of true companionship and emotional closeness. I guess today, if it is a true friendship, the idea of having a BFF (best friends forever), is what we are talking about here. Now, even that has been watered down significantly in our culture, and I think we would have to go back to David and Jonathan to see a truly good illustration of that. Another one that I could mention to you (if you want to think about it or study it), would be the one whom Jesus loved. Most of us think that it was John, son of Zebedee. I certainly think that way. But He and John had this

kind of BFF relationship, but it was a *phileo* love at base and it had overtones of agape love as well.

But we will see in a moment that God, I mean you may not have ever thought about this before, but God has *phileo* love for us. It is an emotional love that He has for us, not just the *agape*, higher superior love. He has both. Let us just make sure that that is plain, that He loves us in both ways, and *storge* as well because we have become part of His Family. But we need to understand that this is actually differentiated in the gospel of John in a couple of places where it shows that God has the *phileo* love for us and Jesus had it for John.

Let us go back to the book of Hebrews and back to the chapter we were there before, Hebrews 13. This time we are going to get the first exhortation, the first great encouragement of this chapter in verse 1 where he says,

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

Now this is his chapter of exhortations to the church and the first thing that he mentions is that he encourages us to persist in exercising this kind of love, *phileo* love. Let brotherly love continue, that is *philadelphia* in the Greek. *Philadelphia* is used not as the name of the city where the Phillies and the Eagles play. We are not talking about that. We are talking about the actual Greek term *philadelphia*. It is used seven times in two different forms in the New Testament, and what it refers to is a tight-knit brotherhood established by fellowship in a covenant. This is very interesting that it is defined down this way and that is how it is used. A tight-knit brotherhood established by fellowship within a covenant.

This is why the author here says keep on having brotherly love, because we have been put into fellowship with one another by covenant. And the thing that we have to work on is the tight-knit part. I mean, we have *philadelphia* just by joining. But we have to really want to be tight-knit with the rest of the brothers and sisters of our family—the Family of God. See, we are put, when we choose to accept Christ's sacrifice, we are elected into this position, we accept covenant, we become a brother or sister in Christ. So we have made

that choice. We are part of the brotherhood. And I will be equal, part of the sisterhood, part of the Family. But we have to want to be tight-knit. We have to want to have warmth for one another.

Now, this term, *philadelphia* harkens back to *phileo's* original sense in common Greek. And that is to regard and treat another as a member of one's own people. You know where we get the name barbarian? Did you ever hear of that story? Well, barbarian is actually the Greek term for a foreigner. And the reason why the Greeks used the term is because they thought everybody who did not speak Greek sounded like "bar bar bar bar bar bar." And so they became the bar-bar-ians, the barbarians. They were not part of the group. They did not speak Greek. But one could in this sense come under the term *philadelphia* if somebody who spoke Greek would accept you as one of their people and not just a filthy non-Greek speaker.

This is what we are talking about here. We are talking about belonging to a group, belonging to one's own group. Now, normally, this was a family grown large, a nation. Or maybe not that big, but we will just call it a tribe. And if someone from outside the tribe came into the tribe and the tribe accepted it, they would show *philadelphia* toward that person because they accepted and treated the other one as a member of the group, their own group. So, *philadelphia* denotes, then, natural affection toward others who belong to the same group. Those who have or hold many of the same similarities to us that they could be considered part of our group or who hold things in common with us.

So in this way, it came to imply a strong attraction and affection for one's chosen or favored people, those whom you decided by your own choice to associate with. It could be a club. It could be a team. It could be your battalion. It could be whatever, but you would show *philadelphia* for those people who were part of the group that you chose to be with and fellowship with. The group then is one's preferred peer group.

We are all in the peer group of God's Family. We are all equal in that way. Just go read I Corinthians 12 and the body analogy where God called us and put us into a body. We may have different functions, but we all need to be there because He put us there to perform that function that He gave us to do. How would we function without those certain parts? They may be less

honorable, as Paul puts it, but they are all necessary. And so we are all parts of the body—peers—because we all have one Head, Jesus Christ. So this has become our preferred peer group because we chose this. Not only did God call us and choose us, but we accepted it and chose to do this.

And remember that word I used a little bit ago? We came into here by covenant and now we are fellowshiping within the covenant and we are expected to "let brotherly love continue" because we chose to be here and we better live up to the terms of the covenant for ourselves, for God, and for all of our peers.

In secular Greek, *phileo* expressed strong feeling and devotion and even passion for those one prefers to interact with or fellowship with. So this love, *phileo* love, is a strong emotional preference for those whom one has placed above all other people. So in this peer group, we have chosen to prefer one another above the people in the world. So *phileo* is the warmth of relationship that is necessary in such a group. And in particular, in this peer group, the New Covenant Family of God peer group, this warmth of relationship is what is necessary for kindness, service, and unity among the brethren. You strip out the warmth of relationship from that, you are not going to want to be kind, you are not going to want to serve, and you are not going to want to be in unity for very long.

As a matter of fact, you will probably declare yourself an independent Christian and leave the church, leave the body, the physical body, and go do, I do not know, monastic things or whatever on your own. That is why Paul here in Hebrews 13:1 said, "Let brotherly love continue." Work on that warmth of relationship, get to know one another, help one another in kindness. Be one with one another because you *are* one. You are the one Body of Jesus Christ. That is why brotherly love is so important, beyond even agape love. There has to be that emotional warm love alongside of agape love.

Let us go to John 15. This is Jesus Christ's sermon, if you will, to the disciples before He was arrested. And He mentions this distinction using the term *phileo*. It is kind of interesting. He uses it in the negative, not of their love but other people's love. But He is getting at the point that we have to have *phileo* love for one another (and we will get to that too in a minute).

John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you [disciple of Christ], you know that it hated Me before it hated you. [That is obvious. We just saw in Romans 1 that the world turned its back on God, on their Creator, that was Jesus Christ.] If you were of the world, the world would [*phileo*] its own."

He is telling them that the world has a form of *phileo* love which they give to one another because they have all kinds of things in common and the big thing that they have in common is that they do not follow Christ. They have rejected Him. Jesus calls them in another place, the dead, because they have no spiritual connection. But they love one another with *phileo* love because they love those who they are in fellowship with under this unspoken covenant of hating God.

John 15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world [You are in a different peer group now. You have been called out and you have chosen to be called out. As He says] but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

You are not part of its group. You do not have much in common. There is no warmth there for you because you are actually a pawn, as they would look at it, of the enemy. You are alive. They can see that you are different. Whereas they are dead and they would rather commune with the dead, the other dead, those that are in their group. And because you are alive and you are making a witness and you are showing the love of God, hopefully, in the way you act out in the world, they hate you. The very opposite of *phileo* love. Because you do not look like them. You do not act like them. You do not think like them. Your aspirations are not like theirs. You live—hopefully you are living—over the sun lives rather than under the sun lives like they are.

They notice. They may not notice consciously, but they notice subconsciously that you are different. And you [only] have to do one little good thing for them to understand consciously that you are different. Like, say to your boss, I need Friday night and Saturday off. You are different. You are not theirs. You are not part of their peer group.

The key here in verses 18 and 19 of John 15 is that the world would love *its* own. And since you do not have many things in common with the world anymore, it will not like you. So that calling that God made and your choice to accept, cut that relationship off with those people. We have little in common with them anymore, so the world hates us, rejects us, wants nothing to do with us.

So, Jesus here uses the word *phileo* to signify the affection, unity, and preference of those who are like whoever the person is doing the loving. So, it is the affection, unity, and preference of those who are similar to you. This works for us, it works for the world. We have love for one another because we are like each other. We have beliefs in common. We have come to the same decision on who we are going to follow and what our goal is. But out there, they love their own. And since the two groups rarely touch, there is hatred, between especially them toward us.

Let us go to John 17, verse 14 now. This is in Jesus' prayer. This word comes up again, "I have given them Your word." Well, not this word, but we can just use this as a backup to what Jesus said in 15:18-19.

John 17:14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world [it is as simple as that], just as I am not of the world."

That pretty much summarizes what I have been trying to say here. You can have *phileo* love no matter what the group is, but it only applies to those within the group who have these commonalities. And you love your own. It is simple as that.

Now, let us go back to John 16, verses 26 and 27.

John 16:26 "In that day you will ask in My name [meaning to pray, to request things], and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you."

He is saying here you have a direct link. Once you have the Holy Spirit, you are directly linked to the Father. You can go ask Him; we do not have to necessarily ask Jesus and then Jesus asks God the Father. We are all one Family. We can go straight to the top. We can go to the Father.

John 16:27 "For the Father Himself [*phileo's*] you, because you have [*phileo'd*] Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

So both instances in verse 27 are the Greek *phileo*. Why? Why does God not love us with *agape* love in this particular situation? Because Jesus is describing the disciples' acceptance of Jesus through faith and obedience. showing that they preferred Him. Or that they chose Him rather than the world. He is talking about the group, the fellowship, the covenant, that they all have in common. Not only did we choose Him above the world, we chose Him above our families and our former friends and acquaintances. We showed that by our choice we *phileo'd* God. He was in our group. He is the one we preferred to be with, starting with Jesus Christ and of course that meant the Father as well because They are one. You love the one, you love the other.

And God the Father, Jesus is saying, reciprocates this love to us because He chose us too. He chose to be in our peer group. He said, "Hey, I want that one. I really like him. Let's invite him in. He could be part of the Family." And we say, "God, I really like You too. I wanna be with You. I wanna be in this group. This could be our club."

You know, kids have that sense they want to make a club, they want to be together in this, you know, whatever it is. The Secret Woman Haters Club or The Treehouse Club or After School Club. Well, we carry that into our adulthood and we want to be in a group that we can identify with and that we have friends that we love, we want to be close to, we have a warm affection for, because they like the stuff that we like and they have the same goals that we have. They want to get to the same destination. And so we agglomerate into this club called The Family of God.

It is far more than a club. But it is structured like a club. Normally a club has covenants and you have to do certain things, and oftentimes clubs give you

responsibilities (Bill talked about stewardship today), you know, certain things you have to do to remain a member of the club and you get together for meetings. And you talk about things with one another.

Maybe it is a book club. In a book club, they get together and discuss not only books but the ideas that are generated from the books and the way they make you feel and what you can do with this knowledge that you learned from the book. We are a book club, are we not? It is *the* Book. And we get together every seventh day, the whole club gets together all around the world, and the Father presides and Jesus Christ teaches through His inspiration—and we learn from the Book. This is what we are talking about with *phileo* love. We *love* to be in this club. We love the members of the club because we are all going in the same direction.

I think that is probably enough for that. We will move on. Just a thought here. What Jesus was saying about not having to ask Him but going straight to the Father, He says, "Hey, sure, He'll give things to you. You can ask Him directly." Well, is that not what true companions do? True companions that love one another? If one came to the other and said, "I need this for" whatever reason, would the other true companion not say, "Sure, I'll give my life so that you can have that. I'll make sure you get this. I do not know when it'll be, but ultimately I'm going to give it to you."

What does James say? "If you lack wisdom, ask God. He'll give it to you." Because that is a good thing that you need in order to reach the destination that all of us are going toward. So why would God not give it to you? He loves you with this pure *phileo* love. He has this warmth that wants to make sure that you have everything you need. Puts a kind of different spin on this verse, does it not?

Let us go on to *agape*. You can see there that it has overtones of *agape*, right? Because one with *phileo* love wants to give the other person what they need.

Agape is the fourth Greek word for love and many theologians say that there is no difference between *agape* love, which is *Strong's* #25 if you want to check that out, and *phileo*. But if you ever see this in a commentary, throw it in the fire. Do not believe them. They are arguing out of their intellectualism

rather than arguing from the inspiration of God's Spirit. Because they will see a few scriptures where the two words seem to have an interchangeable use. You could use *agape*, you could use *phileo*. They would be basically the same thing. And so they conclude from these few scriptures that they are either near synonyms or exact synonyms.

Well, that is just stupid. Two different words for something that means the same thing? No, no. There is shades of meaning here that are very important. If you look over the whole New Testament, *agape* clearly identifies a superior godly love that has some of the same characteristics as *phileo*, but *agape* is greater.

Let us go to Romans 5. This first one that we are going to see here is what makes it so much more special than *phileo* because *phileo* is a natural, human, emotional love. Paul writes here,

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .

What he is telling us here as he starts is that God has gone through several steps here to make sure that we are in His group and that we are in communication and we have our assignments and things we need to do.

Romans 5:1-5 . . . through whom [Jesus Christ] also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance [God is working with us and helping us to grow]; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint [Why?], because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

I do not want to go into all the doctrinal nuances there. But I just want to bring out that Paul very clearly delineates that *agape*, which is used there in verse 5, is *God's* love that He gives to His elect through the Holy Spirit. It is a separate love. Its source, the *agape* love's source, is in heaven. This indicates that Paul recognizes the fact that he and other New Testament authors use it in a new sense, use this word *agape* in a new sense. They took

an existing Greek word and gave it new, spiritual, private meaning. They elevated the term, if you will.

In secular Greek, *agape* means "to like" or "to be satisfied with something." It can mean "to give greetings" or "to honor a person" or "to desire someone or something in particular." And to be honest, it was a rather weak word. In one sense that it had though, perhaps this is the one that the apostles meant to elevate, is that *agape* connotes acting in love or giving on another's behalf. That was another part of the secular way the Greek term was used. And this parallels Herbert Armstrong's teaching about this word. He defined *agape*, if you remember, as an *unselfish, outgoing concern toward others*.

Now theologians could provide a more thorough definition of *agape* if you wanted it as opposed to *phileo*. I will just read this quickly from William Hendrickson and in his commentary on John:

Agape indicates love, deep-seated, thoroughgoing, intelligent, and purposeful. A love in which the entire personality, not only the emotions but also the mind and the will, plays a prominent part which is based on esteem for the object loved or on reasons which lie wholly outside this object, meaning by command. That is, like the command of God. [We are commanded to agape one another. Right? Yes. Going on in this quote.] While *phileo* indicates or at least tends in the direction of spontaneous natural affection in which the emotions play a more prominent role than either the intellect or the will.

So this is why I said *phileo* is a more emotional love, and as it says here, spontaneous for those in our group, whereas *agape* brings in intellect, the mind, the will, we have good reasons for doing what we are doing. And so it does not necessarily have to be an emotional love, it could simply be doing what is right and good. At first. Over time, in combination with *phileo* love, it should be an emotional love as well, but *agape* starts with saying, I must do this, I need to do this, because whatever the reason happens to be, God tells me to, it is in the commandments, or I am part of this group. I need to do this because the two Great Commandments.

If you notice that Hendrickson's definition did not include its source in God and it being a gift of God, or hearkening to Galatians 5:22, a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Because we can only have this love if God gives it to us and pours it out upon us. It is a reciprocal love because it does not originate in here, it originates from God and then we use it and grow in it so that we can learn how to give it. God loved us first. Did not John say that in I John?

So Paul in I Corinthians 13:13 calls it the greatest of godly virtues. And in that same chapter, he describes how one with godly love acts, signifying that it is less an emotion as it is a *purposeful and conscientious way of living*. Get the distinction there. It is not necessarily an emotion. It is a purposeful—that means it is an act of will—and a conscientious way of living. We decide to do these things that are right for other people. It starts with obeying God's commandments, as it says in I John 5:3, and expands to selflessness and sacrifice according to God's will. And those are the things that we saw in my extended sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. Because there Christ was expanding the commandments, expanding the law so that we would then understand the spirit of the law, ultimately, which ends in *agape* love.

Let us go to Philippians 2. We will just quickly read this because this is a good description from Paul of the way *agape* love manifests in a person's life.

Philippians 2:1-5 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy [how?] by being like-minded, having the same love [that is *agape*], being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.

There is *agape* love. The mind of Christ, the way of life that He lives, how He thinks, what He decides, how He gives and gives and gives to His people. We could go on here and see how He shows that He divested Himself of honor and glory to become a servant. And He did that because He wanted to do all that He can to ensure that we have the best outcome. And we have to

mimic that. We have to imitate that. We have to learn through repetition how to do that until it becomes a part of our character and we have the mind of Christ fully. And we do this out of our *agape* for God. Showing through our obedience and our overcoming that He means everything to us and we want His companionship forever. And so we are willing to do whatever it takes to please Him.

Let us conclude in Mark 12. I just want to read the scripture and I will leave you with it to think about it. You know this, we probably go to Matthew 22 more often, but I want Mark's version.

Mark 12:29-31 Jesus answered, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."