

Behold, What Manner of Love!

The world doesn't understand that the absence of our Lord in their life is the absence of true, genuine "agape" love. There are four Greek words for love. "Storge" is the natural love of family love, i.e. the way a parent loves a child. Yet the Bible says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49:15). Then there is "phileo," the love of friends for one another. Defining this love, the Bible says, "Wealth maketh many friends..." (Proverbs 19:4). "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly..." (Proverbs 18:24). So we see here that even friendship love is conditioned upon what you bring and offer to the relationship which is often very conditional. The Greek word "eros" from where we get "erotic" is most definitely not true love. As a matter of fact, this Greek word is never used in the Bible (never!). God does not dignify His Word with this word. It is not because He is against it, au contraire! He is willing to bless this within the bounds of holy matrimony (Hebrew 13:4). God looks at "eros" as an expression of true love, not a means to an end, "...and be thou ravished always with her love" (Proverbs 5:19). The Bible speaks of the "...lust of concupiscence (unrestrained, out of bounds and inappropriate affection), even as the Gentiles (heathen) which know not God" (1 Thessalonians 4:5). The word "agape" is the real deal -- the unconditional love of God. It is not based upon anything we do or earn...it is simply there by the gifting of grace. This is the love that keeps marriages together! The world's marriages are partnerships, which, at best, are held together by the thin glue of friendships, obligations, common interests, social pressure and erotica. All of these things can be compromised and place the couple in jeopardy. The word "agape" was not used in the Greek language until the New Testament. You will not find it used when referencing Zeus, Jupiter, Aphrodite, or Diana. The Greco/Roman deities are totally bereft of true "God" love, so also are the modern interpretations of false religions. It wasn't until Jesus came that God's love was perfectly defined. And to all who know Jesus, you have tapped into the only real love in the universe. More than anything, your spouse needs you

to love him or her with God's love. How true is this trite remark: Know Christ; know love. No Christ; no love! I visited my uncle last week who recently lost his wife of over sixty years. He said to me many years ago, "Son, I did not love your aunt until after we had been married ten years." I was astonished until he then followed up, "I didn't know the Lord until I had been married for ten years. He said, "I was not planning on leaving her, I would not have done that; we were friends and we were partners...but I did not love her until I fell in love with Jesus." "Charity (love) never faileth..." (I Corinthians 13:8).

The Bible says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us..." (I John 3:1). Let's talk about this love.

1. It is a chosen love.

God spoke of the way He loves His people by saying, "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people" (Deuteronomy 7:7). He went on to explain that he was going to keep His covenant and His word to the patriarchs. It comes down to the fact that God has chosen to set His love on us by His mercy and grace. Many years ago I read a sermon by the famed evangelist, Uncle Buddy Robinson who said, "The most marvelous and mysterious thing I ever thought about, is that God saw something in man worth dying for." The Lord Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:44,46). This is a picture of what Christ did for us; He considered His Church as that one pearl of great price and gave up all He had to save us. He saw something worth dying for; not that we deserved it, but because He loved us before we ever lived or loved. This naturally leads us to this deduction:

2. It is a reciprocated love.

"We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). The Bible says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Think of this glorious thought: God has been loving you personally before the world ever began. His love for you has been constant for thousands of years. Our love is so

imperfect. We will say to one another, “I love you today more than I did yesterday.” This is natural and this is human. I do feel cheated because I know that tomorrow we will love each other better, so we are still growing in our love. On the other hand, God loves you as much today as He ever has or ever will. If He could improve in His love, then that means he has not yet become perfect in love. And we know God is perfect in everything! So the truth is, God loves you as much today as He ever will or ever can. So our love to God first started with and in Him and is designed to become perfected in us as His children: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:18). What amazing love!

3. It is an eternal love.

Here is another heart stirring thought: when we are right with God, we love each other with the same love that He has had for us since before the foundation of the world. Jesus requested of the Father: “And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, “Behind every command of God, He places omnipotence. With that in mind, consider what our Lord said, in John 15:12, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” In this age of fickle romance and throw-away marriages, we need to understand that God has given to us assurance that we may love one another with His eternal, never ending love. This is so much more than anything we have to offer.

-Pastor Pope-