

Flourishing in the Kingdom – Agape

The Kingdom and the Covenant, Session 3.02

Agape

- Godly character trait of love
 - *agape* (Gk, noun): a strong, non-sexual love for a person and their good as expressed by God’s moral character; especially characterized by a willing forfeiture of rights or privileges in another person’s behalf
 - *agapao* (Gk, verb)
- God’s love
 - Jn 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
 - “loved” (v, *agapao*)
 - What did God’s *agape* for sinful humanity motivate him to do?
 - Ro 8:38-39, ³⁸ “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 - Ro 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
 - God’s records of us don’t include the sin in our past
 - 1 Jn 3:1(a), “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”
 - Eph 5:1, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children...”
 - “dearly loved” (Gk, adj, *agapetos*): dearly loved and cherished; sometimes preferred above all others and treated with partiality
 - We really can’t comprehend or even imagine how much God loves us, but he gives us earthly experiences that provide some insight
- Jesus’ love
 - Mk 10:21, “Jesus looked at him and loved him.”
 - “loved” (Gk, v, *agapao*)
 - Jn 11:5 – Jesus loved Mary, Martha, Lazarus
 - Jn 13:23; 21:7; 21:20 – refer to the disciple Jesus loved; probably John
 - Jn 15:9-10, ⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”
 - all words “love” are either *agapao* or *agape*
 - Eph 5:1-2, ¹ “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

- Our love
 - Mt 5:43-45(a), ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”
 - “love” (Gk, v, *agapao*)
 - Where had the Jews heard they were to love their neighbor?
 - Lev 19:18, “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - Where had the Jews heard “hate your enemy”?
 - Ps 139:21-22, ²¹ “Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? ²² I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.”
 - Ex 23:4-5, ⁴ “If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.”
 - Pr 25:21, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.”
 - Mt 5:44, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”
 - “love” (Gk, v, *agapao*) same word used for loving your neighbor
 - “enemies” (Gk, adj, *echthros*): a person who hates another and wishes him harm
 - What does *agape* motivate us to do about our enemies?
 - “pray” (Gk, v, *proseuchomai*): to speak to God, to ask/petition God to do something
 - “for” (Gk, prep, *hyper*): for, on behalf of, for the sake of
 - “persecute” (Gk, v, *dioko*): to persecute; to systematically harass and attack
 - How is this becoming increasingly relevant in today’s culture?
 - Strategy: Stand firmly on your beliefs, love those who hate you, pray for those who harass & attack you, continue to properly represent Jesus, say only what is compatible with what God says & trust him with the results
 - How is biblical humility essential to *agape* in such situations?
 - How can we develop *agape*?
 - Ro 3:14, “clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ...” (also, Gal 3:27)
 - Col 3:12, 14, “... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.... And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

Comparison of fruit of the spirit & qualities of <i>agape</i>	
Gal 5:22-23	1 Co 13:4-7
love	love
joy	rejoices (same Gk root word)
peace	not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs
patience	patient (same Gk root word)
kindness	kind (same Gk root word)
goodness	protects, hopes, perseveres
faithfulness	trusts (same Gk root word)
gentleness, humility	does not boast, is not proud
self-control (<i>enkrateia</i>)	not self-seeking

Service

- 1 Pet 2:16(c), "... live as servants of God."
- Jn 13:34-35, ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- Mt 20:28, "... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
 - According to this verse, the King of kings & Lord of lords came to earth to do what?
 - How was giving his life as a ransom a form of service?
 - How was that service an expression of *agape*?
 - What does this reveal about Jesus' command to love one another as he loved us?
- Mt 25:40, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."
 - 1 Co 6:17, "But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit."
 - How is serving other believers compatible with being a servant of God?
 - When you serve other believers, you are serving God

Conclusion

- We must choose to think and act in *agape*, cooperating with Holy Spirit as he cultivates *agape* and Jesus' other character traits in us
- We are to *agapao* those who hate us and pray for – not against – those who persecute us
- Because we're in covenant with God and covenant partners become one, everything we do for another Christian we are in effect doing for God