2024 04 28 WHAT IS LOVE

1 John 4:4-21. Psalm22:9-24 . John15:1-8. Psalm 139:13-18

The English language often has several meanings for the one word – the original Greek which the New Testament – the New Agreement from God to us, was written in, has various words that convey shades of meaning –

In English ‘Love’ -covers all - but in the Greek of the bible we have 4 basic words – the meaning as far as I can understand: (forgive my pronunciation)

* Agape- a selfless and sacrificial kind of love. unconditional "God" love. It is a command.
* Phileo- a friendship kind of love. A bond. phileo  is never commanded. It is more of an emotional love, a cherishing or adoring love.
* Salvation does not come from commanded love, as does Agape. It comes from a trusting relationship. If we are truly followers of the One True God, we should absolutely **adore** Him, not just as the Creator of all, but as our *Abba,*our true, real parent.

Agape and Philio seem to be used interchangeably in some places.

* Storge- a family kind of love. empathy bond. I love my car, I love the sea etc.
* Eros- a romantic, physical kind of love.

The living of love ashow in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a (ESV) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Notice: God wills that we *agape* our enemies, but not *phileo* them. –different

Reading 1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

? brings obvious questions:

. does loving someone automatically bring us into Gods Presence?

. when we die does this ‘loving/caring get us into heaven?

. how can a non-believer in Jesus, who is caring of others, be or not be born of God?

. We can be a great Christian without agape love, BUT; Jesus will say to some people “depart from me what you did was unauthorised” - ([Matthew 7:21](https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/7/Matthew-7-21.html)). Could this happen when someone assumes Jesus is requiring that good works are a condition for salvation. Not only would such an interpretation conflict with the rest of Scripture ([Titus 3:5](https://www.bibleref.com/Titus/3/Titus-3-5.html); [Romans 11:6](https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/11/Romans-11-6.html)), it ignores what Jesus goes on to say here. He specifically says that it's possible to fool ourself into thinking our actions are in service to God, when in reality, what is our motivation? Yet our actions do matter, they do count as an outflowing of our trust in God. (James)

?. so if I- personally - do not love in the highest form of love, will that keep me from God?

No? Listen to the conversation between Jesus and Peter, it happened after Jesus resurrection when they were all having breakfast on the beach: Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times and had been forgiven in a private meeting after His, Jesus’ resurrection - –**5**When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter;

“Simon son of John, do you Agape me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I Philio you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

**16**Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you Agape me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I Philio you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

**17**The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you Philio me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I Philio you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. **18**John 21:15-19

The beautiful thing is that Jesus, after challenging him, accepted him at the level where he was capable of loving him – and specified his calling ‘to look after the believers’ in Jesus name. Later Peter was murdered rather than deny Jesus – the love had come to fullness.

It is the same for you and I – we can be honest with God – the Spirit of God will help us - where are we individually, in our love for Jesus and the Father.

The word used in verses 7, 8 & 9 to love God is agape – a command! the highest form of selfless love.

Jesus told us to “agape the Lord your God with all my heart, and all my soul, and with all my mind, and with all my strength.

And agape my neighbor as myself.” Mark12:30.

If we substitute “walking in the other persons sandals” i.e. putting ourselves in their place – we gain an idea of the depth of ‘loving our neighbor as ourselves’.

Ask ourselves – “do I love myself?” well no - is my instinctive reaction but, I care for my own welfare and comfort and so on.

In preparing this message I have read various commentaries and definitions of agape and philio and as expected find variations and challenges in the commentaries – even to a couple of sites that say everyone else is wrong – not a surprise ay.

One valid point was that Jesus and the disciple spoke Aramaic in daily use but wrote the gospels and letters in Greek – the common language of the day.

The four types of love are not all separate from each other – one type of love does not exclude the other.

*Husbands are told to ‘agape’ their wives*

*YET this relationship includes Agape, Philio/FRIENDSHIP and EROS*.

In John 14:26, 16:13-15 we are told that it is the Spirit/Presence of God who gives us this love. Ezekiel 36:26-37  a promise from God fulfilled at Pentecost - I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of you and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

That heart of love, the Presence of God is our guide and comforter and will bring Jesus to us. John 14-16

I tried to learn NT Greek but I do not have the head for it, but, I did learn that the words are made up of various other words or bits of words that give deeper meaning than we see in the whole.

For example Agape includes the feeling of a ‘**womb**’ of a child growing secure in its mother’s womb -as it grows to be born- in the same way we are carried in the ‘womb’ of God always, even as we grow and experience life after birth and into the various stage of adulthood. “therefor be imitators of God as dear children Eph 5:1

**This image of the womb, has taken a lovely place in my mind and emotions and increase my love for God. See also Psalm 139:13-18**

What did the Lord Jesus say when asked by Nicodemus, a high level priest - “how can I enter the kingdom of God? Jesus replied: “you must be born again – what – must I enter again my mother’s womb and be born again – no, you are born once but you must be born again of water and the Spirit” – the cleansing renewing of Jesus life blood. John 3:1-21. The ‘womb’ of the Spirit.

In this new born spiritual person in Jesus, we learn, like a new born baby to walk and fall and get up and grow in faith and love. The Agape and Philio love of God and family and believers is there to hold our hands as we hold other people’s hands. Agape/Philio love could be like twins in their mother’s womb -a unity a togetherness.

“It would be inadequate to think of salvation only as escape from the penalties of sin. Humans need to be saved from themselves; we need to be saved from the habits which have become our chains; we need to be saved from our temptations; we need to be rescued from our fears and anxieties, from our own foolishness’ and choices. In every case Jesus brings us to salvation. He enables us to face time – the now – and to meet eternity.”

He alone can bring to us the grace, the love, the forgiveness and the strength of God. Through Him alone we can perfectly find and know the perfect love of God. (William Barclay commentary on 1 John 4).

**We live in this love of God and flow it out to others – it may not flow easily – rocks and dams and waterfalls in all our personalities – yet it is who we are in Jesus Love. We have a share of the Spirit**

**Can we say these verses and put our name in it ……………………………..**

“I have loved you ? with an everlasting love . Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you ?.” Jeremiah 31:3

“In love I have called you ?” “I loved you? before you ? turned to me.”

“Before the foundation of the world your ? name was written in the lambs Book of Life”

[38] For I Allan am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate Allan from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ‘Romans 8:38 to 39.

In closing I want to consider the most astounding thing about love – it was God’s love for His creation, the love within the Father, Son and Spirit of God that caused Jesus, fully God, reflecting the full glory and image of God to be born as one of us, - how else could we in the minuteness of our awareness understand the breadth and height and depth of God love \_Gods Agape for us His creations –us made out of mud as we make clay or play doe animals –

Yet God, knowing what we would do with His love, God Who is love chose to breath His Spirit of life into us, and gave us His companionship – and even now we have the companionship of the Presence of God the gift again of His Spirit.

Even knowing the future, God had a plan to rescue us out of the mud – Jesus, for love of God and because of love, came – lived our lives – faced every temptation – no matter how gross – He yielded to none and died -was murdered to become sin for us – me Allan and you. He descended into the kingdom of death and when he rose from the dead – he left our rebellions there and gave us the **righteousness of God.**

**At the end of all the reading and thinking I saw that for us humans agape is simply the ‘Golden Rule’ that Jesus left with us: it is all so simple -**

‘The Lord our God, the Lord is one.  You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’  ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ Mark 12: 29

*1 Corinthian 2-9 Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him”*