

Different Kinds of Love



The Love of God (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to get our hearts in tune for Christmas with this week's special theme: The Love of God.

In my previous talks this week I've shared on the supreme purpose of life to know God. And we've looked together at the Bible's two simple but profound statements that reveal the essential nature of God. These two statements: God is love and God is light.

We've seen that this produces a basic tension between the holiness of God represented by the light, and the love of God. For the love of God draws us and attracts us, but the holiness of God sets limits beyond which we do not dare to pass. And so we are confronted with this basic tension which we have no power in ourselves to resolve. The tension was represented throughout Scripture by God's requirement of a sacrifice representing a life laid down, acknowledging the fact of sin and the penalty of sin. And without such a sacrifice, no one could approach God. So that anybody who approached God had to begin by acknowledging the fact of sin and the penalty of sin. So there was the requirement of God's holiness. But nevertheless, God's love still draws.

And then we see how God alone resolved this tension by providing Himself the sacrifice. Holiness required it, love provided it in one person, Jesus. And I pointed out yesterday that a sacrifice in turn requires two things, both a victim and a priest to offer the victim. And how in the all- sufficiency of Jesus, He provided both. He was the victim, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But He was also the priest. He offered Himself without spot, through the eternal Spirit to the Father. So we see in Jesus the completeness of God's provision and the resolution of the tension between God's love and God's holiness.

Now in my talk today I'm going to approach this same theme from a different angle. I'm going to focus on the essential nature of God's love and in particular how it differs from other kinds of love. Today, particularly in the the world as we know it, there are many, many different things that are at different times lumped together under the one title of love. And it's important that we learn to distinguish between the various different things that are all at times called love.

In New Testament Greek, the language in which the New Testament has been preserved and handed down to us, there are four basic Greek concepts, all of which in one way or another could be translated or represented as love. I'll give you the four Greek words and then I'll briefly try to define for you the specific nature of each word, bearing in mind that my objective is the fourth word, the word which is reserved for the love of God. Here are the four words: first, eros; second, storge; third, philia; and fourth agape.

Let me briefly analyze each. The first eros, which produces the English word "erotic" which I think sufficiently indicates the basic nature of eros. It's primarily sexual. In Piccadilly Circus in London, England, there's the famous statue of Eros in the center. A little boy god with wings and an arrow and a bow. And the concept is that he shoots his arrow and fastens the dart of love in one person for another. But it's basically physical attraction. It's erotic, sexual. And it offers no basis for a permanent relationship. Multitudes of marriages have gone to ground in ruin because they've made eros the basis, and it isn't a basis. It's not a basis for a permanent relationship between two persons. It lasts only as long as the physical attraction lasts.

And then the second New Testament word if storge, which is not found as a noun, but it's found in form as an adjective in the negative form astorgos which means "not having storge." Storge I think could be best described as "natural affection." In the King James Version the negative adjective astorgos is twice translated with the phrase "without natural affection." In Romans 1:31, speaking of the consequences of sin in the human race, it describes men who are:

> "Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." (KJV)

Perhaps an alternative translation would be "unsociable." And then in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 1-3, Paul describes the decline of human character toward the close of this age and he uses the same word again:

> "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous boasters, proud, blasphermers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good." (KJV)

Now we've got to bear in mind that that's the negative, without natural affection. So the positive meaning of the noun is really "natural affection." This is the word that describes those natural bonds that hold human society together, primarily, of course, within the family. The natural affection or love of parents for children, of children for parents, of brothers and sisters for one another. And wherever this love is broken down or ceases to exist, we tend to regard it as unnatural. When parents do not love their children, we consider that's an unnatural situation. When brothers and sisters do not love one another, we see that as unnatural. So I do believe, that the best rendering for that second word, storge is "natural affection," the bonds of relationship that normally hold the human family together.

The third word is philia. The primary meaning of that is "friendship." But friendship is a word that, unfortunately, has been debased in much modern language. It is really a precious and honorable word. To be a friend has meaning. In the Bible Abraham was described as, "A friend of God." And it was a title of great honor. There's a verse in Proverbs, chapter 18, verse 24 which says this:

> "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (NIV)

There's a distinction there between companion, just people who stick together for a while, and a friend, one who really stays in with you especially in the time of need.

So those are the first three words: Eros, sexual love; Storge, natural affection; Philia, friendship.

We come now to the fourth word for love, the one that really is important, agape, spelled A-G-A-P-E. Now the word agape in the Bible usually denotes "love that comes direct from God." However, it may also denote love in man that is (if I may say it) a relic of God's original likeness in man as He created him. But somewhere in the background there is always some kind of association with God in the use of this word agape. And in its most significant and characteristic uses it has certain marks which I want to list briefly for you. These are marks of agape love.

First, it's self-giving. It gives itself, not things. Second, it goes the second mile. You remember Jesus said, "If anyone asks you to go one mile, go with him two." The first mile is duty. The second mile is agape love. Third, it has no strings attached, it's unconditional. It doesn't say, "If you do this, then I'll love you." It's just unconditional, no strings attached. And fourth, it's perfectly demonstrated in Jesus. And just for one example I'll read Romans chapter 5, verses 6-8:

> "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, through for a good man

> someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (NIV)

The emphasis there is on the word "his own love." That's agape love, divine love. And it's demonstrated in this one thing that Christ died for us. While we were still powerless, while we were ungodly, while we were sinners, when we had no claim, when there was nothing in us to merit it, God demonstrated, visibly showed forth to the whole universe, the nature of His love in the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Now in my talk tomorrow I'm going to deal exclusively with "agape." I'll bring out more fully the points I've just touched on today.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow, as I've said, I'll be sharing on the nature of agape love.

Radio Program

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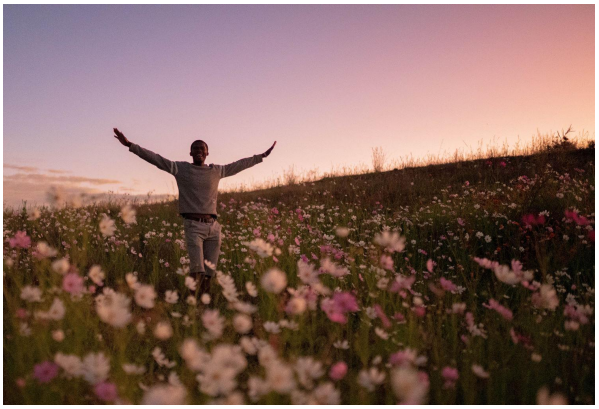

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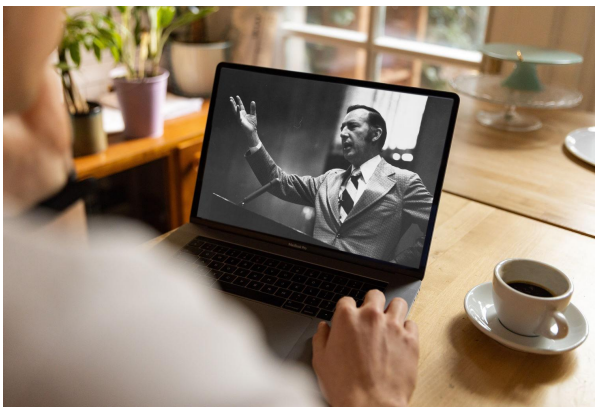

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