

Agape Love



The Love of God (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we draw near to the close of another week. I'll be continuing today with our special theme for this Christmas season: The Love of God.

In my talk yesterday I explained the four main kinds of love covered by the Greek language in the time of the New Testament. The four words I dealt with were these: 1. Eros; 2. Storge; 3. Philia; 4. Agape. And I said about the first one, eros, it was primarily sexual love. The second one, storge, best translated it I think the way the King James translates it; natural affection, natural bonds that hold the human family together. The third, philia, is friendship. And the fourth, agape is the kind of love that I want to focus on in my message today. A love that in some way or other always has it's origin with God.

So today I'm going to focus, now, on this fourth kind of love, agape love. And I'm going to deal more fully with the various features of it that I just touched on briefly at the close of my talk yesterday. I hope that my talk yesterday was as in introduction to what I want to speak of more fully today.

I said there were four main features of agape love. First, it is self- giving. Second, it goes the second mile. Third, it's unconditional, there are no strings attached. And fourth, it's perfectly demonstrated in Jesus.

Let's go briefly over these four aspects of agape love. First of all, its self-giving character. This is beautifully illustrated by the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the Christians at Thessalonica, in First Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 8 he reminded them of how he had been when he was with them in person. And he says this:

> "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." (NIV)

Where it says "lives" literally the Greek says "souls." So that's a kind of love that doesn't just give things. It doesn't just offer advice or preach sermons. But it goes beyond that and it gives itself. It lays down it's life. It says not, "I'm going to give you this or I'm going to give you that," but "Here I am. I'm at your disposal. Whatever I can do for you, count on me." That's agape love. There's all to little of it, I believe you'll agree, in

the Christian church and the Christian ministry. Some of us are good at preaching sermons and giving advice and counsel, but to be a real Christian goes further. It's giving yourself.

Then the second mark of agape love, it goes the second mile. And I take this phrase from some words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:41:

> "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." (NIV)

Someone in certain circumstances in that culture could have the right to force you to go one mile. He could require it of you. But he could not require more than one mile. So I call the first mile "duty." The second mile is "love, agape love." It goes beyond anything that duty requires. But I think it's very important that we all see both in the natural and in the spiritual, we cannot go the second mile until we've gone the first. So agape is not sloppy sentimentality, somebody called it "sloppy agape." It's not just saying, "I love you. I want to help you. I'll pray for you." But it's fulfilling our duty. It's doing everything that duty demands first and then going beyond that. I've met so many people that spoke about love, but didn't fulfill their duty. That's not agape love. Agape love pays it's bills and then it gives beyond that. It doesn't cheat and then offer. It's faithful in small things and then goes beyond.

The third thing about agape love is that it's unconditional. There are, as we say in modern English, no strings attached. Agape love makes no prior demands. It lays down no conditions. It doesn't say, "For me to love you, you've got to fulfill these qualifications." It cannot be earned. That's one of the most difficult things for the religious mind to comprehend, the love of God cannot be earned. And we give people only love that they've earned, we are not giving them God's love, we're not giving them agape love.

There's a little verse from a hymn that's always made a deep impression on me. I don't think I even know the tune of the hymn, but these are the words:

> "How sovereign, wonderful and free the love of God for sinful me."

There are three words there that speak about God's love. "How sovereign, wonderful and free." It's sovereign. No one tells God what to do with His love. He's under no obligation to account for His love. As a matter of fact, as I'll be pointing our later on in this series, He doesn't account for his love. It's unaccountable. And then it's wonderful; it's amazing. If we go only by what is reasonable and probable,we just cannot believe in the love of God because it is most unreasonable and most improbable. And then it's free. That's such a beautiful word. It does not have to be earned, it just has to be received. Let me leave that little couplet with you:

> "How sovereign, wonderful and free the love of God for sinful me."

I trust that you will go through the rest of this day saying that to yourself. "How sovereign, wonderful and free, The love of God for sinful me."

The fourth point that I made about agape love is that it's perfectly demonstrated in Jesus. And I do see this as the absolute essence of the true message of Christmas, God's agape love demonstrated in Jesus. And I'm going to read again those beautiful words of Paul in 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, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us [that's agape love] in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (NIV)

This is the great demonstration of agape love, the perfect demonstration. Let's look at three facts about us at the time when God made this demonstration. It says first of all we were powerless. We could do nothing whatever to help ourselves. Secondly, we were ungodly. We were the exact opposite of everything that applies to the nature of God. We were, in a sense, most unappealing. There was nothing in us to commend us to God. And third, we were sinners. Sinners are rebels. We were enemies. We were in opposition to God. We were not subject to the law of God. We didn't do the things that God required of us. Those are the three aspects of the people for whom God gave Jesus to die. Powerless, ungodly and sinners.

There's just one more important thing that we need to see about this demonstration of God's love in Christ. Something very important because it concerns us. And if we don't understand it we'll never really enter into the love of God. Agape love proceeds out of faith. In this case it proceeded out of God's faith and our of Christ's faith. God and Christ had faith that the death of Christ would accomplish God's purposes. It's very, very important to see that it all proceeds out of faith. If God had waited to see results, there would never have been any sacrifice. But God believed that this gift

of His, this Christmas gift of His love, would produce the results. And so without waiting to see the results, God made the sacrifice.

As I close my message today, let me just remind you of something that I've said before at times in these talks and I always like to say it once again at the Christmas season. Remember that Jesus is God's Christmas gift. And in Him everything we shall ever need for time and eternity is included. God didn't give us a lot of gifts, He just gave us one gift that contained everything. Everything is wrapped up in Jesus. And then bear in mind, that God hung His Christmas gift on a tree and that tree was the cross. And that demonstrates the undemonstratable. That brings to us the incomprehensible, the thing that can never be fully measured or summed up, the love of God in Christ. Let me quote that little couplet for you again. I want you to have it in your mind.

> "How sovereign, wonderful and free the love of God for sinful me."

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be continuing with our special Christmas theme: The Love of God.

As we draw near to the close of this year, I want to say a special thank you to each one of you has shared with me the financial burden of this radio ministry. May I also ask you frankly to remember the ministry once more with a generous gift before the year closes. This will be a great source of encouragement to me personally and will help me to continue and expand the ministry in the New Year that lies ahead.

To each one who responds I'll send an autographedcopy of my book, Appointment in Jerusalem. This is the dramatic, true-life story of my first wife, Lydia, and the children's home she started in Jerusalem. Countless people have written to tell me that it's the most moving and exciting story they've ever read.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on The Love of God (Part 1) is available in a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

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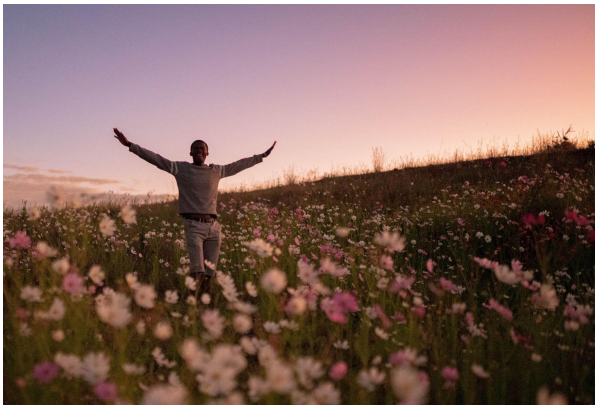
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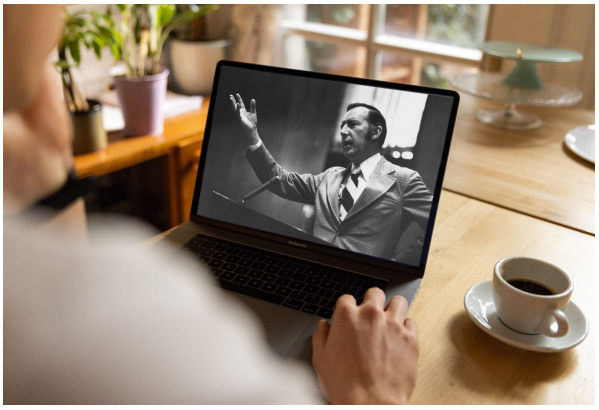
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