

Agape Love

by Wayne Goff

Last week we spoke of the “*walk in the Spirit*” which is a **lifestyle** to be borne by the true Christian. The “*fruit of the Spirit*” is listed in Galatians 5, the first of which is “**love.**”

Love

Love (agape) is newly and supremely defined by God’s Will and Action in Jesus Christ. Jesus agreed with the foundation truth of Moses’ law that one should “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength . . . and . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Mk. 12:30-31). This shows that the love here discussed is a love of **will** and **action**. It is a love that chooses between two masters (Matt. 6:24). It is a love that exists for God as a slave for his Lord (Lk. 17:70-10), which endures persecution (Matt. 5:10ff), and which loves the enemy even to the extent of praying for him (Matt. 5:43-45).

This new love is created out of the forgiveness of sins which makes every obedient soul a “*new creation*” and which gives every redeemed soul a new beginning. The more forgiveness that is received, the more love for God there is in the heart of the forgiven (Lk. 7:47). As a new creature, we begin to put on the works of God in our lives. We do as God would do because we are created in His image and because we love Him. Our love is now a **triangle**: love between us and God and mankind. The love which led God to provide our forgiveness is renewed in our hearts as we learn to forgive those who sin against us.

The apostle Paul explains the three-fold basis of our love:

1. **God sent His only Son into the world for us, Rom. 8:32**
2. **God has called us to Himself by His gospel of love, 1 Thess. 1:9**
3. **The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, Rom. 5:5**

The **goal** of the work of God’s love is not only salvation, but the formation of the “*new man*” (Rom. 6:4). While God has the first word in our salvation, His plan for us does not exclude our will. By God’s love the relationship has been established, but it is our responding love that continues it, Philippians 2:12. Only to the extent that we are trustfully obedient can we say that our faith works by love, Galatians 5:6. And only as that faith continues to work by love will we grow to be all that we can be in Jesus Christ! There is no room for retirement until eternity, Revelation 14:13!

Love **within** the community of believers is repeatedly emphasized in the phrase “*one another*” (see Rom. 12:5, 10, 16). We have responsibilities to discharge one to another so that we might help all true believers to reach that ultimate goal of heaven. Such love is manifested in a readiness for service and sacrifice, for forgiveness and mercy, for lifting up the fallen and restoring the broken-hearted. This love continues to work for the good of all because it is not consumed in selfish worries but is absorbed in the service of God — a service to *others*.

The greatest love of all is that shown by God and Jesus in the giving of the Perfect Sacrifice on Calvary, and such experienced love is our motive in service. As the apostle John wrote, “*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 Jn. 3:16). What a challenging life-goal for every one of us — to so strive to live until love and eternity overtake us in Him! May God help us to see the beauty and the need for such love today — for God, the brethren, and for righteousness’ sake. This is some of the fruit of the Spirit which we will bear if we walk in the Spirit..

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