



7. Getting Better Acquainted with Jesus

We begin to wonder, "Is it possible that any human being can have that true love, agape, in his/her heart?" Aren't we all selfish by nature? The answer is, we learn agape from Christ. In fact, He is trying to give it to us.

This is the real point of the Bible message. When Paul describes in seven steps that love of Christ in stepping down from His home in heaven even to "the death of the cross" for us (Philippians 2:5-8), he says, "Let this [same] mind be in you." We may say, "That's nice for Him; but I can't love like that!" But Paul says it's not impossible.

Jesus does not say, "Look at My great life of agape, and marvel, but you'll never make it yourself." No! He says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love ... as I have loved you" (John 13:34). This same love transforms our nature and recreates us in the image of God. Then happiness flows in. He has never told us to do the impossible. It is possible as we enter His "school" and let Him teach us as students. Oh, what joy it brings to us! Life becomes rich, right where you are today.

In this study we shall see how some people like we are have given demonstrations of agape in their lives. They "saw" Christ by faith; and the vision was completely successful! You are to share in it too.

The Heavenly Treasure Becomes Ours

1. How is self-love exposed in the Bible? Psalm 49:18.

ANSWER: "Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and _____, when thou _____ to thyself."

2. Is this self-love something that Jesus urges us to cultivate? Matthew 22:37-40.

ANSWER: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as _____."

Jesus did not teach that we should encourage a love of self, for that is contrary to His teaching, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." He said in effect: "As by nature you find it easy to love yourself in your unconverted state, so now, as you are converted through faith in Me, love your neighbor."

3. What brings us real comfort and hope? Romans 15:1-5.

ANSWER: "For even Christ pleased _____." "Now the God of patience and consolation grant _____ according to _____."

4. What is the "joy of the Lord" that we will enter into? John 15:11; Matthew 25:21; John 6:38.

ANSWER: "I came down from heaven not _____, but the will of _____."

The Great Contrast Between the Two Loves

5. When Jesus died on the cross what was His true motive? What kind of death did He die? Compare Isaiah 53:11, 12 with Revelation 2:11.

ANSWER: "He shall see of the _____, and shall be _____ ... justify many; for He shall _____ iniquities. ... He was numbered with the _____; and He bore _____, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Jesus' only motive was agape--and He died the equivalent of the _____ for us (Revelation 2:11). "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: ... But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4, 5).

6. What shows that Jesus suffered the same death as the lost will suffer in the second death? 2 Corinthians 5:21 (read also Psalm 22--the Crucifixion Psalm).

ANSWER: "For He [God] made Him [Christ] to be _____."

Jesus felt the supreme agony of being separated from His Father. This was the "death" that He became "obedient unto." You and I are the ones who would have had to go through that if He had not taken our place, and died our second death. This idea of agape has been dying out among many professed followers of Christ because a pagan notion has infiltrated our thinking--the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul. If there is no such thing as real death, then Christ did not really die. If He went to Paradise the day He was on the cross (as many mistakenly believe from reading a misplaced comma in Luke 23:43), then there was no true emptying of Himself, no true death on the cross. The idea of the natural immortality of the soul makes Christ's sacrifice out to be a sham, a pretended stage play. But when the darkness overtook Him on Calvary, the light of His Father's face was in fact completely withdrawn. His cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22) was no actor's wail. Isaiah was right: "He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isaiah 53:12), even "the second death" (Revelation 2:11).

7. How far did Jesus go in searching for you and me? Psalm 139:7,8.

ANSWER: "If I make my bed in hell, behold _____."

As we saw earlier, eros is not evil. It is not wrong to desire a reward or to enjoy the contemplation of Heaven, and the rewards of those who enter at last. The point is that eros is a love no better than what the heathen have. As a motivation, it will not produce a true change of character. Paul says, "It profits me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

How Is Agape-love Possible for You and Me to Have?

8. When the Lord tried and tested Moses to see what kind of love he had, how did Moses show that he had agape? Exodus 32:7-10, 31, 32.

ANSWER: Moses challenged the Lord either to "forgive their sin" [Israel's] or "_____, I pray Thee, out of Thy _____ which Thou hast written."

The only dash in the entire King James Version of the Bible is found in Exodus 32:32. Here Moses breaks down; he cannot finish the sentence. He glimpses the horror of an eternal hell stretching before him if he shares Israel's fate. But he makes up his mind. He chooses to be lost with them: "and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exodus 32:31, 32). Moses stood the test. I can imagine the Lord throwing His arms around His weeping servant. He had found a man after His own heart.

9. How did the Apostle Paul show that he had this same kind of love? Romans 9:1-3.

ANSWER: In order to save his own kinsmen, he "could wish that _____, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

10. What kind of motive alone will make us beautiful, Christ-like Christians? 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.

ANSWER: "For the _____ of _____; ... that they which live _____ live _____ but unto Him, which died for them, and rose again."

Everyone who sees the cross as it truly is, and believes, finds the miracle of agape reproduced in his own heart. This is how the world will be turned upside down again, "for the love (agape) of Christ constrains us" that we "should not henceforth live unto [ourselves], but unto Him which died for [us], and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15). We miss the point of the New Testament if we miss agape in it. We also stay in the dark about what faith is, for New Testament faith is a human heart-appreciation of that "breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of the agape of

Christ (Ephesians 3:18,19).

11. Read Paul's prayer for you ("all saints"). Does your heart say, "Yes, Lord"? Ephesians 3:14-21.

ANSWER: If Christ dwells in our hearts "by faith," we are "rooted and grounded in _____, May be able to comprehend _____ what is the _____, and _____, and _____, and _____; And to know _____ of Christ which passes _____, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7 "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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