

Love and the Bible

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If you think love is an important topic to Christianity, you owe it to yourself, and the world around you, to learn what God teaches on this subject. It is amazing how confused the teaching is on this vital topic. You are about to embark on a fascinating study, and like all correct Bible understandings, it is tremendously liberating.

Love. This seems like an important subject area for Christianity. In fact, one could even contend it is a **core element** of the Christian faith. After all, the **first** commandment is the requirement to **love** God - with **all** our heart, mind, soul and strength (Mk 12:30). The second commandment requires us to **love** our neighbor as our self (Mk 12:31)! This “love” requirement covers all our vital relationships - toward self, neighbor and Creator! But the centrality of this “love doctrine” extends even further. The Bible states that love **fulfills the Law** (Ro 13:8-10 and Gal 5:14)! So, all the requirements of the Law of God ... are fulfilled **by love?! It is evidently made up of something that has the ability to satisfy the requirements the entire Old Testament theocracy! This is worth thought, investigation and inquiry!**

So, ... what is love? If we are to fulfill these commands, we need some kind of definition. How else can we know if we are meeting His requirements? Before proceeding, I want **you** to write down **your definition** of “love.” Nobody will ever know what you write down unless you decide to share it. Don’t over analyze - just write! If you need a starting place, try asking yourself, “*When I say to someone, ‘I love you,’ what do I mean?*” Is love an undefinable feeling - a spontaneous, uncontrollable warmth that wells up from deep inside - to then be directed at the object of affection? Well, even that gives some kind of definition to it!

There are a couple of reasons I want you to express your thoughts in writing before going any further. **First**, I want you to save your definition and reexamine it **after** you have finished this Ebook. I want you to see if this material changes your definition. **Second**, you may decide you want to share your “before and after” definition as part of this Ebook’s future editions.

Well, now that you have written your definition, and I have written mine, here’s the bad news. Our definitions are ultimately irrelevant. “*Say it ain’t so!*” But, it is so. Alas, only God’s definition means anything as it is **by that definition we will be judged. He alone** will decide if we have loved Him, our neighbor, or our self. And He will use **His** definition! Any other opinion on what constitutes love is - even now - null and void. So, we need to be sure we know His definition. That is the goal of this treatise. But don’t throw away your definition yet!

I want to first relate the teaching I received as a young Christian. You may, or may not, find parallels with what you have been taught. Intertwined with this teaching, I will relate relevant experiences to this subject. Again, you may, or may not, find parallels in your own experience. I will then take you to a defining moment that launched me into an objective study into the Biblical topic of love. Against that backdrop, I will discuss this subject in many areas which I believe will interest and challenge you.

Setting the Stage for the Search

In April of 1977, a very confused young man walked into a coffeehouse ministry called The Greenhouse. He was involved in various nefarious activities that found him in a lifestyle totally estranged from God. By the time he walked into The Greenhouse, he had been reading the Bible for six months, with the last six weeks being most intense. He had become intrigued with its contents ... but, a huge cloud hung overhead. This young man rightly understood **he was in trouble with its Author**. Added to this crushing weight was a lack of meaningful life purpose. And activities that had

at one time brought some measure of relief, no longer delivered. All this was taking a heavy toll. And he reasoned that even if all did go well - so what? After forty or fifty years - then what? “*What is the point? Success? To what end?*” Maybe a few of his song titles will give you the idea. “*Dead End,*” “*Fightin’ for Light,*” “*The Harder I Look, The Less That I See,*” “*Even Even Seems Odd,*” and “*Played Out.*” The lyrics reveal the descent of a young man being beaten down by life. Questions, but no answers. And when answers do not come, the weight becomes heavier. The young man ... was me.

I walked into The Greenhouse - a sinner indeed. So, what kind of reception did I receive? Well, I found myself surrounded with smiling faces **that wanted to know all about me!** They wanted to know where I came from, how I found The Greenhouse, how long I had been in the area ... I was welcomed with open arms! I was introduced to everyone there, and after the music, Bible study, and fellowship time, it was clear they were looking forward to my return! Wow! What a night! I felt - LOVE - from people who had never laid eyes on me before! They wanted no money, made no demands, the doors were opening to a new world - and it was **love unconditional!** Right? Well, let’s see. Have you ever walked into some church and received such a warm welcome? And that same level of love and acceptance continued ... right?

Let’s now examine The Greenhouse’s teaching on love - their “Biblical” definition(s). Again, this may, or may not, be a teaching you have heard ... so this may, or may not, relate to you. These definitions are prominent in the Presbyterian Church of America, Southern Baptist circles and the “independent” Christian Church. I state this because I am not sure how pervasive this teaching is - so let me know what your group teaches! As an “Organic Document,” your church’s teaching will most assuredly find its way into this great and important work! So, what did The Greenhouse teach me in those early days?

A Common Teaching

Agapao (verb); **Agapee** (noun). According to The Greenhouse, these Greek words denote the unconditional, divine love of God. God is *agapee* (1Jn 4:8). As God Himself is *agapee*, and since He is divine, then it logically follows that **He acts** (the verb) in **divine love** - *agapao*. This is clearly the highest form of love. In our natural state we are separated from this love, but when we become a Christian, we step into the flood of God’s divine, unconditional love. But, there’s more! As a Christian, we not only **receive** this love from God, but now we can become a conduit for God’s love **to flow through us**. With Christ **in us**, divine love is shed abroad **in us**, and we can now be used by God to unconditionally love **those around us**. *Agapee* is an unconditional love that originates **in God**, and can never fail (1Cor 13:8). The actions, or reactions, of the targeted object is irrelevant. *Agapao* as an act of God - is independent of human affectations.

Phileo (verb); **Philos** (noun). This is brotherly love - man’s love. It is a **lesser form** of love than the divine *agapao*. It is the love expressed by unsaved people. Ultimately, it is a self-centered type of love that **does have conditions to it** - even if those conditions are not readily detectable. Therefore, it is innately fickle and can be turned on and off as situations and conditions change. The Greenhouse often pointed to the word, Philadelphia, which means the city of brotherly love, as an example of the meaning *phileo*.

Eros. This is the Greek word for sexual love. Because this word never appears in the New Testament, The Greenhouse staff summarily dismissed this word. What a great breadth of knowledge they displayed! They not only taught about love from the New Testament record in its original language, **but they even knew Koine Greek that did not make it into the New Testament!** Wow! Impressive!

This sounds great! Especially the part that, as a Christian, we enter into the *divine love*, *agapao*, of God that the world does not know! But, just as exciting, *we can become a funnel for this divine material to flow through us* - as we spontaneously, unconditionally, divinely love those around us! What a rush! When a new person came to The Greenhouse, the staffers were convinced they were functioning in the *agapee* of God. They were giving unconditionally - expecting nothing in return. And the feelings were so warm and genuine. “*What a powerful feeling to have this divine love falling from the Throne of Grace through me to the unsaved world! How great it is to be used by God in such a manner!*”

Unfortunately, I may have taught all this in my early days. After all, **I was being pointed to the original language!** And all the learned teachers and preachers around me were speaking **with one voice** on this subject. Some not only had Seminary degrees, but one even headed a church **with thousands of members!** So, how do I now know this is error? What makes me **so sure** this teaching about “Love” **is wrong - indeed even false teaching?** Well, before laying out the case for your examination, I want to relate a puzzle that made me begin to wonder if something was amiss about this teaching. See if you can relate to this experience in some way.

But, Before the Puzzle

When I was a student in one of the seminaries I attended, I shared the forthcoming information with one of my professors after he had presented this *agapao*, *phileo*, *eros* teaching to the class. When I pointed out the fabulous truth you will soon be privy to, he was taken aback and visibly shook. His theology on *Christian love* was shattered. But, by the next class period, he was back in the saddle! He had run to a resident Greek “scholar” and came back with a half-baked presentation that was an obvious tortured attempt to keep this erroneous teaching alive. When he presented his lame rationalization to the class, it was obvious to all that he was not even buying his own presentation. I didn’t have to say a word and he concluded by saying he would have to look into it more. I do not know if he ever did, or if he is still teaching this heresy about - Love! And I ask you again, “**Is love an important subject area for Christianity?**” Is it? Love! Love! Love! Everybody talks about it! The world sings about it! Movies are laced with it! Multitudes of novels revolve around it! Poetry drips with its theme! Love! Love! Love! The world cries out for this stuff! Young and old, male and female - Asian, Caucasian, African, Indian, Hispanic, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist - all languages, all cultures, all ages (and all future ages as well) - they all write about, and cry out for, this stuff called - **LOVE!** But, what is it? **What is it?!** I guess you have noticed my accusatory language is getting stronger. I just used the word, “heresy” for this teaching! Can I back up such a charge? Or **am I the heretic?**

In reality, my first mission is to take **myself** to the place of accurate information. If I can gain understanding on the Biblical definition of love, it will help me understand God’s activities **toward me** - and events in my life may make more sense. Moreover, an accurate understanding of Christian love will help me understand **my responsibilities** toward God - and man.

If you investigate the upcoming material thoroughly, I believe it will affect every relationship you have - current and future! It will also cause you to **look back** at previous relationships when you thought you acted in love - **but didn’t!** And this material will even affect your relationship with God Himself! Wow! What bold assertions! What audacity and arrogance! But, if I can deliver ... charges of “*audacity and arrogance*” will be replaced with repentance, changed lives ... and reformed ministries!

The Puzzle

Let’s return to The Greenhouse. From the first visit - to five years later.

That first night, I was required to go to the Visitor's Class. It was an in-depth Gospel presentation. Even though I had been reading the Bible for six months, I couldn't figure out what God was requiring of me. That class put all the pieces **of that puzzle** together. By my second visit, a marvelous change had occurred in me. I had called upon the Lord. I returned to The Greenhouse - as a new creation! Life had come! Joy had come! Hope had come! A deep, eternal change had occurred. That was twenty-six years ago and counting. But although The Greenhouse solved that puzzle, over time *they created another*.

Over the next five years, this is what The Greenhouse staff witnessed from that young man (me). Original Christian music flowed from his guitar. He wrote several tracts, and used them to begin hundreds of witnessing contacts. He went to the county jail on Saturday mornings for more than a year to witness to inmates. He started a Saturday night Bible study, and attended The Greenhouse every Tuesday and Thursday night. He brought many new people with him - and even sang his new songs on occasion. All this activity was in addition to a full time job. This was the first eighteen months. Then an area Christian Drug Rehabilitation Program offered him a position on staff. His duties included teaching, counseling, and public speaking. And in that eighteen months he showed up at The Greenhouse every week with a van full of young men. Then this young man - part of the fruit of their labor - went on staff at the only Street Gospel Mission in the area. He was busy teaching, counseling, presenting his new songs four nights per week, and public speaking. This was a two-year assignment. Then, when that Mission closed, some Bible college recruiters from another state showed up, looking for him to attend their College - with the way paved to attend seminary. So, what is the point of this rehearsal of history that no one (except God) is even remotely interested in? Well, let's talk about love.

Before the out-of-State move, I broke away from packing to go by The Greenhouse to say farewell. Judgement Day would probably be the next time paths would cross (and it still looks that way). It was in the afternoon and "the meeting" was with the main staff fellow. All this staff fellow could do - was to continually glance at his watch. The rest of the staff was not at all interested in saying good bye. There was no great surprise at this, as all the staff had progressively grown colder and colder as the years had gone by.

As I drove off, this *new puzzle* crystalized. The first night I attended The Greenhouse, *agapao* love - the divine, unconditional love of God - poured out from these people. Now, five years later, the spigot *was turned off!* So, here was The Puzzle: "*What happened to the agapao love that channeled through The Greenhouse staff - that unconditional, divine love - that never fails* (1Cor 13:8)?" Five years earlier, I walked in **unsaved** ... but now I walked away **as a Christian**. I was now free of drugs, alcohol, cursing, all kinds of sexual misdeeds, lying, employee thefts ... and replacement activities included all that I cited above. I thought, "*Does God love me less now than that first night I came in? Newcomers are still greeted warmly and enthusiastically - just like I was five years earlier! Yet now, five years later, toward me, this love, this agapao love, this unfailing divine love of the eternal Creator - has vanished!*"

Fortunately, my relationship with God has never been founded upon the behavior of man. Therefore, I did not **really** wonder if God loved me or not. That determination was based upon grounds separate from The Greenhouse. It also helped that I had a clear conscience in my five years of interaction with The Greenhouse staff. But **even if I had sinned against the staff**, wasn't the divine love coming through them **unconditional?** In short, I smelled a rat. A dead one. I didn't know exactly where it was, but I knew it was somewhere in the house.

So, ... let me ask you a question about **your** Christian experience. Does any of this sound familiar? Have you ever attended a church where you were **initially** "loved," but then the subtle rejection began - finally culminating in you knowing you weren't wanted around? **What is** this "love?" The people exercising it **really believe they are exhibiting God's agapao love** - yet, it dries up along

the way! Something is amiss! Have you ever found yourself in a puzzle like this? Well, if not, one day you likely will.

Truth be known, this is not a puzzle of God's making. This puzzle is the result of false teaching. Learning the truth solves puzzles. Unfortunately, when faced with a puzzle, many people fall back on the crutch, "*there are many interpretations!*" - rather than bringing a puzzle before God and asking Him about it. While He may not solve it the next day, He is quite interested in leading His own **into all truth**. After all, He has already given the most treasured Object of His affections for our redemption. So, to grant us some area of truth is **a mere crumb** from His table. I, for one, will most happily receive any crumb He wants to drop in my direction. Each **crumb of God** is packed with life, joy, light, liberty - eternal power - and blasts to oblivion all the combined riches this world can muster! But, back to my story.

The Clue

My first 5 years of Christianity was closed, I had said all my good byes ... and I was off to Bible College! Just before leaving, the student recruiter of that college mentioned this little side note. "*Oh, yeah. Your first year, you have to take New Testament Greek.*" I said, "*Greek?! You never said anything about that!*" He responded, "*Ah, don't worry. If I can pass, anybody can. You'll be okay.*" Yeah, right. I had always felt I was a **practical** Christian - a hands-on ministry worker - not an academic. I felt I would benefit my brothers by my practical works and, in turn, I would be fed by my brethren who had the scholarly training.

The Bible College plan was that I would complete my undergraduate degree in two years (thanks to transferred college work). But a little glitch arose. The Bible College only stayed open for **one** more year. When something goes down in flames, it's hard to avoid some burns. When that year ended, I **was through with the academic scene**. After my final exam, I was busily pitching all my books and notes. Then I received a phone call from my Greek teacher. He said, "*Robin, I have just finished grading the final exams, and I wanted you to know you got the highest grade in the class. It's been a real pleasure having you, and I know you are going to continue with your Greek studies.*" As I hung up the phone, I chuckled (there were only four class members), but then I paused in my pitching duties, reflected for a second, and said to myself, "*Well, maybe I'll hang on to my Greek stuff.*"

I independently studied the Greek for the next eight years before taking Greek II in a formal setting. What a tremendous tool this has been. Every hour spent in this endeavor has never yielded a minute of regret. But, initially, after my Bible College year, where was I to start? Well, I had been taught that John's writings contained the simplest Greek. So, that is where I started. I bought an interlinear Greek New Testament and covered up the English as I tried to read the Greek. When I got stumped on unfamiliar vocabulary, I would peek at the English word below. When I found something interesting, I would investigate by going into my Lexicon, or syntax studies, etc. A whole new world of interest and challenge unfolded - and still is - some 20+ years later. "*So, (you ask) ...what about LOVE?*"

As I started in John, everything was going along quite well. Eventually, I came to John 3:16. "*For God so loved (agapao) the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...*" I thought, "*I know that word! That's God's love! That's the love the world is incapable of generating!*" I had run across the stuff of legend! There it was - the powerful, exclusive, love **from** God - in all its purity and transcendency! A love generated from the deepest recesses of the heart of our benevolent Creator projected unconditionally **upon an undeserving world!** I thought, "*Wow! This is great!*" I then continued my journey through John. Then, three verses later

I came to John 3:19. "*And this is the judgement; that the light has come into the world, and men loved (agapao) the darkness rather than the light...*" It took me a second, and then I said, "*Say,*

what?” I read the verse again. I was stunned. Even now, twenty plus years later, that moment is still frozen in time. I thought, “*I did not read what I just read. This is an impossible statement. Men ... with **divine love - for the darkness?! WHAT?? How can men divinely love darkness??**” I saw that *agapao* was in the Aorist mood and active voice, so I immediately went to my lexicon to make sure it was *agapao*. Sure enough ... it was. In disbelief, I read it again and inserted the definition for *agapao* I had been taught. “... *and men had a divine, unconditional love - the love of God, the love from God - **FOR DARKNESS!!!***” The shocking reality then struck me - “*Agapao cannot mean divine love!! I have been taught error ... about love!!*” Aughhhhhhh. And is there a subject **more central** to Christianity than Love?? I’m telling you - alarms went off **everywhere!** A biblical understanding of love is critical - **to everything as far as Christianity is concerned!** We **are** commanded to love God, love our neighbor, love our wife, love our children, love the brethren, love life, love His coming - love our enemies!! We **are not** to love money, love the chief seats, love the first place ... love is all over the place - in attitudes, behaviors, actions and reactions. “*I have been taught error about ... **LOVE!!!***” For me, this created an emergency of the first order. But, as this Ebook is interested in your input, I would like for you to now go to a poll. It asks:*

“The information I have just been exposed to has:

- 1) created an emergency of the first order,
- 2) simply pricked my interest,
- 3) created no emergency at all, or
- 4) has done nothing, as I don’t know what the heck you are talking about.”

The Search for Truth Begins in Earnest!!

God only has to say something **one time** for it to be forever true and fully empowered. But if we can find other corroborating witnesses in His word on a particular subject area, that will help **us** to be sure **we** correctly understand and represent His view on that topic. With that in mind, I immediately grabbed my Greek concordance so as to examine every use of the word *agapao*. The verb form appears almost 150 times in the New Testament. Here are five of them.

2Ti 4:10 “Demas, having loved (*agapao*) this present world, deserted me...”

2Pet 2:15 “... they (false teachers) ... followed the way of Balaam ... who loved (*agapao*) the wages of unrighteousness.

Jn 12:43 “For they (the Pharisees) loved (*agapao*) the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”

Lk 11:43 “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love (*agapao*) the front seats in the synagogues, and (you love - *agapao*) respectful greetings in the market places.”

Lk 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one, and love (*agapao*) the other You cannot serve God and mammon.”

There are sixteen uses of *agapao/agapee* in this vein. These will all be listed later.

“Ohhh ... What about *phileo*?”

Immediately, another word came to mind. “*What about *phileo*? Does that mean, ‘brotherly love’? Is it a human love inferior to *agapao*?*” Within minutes, I discovered that *phileo* **had nothing to do with brotherly love! NOTHING!!** In John 5:20, Jesus stated, “*For the Father loves (*phileo*) the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing....*” In this passage, *phileo* **is an activity between God the Father and God the Son!!** This “stuff,” is generated from inside God the Father and its target is God the Son! Man is completely outside the loop! I thought, “*Phileo cannot mean*

'brotherly love' or some second rate man's love! It can't! Furthermore, how can it be inferior to agapao when it is generated by God Himself? Aughhhhhhh!" I felt sick. Incidentally, I have spelled "aughhhhhhh" with seven "h"s. Seven is a number of completeness. I felt completely sick.

So, there I stood

So, there I stood, six years into my Christian experience - **with no idea what the Bible itself actually taught about love!** What a betrayal! I had naively relied upon the integrity of those Greek "scholars" in my past - *and I propagated their error - their false teaching - their heresy!* And the errant material dealt with - **Love!** What a subject to be screwed up on! After the feelings of shock, anger, and grief ... came cool resolve. A journey was launched for me the day I ran across the statement that "*men loved (agapao) the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil*" (Jn 3:19).

False Teaching - and False Teachers

While I was *a victim* of false teaching, I proceeded to *teach that trash*. I had *propagated false teaching* in the Name of Jesus Christ. At what point does God decide He has a *false teacher* on His hands? There is a line somewhere. Do not presume you know the answer to that. You do not. Nor do I. You may have some *opinion*, but God alone actually knows where He draws that line. It is like trying to determine when a person passes from *stumbling* in a sin area to *practicing* that sin. Extremes may be obvious, but multitudes dance around those lines. For example, Galatians 5:20 tells us that those who practice outbursts of anger will not inherit the Kingdom of God. So, what constitutes *the practicing* of outbursts of anger resulting in eternal disqualification from inheriting the Kingdom of God? That is more than "*the million-dollar question*" - it is "*the eternal destiny question.*" If one commits this "*deed of the flesh*" **once a day** does God label such a one **a practitioner** of this disqualifying sin? But what if one commits this sin **every other day**? Is that practicing it? What if it is committed **once a week**, or **once a month**? Is that "practicing" it **as far as God is concerned**? Remember, the correct answer determines if a person spends eternity in Heaven - or in Hell. Can **you** accurately answer this question? And even if we pretended you could, can you also accurately pinpoint for us when one is *practicing* immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, envies disputes, dissensions, factions, drunkenness, carousings, and other similar damning practices of Galatians 5:19-21? And at what point do I depart from carrying a false teaching - **and become a false teacher**? This is no trifling matter. This is not just some academic inquiry to be bantered about. The strongest words of damnation are reserved for **false teachers**.

I have often told individuals it would be better to die as a whoremongering drunk - having never uttered a word about God - than to die with a rap sheet filled with misrepresentations about The Creator. Think of it this way. Let's say the headquarters of a huge company is housed in the middle of your city. Two men are standing outside the building, and you ask them about the products and services of that company. The first man says he really does not know, and walks away. But, the second man launches into great detail about the company's product lines, service commitments, and warranties. Unfortunately, he is mistaken on all points. Which of these two will provoke the President of the company to greater wrath? False teachers are in the greatest peril **of all** with God. For me to realize I had falsely represented God, not only caused great grief over misleading my audiences, but also **great alarm**. Yes, I was taught error by those leading me, but **I am ultimately responsible for what I propagate in the Name of Jesus Christ**. I repented then and there. I shut my mouth on this subject until I had sought God on this matter and honestly studied to arrive at some legitimate conclusions.

My Starting Point

While I did not know what the Bible *did* teach on this subject, I did know this. *Agapao could not mean* divine love, and *phileo could not mean* brotherly, or man's, love. ***So, I already did know more than my "teachers" knew on the subject!*** That encouraged me a little bit. Things could only get better - if God would grant me the wisdom, understanding and insight needed to grow into truth. So, I asked Him for that assistance. That was my starting point. If this sounds reasonable to you, maybe you could take a moment and ask the same.

Eros

Oh yes ... one other little point of interest. *Eros* is indeed associated with sensual desire and passion - sexual love. The Greenhouse, and others, got that one right. But, as *eros* does not occur in the New Testament - whoopee! The one that doesn't matter ... they got right.

The Lexicons

A lexicon is basically a dictionary. There are many Greek lexicons by many different authors. Some give a relatively short definition for a word, while others go into great depth. The more in-depth works examine the root of a word and expound on the earliest uses of the word - thus predating a Biblical use of the word by as much as a thousand years! Over time, most words develop nuances and take on new duties. The study of non-biblical Greek writings can be quite helpful in understanding the disposition of a word by New Testament times. For example, in our own language, consider the word "bread." At one time, it simply meant bread. But at some point it picked up the meaning of "food" in a general sense. Later it picked up a slang use - meaning "money." This word has developed a circle of potential meanings. When a writer uses this word, we need to look at the context, plug in potential meanings, in the attempt to come to an honest conclusion on the author's intention. This might be fairly easy to figure out **today**, but if we were **two thousand years in the future looking back on that writing**, it might not be so easy. That is what we are trying to do as we work with New Testament Greek. And as a further complication, this is an extinct type of Greek language. While most Greek lexicons are fairly objective in their definitions, sometimes lexicographers obviously stray into subjective opinion. This can be discerned by comparing the work of several lexicons when studying a given word. Conflicting definitions flag you to a more careful, and prayerful, investigation. The study of the words *agapao* and *phileo* are great cases in point. Lexicons conflict with each other in very substantial ways. Here is a brief synopsis.

- 1) First, all **do agree** the verb, *agapao*, was used by "the profane writers" of the Greek Classics. But, the noun, *agapee*, did not appear until its use in the LXX (Septuagint, about 150 BC by Jewish translators). This **fact** becomes extremely important to many lexicographers, and theologians alike. This will be discussed in detail in an upcoming segment.
- 2) Next, all **do agree** that *phileo* is found in pre-Biblical uses, often in the Classics. The noun, *philos*, was also common. This fact (of commonality) also becomes quite important to many lexicographers and theologians. This too will be detailed in the upcoming segments.
- 3) Unfortunately, lexicographers **disagree** on the meaning of *agapao* and *phileo*. I am sure that is exactly what you wanted to hear! Some lexicographers assert that *agapao* and *phileo* are used **interchangeably**. Others believe each word is distinct in meaning and carefully placed by God in His word for specific purposes. Some assert *agapao* is activity arising from the will, while *phileo* is more emotion based. So, what **is** the meaning of *agapao* and *phileo*?

Before answering this, I think this is the place to list **the different ways** these words are used. I then want to discuss The Romanticized View versus The Non-Romanticized View. Then I think it will

be appropriate to forward - what I believe to be - accurate definitions.

Agapao and Agapee are routinely expressed by man (saved and unsaved) and also by God.

Agapao (verb) displayed by God: “... for God *loves* a cheerful giver.” 2Cor 9:7. This use can be found in dozens of other passages.

Agapao (verb) displayed by saved man: “He that *loves* his brother abides in the light” 1Jn 2:10. This use can be found in dozens of other passages.

Agapao (verb) displayed by unsaved man: “... men *loved* darkness rather than the light” Jn 3:19. Also see, Mt 5:26, Mt 6:24, Lk 6:32, Lk 7:42, Lk 7:47, Lk 11:43, Jn 12:43, 2Ti 4:10, 2Pet 2:15, 1Jn 2:15, 1Jn 3:18 and Mt 24:12. A couple of these are injunctions to Christians to direct *agapao* in the right direction (e.g., 1Jn 2:15 and 1Jn 3:18).

Agapee (noun) in reference to God: “God commended His *love* toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Ro 5:8, plus dozens of other examples.

Agapee (noun) in reference to saved man: “...and walk in *love*, just as Christ also loved you” Eph 5:2. (This is the passage where the noun and verb **are not divorced** - “**just as** Christ **also** loved (*agapao*) you!” The same stuff!

Agapee (noun) in reference to unsaved man: “And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s *love* will grow cold” (Mt 24:12). See also Revelation 2:4.

As you can see, it is *impossible* for *Agapao/agapee* to mean, “divine love.” Plug that meaning into each verse, and you will see the nonsense.

Phileo is routinely expressed by man (saved and unsaved) and also by God!

Phileo displayed by God: “Those whom I *love*, I reprove and discipline.” Rev 3:19. See also Jn 5:20, Jn 11:3, Jn 11:36, Jn 16:27a, and Jn 20:2.

Phileo displayed by saved man: “Greet them that *love* us in the faith.” Tit 3:15. See also, Jn 16:27b, Jn 21:15,16,17, and 1Cor 16:22 (a critically important use to be examined in detail later).

Phileo displayed by unsaved man: “Outside ... (is) everyone who *loves* and practices lying.” Rev 22:15. There are seven other uses like this. See Mt 6:5, Mt 10:37 (twice), Mt 23:6, Lk 20:46, Jn 12:25, and Jn 15:19.

Again, you can see it is *impossible* for *phileo* to mean, “brotherly love.” Plug that definition into each verse, and here too, you will see the nonsense. So, why do “Greek scholars” say *phileo* is a “brotherly,” or “man” love? Keep reading and you will be appalled at the error.

So, *agapao* and *agapee* are expressed by man (saved and unsaved), **and** by God. *Phileo* is also expressed by man (saved and unsaved), **and** by God! Man and God display **both**.

The Romanticized View

“What the heck are you talking about?”

An understanding of this section will explain how the Bible’s teaching on love has become twisted. Let’s first define “Romanticism.” When the concept of romance arises, what comes to your mind? Some think of candlelight dinners where time is suspended and two people share thoughts and feelings in a magical, other worldly, environment. Others think of the Romantic period when virtuous

knights participated in great adventures of danger and intrigue - being motivated by a pure love in some noble quest. Still others think in literary terms, when artists threw off the straight jackets of patronism and puritanism - for freedom of expression in feelings, form, and subject matter. But for my purposes here, forget all that. I am using this term, and its related concepts, in a more sterile sense.

Romanticism is a notion, or ideal, that is maintained in spite of the cruel harshness of contrary fact. The one embracing the fancied notion is **emotionally bound** to the notion or ideal, so it is often impossible to reason with them. A Romanticist uses *selective* facts while excluding contrary material that challenges the fancied notion. Sometimes, a romanticized view *exaggerates* existing facts, and *fabricates* others, in its quest to uphold its ideal. In all cases, **contrary facts are not even heard**, much less entertained, and, consequently, never investigated. One in such a position (a Romanticist) must experience **an explosion to the romanticized ideal** for a reassessment to occur. For example, it took **the collapse** of The Third Reich for adherents to question the romanticized notion that their race was the master race. How could “the superior” race fall to “the inferior” one? Concerning the subject matter of this Ebook, the **initial** explosion for me occurred with John 3:19.

I must say, it is a bit ironic I am opting for this more sterile definition of romanticism - and then apply it to the subject of love itself! May the discerning reader and the disciplined in thought understand and prosper!

It All Begins With *Agapee* - A “Clean Word” for the Romantic

At one time, many believed **the entire** New Testament was written in “Heavenly Greek.” It was a holy language from heaven, unsullied by man. But as archeologists poked around, they began finding land deeds, shopping lists, and other “profane” documents written at the same time as the New Testament - **in this Heavenly Greek language!** Archeologists soon concluded the New Testament was written in the **common language** of **the entire Roman Empire!** So now, New Testament Greek is called Koine (common) Greek. I share this because there are still Bible “scholars” who cling **to remnants of the romanticized notion of a “Heavenly Greek” New Testament language.** The treatment of *agapao* and *phileo* are the classic case in point. They want God’s love to be totally separate from the pollutions of man. God is “clean,” and if they **cannot** keep the rest of the New Testament Greek “heavenly,” they are going to keep His love heavenly. But how can this be accomplished? Well, **the noun, *agapee*,** presents the opportunity. While the verb, *agapao*, was used by the profane writers of the Greek Classics, the noun, *agapee*, never was. Thus, some lexicographers decided *agapee* is a “clean word” **reserved** for God (and **by** God). He can then infuse it with His own meaning (with the help of lexicographers and scholars) - and introduce an attribute that was somewhat previously veiled - His love.

“**God is *agapee***” (1Jn 4:8). With this single use of *agapee*, divinity is infused into this word. *Agapee* is more than just an attribute of God - it **is the very nature of the eternal Creator Himself - indeed the very heart of God.** This “fact” alone makes *agapee* the undisputed, de facto, highest form of love. Romanticists (lexicographers, scholars, populists, and whoever else loves this notion) then infuse this word with all the moral qualities of God. Humanity is forever moved outside this word - because “**God is *agapee!***” - not man. And where He is, it is. Many Romanticists maintain this love has no bounds or limits - because God has no bounds or limits. This love, because God Himself is this love, trumps everything. This sounds great! It is no wonder this romanticized ideal is so popular! Those who hold this ideal have romanticized a subject that so easily succumbs to romantic notions anyway - LOVE!

But why don’t the Romanticists, and their lexicographers, apply their same romanticized system to other words like wrath (*orgee*), anger (*thumos*), jealousy (*zeelos*), and lust (*epithumos*)? You will see why I ask this question in due course. But, first

The Divorcing of a Noun (*agapee*) and a Verb (*agapao*)

Maybe this divorcing of primary meaning between a noun and its verb is a legal use of the language and I just do not know it. But even if it is, the use of *agapee* in Matthew 24:12 **alone** brings the Romanticist's meaning of *agapee* into question. "And because lawlessness is increased, the love (*agapee*) of many will grow cold." Let's even assume Jesus is speaking about the love of **saved** people growing cold. How can *agapee* **from God** grow cold? Even if **the saint** had **smothered it** in sin, the *agapee* itself, being from God - even being God - **can't** grow cold! Then in Revelation 2:4, after several citations of praise, Jesus said to the angel of the church of Ephesus, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love (*agapee*)." This is another challenging use of the noun, *agapee*. The desertion of a **first** love insinuates there is a second ... or third ... or fourth love (*agapee*) out there for the taking. But there can only be **one** divine love. Can divine love compete with other divine love? This is problematic for the honest Romanticist. But even more contrary is Ephesians 5:2. "Walk in love (*agapee* - noun) **just as** Christ also loved (*agapao* - verb) you." Looks like the same stuff to me. There's no divorcing of the noun and verb in meaning here.

To build a theology from the **absolute need** that a noun and a verb be divorced in meaning and use is a step across a line that assumes there is solid ground on the other side. But this is a **requisite position** for Romanticists as they construct their theology on the love of God. Not only is that a tough step for me to take, but Matthew 24:12, Revelation 2:4, and Ephesians 5:2 form a three stranded rope around my waist pulling me back from taking that step. But, Romanticists must take it. In doing so, they create casualties along the way.

The Verb *Agapao* - The Romanticist's First Casualty

The Romanticist's portrayal of the love of God is exciting, stimulating - and sounds absolutely glorious. But, as is consistent with all romance, **emotion** drives the "logic." The first casualty is the verb, *agapao*. You would think Romanticists would disown this verb when the **fourteen** "errant" uses of *agapao* are exposed (which you will see in a moment). They must not realize this divorce between noun and verb **must** occur, if their myth has any hope of survival! (Of course, because of me, they may decide to now dump the verb.) But currently, the verb *is blurred in* with the romanticized meaning assigned to the noun, *agapee*, and is portrayed **as action** from God. That's why John 3:19 ("*men loved, agapao, the darkness*") shocked me so. That is **action from men - evil men!** I am really surprised some copyist did not substitute *phileo* in the twelve passages that contain fourteen "illegal" uses of *agapao*. But it appears this romanticization is such a recent invention that the Greek texts did not have any real opportunity to be corrupted. So, I guess The Romanticist views these rogue uses of *agapao* are some kind of Scriptural error - if even "seen" at all! But if seen, these contrary uses of *agapao* are **enemies** to be **avoided, ignored, rationalized, railed against** or **suppressed**. In this Ebook, it will be difficult to **avoid** or **ignore** or even **rationalize** this material away, but **railing** and **suppression** of the contrary material is still available. When anyone holds a romanticized notion on any topic, that person is **emotionally bound to it** - and those cords are stronger than the arguments of unimpassioned logic. Experience has taught me that Romanticists, and especially those who teach the romanticized positions, are so emotionally invested, they are what I call "**hardened Romanticists.**" At first glance, this seems to be an oxymoron. But hardened Romanticists are the most **intolerant** of all people on the planet. This is true in theological and political realms alike. Their romanticized notions **are ideals** that appeal to their sense of beauty. That "beauty" may be the Romanticist's view of fairness, justice, or, as in this case, a desire to make God **separate** from sinners in His love functioning. Any challenge to this romanticized position is viewed as a **personal attack** to be aggressively responded to. This is an irony of Romanticists. If they cannot successfully avoid, ignore, or rationalize contrary facts - they attack

them. Emotion rules. The search for truth is secondary - assuming it exists at all.

The Non-Romanticized View

Lexicographers of this stripe **do acknowledge** the lack of predated New Testament material as they attempt to assign meaning to the noun, *agapee*. But rather than invent some notion that is imposed on this word, they take a more linguistically sound approach. For starters, they do not divorce any noun from its verb in primary meaning. Then they carefully evaluate the context of each occurrence of each word (*agapee*, *agapao*, *philos*, and *phileo*). This is a great aid in determining the meaning of any word. So ... what do the words *agapao*, and *phileo* (with their respective nouns) mean? I will give you a comprehensive Non-Romanticized definition, gleaned from several sources, and then list all places where these words are found. You can then “plug in” the respective definitions, and see if they make sense.

Agapao Means ...

The primary meaning of *agapao* is, “**to value, or esteem, because of a perceived intrinsic worth.**” It is a **respect** or **honoring** because of this perceived inherent worth. Activities arising from *agapao* are primarily **acts of the will** - not emotions. That is why it can be **commanded**, as feelings are **not required** for its expression. This is critical for understanding *agapao*. The perceived value of the target generates **deferment toward the object**. This often creates a careful and faithful devotion toward the object of *agapao*. While this “respect” for the perceived object **can** create feelings, these feelings are not requisite to the expression of *agapao*, as they are not **primary** to it. Furthermore, *agapao* never leaves the realm of **control by the will**, even if feelings do become present. In this instance, feelings never dominate the will.

Phileo Means ...

The primary meaning of *phileo* is, “**to cherish.**” It is *packed* with emotion. It means “**to like, to be fond of, or to delight in.**” In some contexts it is translated, “*to kiss!*” It is the word for intense endearment. The noun form, *philos*, means, “*friend, or a congenial associate.*” *Phileo* is really the **warmth of love** for which everyone craves. This is the love of emotion, the love of affection. Emotional responses are ignited by the object. While there are two passages that indicate employment of the will (to be discussed shortly), *phileo* highlights the emotional aspect of love.

If you have it in your mind that *phileo* means, “*brotherly love*” or “*human love,*” **you must get that out.** *Phileo* has **nothing** to do with “brotherly” or “human” **in meaning in any way.** Shortly, this will be clearly demonstrated.

A Simple Listing of the Good, and the Bad - Which is Often Ugly (at least to the Romanticist)

Maybe this is the time to simply list the good and bad *agapao* loves and the good and bad *phileo* loves according to topic differences. This is interesting. When you see “etc.” after a verse, that indicates there are other uses of the word toward that same subject area.

Good *Agapao* (verb) Uses:

Toward your neighbor (Mt 5:43, etc.).

Toward your enemies (Mt 5:44, etc.).

Toward God (Mt 22:37, etc.).

Jesus toward the rich young man (Mk 10:21).

The Roman Centurion toward the Jewish nation (Lk 7:5).
 The forgiven, immoral woman's love toward Jesus (Lk 7:47).
 The one forgiven little, who loves little (better than loving none I guess) (Lk 7:47).
 God toward the world (Jn 3:16).
 The Father toward the Son (Jn 3:35, etc.).
 Children of the Father toward Jesus (Jn 8:42).
 Jesus toward Martha (Jn 11:5).
 Jesus toward His disciples (Jn 13:1, etc.).
 Jesus commanding the disciples to love one another (Jn 13:34, etc.).
 The obedient toward Jesus (Jn 14:23).
 The Father toward those obedient to the Son (Jn 14:23).
 The Son toward the Father (Jn 14:31).
 Christians toward God (Ro 8:28).
 God toward Jacob (Ro 9:13).
 God toward non Israelites (Ro 9:25).
 God toward a cheerful giver (2Cor 9:7).
 Paul toward the Corinthians (2Cor 11:11, etc.).
 Jesus toward Paul (Gal 2:20).
 Husbands toward wives (Eph 5:25, etc.).
 Christ toward the Church (Eph 5:25).
 Christians toward each other (1Thess 4:9, etc.).
 Christians toward Christ's appearing (2Ti 4:8).
 Jesus toward righteousness (Heb 1:9). Note this is directed at a "thing".
 Anyone toward life (1Pet 3:10). This is another "thing".
 John toward his audience (2Jn 1).
 John toward Gaius (3Jn 1).
 Martyrs not loving their life even unto death (Rev 12:11).
 Towards the beloved city (Rev 20:9). Another "thing".

Good *Agapee* (noun) Uses:

Love of God (Lk 11:42, etc.).
 Disciples having love for one another (Jn 13:35, etc.).
 Jesus' love for disciples (Jn 15:9).
 Jesus abiding in the Father's love (Jn 15:10).
 The love of laying down one's life for his friends (Jn 15:13).
 God's love for Christians (Ro 5:8, etc.).
 Love of Christ (Ro 8:35, etc.).
 Love without hypocrisy (Ro 12:9).
 Love does no evil to neighbor (Ro 13:10).
 Love fulfills the Law (Ro 13:10).
 The Love of the Spirit (Ro 15:30).
 Paul towards the Corinthians (1Cor 4:21).
 Love builds up others (1Cor 8:1, etc.).
 Love is patient, kind, not jealous, not boastful and never fails (1Cor 13:4,8).
 The greatest of faith, hope, and love - is love (1Cor 13:13).
 Pursue love (1Cor 14:1).
 The God of love (2Cor 13:11).

Faith works by love (Gal 5:6).
By love serve one another (Gal 5:13).
Fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal 5:22).
Speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15).
Labor of love (1Thes 1:3).
The breastplate of love (1Thes 5:8).
Receive the love of the truth (2Thes 2:10).
To provoke into love (Heb 10:24).
Love covers a multitude of sins (1Pet 4:8).
Kiss of love (1Pet 5:14).
God is love (1Jn 4:8).
Dwell in love (1Jn 4:16).
No fear in love (1Jn 4:18).

Evil (or Neutral) or Non-Divine *Agapao* (verb) Uses:

Only loving those who love you (Mt 5:46).
Two masters - hate one and love the other - can choose *agapao* for money over God (Mt 6:24).
Sinners also love those that love them (Lk 6:32 - this is two uses in one breath!).
Which released debtor will love the releasing lender most? (Lk 7:42).
Pharisees love the uppermost seats **and** respectful greetings (Lk 11:43).
Men loving darkness (Jn 3:19).
Pharisees loving the praise of men more than the praise of God (Jn 12:43).
Peter being asked if He loved Jesus “more than these” (Jn 21:15).
Demas having loved this present age (2Ti 4:8).
Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2Pet 2:15).
Admonition to not love the world. **If one does**, the love of the Father is absent (1Jn 2:15).
Not to love with word or tongue, but in deed and truth (1Jn 3:18).

Evil or Non-Divine *Agapee* (noun) Uses:

Love of many that grows cold (Mt 24:12).
Leaving **first** love (Rev 2:4).

Good *Phileo* Uses:

The Father’s love for the Son (Jn 5:20).
Jesus’ love for Lazarus (Jn 11:3).
The Father’s love for the disciples (Jn 16:27).
The disciples love for Jesus (Jn 16:27).
Jesus’ love for John (Jn 20:2).
Peter’s love for Jesus (Jn 21:15).
Various Christian’s love for Paul and company (Tit 3:15).
Jesus’ love for His own (Rev 3:19).

Evil *Phileo* Uses:

Pharisee’s cherishing public praying (Mt 6:5).
Cherishing father or mother more than Christ (Mt 10:37).
Cherishing son or daughter more than Christ (Mt 10:37).
Pharisee’s cherishing the place of honor at banquets (Mt 23:6).

Pharisee's cherishing the chief seats in the synagogues (Mt 23:6).
Pharisee's cherishing respectful greetings in the marketplaces (Mt 23:7).
Pharisee's cherishing the title, "Rabbi" (Mt 23:7).
Cherishing one's own life (Jn 12:25).
The world cherishing its own (Jn 15:19).
The cherishing of lying (Rev 22:15).
The cherishing of practicing those lies (Rev 22:15).

But the use of *phileo* does not end with these words. *Philos*, the noun, is **compounded** with many other words. This is where we find the root of the violation of the verb *phileo*! We will come back to this following a deeper discussion on *agapao*.

Good *Philos* Compound Word Uses:

To cherish good men - *philagathos* (Tit 1:8).
To cherish brothers - *philadelphia* and *philadelphos* (Ro 12:10, etc. and 1Pet 3:8).
To cherish one's husband - *philandros* (Tit 2:4).
To cherish mankind - *philanthropia* and *philanthropos* (Acts 28:2, etc. and Acts 27:3).
To cherish God - *philotheos* (2Ti 3:4).
To cherish hospitality/strangers - *philoxenia* and *philoxenos* (Ro 12:13, etc. and 1Ti 3:2).
Tender affections - *philostorgos* (Ro 12:10).
To cherish one's children - *philoteknos* (Tit 2:4).
A cherished honor - *philotimeomai* (Ro 15:20, etc.).
Courteous or affectionately minded - *philophronos* and *philophron* (Acts 28:7 and 1Pet 3:8).

Evil *Philos* Compound Word Uses:

Cherishing silver/money/covetous - *philarguria* and *philarguros* (1Ti 6:10 and Lk 16:14, etc.).
Cherishing of one's self - *philautos* (2Ti 3:2).
Cherishing of pleasures - *phileedonos* (2Ti 3:4).
Cherishing strife - *philonikia* and *philonikos* (Lk 22:24 and 1Cor 11:16).
Cherishing preeminence - *philoprotuo* (3Jn 9).
Cherishing worldly "wisdom" - *philosophia* and *philosophos* (Col 2:8 and Acts 17:18).

By the way, these evil cherishings create a particularly dangerous situation. One's love has passed from the realm **of will** into the realm **of emotion**. If we develop a cherishing for things that damn us, we are in big trouble. Only the intervening power of God can demolish these intense emotional bonds. Cherishing any of the things listed under "Evil *Phileo* Uses," or "Evil *Phileo* Compound Word Uses," **is worse** than catching a lethal disease. A lethal disease kills the body. These lethal cherishings damn the soul - eternally. Look through that list again. Each "problem cherishing" is worthy of a sermon - or a series of sermons.

Now, For a Closer Look at *Agapao/Agapee* - The Choices We Make!

An examination of the "definition" of *agapee* in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a is now in order.

"Love (agapee) is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into an account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; love (agapee)

never fails.”

One goal I have, is to demonstrate *agapee* **does not require the presence of familial emotions**. Another goal is to demonstrate how *agapee* is fully under the control of one’s will. The practice of *agapee* is completely based upon choice! But “a practice” of *agapee* requires **action!** And guess what **action** is? ***It is a verb*** - which, in this case, is *agapao!* The noun and verb cannot be divorced! So, let’s go back through this passage!

You can choose to be **patient** toward another ***without liking*** that person. ***You can choose*** to be **kind without an emotional bond**. In fact, you probably do both of these things *all the time!* You are practicing *agapao* at those moments! No warm fuzzy feelings are required! If you sense you are **jealous** towards someone, ***you can choose*** to rebuke yourself and make yourself repent of this perverted evil. Again, it is not required ***that you like this person*** in order to right yourself. “*Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy?*” (Pro 27:4). If you repent, you will be practicing *agapao!* To continue through 1Corinthians 13, if you do possess *agapee* towards another, you will not be a **braggart** or be **arrogant** towards them. These activities and attitudes cannot exist at the same time *agapee* does - as they are opposite of *agapee*. When you perceive this high mindedness in yourself towards another, ***you can choose*** to repent of this self centered, over evaluation of self - ***and it is not required that you like the person*** you have been a braggart or arrogant toward! If you find you are **acting unbecomingly** towards someone, ***you can choose*** to rebuke yourself for your misconduct. This can be done without an ounce of “like” towards that person. ***You can choose*** to seek the welfare of another, instead of **seeking your own** - and this can be done even if you **dislike** the individual! To be sure, it is easier to do these things if you like someone, but “*if you only agapao those who agapao you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners agapao those who agapao them.*” (Lk 6:32 - oops! There is one of those *agapao* uses that Romanticists **must excise** from the mouth of Jesus. “*He has misused this word!*” Friends, you are going to have to make some decisions on this subject of love. Either some gushy, errant, flesh-driven notion is going to survive, or you are going to get before God and ask Him to teach you **His definition** of love.) *Agapee* is **not easily provoked**. This word means, “*not easily incited*” - or “*quick to receive a charge against.*” ***You can choose*** to act otherwise. When a provocational report is brought to you, ***you can choose*** to “*examine all things carefully*” (1Thes 5:21), realizing the fact that “*the first to present his case seems just, until another comes and questions him*” (Pro 18:17). But, now let’s turn the tables and assume **you** are the one violated. ***You can choose*** not to take into account **this wrong suffered**. It may be hard, but you can deal with **your will** and make yourself rise above the offense. “*Agapee covers a multitude of sins*” (1Pet 4:8). And it is not required that you **like the person** you choose to practice this towards. Liking them is a totally separate and even **irrelevant issue!** *Agapao* addresses **your** will, and how **you choose** to conduct **yourself!** Let’s keep going through the 1Corinthian 13 list. ***You can choose not to rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoice with the truth.*** If you find you are doing otherwise, I would maintain your eternal destiny is at stake. God hates evil, and for one to rejoice in it - is big trouble. And “evil” is more than murder, or stealing, or lying. It also includes fleshly impatience, jealousy, rudeness, bragging, arrogance, self-centeredness, grudge harboring ... gleaned from the list above. My point? We have a lot of **behavioral choices** to make - and those choices have **nothing** to do with the other party! *Agapao* is an act of **our will** and **is not dependent** upon the actions of those we are commanded to practice *agapao* toward. That is why God can, and does, **command this** of us. When we see our choices do not align with *agapao*’s demands, we can change course. We can repent. But let’s go further. ***You can choose*** to practice these things **to enemies** - even if you **emotionally hate** them! Wow! What an outrageous claim! Well, go through the list in 1Corinthians 13 again. This time, place in your mind’s eye someone you deeply despise. ***You can be*** patient, and kind, and refuse arrogance

towards that person, as well as reject jealousy ... and all the rest! Go through the list! Would it be **easy** to practice *agapao* towards one you emotionally disdain - even hate? No. But possible? Yes. You would need power from God, but I somehow believe He is willing to assist in this matter if He expects this behavior from you ... and me (I hate the last two words of that sentence). You see *agapee* **bears all things**. *Agapee* **believes all things** and **hopes all things** - hopes for change, like a Saul becoming a Paul. And *agapee* **endures all things**. There is great longsuffering in *agapee*. **You can choose** to act, and react, in these manners **at all times**. **If you do not, it is because, for your own reasons, you have decided on another course of action**. You see, *agapee* **never fails**.

I used to say that I could not control my anger. I really believed that. Then I ran across a little pamphlet that challenged that belief. The author asked me something to this effect. "*If you were in a tirade and the President of the United States knocked on your door, would you continue the rage - or stop?*" I knew I would stop. Then he said, "*See, you can control your anger!*" Similarly, the reason we do not practice *agapao* is because **we decide not to**. *Agapao* is an **internal** and **controllable choice** on our part. There is great liberty in understanding this truth. We can obey and please God without needing some flighty and elusive warm fuzzy feeling. That also explains how God **can command** that we love! **And here is a great key to being able to consistently practice agapao**. If we decide that **each person** has an **intrinsic worth separate** from any behavior, we can practice *agapao* towards them **at all times**. We can develop a genuine **respect** for each person - even if they do not have it towards their own self! Our actions, and reactions, towards others do not have to be based upon their behaviors. If we believe people are the crowns of God's creation, thus giving them value apart from any behaviors, **then we will act accordingly** - which means, in *agapao*. We **will** treat them as valuable - because we perceive this intrinsic worth in them. That is how we can *agapao* even enemies! And when you also factor in that God can recreate them at any moment (conversion), then we **can** muster the power to rise above a simple response to their behaviors. Tough stuff, but with God's assistance, we can **look past** their behaviors and operate in respect towards them. This is the essence of *agapao*. That is why it never fails.

Having said all this, *agapao* does not have to occur in an environment void of familial feelings. But it is now obvious to you **that it can!** The unsaved practice *agapao* around us **all the time**, and it is often couched in the realm of familial feelings. And that is easy. If you **like** someone, it is *easy* to be kind to him/her. You don't feel jealous or arrogant either. You are not rude and you want to see that person do well. You always grant the benefit of the doubt, you practice patience and even cover errors! **When you like someone**, *agapao* is easy - **even natural**. Sinners practice it toward each other constantly. Have you ever worked a job where co-workers overlooked, and even covered, the errors **of those in the clique** - while at the same time tried to get others fired for the same offenses? They **could have decided** to practice *agapao* towards those they didn't like, but they chose otherwise because their *agapao* is based upon a prerequisite of liking the target of their *agapao*. These are very small people. Do local churches have people who do this?

But *agapao* is also regularly practiced by sinners who have genuine respect for someone - even if no genuine familial feelings exist. For example, a truly content employee may have this towards his/her superior(s). The well being of the superior(s) results in the continued well being of the employee. Therefore, when occasion presents itself, the employee exhibits all the applicable characteristics of *agapao* even though the employee has but a passing, personal relationship with his/her supervisor(s).

The truth is, *agapao* abounds all around us, being practiced by sinners and saints alike. And it is directed towards animate **as well as inanimate** objects! It is practiced towards money, towards places of honor, and towards the world! Once you understand what *agapao* is, you will begin to recognize its presence all around you. The Bible does not list every use of expressed *agapao* in its

pages. But it gives enough examples to set us on the trail to see its expressions and activities in this world. You see, *agapao* does abound - whether you see it or not, whether you understand what it is or not, or whether you are willing to acknowledge it or not. And sinners exude it in all directions as they “*agapao the darkness!*” (Jn 3:19). Boy, the Romanticists are really screwed up on this love deal.

And Guess What ... *Agapao* is Conditional!!

Actually, *agapao* is conditional. The prerequisite for the exercise of *agapao* is that the target object must possess a **perceived, intrinsic worth**. That must be present for *agapao* to be triggered. It does not matter if the target actually **does** have value or not; the only requirement is that the one exhibiting *agapao* **perceives an intrinsic worth in the target object**. It is an interesting phenomenon that people often set great worth on some goal, and devote themselves to it, but once obtained, there is a great letdown as it is discovered the perceived value **is an illusion**. This is often the story of the one who has gained fame, or money, or some power position. The Pharisees loved (*agapao*) those chief seats! But those seats of power have all long since fried. How valuable were they in actuality?

Concerning God’s *agapao* toward the world, it is based on **the condition** that He sees an intrinsic worth in “the world.” And what is that **intrinsic** worth? Obviously, it is people. That is what (who) Jesus died for. Our worth probably lies in our basic design - as being made **in His image!** He has created us in His likenesses - or at least Adam was. This will be discussed later, in detail. So, based upon this **condition** of an inherent value, God does exercise *agapao* toward us. But it does not follow that He exercises it because of personal merit. We may be innately valuable, but we have **done nothing** to merit, or deserve, His exercise of *agapao*. Our record of behavior should run Him off. I am glad He does not deal with me in fairness.

Are There Degrees of *Agapao* ?

Yes, there are degrees of *agapao*. When Jesus dined with Simon, the Pharisee, He asked Simon which debtor would love (*agapao*) the debt releasing lender **more** - the one who was released from a small debt, or the one released from a huge one. When Simon indicated the one who had been forgiven the great debt would love (*agapao*) the lender **more**, Jesus responded, “*You have judged correctly*” (Lk 7:36-50). This passage **alone** debunks the myth of *agapao* being “the divine love of God.” Is one who had been released from a big debt going to have a big Godly love, while the one released from a small debt has a littler Godly love? And there is no indication Jesus is referring to two Christians anyway. He was simply talking about two indebted people! On another occasion, Jesus asked Peter if he loved (*agapao*) Him “**more than these**” (possibly a comparison to the other disciples, but possibly toward the nets and/or fishing) (Jn 21:15). Jesus was asking Peter to rank his *agapao* **loves** - Jesus ranked against competitors! In 1 Peter, Christians were admonished to “**fervently agapao one another from the heart**” (1Pet 1:22). This at least insinuates the possibility that one can practice *agapao* in a less fervent way. In examining all the uses of *agapao* in various contexts, it does appear the intensity can be quite light - all the way to quite intense. But *agapao* never leaves the realm of the power of the will. One can be extremely aggressive in practicing all the characteristics of *agapao* (as expressed in 1Corinthians 13), and yet still find the will in dominance over any emotional element. Emotion is always present (we constantly live in some kind of emotional state), but in *agapao*, **the will** is always the predominant force. **Fervent agapao** is more of a call **to devotion and duty** because it is *the right thing to do* - as opposed to a call for warm gushy feelings of love. It is a call to be *extremely* patient, or *extremely* kind, etc. These are all still acts of the will - just more intense.

So ... Did The Greenhouse Practice *Agapao* Towards Me?

So what was the “stuff” I felt at The Greenhouse on that first night? Was the staff full of

agapao? Well, with the passing of a little time, the answer became clear. When one has *agapao* toward another, which must be developed through **self evaluation** and **internal rebukes**, it **never** fails! So, what was that “stuff” they poured on me in the beginning? Well, since the only word now left for Biblical love is *phileo*, maybe that is what it was. After all, they taught that *phileo* was “brotherly love” - a human love inferior to *agapao* and, by default, a potentially fickle beast. That must be what it was, right?

Now for a Closer Look at *Phileo*

As stated earlier, the primary meaning of *phileo* is “to cherish.” In some contexts, it is translated “to kiss.” The noun, *philos*, means “friend.” Obviously, to even the most casual observer, this word is permeated with feelings. All lexicographers readily concede this. So let’s ask some questions about *phileo*.

Three Questions With Three Short Answers.

Question one: Does *phileo* mean “brotherly love?” No. *Phileo* has nothing to do with a meaning of “brotherly love.”

Question two: Is *phileo* simply a human love? No. *Phileo* is **not** exclusively expressed by humans. **God also expresses it**, so it **cannot be downgraded** to merely a human love.

Question three: Is *phileo* capable of failing - being innately fickle, turning on and off? No. *Phileo*, like *agapao* does not fail. **Both are a true love.** Genuine *phileo* automatically fulfills all the particulars of *agapao*, and, once arrived at, it is as steadfast as is *agapao*.

Same Questions With Expanded Answers.

Question one: “Does *phileo* mean brotherly love? No. *Phileo* has nothing to do with a meaning of brotherly love.” This romantic myth has been propagated by a **compound word** that involves the noun, *philos*. Follow this closely.

Philos is often combined with a host of other words. *Agapao/agapee* is never found in a compound form. I do not know if there is any significance to this, but **I do know** that when one understands the proper meaning of *phileo/philos* and sees what words it is compounded with, extremely interesting discoveries are produced. When *philos* is compounded with another word, it means to cherish *something* (the other word now glued to *philos*). Here are all compounds in alphabetical order. While several have a “circle” of potential meanings (depending upon context), for the sake of brevity I will give the most primary one. Some of these are a bit “wooden.” I also note the genders of the noun, even though the male/female connotations are often irrelevant. It is like when we refer to a ship as “her.” The ship is not a female.

Philagathos = *Philos* + *Agathos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of good” - **1 use**.

Philadelphia = *Philia* + *Adelphai* (fem noun) = “a cherisher of the brotherhood” - **5 uses**.

Philadelphos = *Philos* + *Adelphos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of a brother” - **1 use**.

Philandros = *Philos* + *Aneer* (masc noun) = “cherish a husband” - **1 use**.

Philanthropia = *Philia* + *Anthropia* (fem noun) = “a cherisher of mankind” - **2 uses**.

Philanthropos = *Philos* + *Anthropos* (adverb) = “humanely, kindly” tenderly human - **1 use**.

Philarguria = *Philia* + *Arguria* (fem noun) = “a cherisher of silver” - **1 use**.

Philarguros = *Philos* + *Arguros* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of silver” - **2 uses**.

Philautos = *Philos* + *Autos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of self” - **1 use**.

Phileedonos = *Philos* + *Eedonee* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of pleasure” - **1 use**.

Philotheos = *Philos* + *Theos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of God” - **1 use**.

Philonikia = *Philos* + *Nikia* (fem noun, mixed?) = “a cherisher of contention” - **1 use**.
Philonikos = *Philos* + *Nikos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of arguing” - **1 use**.
Philoxenia = *Philos* + *Xenia* (fem noun, mixed?) = “a cherisher of a stranger” - **2 uses**.
Philoxenos = *Philos* + *Xenos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of a stranger” - **3 uses**.
Philoprotuo = *Philos* + *Protuo* (participle) = “cherishing first place or pre-eminence” - **1 use**.
Philosophia = *Philos* + *Sophia* (fem noun, mixed?) = “a cherisher of wisdom” - **1 use**.
Philosophos = *Philos* + *Sophos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of wisdom” - **1 use**.
Philostorgos = *Philos* + *Storgos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher, naturally affectionate” - **1 use**.
Philoteknos = *Philos* + *Teknos* (masc noun) = “a cherisher of children” - **1 use**.
Philotimeomai = *Philos* + *Timeomai* (verb) = “to cherish honor, a cherished ambition” - **3 uses**.
Philophronos = *Philos* + *Phronos* (adverb) = “kindly minded” - **1 use**.
Philophonon = *Philos* + *Phron* (masc noun) = “courteous, kindly minded” **1 use**.

A few of these transliterate directly into English. *Philadelphia* (the city of brotherly love), *philanthropy* (a humanitarian, a lover of mankind), and *philosophy* (the love of wisdom).

Some facts - As You Can See

- *Philos* is a **totally separate word** from every one of the 16 words it is compounded with. The words are: **good, brother, husband, mankind, silver, self, pleasure, God, contention, stranger, pre-eminence, wisdom, affections, children, honor** and **mind**. Only 1 of the 16 words (or 2 of the 23 if you include all gender uses) has anything to do with “brother.”

- *Philos*, in compound, appears 34 times in the New Testament. 6 times it is compounded with *adelphia* (sister) or *adelphos* (brother) and **the other 28 compounded uses** are with the other words listed above.

Whoops!

Romanticists have a problem. This is a big one. You see, **the verb, *phileo*, is never in a compounded form with any word**. So, in order to corrupt the meaning of that verb (so it means “human love”) they must reach **to the noun, *philos***. The Romanticist is totally dependent upon this verb and noun **being married** for their romance to survive! What a syntactical turn! On one hand, they **divorce** the noun and verb, *agapee* and *agapao*, but now **must marry** the noun and verb, *philos* and *phileo*. Otherwise, their romance dies. But just as important, they must reach to a **compounded** noun form of *philos* in an attempt to pull this off! Each of the sixteen words compounded with *philos* are stand alone words with their own distinct meaning. Romanticists have picked **one, or maybe two**, of these (*adelphos*, and *anthropos*) - and then imposed **their meaning** on the verb *phileo*, in their attempt to pollute it. What a sleight of hand! But, this is sick and has made for a very sick romance. Indeed, it is deathly ill, and I have no intention of healing it. It is still alive - but it has no life - and I hope to speed its demise. God does not reside in error. He never has - and never will. But the Romanticist’s language problems do not end here. Because *phileo* (the verb) never compounds with *adelphos* (a noun) - or any other word - it **always stands by itself with its own unique meaning!** “Brother” or “human” (nouns) are no more a part of the meaning of *phileo* (a verb) than the word “elephant”(a noun) is part of the meaning of the word “smash” (a verb). But I will compound those two words as I hope to be like an elephant smashing a rotten peanut. Romanticists recklessly handle God’s word (2Tim 2:15).

So, **why** have people primarily welded the word, “brother,” to the verb, *phileo*? Why not pick one of the **15 other words** *philos* can compounded with, and weld one of them permanently to *phileo*?

They could have said, “*Phileo means, ‘love for goodness,’ or ‘husbandly love,’ or ‘love of mankind,’ or ‘love of silver,’ or ‘love of self,’ or ‘love of pleasure,’ or ‘love of God,’ or ‘love of arguing,’ or ‘love of strangers,’ or ‘love of wanting first place,’ or ‘love of worldly wisdom ... or affections ... or children ... or honor ... or of the mind.’*” Why was “brother” picked? Why “**brotherly** love” - **and the other 15 dismissed?**

There are only two possible answers.

1. Ignorance.

2. Deliberate abuse of the Greek language **for a preconceived end**. Enter the Romanticist! They have **perverted** the meaning of *phileo* - degraded it - and propagated a pious, romanticized myth.

So, here is the myth. First, *agapao* is divorced from *agapee* - followed by a rewedding after being cleaned up. Now *agapao* is divine activity - unconditional, holy, exclusive - free of profane human defilement! Then, this other worldly, unconditional stuff pours from the obedient Christian upon a dying world - thirsting and craving for the real thing - the real stuff of love! Oh, such a mystical concept! Even magical! How pure! How absolutely ... **romantic!** Next, this romantic myth **must find a word to cover the unsaved’s capacity for human affection!** So *phileo* gets the nod! But ... the word of God just does not cooperate. Just as *agapao* does not support the romance, so also, *phileo* refuses to submit to this desired **degraded** position. Sorry about that. This romanticized theology may be an extremely seductive vision about God’s love - indeed even beautiful - but a myth can only be a myth. It can not be turned into reality no matter how great the effort to affect that. So, I guess you will have to decide if you want to continue to live in - and teach - a romanticized myth, or else learn what He actually teaches about love. How important this subject **is to God, to Christianity, and to the unsaved world?**

Question two: “*Is phileo simply a human love? No. Phileo is not exclusively expressed by humans. God also expresses it, so it can not be downgraded to merely a human love.*” At least not righteously downgraded. John 5:20 **alone** forever puts this errant idea to rest.

Jn 5:20 “For the Father loves (*phileo*) the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing”

But also:

Jn 16:27 “For the Father Himself loves (*phileo*) you, because you have loved (*phileo*) Me”

Concerning *phileo* emanating from Jesus, consider the following passages. I am stating these separate from the Father’s *phileo*, as some may want to say Jesus’ expression of *phileo* was a function of the **human part** of His nature - thus only being a human love. However, the two passages above **immediately and forever refutes** the myth that *phileo* is a human love inferior to *agapao*. Anyway, here is *phileo* expressed by the pre-resurrected **and** post-resurrected Jesus.

Jn 11:3 “Lord, he (Lazarus) whom You love (*phileo*) is sick.”

Jn 11:36 “So the Jews were saying, ‘Behold how He loved (*phileo*) him!’”

Jn 20:2 “So she ran and came to ... the other disciple whom Jesus loved (*phileo*)”

Rev 3:19 “Those whom I love (*phileo*), I reprove and discipline”

I probably should not have pandered to this errant “human side of Jesus” notion as I just did. The word *phileo* **can not, and does not,** mean “human” or “brotherly” love. When this errant meaning is imposed upon *phileo*, it destroys an accurate understanding of these passages where Jesus **did express** an intensive cherishing for objects of His affections. He **cherished** Lazarus, and John, and

whoever He was referring to in the Revelation passage. He **cherished** them - more than just *agapao* for them! But I am getting ahead of myself. Wait until you see how this point affects a correct understanding of the encounter between Peter and Jesus in John 21:15-17! That is coming up!

Question three: “*Is phileo capable of failing - being innately fickle, turning on and off? No. Phileo, like agapao, does not fail. Both are a true love. Genuine phileo automatically fulfills all the particulars of agapao, and, once arrived at, it is as immutable as is agapao.*” **Phileo is a different form of love**, being more emotional in nature. Therefore, it **does not compete** with *agapao*. In fact, *agapao*, in a sense, is *phileo*’s indispensable **base**. No one cherishes something, or someone (*phileo*), **without a genuine respect (agapao) also being present**. And, if *agapao* is expressed long enough towards an object, it is not unusual if *phileo* develops. Sometimes this is extremely good, and sometimes this is extremely bad. When the *phileo* realm is reached, one’s will has been principally supplanted with emotional bonds. If directed towards Christ, this is fantastic, **and indeed essential** (as will be seen), but when *phileo* is misdirected, the outcome is absolute disaster. This was touched on earlier under the listing of “*Evil Philos Compound Word Uses.*” They are really worth studying - and warning about.

Are There Degrees of Phileo?

Just like *agapao*, there are degrees of *phileo* - I think. But, then again ... maybe not. The reason I state there **may be** degrees of cherishing is because of this statement by Jesus. “*He who cherishes (phileo) father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who cherishes (phileo) son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*” (Mt 10:37). But my question is this - if one has developed a true cherishing of Jesus, how can **anything** rival that reality? Stated another way, if one does cherish someone (or something) **above** Christ, does any genuine cherishing of Jesus exist anyway? Maybe I am really missing something here. As an emotion based response, if I cherish something, I cherish it. That object I cherish is not in competition with anything else I cherish, as it stands alone in its own “space” if you will. Nothing threatens it, as this is a spontaneous, emotional, attachment that separates that object from any other object. And I see myself as cherishing different things **from a different foundation**. As an example, I have two daughters. I genuinely cherish them both. I have told each daughter they have a place inside of me that cannot be challenged. They are in competition with no one (not even each other) - “*and that’s just the way it is.*” But I have **not** developed a cherishing for them **from a foundation** of delivering me from a purposeless, futile, destructive life. Jesus did that. My daughters have **not** taught me great spiritual truths on the nature of man, and the character and agenda of God. Jesus is doing that. The cherishing I have for Jesus **arises from a different foundation** than that of my daughters. I have **not** held Jesus as a newborn infant and witnessed the miraculous stages of childhood development into young adulthood. My daughter(s) possess that realm. To me, an important element of the essence of cherishing is discovered when the foundations are examined that give rise it. And the fact that the Lord **wants His daughters** “*to cherish their husbands and children*” is evidence He is not threatened by such activity (Tit 2:4) - and neither is our well being.

Is Agapao the Highest Form of Love?

Stated another way, is *phileo* inferior to *agapao*? The answer is either, “*Yes,*” or “*No.*” Only one answer is correct. Romanticists say, “*Yes!*” to both questions. “*Agapao is the highest form of love, and phileo is the inferior of the two.*” The Non-Romanticist answers, “*No!*” to both questions. “*Agapao is not a higher form of love, and, consequently, phileo is not an inferior form of love.*” But this does not end the matter. In the Non-Romanticist group, there are **two camps!** One camp believes

these two Greek words are *equal* (therefore interchangeable) while the other camp is convinced *phileo* is **actually the higher form of love!!** Let's investigate.

In my early study of these words, I did not want to pit these words against each other in any way. Each **stood alone** with a different meaning, point and thrust. I did not want to over react to the heresy I had been subjected to and automatically take the opposite position. But, as I studied the way the two words were used, it became clear that one *was definitely used in a more emotionally intense way* than the other. And I am sure you already know which one that is. You got it! *Phileo* is the winner - it's the "warm stuff" we all crave! As stated above, Romanticists represent *agapao* as the more intensively affectionate of the two. The flesh (in this case, the false teaching about love) always gets everything *exactly backwards!* So ... what's new about that?

The next question is this; "*Is the more emotionally intense word, phileo, actually a higher form of love than agapao love?*" Wow! What a question! Can you even believe you are seriously contemplating this question? While you may not yet know what you **do** believe on this subject, you will not be able to go back to a romanticized myth! Right? Say, "*Right!*"

So ... does it follow that a more *emotionally* intense word is a higher word? Is *phileo* **superior to agapao**? This is a tough question. Here is my qualified answer. I basically believe these words are different forms of love - with a different purpose and thrust. I also think both words can be expressed with an equally intense degree of fervor. A person can exercise *agapao* with tremendous intensity - yet all the while directed by one's will. This might be akin to an intense respect - evidenced by honor and duty with unswerving obedience and deep devotion. *Phileo*, on the other hand, can be just as intense, but its emphasis is on emotional attachment. And it may well be that *phileo* is actually the *emotional extension* of *agapao*. If you cherish someone or something, you already automatically fulfill the calls of *agapao*. But one thing is for sure - *phileo* is **definitely not inferior to agapao**. So now we find *agapao* is the word on trial! And, in the best case scenario, *agapao* *might be equal to phileo*, and at worst, it may be the inferior of the two! Let's examine the case for *phileo*'s superiority.

Some suggest that because *agapao* is commanded, that makes it *inferior* to *phileo*. We are commanded to love God (Mk 12:30), love our neighbor (Mk 12:31), love our enemies (Mt 5:44), love one another (Ro 13:8), love our wives (Eph 5:25), and not to love the world (1Jn 2:15), etc., etc., etc. This is all *agapao*. As an act of the will, one can choose to exercise *agapao*, or refrain from exercising *agapao*. But *phileo* **is past the reach of command**. It is **stronger** than where a command can reach, and that makes it the higher form of love. At first blush, this seems to have merit. However, the flaw with this argument are two passages that indicate *phileo* can be a function of the will. Hebrews 13:1 says, "*Let love (phileo) of the brethren continue.*" This is an imperative, and even if it is an injunction (more of an appeal rather than a flat command), it is still directed to the will. The other passage is in Titus. Older women are to teach the younger women to love (*phileo*) their husbands and their children (Tit 2:3,4). This is a **reasoned work** (it is taught) and, at some level, is an appeal **to the will** of younger women.

But, there are two passages that may indicate *phileo* **is indeed** the higher form of love!

Jesus and Peter - Denials and Restoration

Just before the crucifixion, three times Peter denied even knowing Jesus. Hours earlier, he had adamantly asserted he was ready to die with Jesus rather than deny Him (Mk 14:29-31). He was extremely aggressive in proclaiming his loyalty toward Jesus **no matter what**. Following Jesus' arrest, and the worsening trial progressions, Peter proceeded to fail miserably. He first crumbled before a servant-girl who kept the door (Jn 18:17). She had been studying him intently and asserted that Peter had been with Jesus. He immediately denied even knowing Jesus (Lk 22:56,57 and Mk 14:66-68). A little later, this same maid followed Peter onto the porch, and began saying to bystanders that Peter had

indeed been with Jesus. Peter denied this again (Mk 14:69,70) - but this time with **an oath!** He *swore* he was telling the truth (Mt 26:72)! Then after a little while, the bystanders pointed to his Galilean accent as evidence of his connection to Jesus. At this point he began to curse and swear, “*I do not know this fellow you are talking about!*” (Mt 26:74 and Mk 14:70,71). The novice may think this cursing and swearing meant cussing. While there may have been some incidental cussing in this exchange, **the cursing part** was probably a call by Peter **to have curses fall upon him** if he was lying about his association to Jesus. **The swearing** was another oath - a vow he was telling the truth. He may have even been calling, “*God as my witness*” - or swearing by His Throne (Mt 23:16-22). But regardless of the accuracy of this last point, one thing is absolutely clear. Peter’s denials were loud and clear. And it was actually more than just three denials - it was **three episodes** of denials. Then the cock crowed, and Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Lk 22:61). Never has a dagger been thrust deeper into the heart of any man. Never.

If you work through the resurrection accounts *with an eye on Peter*, you can sense the damage he incurred by his massive failing. A festering sore laid beneath the new reality - the reality of joy, hope and power offered by a resurrected Christ. Peter’s horrific denials would not let him fully enter into this new scene. After all, these denials had occurred only days earlier. With this backdrop, let’s work through this passage.

“*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love (agapao) Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love (agapao) Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You.’ He said to him, ‘Shepherd My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love (phileo) Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love (phileo) Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo) You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ (Jn 21:15-17).*”

Here is how the Romanticist presents this passage. Jesus’ first two inquiries ask Peter if he has a divine love (*agapao*) toward Him. Peter weakly acknowledges this and while sheepishly scuffing the sand at his feet, without being able to look Jesus in the eye, Peter says that he has a brotherly love (*phileo*) for Him. But the third time, Jesus even challenges this claim - and that is why Peter is grieved. Jesus is asking, ‘*Peter, do you even have this lower form of love for Me? It’s clear you do not have agapao (the denials proved that, as it, and you, failed), so I am coming down a notch and asking you if you even have a brotherly love - a fickle human love - for Me.*’ And by this Peter is restored? Brethren, this is not the scene at all! Now let’s look at a corrected understanding of *agapao* and *phileo* and reexamine this conversation. Keep in mind the original Greek had no punctuation marks, so all punctuation is at the discretion of the translator. Those marks should be determined by the weight of the words with their proper meanings and context.

Here is the Non-Romanticist’s take. The first two times, Jesus is asking Peter if he looks at Him as One intrinsically worthy of respect - as valuable. Peter’s response is aggressive. “*Yes Lord! But You are much more than that to me! You know that I cherish You!*” This claim was initially left unchallenged. But, after Peter asserted this a second time, Jesus **did challenge this assertion** by one who had previously overstated himself. “*Simon ... Do you indeed cherish Me? Do I really hold such a position with you?*” This is what grieved Peter. Even though he had miserably failed him on the night of the trials, Peter knew he adored the Lord of Glory. But with the failures of his recent past, how could he prove this? How could he back up this claim? He couldn’t. All he could do was throw this assertion at the feet of Jesus, and say, “*Lord, You know all things - You know I cherish You - You know I adore You - and You know what I am saying is true!*” That is the Peter I know. Obviously humbled, but still the brash, out-front, assertive Peter of the New Testament. I **know** this is the scene. Jesus used

this discussion to assist putting the limb back in joint (Heb 12:13). He let Peter know He had work for him to do - leadership labors with heavy associated costs. This was a very firm conversation by Jesus, complete with rebukes, but it was intended to assist Peter in getting straightened out and moving forward. It was not a boohooing confessional. Instead, it was effective reproof and restoration intended to cause change and productivity. I know it succeeded. Even though Peter still made some massive blunders later (Gal 2, especially verse 14), he still produced mightily for the Lord **he cherished!** Not only can you see many things Peter did in the Book of Acts, but he also was used by God to write two tremendous letters of the New Testament. Oh ... to be so used!

Still not convinced of *phileo*'s superiority to *agapao*? Well, let's look at another passage, one with an **eternally critical use of *phileo***.

1 Corinthians 16:22 - A Critical use of *Phileo*

"If any one does not love (phileo) the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha." This is a command and should be translated, *"he must be accursed."* Eternal damnation awaits anyone who does not *phileo* the Lord! I think this is something we might want to be sure we understand. If one's **eternal fate** is dependent upon having this well, let me submit some thoughts.

God **commands** all people to *agapao* Him - to consider Him intrinsically valuable and worthy of respect. As **the Creator**, that alone justifies such a demand. This has nothing to do with our feelings. This is about position and power. It's a call to right thinking. But, as far as **cherishing** Him ... He does not command our emotions (*phileo*). **But, if that emotional bond is absent, we are doomed.** The goal of Christianity is for individuals to **know God!** *"And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent"* (Jn 17:3). As we get to know God, a cherishing of Him will develop. We will begin to see how He works with His own tirelessly - even though they fail Him regularly. We will see how He faithfully grants pardon and offers to share Himself with the most undeserving of creation. As we learn more of His ways, we see an astounding wisdom. His creative abilities are stunning. His attention to detail is beyond measure. He creates purpose and meaning in places where there is none. And the certainties of His future assertions bring hope and encouragement and courage to the present. But it does take time and experience to grow into a cherishing of One from whom **we were initially separated!** This is all part of a person developing his/her own relationship with the God of the Bible. But, a word of warning. I believe it will be quite common on Judgement Day, that many will find they cherished a **God of their own imagination.** I must know the God of the Bible - not some "God" I think He ought to be.

So it may not be that *agapao* is inferior to *phileo* when all is said and done. Maybe they are two completely different forms of love that do not compete with each other at all. But, it is clear to me - in the love competition - this is *agapao*'s only hope. It is playing "catch up" to *phileo* - with the hope of gaining a tie.

It is Time to Take a Risk

The forthcoming material may be misunderstood. Romanticists may use these next statements to tenaciously hang on to the myth that *agapao means* divine love. So here goes.

Any action of God, any activity in which He exercises Himself, is, by default, divine. It cannot be otherwise. So, when God exercises *agapao*, **it is divine.** BUT, BUT, BUT, when He exercises *phileo*, **that too is divine.** So also when He exercises **jealousy** (*zeelos*), **wrath** (*orgee*), **anger** (*thumeo*), and **lust** (*epithumia*)! Activity by God is always holy, pure, rightly motivated, and without flaw. Check these out!

Zeelos displayed by God: “For I am jealous over you with a *godly jealousy*” 2Cor 11:2.

Orgee displayed by God: “He who does not obey the Son, shall not see life, but the **wrath of God** abides on him” Jn 3:36.

Thumos displayed by God: “He also will drink of the wine of the **wrath (anger) of God**” Rev 14:10.

Epithumeo displayed by God: “I have **earnestly desired** to eat this Passover...” Lk 22:15.
(Translated “lust” in most places).

No lexicographer takes the word for jealousy (*zeelos*), wrath (*orgee*), anger (*thumos*), or lust (*epithumia*) and assigns the meaning of “divine” to any of these words. Why is that? Maybe the reason can be found in “the pattern of reason” below. (Does this look familiar?)

Zeelos displayed by God: (In this case, it is Paul who is jealous, but refers to it being the same as God’s jealousy) “For I am **jealous** over you with a *godly jealousy*” 2Cor 11:2.

Zeelos displayed by saved man: “But if you have bitter **jealousy** ... in your heart ...” Ja 3:14. This is a negative sense whereas Paul’s above is positive.

Zeelos displayed by unsaved man: “Now the deeds of the flesh are obvious, which are ... **jealousy** ...” Gal 5:19,20.

Orgee displayed by God: “For the **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ...” Ro 1:18.

Orgee displayed by saved man: “Be **angry (wrathful)**, and yet do not sin” Eph 4:26.

Orgee displayed by unsaved man: “For the **wrath** of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” Ja 1:20.

Thumos displayed by God: “... seven golden bowls full of the **wrath (anger) of God**, who lives forever and ever” Rev 14:7.

Thumos displayed by saved man: “Let all bitterness and **anger** and wrath be put away from you ...” Eph 4:31. Actually the translators should translate *orgee* as wrath and *thumos* as anger, but they sometimes mix these up. I straightened them up in this passage.

Thumos displayed by unsaved man: “And all in the synagogue were filled with **rage (anger)** as they heard these things ...” Lk 4:28.

Epithumos displayed by God: “With **desire (lust)** I have **desired (lusted)** to eat this Passover ...” Lk 22:15.

Epithumos displayed by saved man: “... having the **desire (lust)** to depart and be with Christ ...” Phi 1:23.

Epithumos displayed by unsaved man: “And the world is passing away, and also its **lusts** ...” 1Jn 2:17.

As you can see, all these words are used in reference to God and man - **just like *agapao* is!** So why doesn’t some lexicographer try to assign the meaning of **divinity to these words** as part of their **basic** meaning? The only explanation is that these words **do not incite romanced ideals and excitements!** Therefore, lexicographers approach these words more objectively. As they examine each word’s historical roots and usage, they find each word used in both positive and negative ways - in reference to God and man. While they can be divinely exercised, they can also be profanely exercised.

Therefore, the words **can not mean** divine. But *agapao* is just like these other words! *Agapao* is practiced by God, by saved people, and by unsaved people - just like *zeelos*, *orgee*, *thumos*, and *epithumos*! This inconsistency can only be explained by the great desire for romanticized notions about love.

Apapao and *phileo* are both **morally neutral words** - just like *orgee*, *thumos*, *zeelos* and *epithumia*. To be sure, when God exercises *phileo* or *agapao*, these are divine expressions. But so is His wrath (*orgee*), anger (*thumos*), jealousy (*zeelos*), and lust (*epithumia*). But these actions are holy not **because the words mean that - but because the One exercising the activity is holy**. When the unsaved act in *agapao*, *phileo*, *orgee*, *thumos*, *zeelos* or *epithumia* they are all **unholy**. The actor determines the morality, or immorality, of the action. *Agapao*, *agapee*, and *phileo* **are practiced** around us all the time - by the saved and unsaved! There is no doubt many murderous leaders have practiced *agapao* and *phileo*. Many outsiders have been amazed that extremely violent people often have a kind - even tender - side. But this is really simple to explain. These “leaders” impute an intrinsic worth in some people, and therefore practiced *agapao* toward them - say, their hit men. And close family may be cherished (*phileo*). Great patience and attention is granted **these** individuals, but withheld from others - totally withheld. Hitler practiced *agapao* towards darkness with great fervor, and probably had great *phileo* towards himself - and maybe lots of other things, like preeminence, his Third Reich, or his Aryan philosophy. *Agapao* and *phileo* both exist in large quantities all around us. The only reason evil expressions of *agapao* and *phileo* **ever fail** is because of an event God throws in the way. It’s called death. If one is not converted (thus dooming these errant loves), then physical death will come to end these loves - at the time and place of His choosing. These errant loves will die one way or the other.

Boy, did you think you would read a paragraph like this last one when you started this Ebook? We really ought to list all kinds of evil *agapao* and *phileo* loves that currently abound around us. Submit your examples (via “Organic Document”) and help create pages of footnotes to this end! For example, from all I can tell, I think Hugh Hefner has absolutely loved (*agapao* and *phileo*) his life, and if he could, he would extend it eternally. Similarly, I saw a biography on Jenna Jameson, and she seems to absolutely love (*agapao* and *phileo*) the “career” she has built. If it was within her power, she would make it eternal. Politically, it seems that Saddam Hussein loved his life and would have vigorously pursued all the loves in his heart - to the fullest extent - if he had the power to do so. He did all he could with the power he did have. It took “Baby Bush” to halt him - and his *agapao* and *phileo* filled sons as well. They loved - *agapao* **and** *phileo* - preeminence, chief seats, money, respectful greetings, the praise of men, maybe praying in public, pleasures, and all kinds of darkness! My friends, *agapao* and *phileo* teem all around us! Open your eyes to it! And true *agapao* and true *phileo* never fail. They are faithful loves unto death for the unsaved. And, for the saved, they are faithful unto the new heavens and earth. Oh ... maybe this is a good time to revisit The Greenhouse.

So, ... Back to The Greenhouse One Last Time

So, what was that “stuff” initially poured all over me? It could not have been *agapao*, as it soon failed. Was it *phileo*? That is the only choice left. Did they cherish me? Is that worth a response? The root of the problem is that The Greenhouse “leadership” never did have a genuine respect for me (*agapao*), so how could they even begin to cherish me (*phileo*)? This scenario happens all the time in all kinds of settings. Unfortunately, it also often occurs in the church. Have you ever been part of a church **that initially warmly embraced you** - only to later **turn cold** toward you after getting to know you better?

Well, I do have a name for this “stuff.” Unfortunately, the correct word to describe it is often used as a cuss word, so let’s just call it “illegitimate love.” It is “*not genuine or authentic; it is*

inferior, spurious, or of uncertain origin.” This “stuff” can feel quite real (that first night at The Greenhouse, I did feel something **very real**), but the biggest problem is that those who express this illegitimate stuff often purport it **as love that is coming from God!** Then when it fails, that makes this stuff *more than* illegitimate - it is a fraud - **an imposter!** And to make matters even worse, when this “love” does fail, it is often replaced by some other stuff that can be quite hostile. So, let’s attempt to pin down this “love stuff” that arises from an “uncertain origin.” Here is my best shot. Feel free to submit yours.

I think this imposter - this conditional, fickle, warm, goo - arises from the deep recesses of the ego of the “lover.” It is a self-centered exercise designed to soothe the “lovers”ego. These initially warm, concerned people believe they are **supposed** to be loving, so they **act** that way. And that is what it is - **an act.** Of course, they do not believe this is an act, as that would defeat the whole purpose of the exercise in the first place! On the contrary, the “loving one” sees himself/herself as a **good person, a caring person - a Christian person!** And these “lovers” often delude themselves into believing their love, and all the associated feelings of warmth and acceptance towards those who fit their Christian profile, **is from God!** And they can be quite steadfast in this “love” - until crossed! It is at this point the fraud is exposed - and the spigot of “love” **turns off!** If you cross them **personally** (and you may never know when you did this, or how) or if you cross them **doctrinally** (whether in teaching or practice), you have stepped on a land mine - and the goo blows up. This “love” is neither *agapao* or *phileo*. It is illegitimate - but, even worse, it is an imposter. Unfortunately, the perpetrator of the fraud is often completely blind to the fraud **before or after the fact!**

While I may not have pinpointed the exact origin from which this imposter arises in the analysis just forwarded, I do know I am poking around in the right area. I am stabbing into that dark terrain called, “the flesh.” So, I guess this stuff really does have “a certain origin.” Maybe you can dig around and pinpoint more accurately the particular foundation(s) from which this stuff rears its ugly head. By pointing you to “the flesh,” I have at least directed to the correct area to hunt in. Submit your findings, and they will surely find their way into the annals of this great fact-finding, investigative treatise! Maybe there will even be some confessionals!

I believe visitors to a church, or any Christian gathering, should be welcomed in the Name of Jesus. But if you do that, **you are obligated to continue to represent Him consistent with His will and ways for the duration of their stay** - and that may mean the rest of their lifetime - and yours! And it starts with *agapao* - a deep and genuine respect for your visitors with the acknowledgment that God created and led that person into your realm of influence. As His representative, you are obligated **to learn His rules** for how to treat people that come to a place **that bears His Name.** For starters, you must become well versed in the material in 1Corinthians 5: 9-13. And who knows, if you practice the unfailing *agapao* towards those who come into your circle long enough, you might even develop very deep feelings for some of them - maybe many of them. You might even cherish them. In case you missed it ... that is *phileo*.

In Concluding this ...

“*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick - who can know it?*” (Jer 17:9). *Agapao* and *phileo* do not fail. They cannot fail. But the “illegitimate love” just described is fickle, conditional, self centered and fails **as soon as you do not live up to the standards and expectations of the one who is giving it out.** As an imposter, this pseudo, spurious, fraudulent activity grades as an F-. But even though it is illegitimate, we do know **it does have a certain origin** - the flesh. It hijacks the word “love” but **it is not love.** It is **not** based upon genuine respect for the object it is being directed at. *That is why it can be turned off!*

By the way, The Greenhouse is not a place of bitterness for me. I have received many other

(and more severe) injuries by professing Christians since then, to lose any sleep over my Greenhouse experience. I have heard it said, “*God uses a crooked stick to draw a straight line.*” I gained many things there, so maybe these were bends in their crooked stick - to be straightened in due course. The truth is, without excusing any of these bends, we are all crooked sticks. I have used The Greenhouse as a microcosm for illustrative purposes. I want to quickly share four pointers that have helped me deal with injury along the way, and hope may be of value to you.

First: One time, I went to an older Christian man to apologize to him. I had a real disdain for him, which I thought had been quite obvious. He said he wasn’t even aware of my ill will, but then added, “*You know, one of my goals as a Christian has been to develop a **thick skin** - but still have a big heart.*” Oh God, please get me there. I want to be like that. That’s Jesus.

Second: Remember my first year Greek instructor? Well, he would often say, “*I have learned kindness by being around those who are not kind. I have learned fairness from those who are unfair. I have learned love from being around those who do not love. They have been my best teachers.*” This has helped me all through my Christian experience.

Third: To hold some past grudge against someone is really pretty ridiculous when you think about it. For example, if I did something to offend someone five years ago, well, **today** I am not that same person. So, if they are still mad at me, they are really mad at someone who existed **five years ago**. It is anger at a figment of the imagination. This is not a totally accurate statement, but I hope you get the gist of what I am saying. We all keep changing.

Fourth: But the best aid for dealing with any injury, has rested upon this statement by Jesus. “*A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher*” (Lk 6:40). Anytime I am let off with less injury than what Jesus received, that shows God is allowing me to be **gently dealt with**. That’s fine with me!

I would not trade my experience with The Greenhouse for anything. They solved puzzles for me (i.e., The Gospel), and created others (i.e., Love). I am learning that God specializes in solving puzzles of all kinds, regardless of the origin of the puzzle. It’s all beneficial.

So ... What Are Some *Other* Practical Results of This Study?

I will first answer this **Personally**, then suggest **Some Pointers for the Church**, and then make a few observations about **God’s exercising of love**.

Personally:

1) Just because teachers and preachers use Greek words in their presentations, that does not mean they are accurate in their assertions. The old saying, “*a little knowledge is a dangerous thing*” is often accurate. But, in this case, “*a little **imagined** knowledge is an extremely dangerous thing.*” The accurate handling of God’s Word is more important than any of us can even begin to know. It is astounding to consider that one’s eternal destiny hinges upon a proper integration of God’s Word. **Saving faith** blossoms from a right understanding, and positive response to His Words! (Ja 1:18, 1Pet 1:23, Jn 17:17, Eph 1:13, Eph 5:26, and 1Thess 2:13). In this case, an extremely important subject area has been totally misrepresented.

2) An appeal to original languages is often a power play by teachers/preachers. This strikes at the heart *of the honesty* of one’s teaching. An appeal to original languages can be used *to intimidate* listeners, and cause a de facto submission. The one using Greek *seems to be* the most studied and knowledgeable, and listeners, who have no knowledge of the Bible’s original languages, have no tools to then examine - or challenge - the assertions of these “scholars.” This is dangerous. I have no doubt

that Satan is quite skilled in his knowledge and use of the Greek to accomplish his ends. He does appear as an angel of light - of knowledge (2Cor 11:14,15).

3) The source of the error of those propagating this false teaching on love (or any other error) is ultimately - irrelevant. God warns that teachers are under a stricter judgement, so there should be few of them (Ja 3:1). Whether one is teaching error from malicious intent, or “innocent” ignorance, is irrelevant. Error is error and God is not there.

4) I am responsible, and accountable, for what I present about God. The fact I had been under false teaching does not excuse my error. To plead, “*I was just teaching what I was taught! I didn't know it was wrong!*” is not a defense that will stand on His Day.

And here are some behavioral effects this has had on me - which are tremendously liberating (truth always is).

1) I can practice *agapao* without any “warm feelings” of love. I can be patient, kind, and all the rest of 1Corinthians 13 without waiting for, *or feeling guilty for not having*, some subjective, gushy “feeling” of love. This is great! I *can choose* to act, **and react**, in Biblical *agapao* towards brothers, enemies - and God! This is tremendously liberating! Hallelujah!

2) When I perceive inside of myself that I am rejecting another person (usually an internal disdain for that person), I must stop everything, dig inside myself, and pinpoint *why* I feel that way. If that rejection is groundless before God (which is usually the case), **I must then rebuke myself** - and at least *leave that person alone*. Then, when sanity rules, I can make myself practice patience, or kindness, etc., toward him/her - and be found operating in the realm of *agapao* - even if I have no endearing feelings present.

3) I have found that if I practice *agapao* toward someone I naturally reject, a very strange transformation often occurs **in me.** I begin to see strengths in that person I did not initially see. Had I not **called myself into *agapao***, I would never have seen those things. Interestingly, a heartfelt respect actually does begin to grow, and many times those things that originally “put me off” recede from the forefront. If practiced long enough, sometimes even *phileo* develops! When we marshal our will to operate in *agapao*, God opens our “eyes” to see more like He sees. He sees changed people. He sees potential in people. He sees strengths He has placed in people. I have found myself earnestly praying for people I originally wanted very little to do with. God **changes me** in this whole process.

Some Pointers for the Church:

The church's first responsibility is to accurately teach God's **words**. Christians need to know each word's definition as precisely as possible. It my hope this Ebook will find a place in this important duty. This is a vital topic and the material presented here needs to sink deeply into the understanding of the saints - and deeply into the fellowship.

Next, the church fellowship should be the showcase of righteous expressions of both *agapao* and *phileo*. Proper teaching can only enhance this effort. Too many people **are trying** to “love,” without understanding what it is **from God's viewpoint**. There is a simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Here are some basics.

A) Where genuine respect for others exists, *agapao* exists. This is evidenced by the practice of patience, kindness, and all the rest. Absent any of the disciplinary sins (1Cor 5:11), *agapao* is to be practiced toward each person from the first visit through the last. The church should be a **safety zone** for anyone who is seeking spiritual information. Furthermore, a professing Christian should be incorporated into the local body according to **his/her desires** and according to the church's **general affirmation** of the person's gifts, abilities, and experience.

B) When it is discerned that someone is **not** operating in *agapao*, action is required. This is a legitimate functioning on the part of church leadership - indeed, a top tier responsibility. Contrary agendas to the proliferation of a righteous *agapao* must be confronted, and subdued. Of course, the leadership itself must act in *agapao* towards the violator - but it must act. The pattern put forth by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 provides the procedure. Sins are exposed, opportunity to repent is provided, the innocent are vindicated publically (if it gets that far), and persistent “felons” are exposed and removed. Love does not allow wickedness to prevail in the church.

If *agapao* is diligently pursued by **all** the church, *phileo* will undoubtedly emerge. When people are fervently accorded genuine respect over a long period of time, “hidden” abilities and traits will emerge. Many will profit - and endearment will result. This benefits both the giver and the recipient. The true challenge for the leadership of a given church body is to create, and then diligently protect, an environment where this progression can occur.

God’s Love Towards Humanity

Much of what you are about to read may be foreign to anything you have ever heard. My views have developed after a considerable amount of time, thought and investigation - *after* the revelations about the meanings - and uses - of the words *agapao*, *agapee*, and *phileo*. I hope you will not rush to judgement, but carefully consider these assertions.

“So, ... Does God ‘Love’ Everybody?”

Does He? Recently, a woman I work with, had this on her back window. “*Jesus really DOES love you!*” Later I saw a church sign - “*Jesus loves you - and so do we!*” As you can tell, these declarations were talking about the warm, fuzzy, emotion based stuff we usually call “love.” But, what if this is **not true**? What if He **does not** “love” everybody? If you declare He does, and then stand before Him, and it turns out He does not, won’t you be guilty of **falsely representing** Him? Won’t you be **a false witness** - witnessing that which is **not true**? A declaration this fundamental best be correct. Just because you think He *should* love everybody - does that mean He does? Now, I know **why** people want to declare that God loves everybody. It sounds great! And it makes the proclaimer feel good about this God! Everyone can be hugged and there is no reason why anyone ought to be mad at the proclaiming witness, or at God, in any way. This is just beautiful! But, I ask again, **what if** God **does not** love everybody? Is this a terrifying thought to entertain? I guess you have figured out I am not so sure God does love everybody. I wish He did, but I am not so sure He does. In fact, I know He doesn’t. But before putting forth the Biblical case, I want to relate a story.

At one time, I worked for a Japanese man. We had some interesting conversations. He was inquisitive about spiritual matters, but offended by this “Christian” message: “*Christians say, ‘God loves you,’ and ‘Jesus loves you!’ But if I do not receive His Son, that God who loves me so much is going to throw me into a lake of fire and torture me forever and ever. I guess He will say, ‘I love you! But, because you did not receive my Son, I am going to fry you forever - and you will never have another chance to receive my Son. But ... I do love you!’*” He added, “*What a peevish, babyish God you have; ‘If you receive My Son, you will go to a wonderful place forever, but if you don’t receive My Son, I will torture you forever!’*” This Japanese man also understood his entire family was heading there, **and his forefathers, who had never even heard of Jesus, were already there** - at the hands of this God of love. To the thinking, non-Christian, a God who loves everybody, yet sentences the bulk of these loved individuals to Hell - well, this is nonsense. Of course, I have heard many a preacher declare, “*God does not send anyone to Hell. You send yourself there by rejecting His love,*

rejecting His Son, rejecting His good news message - by continuing as an unbeliever.” But aren't all those things - sin? Didn't Jesus die **to pay for** our sins? I guess He only died for certain sins. *“But this is a gift from God. If someone gives you a gift, it is not yours unless you take it.”* So, if you recklessly fail to take this gift, isn't that just a **sin of omission** - failing to do something one ought to have done? So, let me get this straight. The *agapao* of God that never fails - in the end - fails. And it fails **right at the moment of death!** The exact second **we need it most** - the second we are exiting this life and entering eternity without the pardoning blood of Jesus - at that exact second His patience, kindness, and all the rest runs out **forever!** So, this divine, unconditional love **is conditional** after all. If we reject His Son, neglect his Son, or didn't even know He had a Son, then we go to Hell. But as unconditional love, **that rejection, or neglecting, or ignorance itself** should be covered and He ought to pardon us all and take us all to Heaven anyway, right? Wouldn't that really be **unconditional** love? Let's take a look at this place called Hell for a moment.

Isn't Hell a place **created by God?** And won't it be eternally **sustained by God?** Satan did not create it and Satan **is not** the King of Hell. He will not be tormenting anyone. Jesus Christ is the King of Hell. He has the keys to it (Hades anyway, which is Hell's precursor - Rev 1:18). Satan will be occupying **the worst possible place of torment.** Some maintain Hell was created *“for the devil and his angels,”* and human beings are not supposed to be there (Mt 25:41). But who are the ones to Jesus' left, in that Matthew 25 passage, who are being sent there? My reader, **people** are going to be assigned there **along with** the devil and his angels. Each sinner, whether man or angel, will occupy his/her/its proper place - each one according to each one's culpability as determined by God Himself. The same God who originally made this earth “very good” (Gen 1:31), and then later cursed its ground (Gen 3:17-19), and who will create a perfect new heavens and earth (Isa 65:17, 2Pet 3:13, Rev 21 and 22) - is also the One who has thought up, and created, the eternal lake of fire (Mt 10:28, Mt 25:41 and Rev 20:13-15). That place is the destiny of **billions** of moral beings (immoral beings) and they will be in unimaginable agony forever and ever. And God loves them? Why won't He give them a second chance somewhere along eternity's “time line?” If He loves everybody so much, why won't He just forgive people for failing to receive His Son? Everyone in Hell will be constantly aware that they **should have received the Son**, so why not just create the circumstance for that opportunity? *“After all, when we were on earth, there were so many distractions! Between economic pressures, family demands, illnesses, oppressive governments - well, it was a constant struggle just to survive. Concerning spiritual matters, there were false teachers, false religions, and seductive philosophies all over the place! ‘Learned’ religious people and theologians had different interpretations on everything! They couldn't even agree what love was - or if You wanted 10% of everything we earned! And abounding sin blinded us and made us so short sighted! (Jn 9:41 and 2Pet 1:9). And then there was Satan, and his minions, who were so busy confusing us! Surely the great God of love understands all this fully and will undoubtedly give us another chance at some point! In Hell, our sin problem, and the remedy for that problem, has our full attention! That is all that is thought about - except for the agony in this place!”* (Lk 16:24).

And what about the myriads in Hell **who never heard of His Son in this life** - and yet they will be punished by their Creator - **who loves them** - forever and ever? Or, do you think everyone who never heard about this Son will be automatically pardoned? If you believe that, then you should stop all evangelistic outreach to countries and societies that have never heard about Jesus. If 100% of them will go to heaven anyway, why bring the message about the need to receive the Son - **and then doom the ones who fail to do that?!?!** **You** are then responsible for sending some of them - maybe most of them - to this place of horrors, when they would have gone to heaven **if you had just left them alone!**

By the grace of God, there is one thing I do not believe I have ever done as a Christian. I have never participated in any joke about Hell. I have never trifled with it in any way. The Bible's teaching

on this matter is horrifying and beyond levity on any level - especially when I get a glimpse of the truth **that I deserve to be there**. Had I died before receiving Jesus Christ, I would be in Hades now - with Hell on its heels. The Bible is clear on that. When I was 17, I got my foot crushed in a hydraulic lift on a tractor. I developed two kinds of gangrene, and lost most of my big toe and was on the way to losing half of my foot - possibly more. The pain of that crushed foot **was nothing** compared to what the Bible says Hell is going to be like. There is nothing about this subject that inclines me toward jest. I do not want to stand before God with any joking on my record about this matter.

The Weak Jesus

Have you ever read one of those “*love letters from Jesus*”? In them, Jesus aches for our love and is incomplete if we keep ignoring Him. He longingly reaches out to us with a tear in His puppy love eyes. He is a **frustrated lover**, waiting for our attention and love in return. **We** are in the power position, and **we** weigh Him in the balance and decide if He is worthy **of us** or not. **We** decide the fate of this longed for relationship. God just sits and waits, hopes and longs for ... us. He is love sick. **This Jesus is so weak**. He **needs** us, Heaven **needs** us, the Church **needs** us, eternity **needs** us! After all, **we** are so interesting and our company is so stimulating! But, in the end, if **we decide** He is not worthy, He then decides, in the anger of a jilted lover, to cast us into Hell. So, maybe He doesn't look so weak after all. Now He looks spiteful.

Personally, I am astounded He wants anything to do with me. I had violently violated His will and ways before I became a Christian, and since becoming a Christian, I still sin against Him with alarming regularity. In fact, the more I learn of His definition of sin - well, it is incredible how much I sin in deed, word, and thought. You might think you are better than me. But you're not. Well ... maybe you are. But, if you compare yourself to the perfect standard He has **for you** - well, you are disgusting too. You might think you are a real catch, but you're not. When I called upon the Lord in 1977, I remember saying, “*I've been told I need to accept Your Son ... but **who am I to accept Him?** Is it possible **He will accept me?**”*

Esau ... the only person ever hated by God. Right?

In Romans 9, Paul was discussing God's involvement in the descendants of Abraham. When discussing Isaac's twin boys, Esau and Jacob, we have this remarkable declaration about God's involvement in the affairs of man. “... *for though the twins were not born, **and had not done anything good or bad**, in order that God's purpose **according to His choice** might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her (Rebekah), ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written, ‘**Jacob I loved** (agapao), **but Esau I hated** (miseo).’ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then (in conclusion), it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, **but on God who shows mercy**. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.’ So then (in conclusion), He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?’ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say back to the molder; ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? Or does not the potter have a right (authority) over the clay, to make **from the same lump** one vessel for honorable use, and another for dishonor? What if God, willing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much patience, vessels of wrath prepared for (made for) destruction?” (Ro 9:10-22).*

This passage brings up some very fundamental questions about God loving **everybody**. Did

God love Esau? Well, some make the case **He actually did**. They contend this passage should read, “*Jacob I loved, but Esau I loved less.*” The accuracy of this translation depends on two things. First, there is **one** use of *miseo* that **might** mean, “love less.” In Luke 14:26, Jesus said, “*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate (miseo) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.*” The other thirty-seven uses of this word in The New Testament definitely means, “hate.” But even if we suppose “*God loved Esau less,*” **what is that about?!** That is partiality and placing one person above another - **even before birth!!** Come on! Where is the fairness and justice, in that? If you have jumped on the “*God-loved-Esau-less*” bandwagon, do not think you have solved this passage and can now glibly move on declaring how God loves everybody. Questions abound! “*How much less did God love Esau, and in what ways - and why? Does this, ‘being loved less by God’ action, touch the salvation issue?*” This even raises serious questions about the nature of God Himself! “*Is it right He should love someone more - even before birth? How often does He do this sort of thing? Does His loving someone more or less than another impact one’s success in this life? Does it impact eternal positions one might hold in heaven? What does it mean, in real terms, in practical realities, to be loved less by God?*” If you opt for this position - that God did not hate Esau, but simply loved him less than Jacob - you have **thousands of questions to answer**. I have just scratched the surface.

But a second thing the “*God-loved-Esau-less*” club is dependent upon, is eisegesis of the verse. In other words, ignore the rest of the passage. You see, after Paul makes the assertion, “*but Esau I hated,*” he immediately begins fielding attacks against such a position - that God would hate someone - even before being born! But Paul not only defends the right of God to do whatever He wants, he rebukes man for even challenging God on this. “*What if God, willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for, made for, even expressly fitted for destruction?*” (Ro 9:22). *Miseo* in this context means, “hate.” But even if you decide to turn away from this, what about this passage? “*The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence, His soul hates.*” (Ps 11:5). Proverbs 6:6-19 says, “*There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him ... a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.*” These are individuals.

If God can hate **one** person, can **He hate** another person and still be free of wrongdoing? Can He hate three or four more and still be okay? If God can **hate** Esau before the poor fellow was even born, **and is free of wrongdoing**, then God can hate **a dozen people** before they are born, **or a million, or a trillion**, and still be without fault. A very weak argument concerning this passage about Esau is as follows: “*God already knew what Esau would do and what he would be like before he was born, because God knows the future! So even though Esau had not yet done anything good or bad, God was reacting to Esau knowing what he was going to be like.*” So, if God knew Esau was going to be such a foul person, then why create him in the first place? Why let him grow up, only to march into His wrath and eternal damnation? It seems to me, **love would require the guy never come into existence in the first place!**

And what about Judas? What did Jesus say about Judas? “*It would have been good for that man if he had not been born*” (Mt 26:24). But he was born. If it would have been “**good**” that he not be born, why didn’t the God who loves him do that “good thing” for him? “*But, God didn’t make Judas betray Christ! Judas acted on his own free will!*” That has nothing to do with anything. Who is saying God made Judas do anything? But it is clear God knew what Judas was going to wind up doing before he was ever born. And how do I know that? Well, other than the fact He says He knows “*the end from the beginning*” (Isa 46:10), consider this. God predicted many specifics **about the crucifixion** hundreds of years before it ever happened. Details as minute as soldiers dividing His garments, and then casting lots for His clothing are predicted (Ps 22:18). For God to accurately

enunciate such *incidental* details in the midst of a complex murder incident, He surely knew in advance **all the characters** of the entire drama. God knew before the world was ever created who Judas was *and what he would do when he entered human history*. If Jesus states, “*it would have been good for that man if he had not been born,*” then I ask you again: Why didn’t God - the good and all loving God - **do that good thing for Judas?** At a minimum, He could have seen to it Judas was born at another time, or in a different place, so the betrayal opportunity never existed. But not only was Judas born in the wrong place at the wrong time - get this! **Jesus chose Judas to be in His inner circle knowing from the beginning what Judas was going to do!** “*For Jesus knew from the beginning ... who it was that would betray Him ... ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’ Now He meant Judas ... who was going to betray Him*” (Jn 6:64,70,71). Jesus meant it when He said it would have been better for him if he had never been born. Why didn’t Jesus say, “*Judas, after you do your dastardly deed, know that I love you and stand ready to pardon you. Just repent and believe! Don’t despair and kill yourself!*” I want to see you talk to Judas about God’s love - that unconditional love. But things go deeper than this. Let’s return to Esau.

If God hated Esau because He knew what Esau would become, can God hate others (say billions of others) as He sees what kind of people they will become? And what kind of people do people become **from His viewpoint?** “*God looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there is anyone who understands, who acts wisely, who seeks after God. Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one*” (Ps 53:2,3. Also read Romans 3:10-18 for a fuller appraisal from God’s viewpoint). He says there is not **one single human being** that seeks Him. Every single person seeks his/her own interests. Everyone goes astray. Jesus did not entrust Himself to man, as “*He knew what was in man*” (Jn 2:23-25). He also said, “*What man is there among you, when his son shall ask for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give what is good to those who ask Him!*” (Mt 7:9-11). It is an assumed position: **man is evil - all men are evil - every man is evil** - past, present, and future. “*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags*” (Isa 64:6 - I have been told this is a reference to menstrual rags). A fatal error millions make, and assures them of Hell, is that they compare themselves **to others**, and determine, “*I am not really so bad.*” Paul stated, “*We are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding*” (2Cor 10:12). My point? If God decided to hate Esau based on **future performance**, then He will end up hating **every single human being**. Everyone’s future performance is evil.

All evildoing heads into the wrath of God. Every sin either meets the wrath of God on the cross, in the body of Jesus, or else each sin will be sent into the fires of an eternal Hell - along with the perpetrator of the evil. While some sins are more heinous than others (with varying degrees of punishment), all sin is evil and not one sin will escape the wrath of God being exacted upon it - not one.

Some harbor the deep inner thought that they are in some way **better in nature** than Esau. Well, here is what God says to Christians **about themselves** before they became Christians. “*... You were formerly alienated, and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds ... You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging in the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were, by nature, children of wrath, even as the rest*” (Col 1:21 and Eph 2:1-3). Esau is part of “*the rest,*” - **and before salvation every Christian was originally part of “the rest.”** In the illustration

about the potter in Romans 9, he makes vessels of honor and dishonor **from the same lump!** (Ro 9:21).

By the way, when do you suppose Esau found out he was hated by God? Do you think he learned of this when he was 5, or 10, or 20, or 50? Maybe he only learned of it when he died! Maybe Esau will realize God had “*endured with great patience*” a vessel of wrath ... himself. And all God was going to do - was hold him responsible for his actions - nothing more and nothing less. Maybe this is the same story for all the unredeemed. Maybe they will not find out until death they were hated by God all along, just like Esau, even before they were born! And maybe the way this hatred will be manifested is by - the exercise of simple justice. Everyone whom God deals with by simple justice will wind up being damned. Oh ... I can hear gnashing teeth, and wrenching cries of anger - at me! And I must say, this is tough stuff for even me to hear - and I am writing it! Well, more tough stuff on the way.

Let's think about the “*vessels of mercy*” in Romans 9. Clearly, God loves the ones He has decided to have mercy upon. But, does He also love those He has decided **not to have mercy upon?** And does He love those **He hardens?** But, if He does love everybody, why withhold mercy, or harden anybody anyway? So, does He love everybody - except Esau?

I believe the un-mercied, the hardened, and Esau are all part of the same cloth. They all stand on the left. They are the goats. This is hard material. It is hard to say God does not love these people. But I do not think He does. I also do not think He feels neutral toward them. While it is easy to think of God haters, it is hard to think of **God hating**. But I do believe Esau is not by himself. Everyone outside of Christ (from God's eternal view) abides with Esau.

“So, Why Does God Love Anybody?”

I can only come up with one answer. The reason He loves **anybody** is because ... He has decided to. It is sure not based upon performance. In our natural state, He calls us “*enemies*” (Ro 5:10). And, “*the intent, the inclination, of man's heart is evil from his youth*” (Gen 8:21). We are not remotely interested **in anything** He is interested in. All our priorities are alien and hostile to His. Even those He has chosen to have mercy upon, I can make the case that He really does **not** love **them** - in one sense. See what you think of this.

What is one of the very first things God does when a person responds positively to the Gospel message? Well, along with forever removing that person's sins, He sends the Holy Spirit **to live inside that person**. The individual is born again and made a new creation (1Pet1:23 and 2Cor 5:17). He/she is now “*alive to God*” (Ro 6:11). This new Presence creates “*a new self*” (Eph 4:24). The natural, original person is called “*the old self*” (Ro 6:6). The rest of the Christian experience has **one major goal** - putting to **death** this old self and simultaneously being conformed to the image and mind of Christ. This is not a **tweaking** or **reforming** of the Christian. God has dedicated Himself **to the destruction** the original person - one way or the other. Now, you may balk at the notion that **the whole old self** needs to be destroyed, but I submit to you that before salvation, the only thing a person does **is sin!** The **first commandment** is, “*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” (Mt 22:37). Before salvation, no one obeys this first and foremost commandment - not even once. God's goal is for the original person, who obeyed this command **0% of the time**, to be completely supplanted by a new person who obeys this command **100% of the time!** We will reach that plateau when we depart this age and sluff off whatever sin is still plaguing us. That glorified saint will be the **complete opposite** of the person that existed the second before receiving Jesus Christ. And, you see, that makes my point. He does not really love **me**, because the **natural me** He wants dead ... dead ... dead. The original me is to be **totally destroyed, absolutely dismantled and completely demolished**. Not a remnant of **me** will survive His assault. This is true for every single

Christian. And that's the best thing - for me.

But aren't we told that if we really love people, we should accept them as they are? Isn't this one of the great love calls - to accept people **as they are**? At a minimum, you should at least love **the main part of them** - their personality, character, abilities, etc. Maybe you are allowed to make a few minor changes, but generally you are to keep them in tact. And isn't a core problem in marriages the fact that one partner wants to change the other? The great counseling call is, "*Stop doing that! You must accept your partner as he/she is!*" But God's love towards me **knows nothing of this philosophy**. Nothing.

So, what is God's procedure in throwing out the old and bringing in the new? Well, He first **appeals** to the Christian to put to death the deeds of the flesh. "*For if by the Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God*" (Ro 8:13,14). He **rebukes** the Christian regularly and exposes areas He wants corrected. But **when** that message falls on deaf ears, He personally moves in for the kill! **When** (not, "if") the Christian decides to ignore His warnings, **He disciplines the rebel**. "*My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; For those the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges everyone He welcomes as a son But if you are without discipline ... then you are illegitimate children and not sons*" (Heb 12:5,6,8). His rebukes, disciplines and scourgings are designed to create positive change, **and are reserved for His sons**. "*He disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness*" (Heb 12:10,11). And the discipline can even be so severe that the Christian physically dies! (1Cor 11:27-32). He will **kill us** if that is what it takes to cause repentance and change. "*If it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?*" (1Pet 4:18). This total change in us is not an optional activity - **it is required!** (Heb 12:14).

Herein lies an exceedingly interesting, but terrifying, point. To begin, the only thing that causes God anger - is sin. Where sin is absent, God's displeasure is absent. But He responds in two completely distinct ways toward the ones generating sin. When directed towards the vessels of mercy, it is calculated **by God Himself** to cause positive change - so they "*might share His holiness*" (Heb 12:10). Those **He loves** He disciplines. But non Christians are never **disciplined** by God. They are **punished**. That which awaits the sinner is not designed to change them. If a year in the flames of Hell caused even **a millionth of a percent of change** toward righteousness, then at some point, Hell would end, with the sinner righteous. So, there is a **redemptive** anger of God as well as **non-redemptive** anger. Both are holy and righteous - yet have entirely different goals! I do not believe I have ever heard anyone expound on this. Maybe I will develop this in a future Article - or maybe you can! If He sends His anger with the design to correct us, we suffer, but win. If, on the other hand, He sends His anger with the design to punish, we suffer, and are doomed. The distinction lies in whether one is a vessel of mercy - or a vessel of wrath. Love is present - or absent.

Concerning God's determination to totally destroy my old self, in the deepest and truest sense, this really **is** love for **me**. He knows **I** must be destroyed - or else, **I will be damned**. He has decided to save me - **from Himself!!** He knows if He does not completely transform me, **He will eternally damn me**. He does this because **He has decided to have mercy upon me**. Why? "*For He said to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it does not depend upon the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires*" (Ro 9:15,16,18). How can this be stated any clearer? And this is an Old Testament passage repeated in the New Testament! You know, most Christians just **can not listen to this**. It confounds them. It violates everything known as "God's love." They must close their eyes, cover their ears, and shut their mouths

from even reading this out loud. And if this passage is addressed from the pulpit, there is a great amount of hand wringing, apology, and statements of how hard this is to understand. But after some deep sighs, and a long moment of dismay, accompanied with a seeming humility, the preacher rushes out from this great depth, this great unknown, and leaves the befuddlement behind! He brightens up, and announces, “*We still know He loves everybody! We just can’t figure this passage out right now because of our limited understanding. But, that’s okay. He will explain it all when we are on the other side!*” If you have **already decided** that God loves everybody, this passage is not **hard** to understand - **it is impossible to understand**. “*It must be a translation or transcription error - or something!*” But if you can simply read, this passage is not hard to understand at all. Terrifying, but not hard.

“But, Isn’t it Hypocritical”

“*But, isn’t it hypocritical if God expects us to love our enemies, and yet He does not hold Himself to that same standard?*” This is a good question. I’m glad I asked it. There are a couple of ways to address this. To begin, we are to love **our** enemies. If it is **finally determined** that someone is **God’s enemy**, I do not see we will be required to *agapao* that one. But that determination **will not become certain** until Judgement Day. In this life, our enemies may be brothers (or sisters) in a pre-Christian state! When Saul was overseeing the stoning of Stephen, it would have been a real shame for a Christian assassin to arise and kill him. It wasn’t too much later the enemy Saul, became the apostle Paul. This is probably one reason we are not to seek our own revenge, but instead we are to leave that to God (Ro 12:19-21). Only God knows who He has chosen to have mercy upon, **and when He is going to bring that person to salvation**. But here is another way to look at this. Often, we may be a bit **premature** in our labeling of an “enemy.” If we control ourselves and practice *agapao* toward *perceived* enemies, we may find some of those are actually friends. We may learn very valuable things from them. Some of my “enemies” God has used to correct me - and expose things about me I didn’t want to see.

I do not believe God will require we *agapao* those who will be finally determined as the enemies of God, who are to be slain in His presence (Lk 19:27). And because *agapao* **never fails**, I do not see how one can make the case that these enemies ever were loved by God - especially when we witness them being cast into the Abyss. The “enemies” He decided to *agapao* (like Jacob, and all the redeemed) He brings to Himself, and totally overhauls into the image of the Son - because *agapao* never fails.

“But What About John 3:16?”

“*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life*” (Jn 3:16). This statement is absolutely correct. So let’s look closer at it by means of short questions and answers.

- 1) Who wrote this?
- 2) To whom was it written?
- 3) What did that audience believe about themselves?
- 4) Next to salvation, what was (is) the greatest message of the New Covenant?

Well, here are the answers.

- 1) John wrote this.
- 2) He was an apostle **to the Jews**.
- 3) For a couple of thousand years, the Jews had been taught they were **the only nation in the whole world** whom God had set His sights upon. All the nations of the world, all the cultures, all the races, and all their histories were lumped into one pile - the Gentiles - the heathen nations. **The Jews** were the chosen people of God, and if anyone outside that people group wanted to come to the real God,

they would have to come through the Jews.

4) The moment Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was ripped from top to bottom - and God ended that arrangement forever! The Temple, with its orders and procedures, was abandoned. God turned everything inside out and upside down. The Law Covenant - The Old Testament - was over. You see, John was explaining *to his fellow Jews* that God so loved **the world** - not just the chosen Jews (gosh, He was choosing back then too?), that He sent His Son - and a whole new set of procedures was enacted. Next to the Gospel message, this is the greatest message of the New Covenant. God so loved **the world** that He made this change.

Under the Old Covenant, no one believes every single Jew was saved. Most agree only a remnant was saved. So also with the world now. While God has committed Himself to reaching into every nation, tribe, tongue, and family, it does not follow that every single one in all these groups are targets of His mercy.

“And What About 2 Peter 3:9?!?!”

Maybe we should start with verse 8. *“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance”* (2Pet 3:8,9). A first principle of proper Bible interpretation is to identify the audience being addressed. In this case, Peter opens this letter by saying, *“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours ...”* (2Pet 1:1). Peter is writing to **Christians**. In verse 8 and 9 of Chapter 3, I believe Peter is still speaking directly to Christians, **about Christians - not about all the unsaved peoples of the world!** *“... beloved (his Christian audience of those with a like faith) ...The Lord ... is patient towards YOU ...”* The following indefinite pronoun, “any” (functioning as an adjective) can, and probably does, refer to any of the ones (plural) constituting the “you” (plural) he had been addressing throughout this whole letter (and also his first letter). As an indefinite, that does not mean the reference is now “to all the unsaved peoples of the world!” It can still be referring to the group being addressed, and is a declaration applying to **any of them!** It is not unusual for an adjectival, indefinite pronoun to refer to a **definite group**. For examples, see Luke 1:5 (priests being the referenced circle), Acts 3:5 (money, or some sort of goods, being the referenced circle), and Philippians 3:15 (Christians of a different mind being the referenced circle). Examples of an indefinite applying to a very definite, and sometimes very small circle, abound. So, *“the Lord is not willing any one of you all - any of you I have been writing to in this letter - perish”*

“... but for all to come to repentance.” So, who is the “all”? Well, this phrase is introduced by *alla*, which is an intensive, superordinating (hyperordinating) conjunction - “but.” Therefore, this phrase adamantly refers to the “any” of the previous phrase. So, the Lord not only does not plan that any **of the any** perish, **but** that “all” of those “anys” (whoever they might be) should make room for repentance. So, the “any” and “all” **are the same group**. Another translation problem in this passage has to do with the word normally translated, “wishing.” The word is *boulomai* - not *thelo*. *Thelo* means “wishing” or “wanting” - a passive kind of hoping. But *boulomai* is a strong word **implying action**. *“The Lord is not willing any of you perish”* - it implies planning or design. It is **not** His will, **His plan**, *“that any of you like-faithed Christians perish but, on the contrary, all of you like-faithed saints are to, koreo, make room for, give admittance to, and progress into - repentance; a changed mind.”* Christians are destined to have the mind of Christ - to think and reason like Jesus. Our value system, priorities, actions, and reactions are to be steadily progressing towards **a total synchronism** with Him. How else will we stand shoulder to shoulder with Him on Judgement Day and render eternal judgement on the unsaved, as well as the fallen angels? (1Cor 6:1,2). (Oh, I wish I could play

my song, “Shoulder to Shoulder” for you right now). God is not willing any **of us** perish (and perish we must, if we do not have the mind of Christ). He is actively working in each of our lives so that every single thought will be brought captive to obedience in being Christlike (2Cor 10:5). God wants us to “*make room for*” our thinking to be changed (repentance), but when we decide **not** to make those accommodations, God will employ His methods (disciplines, as discussed earlier) to make sure His will (plan, *boulomai*) is not thwarted. He is not going to allow **any of us** to perish! That is what 2Peter 3:9 is saying!

The translation just forwarded **continues addressing Peter’s audience** rather than addressing every single person in the world of every generation. Peter was working with **his audience** in this passage, and referencing how God was working with them! It seems strange he would suddenly leave them, throw out a net covering every human being on earth - past, present, and future - and then abruptly return to a discussion about his audiences behavior in light of the impending destruction and recreation of this current earth and heavens! Read through 2Peter 3, the whole chapter, and keep in mind what I have presented here and see if it makes sense to you. My syntactical ground is solid, but I look forward to your challenges!

“But As Creator ...”

“But as Creator, doesn’t He just love us all because He made us? Isn’t it like the love we have for our own children?” Well, do we have to talk about Esua again ... or Pharaoh ... or Satan ... or Hell? Why not just grant universal pardon and be done with it? Good fathers provide for their children - and they provide the most important things first. The most important thing every sinful creature needs is the blood of Christ so one’s sin problem is eternally removed. Even as stupid as I am, I know this is the most important truth that can be uttered. For any sinful creature, the blood of Christ secures eternal pardon and is the cornerstone of eternal life. When the sin problem is removed - so is death and Hell. Death has no right to one who has all sin removed, and Hell has no claim either. Life, eternal life, is the only thing left. Any loving father would automatically provide the most obvious and critical need(s) for each child **before all else** - whether that child **understood** the act or not - or whether the child **appreciated** it or not. And in this case, God would have all eternity to enlighten even the dullest pardoned dullard so as to eventually become eternally grateful. If God loves everybody as His precious and beloved children, what could possibly be holding Him back from simply applying the blood of Christ to each person - even the fallen angels - and then enlighten them later on this great act of Fatherly need meeting? Could it be ... He doesn’t love everybody? Could it be ... He is **not** everyone’s Father? Could it be ... He does not view everyone as His child? Come to think of it, I do recall a conversation Jesus had with the Pharisees. Here is part of it, in midstream. *“You are doing the deeds of your father.’ They (the Pharisees) said to Him, ‘We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me You are of your father the devil ...”*(Jn 8:41,42a and 44a - go read the whole passage). Hmm... ... the plot thickens. Who else might have this father? Is the pool of “Esuas” expanding? And what is this about? *“... you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ ...”* (Ro 8:15b - 17a). Only those in Christ have God as their Father. Whoa! Maybe that explains some things.

“But, What About God Hating the Sin”

... and loving the sinner?” I knew you would be able to complete that sentence. We hear it all the time. For starters, the Bible **never** makes a statement like this **when referring to the unsaved**. In

fact, I do not think I can find a passage that even **hints** at this concept toward the unsaved. But it sure sounds great, doesn't it? That way we can say, *"I love the homosexual, but I hate the same sex anal copulation."* Or, *"I love Saddam Hussein and his sons, but I hate the mass murdering, raping and torturing."* Or, *"I love abortionists, but I hate the dismembering of those unborn infants."* Yes, the one who wants to feel all fuzzy and warm toward these sinners can say, *"I separate sin from the sinner, so I can love you, yet hate your sin - just like God does!"* He does? Where do you get that? Psalm 11:5b says, *"The **one** who loves violence (sin), **His soul hates.**"* This doesn't sound like a separation to me. Or Proverbs 6:16-19, *"There are six things which the Lord hates ..."* and here are three of them; *"... **a heart that devises wicked plans (sin) ... a false witness who utters lies (sin), and one who spreads strife (sin) among brothers.**"* Even if you choose to dismiss "heart" - what about the other two? These sinners are not separated from their sin. In fact, **their sin causes the hatred - for them!** Sin and sinner are two peas **in one pod - they are one!** In fact, as far as the unsaved are concerned, I do not think God **ever** separates the two. In Romans 1, when speaking of idolaters and homosexuals, He gives them over to *"the lusts of their hearts,"* and *"to degrading passions"* **as the sin and sinner become indistinguishably mingled.** Even His chosen people, when deciding to pursue sin, were judged by God. *"You have ... delivered us (melted us) into the power of our iniquities"* (Isa 64:7). I do not see God separating sinners from their sin. If anything, He melts them into it. So, how did people come up with this notion? Well, I believe it has arisen from one of two sources. Either our legal system, or else a misunderstanding of Romans 7:7-25.

The defense part of our legal system is built upon placing the blame for errant behavior away from the accused and on to something else - anything else. The DC sniper, Lee Malvo, pulled the trigger, but the real culprit was **his obedient nature** towards his father figure, John Mohammed. John Hinkley shot Brady and President Reagan, but the real culprit was **the need to impress** Jody Foster. Congressman Janklow's **diabetes** caused him to speed, run a stop sign, and kill a motorcyclist. Defense lawyers blame upbringing, drugs, peer pressure - whatever they can dream up - to separate the act from the actor, or, in our case, the sin from the sinner. This cultural pollutant may have weaseled its way into many a "theologian's" thought processes.

But a less cynical view may attribute this errant teaching on a misunderstanding of Paul's discussion about his fight with his personal sin. He is talking about a battle between *"his inner man ... the law of my mind"* versus *"my flesh"*. He says, *"I am doing the very thing I hate But if I am doing the very thing **I do not wish** (the key to this), I am no longer doing it, but sin which dwells in me"* (Ro 7:15,20). While this passage is not the easiest to understand, I do think it is describing the struggle of the saint (believer) with his sin. **The saint is separated** in some very real ways from the old nature - from sin. Our new self wants to obey God, **but our old self does not.** Of course, as discussed earlier, the fate of the old self is sealed. It has been judged and is being overpowered and destroyed. But if we fail to avail ourselves of God's Spirit to put to death the deeds of the flesh, then God moves in with surgical strikes designed to kill the old self. Unfortunately, this is not a once-for-all procedure, but, rather, a step by step dismemberment of the old self. This process is called sanctification. So, God **does separate sin from the saint**, and it is targeted for annihilation, but I see no evidence God separates sin **from the sinner.** This false separation sounds great (maybe even a bit romantic?), but this gooey stuff of *"God separating the sinner from his/her sin"* is just another facet of the romanticized ideal of God's love. It is a great injustice to let sinners believe God somehow separates them from their actions and deeds. It may give them a false sense of security as it downplays their dire position with God **because of their sins.** They need to know the naked truth of how God sees them outside of Christ. It is a horrendous picture - and paint it I will. That is love - real love - for the sinner. And love them I will. How? By telling them the truth. Sin is the greatest of all enemies to one's well being. **Sin** forms a *"certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which (is) hostile to us"* (Col 2:14).

This is a death warrant not separated from the sinner. The Christian is **positionally** separated from his/her sin, but even then, sin still creates conditions for disciplinary activity from God.

“So, Are There Any Grounds From Which God Can Love Anybody?”

There is a foundation upon which God develops a basis for love. Ironically, it is from this same basis, His response of anger, wrath and individual hate for man arises. Please consider this carefully. (Yes, I did say, “individual hate.” Can this possibly be correct?).

While no person, in his/her natural state, is **worthy** of God’s love, each person still possesses **an innate worth**. This is a subtle, yet very important point. There is a difference between **being worthy** and possessing **an innate worth**. No one, based on merit, has any grounds for attracting love from God. But what does give **potential** for favorable treatment is this fact - we possess an innate worth in that man was created in the image and likeness of God - at least Adam was. “*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*” (Gen 1:26,27). At least **Adam** was created in the **image and likeness** of God. I am not aware of a passage that defines exactly what that means, but I will forward my opinion in a moment. But first, consider this statement **after the fall**. It may have a profound bearing on this forthcoming discussion. “*When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth*” (Gen 5:3). Now, I am going to just blurt this out, and I may, or may not, be right with all this.

What does it mean to be created in His image and likeness? My guess is that God created man (Adam) with many characteristics and abilities He Himself possesses. These are “images.” For example, the Bible is clear that God is creative, communicates, and plans things. He also has emotional responses, and reasons in both the physical and abstract realms. This includes mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, biology, morality - everything. Man was originally made **similar** to God in that he, too, could operate in these abilities, or “images.” To be made in **His likeness** may refer to how one operates in these abilities. Originally man (Adam) functioned **righteously** in them - just **like** God does. The **communicative image** was not fouled by lying, flattering, gossip, cursing, put downs - or using God’s Name in vain. Man used this image of God **like God does** in that he spoke only truth and for edification. The **planning image** was not fouled by schemes to rip off elders, invent warfare, or fly planes into buildings. Man was to plan great and mighty things that would benefit everyone and everything touched by the plan. The **creative image** was not fouled by the creation of slasher movies, self promoting books, or magnificently ornate parades featuring perverse sexual choices. After the fall, man lost the ability to practice these images consistent with God’s likeness. We twisted these abilities all up - **and that is the source of God’s anger, wrath, and hatred!** The very thing giving us innate worth is also the very thing that draws God’s wrath! We have taken the “crowns” He has imparted and have used them towards evil. He holds us accountable for this, and has logged every single violation by every single human being. Each violation requires **life** (blood) - either Jesus’ - or our own!

One fly in the ointment to my theory is that Seth is said to be in **the image and likeness of Adam**. My proposal (above) has us still in **the image** of God, but in **the likeness** of Adam. It is quite possible I am overestimating us. Maybe we have fallen so far that God does not consider any of Adam’s descendants (all of us) to be in **His image or likeness at all!** Maybe we are a lower form of life. He still holds us morally accountable, but altogether **inferior** to Adam as he was originally created. So, in that case, we do not even possess an innate worth in our natural state. That means we are even worse than what I have depicted thus far. I have given us too much credit.

So, here is where we are at. No one is worthy of God’s patience, kindness, goodness, etc. Sin has disqualified us from **being worthy** of that kind of activity from God. We may not even possess the innate worth I tried to make a case for in the preceding paragraphs. We may have lost more at the fall

than any of us realize, or have been taught. And it is not as though we were at one time good, and then went bad, and God wants to **restore** us to that former state. He says, "*The intent, the inclination, of man's heart is evil from his youth*" (Gen 8:21). We came out of the womb internally (eternally) bent toward evil. All we needed was time and nourishment to develop into the perverted creatures we are. In one statement, Jesus put all this in perspective. When addressed as "Good Teacher" by a man inquiring about how to inherit eternal life, Jesus rebuked him **and the entire human race**. "*Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone*" (Mk 10:17,18). No wonder they crucified Him. You know, when I hear unsaved people casually refer to Jesus as a good moral teacher, or great philosopher, I know they have never read what He taught and said.

Let's Get to the Bottom Line!

I want you to now forget a bunch of stuff. Forget all the theology, all the questions about fairness, and abandon your worries about the fate of people that have never heard (or never will hear) about the Son of God. I even want you to forget all the discussion about the Greek words on love! Forsake all concern about God loving, or not loving, everybody. Abandon all your philosophical, ethical, moralistic, problematic wrestlings on these matters. You can't do anything about them anyway, and, besides, God will ultimately take care of His own business. So, go ahead and turn all that stuff over to God, and let those concerns be His problems - at least for the next few moments. I want to talk to you - about **you**. I want to ask **you** some questions that I want **you** to answer between **you and yourself**. I want you to answer them honestly. In fact, I am going to leave some space between each question so you can write your response. If you do not want to answer any particular one, skip it, go to the next, and then come back to the one(s) skipped after you have answered the others.

1. **Should** God love you? Why?
2. Is there **something special about you** that should cause your Creator to love you?
3. Is there **something you have done** that should attract love from God?
4. Do you see yourself as superior to Esau? If so, in what way(s)?
5. Do you think God somehow owes it to you - to love you?
6. Who told you, "*God loves you!*"? Do you think that person (those people) know what he/she is talking about? How do you know he/she is correct? Are you willing to bet your eternal destiny on his/her assertions?

I am challenging you on a very critical point. You have probably been told, "*God loves you! And here's how much!*" (with arms outstretched as though hanging on a cross)." Well, **how do you know that? Who told you that? And how do they know that?** But most importantly, **is this true?** It seems to me, at first glance, if God does love me **unconditionally**, if He **really does**, then what's the fuss? If the Creator of everything loves us all - well, I've got it made - you've got it made - everybody's got it made! No worry, mate!

If you want to share any of your answers to questions above, each unique response will definitely make future editions of the “Organic Document.” I want this audience to be able to learn from you on this all important matter.

One More Question

Right on the heels of these previous questions, and your answers, let me ask you one more question. And then I want to give my response.

Question: Do you think there are **other people** worthy of God’s love? Are there people **better than you** who have earned God’s love - either by their behavior, or pious nature or something?

Now, I want you to really answer that before you read my response Now that you have, well, I have good news for you. Mary, John the Baptizer, the Apostle John or even Paul -no one has an innate advantage over you. Initially, all of us are in Adam. In an act of God, solely based upon His determination of mercy **and love**, He made some of us “*new creations*” (2Cor 5:17). He “*calls into being that which does not exist*” (Ro 4:17).

So, What About Me?

Well, I don’t think I’m under any delusion that God should love me. There is nothing about me in character or conduct that should elicit such a response from Him. I deserve His wrath and Hell if anybody does. I was a healthy, young, white, male living in the most prosperous country on earth with access to the message of God my whole life. I had all kinds of opportunity placed at my feet. So, what did I do with all this? I polluted myself with all kinds of foulness - mentally and physically. I had even spent two summers **selling Bibles** door to door - just for the money. It was a big joke. I was a Bible salesman in the summer and a bartender in the winter. Ha, ha, ha ... real funny. So, why does He love me? Is there something about me that makes me different than Esau, or Judas, or Pharaoh? Is there some little spark underneath all my wickedness that would cause God to overlook all the garbage - and love me? The answer is a simple ... no. God, for His own reasons, decided to extend mercy to me. This was not owed. He could have hardened me just as easy. I am absolutely convinced, **and totally certain**, this extension of mercy has been an act of God that has nothing to do with anything about **me**. I am also sure this conclusion will be confirmed at the Judgement. Furthermore, I also believe that every single vessel of mercy **will be of that same conviction** when the events of that Day come down. Not one high thought will be able to raise its abhorrent head when those events begin unfolding. Not one. Whether it’s Paul, Abraham, Mary, David, Ezekiel, Enoch, Daniel, or me - in this matter, we will all be on the same level. Of course, once this initial threshold is crossed, those saints will leave me in the dust, as their service, commitment, sacrifice, and behaviors toward God make my life look like a bad joke. Now ... tell me again; why should God love you? What is it about you that should elicit this response from Him?

I guess it is fairly obvious I am not inclined to declare to you how much God loves you. To do so, in my view, would be **hatred** for you. This is such an astoundingly important matter **for you personally**, that I want to be completely removed from being in the midst of that determination. It should be settled between you and God alone! It **must be** settled between you and God alone. One great goal of this Ebook has been to remove all the great “love filled” orators out of the picture as well. **I want you to deal directly with God** on this eternally important matter - **with everybody out of the way!** That **is** my love for you. It really is. You see, if it was in my power, I would like to see every single person forgiven and made a new creation. I would even like to see Satan redeemed. I am not the first in this desire, as Origen, an early Church “father,” did believe “*God was in Christ reconciling*

the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2Cor 5:19). And God reconciled “*all things to Himself ... through the blood of His cross ... whether things on earth or **things in the heavens***” (Col 1:20). So Origen believed all people and all angels, including Satan, were (are) pardoned! Obviously, I believe Origen was mistaken in his conclusions, but I sure understand the wish! But on to a few more wishes. I would like to see all the pain and suffering, created by sin, covered with the balm of pardon - and what has been done in the past, stay in the past. The sufferings in Hitler’s torture camps are finished. Couldn’t those who suffered there be fully comforted on the other side, with all their loved ones for eternity, and be fully restored, much like Job was - but with **an eternal** restoration? And couldn’t a redeemed Hitler, Goering, Hess, Himmler, and all the rest, seek pardon from their victims (and God), and all be fully recreated in righteousness? And there would be an eternity to accomplish restitution - if that was even needed. I wish all this **could** happen. I wish all this **would** happen. If God can save any of us, He can save all of us. I believe the blood of Jesus is powerful enough to pay for every sin ever spawned - even Satan’s. I wish God, in a great act of **unconditional love**, would simply apply that blood to all - humans and angels alike - and Hell would be eternally extinguished as there would be no need for its existence. But if Hell does need to exist, why can’t God give everyone **there** the opportunity to get right with Him? Why does a positive response to the Gospel **have to occur on this side of death** - especially when confusion abounds on all these *eternal* matters? **It seems like eternal destinies should not depend upon decisions made in a darkened, temporal realm.** He understands how sin blinds us, deadens us, confuses us, and enslaves us - even affecting Satan himself. Satan *knows* he has but *a short time*, so what is his reaction? He is “*full of wrath*”(Rev 12:12). That is insanity. If he was thinking right, he would react like Jonah’s Ninevites when they got the bad news of their impending doom. The king, and his nobles, declared an absolute fast and ordered full repentance by everybody. “*Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish!*” (Jonah 3:9). God did relent. Satan witnessed this. But sin has dramatically diminished his capacity for right thinking. Instead of begging for mercy, he has decided **to add to his damnation** by pursuing maximum mayhem. He is insane. It is clear that **everyone will understand** what they should have done once they are on the other side of death’s door! When speaking of His return at the end of this age, Jesus said, “*For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For, as in those days which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be*” (Mt 24:37-39). They **do understand once the curtain falls!** The rich man in Hades **knew what needed to happen** as he begged Abraham to send Lazarus back to warn his five brothers “*lest they also come to this place of torment*” (Lk 16:28). But that request was denied, as was his request for a cool drop of water, as a great chasm **was fixed** between the two eternal realms. And Who decided there was to be a chasm? And Who decided it was fixed? And Who decided that once one enters into Hades, there is no exit - eternally? All I can say is, “*it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb 10:31). But, to be quite honest, here is what I really want. I want God to have His way in all things. Not only is it going to turn out that way anyway, but I am convinced His determinations will be the proper ones, the correct ones - indeed the necessary ones. **My** wish is be found in total agreement with God, in every detail, on Judgement Day - and beyond.

“Man, Is This Guy Confused!”

Right about now I can hear many of you saying out loud, “*Boy, this guy is all confused about God’s love! This poor soul has tied himself up in knots as he has been futilely applying Western logic to an area of deep mystery. He has forgotten about our free will and how we have the power to choose,*

or refuse, God. He also does not understand that we are now in *The Age of Grace*, and though God has not changed, **His dealings with mankind has!**” Well, don’t worry about me too much. I haven’t forgotten any of those things. In fact I have been flooded with those themes and may know and understand them as well as you. And you know what? I think most of that is part of the Romanticized myth of God’s love, and does not **honestly deal with** many of the issues I have brought forward. But, that is why this is an “Organic Document.” I do think love is an important subject in the Christian faith - deserving a full vetting.

Conclusion

I have really written this for my own sake more than anyone else’s. This material has been burning inside of me for years. The same is true of all my Ebooks and Articles. But I hope this will also benefit Christians. I am not sure it will be of much value to the unsaved - as they are **unbelievers**. They do not believe God’s materials, and this stuff about God loving them or not - is a curiosity at best. When they find themselves in a “foxhole” in life, the issue might come up, but once out of the “foxhole,” the fogs of delusion roll back in. To run up to the unsaved and announce, “*God loves you!*” elicits a shrug of the shoulders, with an, “*Oh, that’s nice,*” as they walk off in their fog. They may think on it a bit, and come to conclusions like those of my Japanese boss, but the only thing that will cut through their fog of death, is **accurate sharing of God’s word, empowered by the Spirit of God**. But, He will only back up **truth**. I want you accurately representing Him. Judgement Day is going to be an absolute “bloodbath.” Only eight souls were saved in Noah’s day - out of how many? And at His return, it will be **like those days**. Think about this for a moment. Every sexually immoral person is going to Hell. Every adulterer, every homosexual, and every fornicator. No one’s opinion on these matters will mean anything. When you add all liars, all idolaters, all drunkards, and all who practice outbursts of anger, or jealousies, etc. ... well, **everybody** is covered in the lists of the damned. Relative to the world’s population, the redeemed will be **but a remnant**. And God loves all those who will be part of His mass slaughter? But, I do look forward to your input, and others may want to read your take on given subjects addressed here, and you may be interested in my responses as well.

So, if there is a conclusion, let’s go back to the beginning. It would be interesting to have you revisit your definition of love. Has anything changed?

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Listen, Learn, Live!

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