



Charity-Agape Introduction

Perhaps containing the greatest behavioral instructions, 1 Corinthians 13 contains the Bible's most concise expose on how to behave within and without the Family of God. While each of the Gospels and all Church Epistles provides information for how the New Christian Man is to walk, no Christian walk is complete without the overlay of an Agape Code of Conduct. That is exactly what Agape is. At least 20 specific conduct characteristics are listed, but are these ignored in the Church? That is the test question each Christian must answer. The following is designed to introduce you to this great field of study.

(1 Cor 13:1-2 KJV)
 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. {2} And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and



though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

We are told that, without agape, the Christian is a noise-maker, nothing more. Charity is translated from the Greek word agape. Often, Bible scholars and students of the Bible refer to charity as love. Charity might be a loving application of divinely inspired guidelines, but it isn't love. It is the how-to-behave for spiritually minded sons of God.

Prior to the day of Pentecost, Agape was widely known about and practiced. This means that Agape wasn't

first available when the Christian Church began.

Jesus prophesied about a unique manner of men called false prophets and what shall turn people away from proper son-of-God behavior.

(Mat 24:11-12 KJV)
 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. {12} And because iniquity shall abound, the love [agape] of many shall wax cold.

He exposed the future of deception, a future without this veritable code of conduct in operation. We see 'iniquity,' which is sin, at loggerhead with agape.

Jesus prophesied about the Pharisees' ignorance of salvation.

(Luke 11:42 KJV) But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love

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[agape] of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Jesus confronted the Pharisees, men who were leading God's people into a spiritual abyss. He taught the vitality and importance of judgment and agape. They taught falsehoods regarding salvation. Whenever you see the three words—love of God—together, assuming there are supporting Greek words in the text, the context is salvation.

The context of Jesus' words for this next example is found in verse 39:

(John 5:39 KJV) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

The context is eternal life. Why were these people so hateful toward Jesus? Jesus made himself equal with God, and the Jews hated and wanted to kill him for that. These hateful men were his audience. In his confrontation, he referenced agape.

(John 5:42 KJV) But I know you, that ye have

not the love [agape] of God in you.

These hateful men refused Jesus, God's salvation.

From these references, we have learned that the subject of agape has been with us for a very long time, its advent long before Pentecost.

(Rev 20:7-9 KJV) And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, {8} And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. {9} And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved [agape] city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

We learn from the book of Revelation that agape will be with us forever, for God's city is named after agape. In verse nine, it is called God's beloved city—God's agape city.

(John 13:35 KJV) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love [agape] one to another.

Jesus demanded his men follow a specific code of behavior; he told them to have agape toward one another.

(John 15:9 KJV) As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

God applies agape characteristics to all that He does. Jesus applied agape characteristics toward his disciples. We find agape cited three times in one verse, and we're not even in the Epistles which were written to Christians. The Gospels were written before Pentecost, but are not specifically addressed to Christians.

'Love' in the following verses is from agape.

(John 15:9-13 KJV) As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. {10} If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's command-

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ments, and abide in his love. {11} These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full. {12} This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. {13} Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus captured agape no less than eight times in these five verses. Do you think he placed importance on living the agape code? I do. Each English word, love, is translated from a form of agape. What do you make of continue, abide, remain, commandment, love one another, and lay down your life? I'd say living according to agape has moved to the absolute top of the list of godly behavior. Agape is literally the family of God code of conduct. Without it in operation, God's children are noise-makers, people who don't profit others in the Church and in life. This becomes especially vital regarding the operation of the manifestations of holy spirit.

(1 Cor 13:1-2 KJV)
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tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. {2} And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing [oudeis- not even one].

Our feature section, 1 Corinthians 13, should speak more loudly than ever. Verse two tells of Christians that manifest the gift of holy spirit. The word *gift* is falsely supplied by the translators. These Christians manifest holy spirit without proper behavior, and are nothing. Nothing means nothing. They might think that they are really something, but they are nothing in the eyes of the Church. Yes, they are still born again, but their manners in and among the sons of God, and that includes angels, is totally inappropriate. Do angels matter?

Verse one says they do. What is an angel? An angel is a 'messenger.' The word angel is highly misleading, conjuring up images of little

cupids, and naked men with huge wings. The Bible teaches no such thing. The Bible teaches that a messenger (if I may) of God is a man just like you and me. There is a significant difference though. The messenger-man is a spirit-man, not a carnal, five-senses man. He eats, laughs, and get his feet dirty just like me and you, but he is not carnal. He is a man. All sons of God in the Bible are men. Fallen messengers are men (think satan and one third of the angels), faithful messengers are men (think the angels that have not turned against God), human beings are men, even God is a man. We were created in his image.

You may speak in tongues with an angelic tongue, but without agape applied to your step-by-step Christian walk, you risk alienating God's family, including all earthly and heavenly sons of God. These may sound tough, but so do verses one and two. Bottom line: receive the 1 Corinthians reproof seriously.

Understanding 'nothing' is vital to behavior-minded sons of God. Nothing means nothing.

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(Mat 5:13 KJV) **Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing [oudeis- not even one], but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.**

“Yikes!” you might say. I would. Nothing is as bland as useless salt. It still looks like salt, but is tasteless. Salt used to be more valuable than fine gold; it was traded as a value-commodity. What if you purchased salt with this in mind, only to find out that it had lost its savor? Only to find out that it had not even one smack of taste? I probably shouldn’t mention that useless salt should be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

(1 Cor 13:3 KJV) **And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**

Summarizing verses 1-3 in terms of all the things a well-meaning son of God might be doing adjacent agape, we see a rather involved list of bragging rights that, without

agape in operation, send the boaster running.

1. He speaks in tongues, maybe with an angelic tongue.
2. He prophecies.
3. He understands all divine secrets (can you imagine?).
4. He understands all knowledge (if he applies this, he is super wise).
5. He is oozing with knowledge.
6. He operates the manifestation of believing, using it to move mountains.
7. He is charitable beyond belief, nourishing countless needy with all of his possessions.
8. He works so hard at giving to others that he ‘burns himself out’ day after day.

Without agape, wonderful men and women perform countless selfless acts, yet still fall miserably short of establishing their own ‘rightness’ before God. Agape puts the savor back into the salt. Agape puts the Christ back into a Christian. A Christian seeking to benefit others, must first benefit him or her-self. That is the nature of the word ‘profiteth.’ God wants his sons (you, me, and all mes-

sengers) to benefit. What good would it do if you benefit or profit others, and you yourself suffer? That makes no sense! Take thought to bringing profit or benefit to yourself, and then to others.

(1 Tim 4:16 KJV) **Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.**

This is not talking about financial gain; this is talking about practicing agape behavior, a code that applies to all of God’s family.

Agape behavior offers no in-between, no gray position. Agape behavior is impossible to counterfeit.

(Mat 6:24 KJV) **No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love [agape] the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**

On one hand, we are given agape. On the other, hate. Don’t be caught in the misty

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flats of indecision—should I behave or should I ...?

(Mat 5:43-48 KJV) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love [agape] thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. {44} But I say unto you, Love [agape] your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; {45} That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. {46} For if ye love [agape] them which love [agape] you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? {47} And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? {48} Be ye therefore perfect [complete - with a view to salvation], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect [complete - with a view to salvation].

Agape is Christian, Jewish, Israeli, angelic, heavenly, other-worldly, eternal, and most of all, godly. Agape defies sin and hate. Agape brings full joy. All sons of God are to behave according to this divine behavior code.

(Rev 22:14 KJV) Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

We are commanded to love God and each other according to agape.

So, just what is this code that we are to follow? More to come ..., next month.

Much love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown