



Agape—Suffereth Long

This series of Artios Letters will expound upon the biblical usages of agape and define each characteristic. They will show the reader what each characteristic means and how to manifest them. Biblical support is provided for each topic. The clear-cut information that follows will enable any Christian to attain a disciplined life through agape, and begin to reap the benefits of such a life-style.

Our quest begins with the first characteristic of agape – called suffereth long. Keeping in mind that we are dealing with old English phrases, we have to find out what this really means.

1 Cor 13:4 **Charity suffereth long**, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,



What's behind the English?

The phrase “suffereth long” comes from the Greek word makrothumia. This word is derived from two different words, makro and thumos.

Makro means “far off, to be slow, or of long duration.”

Thumos means “to rush,” and indicates “a strong passion or emotion of the mind.”

Since “suffereth long” comes from two different Greek words, we need to

spend some time on both. Let's begin with makro.

Makro

Makro is used to describe things that are of long duration, whether distance or time. We'll find it used in many different verses.

Luke 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

Here, it is used to describe distance, a journey to a far [makro] country.

Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Agape—Suffereth Long

The Pharisees would make long [makro] prayers. From these two verses, the word makro is defined. It means of long duration, and this length can be either in terms of distance or time.

Thumos

Thumos means, “a strong passion or emotion of the mind.”

Luke 4:28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

The people in the synagogue received Jesus' teaching with wrath. They were all filled with a strong negative passion (wrath). Can you imagine this? These people became really mad because they disagreed with what Jesus was teaching. Not only did they become mad; they were *filled* with this strong negative passion.

Acts 19:28 And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of **wrath**, and cried out, saying, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*
Acts 19:29 And the

whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

Paul just finished teaching that idol worship was wrong. The people in Ephesus did not like hearing this. In fact, they did not like it so much that they became filled with a strong negative passion. This passion drove the whole city into confusion.

Acts 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

The confusion was so bad that they did not even know why they were come together. Thumos means, “wrath,” which is a strong negative passion, which can issue in confusion. We have allowed the Word of God to define the two words that make up makrothumia. This takes us to the Golden Nugget account, an account for

each characteristic that defines this quality of agape. Then we can go to the individual usages of this word to complete our study.

Golden Nugget

The following account describes the word makrothumos in detail. It provides an example of how one should prolong or put wrath far away, as well as the opposite, how a man can manifest a strong negative passion. The account is about two people: a king who is filled with compassion for one person and a servant who is filled with wrath toward another.

Mat 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.
Mat 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.
Mat 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he

Agape—Suffereth Long

had, and payment to be made.

The servant owed the king a lot of money, but was unable to pay him back. Consequently, the king commanded the servant to be sold, along with his whole family and possessions. This is how the king was going to be recompensed for the debt.

Mat 18:26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have **patience** [makrothumos] with me, and I will pay thee all.

The servant reacted by falling down and begging the king to have patience. "Patience" is translated from makrothumos. He specifically asked the king to postpone his wrath, to move his negative passion a long way away. The servant tried to convince the king that he would be able to pay.

Mat 18:27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

Verse 27 contains a great key to understanding how to postpone such strong negative emotions. The king was moved with compassion, set the servant free and forgave him of his debt. Compassion is the positive quality that has the ability to counter the aggressive attributes of wrath. Let's learn more about it.

Compassion

Compassion comes from the Greek word splagknizomai meaning, "to be moved with pity or compassion." Literally, this Greek word means, "from the chief intestines" or "spleen." Often, it is translated "bowels." In current day vernacular, the word "guts" would also apply.* The word normally used in English is compassion. Our compassion comes from our innermost feelings. Compassion confronts and defeats nega-

*This is an example of the figure of speech metonymy meaning "changing one noun for another." When this figure is employed, the literal meaning of chief intestines is changed to mean innermost feelings, or compassion. When God uses figures like this in His Word, He is emphasizing His Word. God is saying, 'Pay Attention!'

tive passion.

The following examples of compassion can help you better understand what it means.

Phil 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the **bowels** of Jesus Christ.

Paul was sharing of his personal longings. He says that he longed after these people "in the bowels of Jesus Christ". He had the innermost feelings of Christ in him. These feelings were used to convey his longing to see the other believers. Compassion comes from within. When you allow the Christ in you to shine, you will naturally manifest compassion.

Matthew 9 shows us how compassionate Jesus Christ was.

Mat 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Mat 9:36 But when he

Agape—Suffereth Long

saw the multitudes, he was moved with **compassion** on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Compassion has a moving force behind it. It can move you from within to help others. Because you have Christ in you, you have the same ability to have compassion from within. This is a wonderful truth. God's people, born again of holy spirit, have the ability to manifest the same compassion that Jesus Christ manifested. Compassion comes from within and is available because of the gift of holy spirit.** This quality of compassion is always available and can be drawn upon at any time.

Phil 2:1 If *there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love [agape], if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels*

**To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Colossians 1:27) Christians have Christ in them.

and mercies,

Philippians 2 begins by stating that "if" there is anymore of Christ's comfort. This really is not even a question. Certainly there is plenty of Christ's comfort. As well, there is plenty more comfort of agape and fellowship of the spirit [sharing fully of the spirit] and bowels [innermost feelings] and mercies. Mercy, oiktrimon, means, "kindness in relieving sorrow and want." All of these qualities come from Christ within you. If these things still do exist, and they do, then we are to carry out verse 2.

Phil 2:2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, *being of one accord, of one mind.*

It is the fulfilling of a leader's joy when people he has taught are like-minded with the same love, the same spirit, and the same thoughts. Like-mindedness is reflected in love, spirit and thoughts all being the same among the believers. Because the same comfort of agape, fellowship of the spirit, innermost feelings

and mercies are available, Christians can be like-minded. Compassion is a necessary ingredient to manifesting agape. As you discipline your mind to manifest compassion, you enable yourself to defeat negative passions.

We were studying Matthew 18 for our Golden Nugget. We learned of the compassion of the king, and how that is a wonderful example of a man staying, or putting away the temptation to manifest the strong negative passion of the mind. We learned that compassion is wrath's opposite. Now we will pick up the Matthew 18 record and see the negative side of wrath.

Mat 18:28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*

The servant, the one who was just forgiven by the king, found one of his servants who owed him money. Look at what he

Agape—Suffereth Long

did. He grabbed his servant by the throat and demanded owed money. Wrath can become physical.

Mat 18:29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have **patience** [makrothumia] with me, and I will pay thee all.

Patience comes from makrothumia. This lowly servant asked for the same treatment that the king had just given his servant. Can you imagine this situation? Here is a man who was just forgiven by the king. He was now without debt, and he is standing there with his hands around his servant's throat demanding money.

Mat 18:30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

Clearly, this servant learned nothing from the compassion of the king. He threw his own servant into prison until he should him pay his debt.

Mat 18:31 So when his

fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord [the king] all that was done.

The fellow-servants went to the king for help. This must have been such a terrible scene to provoke such sorrow.

Mat 18:32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Mat 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

The king quickly brought this man and his wickedness under control. This man manifested a tremendous amount of wrath toward his servant. The king realized the problem and took care of it. Remember that, at first, the king was also filled with compas-

sion toward this man. A compassionate man also has the ability to be just. Compassion is not a compromise or a weakness. We can be moved with compassion or we can be so filled with negative passion that we have no forgiveness within us at all. Whenever negative passion becomes a temptation, we must learn to put on compassion and be just.

In situations where you are tempted to manifest a strong negative passion toward another, remember how the king handled the servant. He did not manifest a negative passion toward the wicked servant. He was just. He removed the problem from the other servants without becoming filled with wrath. Once compassion is learned, it becomes easy to manifest in trying situations. Learn to be compassionate toward those in need. Compassion and justice go hand in hand.

Much Love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown