

Qualities of God - Love

(agapao and agape)

A modern English language dictionary may contain some or all of the 18 definitions of love currently used in conversations and written materials today. Many of those definitions have nothing to do with the Biblical concept of love and are condemned by God in both the Old and New Testaments.

In the Monte Vista Lesson Archives, there are over 80 sermons and lessons on love. One full class was conducted on the "Love Chapter" of 1 Corinthians 13 and Ryan Goodwin presented a series on "The Other Love Chapter," Romans 12.

Many of our neighbors claim the God of the Old Testament was a God of hate, but the God of the New Testament is a God of love. In making that claim they deny the very nature of God and His people while preaching a doctrine of love and acceptance of all people and things without regard to clear statements and demands of the only true, never changing, God. All people are loved by God but are accepted into His presence on His terms, not mankind's terms.

John states that "love is of God" and "God is Love." (1 John 4:7-8) The love that John writes of is a noun. It is something that has substance, like all other nouns, and will cause and/or nourish action and attitudes in those that possess it.

Without digging too deep into the original definition of terms, and looking at the modern translators' interpretation of those terms, let us consider Romans 12:9-10 which refers to the hearts of people changed by the Love of God.

(Romans 12:9-10) Let love (the noun) be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate (the natural attitude demonstrated to protect the young or suffering) to one another with brotherly love (the familial love of family members), in honor giving preference to one another (placing the wellbeing of others before self).

The word love used to begin verse nine is the noun form and is the force behind the verb or action form of love in: (John 3:16) God's love for the world to give His son; (Romans 5:8) the demonstration of God's love while we were sinners, and (John 17:26) the Father's love toward the son and in turn, the love expected to be in us.

This expectation is also mentioned in (John 14:21) where Jesus says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

The identification of love is described by W. E. Vine this way; "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, (1 John 4:9-10). Obviously, this is not the love of complacency or affection; that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects (Romans 5:8). It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself." In other words, God loves because that is what He is and cannot do otherwise.

In the Old Testament, the love of God is shown in passages like; (Deuteronomy 7:9) "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;" And (Deuteronomy 13:3) "... the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Notice the attribute of love toward those that "pass the test" of returning His love, with all their heart and soul, by obedience to Him. The book of Judges is a commentary on people doing what was in their hearts rather than God's heart.

New Testament demonstration of love is, first of all, a committed, wholehearted, love of God. It is

demonstrated by obedience to the gospel commands, love and care for the brethren, and a love of all mankind with a commitment to work for the salvation of everyone. The opposite of love is shown in "self-will," pleasing one's self, satisfying individual desires, and ignoring God's desires.

In Colossians 2:20 to 3:14, Paul questions why we should be concerned with human things that are, "...according to the commandments and doctrines of men?" He states God's requirement for His children in (Colossians 3:12-14) "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

We each need to ask, "What is the object of our love? Is it the world's things, our things, or God's things?"