

GOD'S SPIRIT OF LOVE IS BASED UPON FIXED PRINCIPLES

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In the Nov. 10th Manna comment, our Pastor said that “The love of God, which the apostle is here describing as the spirit of the Lord’s people is a love which is far above selfishness, and is based upon fixed principles, which should, day by day, be more and more distinctly discerned, and always firmly adhered to at any cost.” The particular thought that caught my special attention in this comment is that “love is based upon fixed principles.”

I wonder how many of us have thought of love as “based upon fixed principles?” If this be true, and if, we should be discerning these principles more distinctly every day, and if, we should always firmly adhere to these principles at any cost, then we have a most vital subject to think about. If we are going to adhere to principles at any cost, then we must have clear ideas as to just what these principles are.

The Nov. Manna comment is taken from an article in the Feb. 15, 1903 Tower and is entitled “LOVE IS THE PRINCIPAL THING.” Under the title of the article, in brackets we found these words, “See revision of this article published in issue of Nov. 15, 1911,” and I turned to this article and found it entitled “A PRACTICAL SELF-EXAMINATION ON LOVE.” The same expression exactly was found in this article as the one in the Nov. 10th Manna.

We will use the time at our disposal to see if we can discover some of the “fixed principles” of love, and how these principles are worded in Scriptural language. We are concerned now with agape love—please keep this in mind as there are other loves in the Word of God. It has been said that “It seems impossible to describe love, this wonderful quality without which nothing is acceptable in the sight of God.” Love has certain manifestations and those who possess the characteristics of love are able to appreciate it because they have it as a disposition. It has been said that “the measure of our appreciation of divine love will be the measure of our zeal in conforming our characters to the divine pattern.”

We all know that many of the graces of the Spirit are recognized by the unregenerate and are IMITATED as marks of good breeding; and in some cases this imitation is successfully worn as a cloak or mask, covering hearts and sentiments wholly antagonistic to the holy spirit of love. “In the Christian, however, a mere OUTWARD manifestation of amiability, meekness, gentleness, patience, etc., is not sufficient—these graces must be produced by the SPIRIT of love, filling and expanding within his own heart.”

We know that in the early church there were certain gifts such as prophecy, or oratory, special knowledge of the mysteries of God, and large faith; yet Paul declares that “if we

possessed all of these in their fullest measure, and love were absent, he would be nothing—a mere cipher—not a member of the new creation at all, since love is the very spirit of the begetting to the new nature.” In 2 Cor. 13:5, Paul counsels us to “Examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith.” We are “to prove ourselves” by this test of Love—“Whether I am something or nothing, in God’s estimation, is to be measured by my love for Him, for His brethren, for His cause for the world in general and even for my enemies, rather than by my knowledge, or fame or oratory.”

Incidentally “we are not to understand that one could have a knowledge of the deep mysteries of God without having been begotten by the holy spirit of love; for the deep things of God knoweth no man, but by the spirit of God; but one might lose the spirit before losing the knowledge it brought him. In the measure of character, therefore, we are to put Love first, and to consider it the chief test of our nearness to and acceptance with the Lord.”

The Apostle Paul gives us a detailed description of the various qualities of agape love in his well-known treatise on love found in the 13th chapter of 1st Cor. We will examine these qualities and as we do, I think we will discover the “fixed principles” that will be guidelines for the development of the spirit of love and its application in the practical affairs of life. However, before we delve into the 13th chapter of 1 Cor. we want to offer a word of instruction or caution. We could even say a word of WARNING. Our word of warning is this—we must remember that this love described in 1 Cor. is NOT the foundation of Christian character, but the refinement of Christian character, the finishing touches, so to speak. The foundation of Christian character is stated by Jesus in Mark 12:30, 31 “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

In giving this command, the Lord did not specify, first meekness, gentleness, patience, but love toward God and toward our neighbor. “Meekness, gentleness and patience, are indeed elements of a holy character, a holy mind, which the Lord will develop in us; but they are not the sum of this character which we call love. They are only twigs or branches, as it were, on the great tree of Christian faith and fellowship; and these twigs or branches can be duplicated to some extent on other trees, and on other vines than that of ‘The Father’s right-hand planting.’ So then, in looking for Christian brotherhood we should begin at the start and look for loyalty to God and to our Lord and to the Gospel message and to the brethren.” (R4480-6, 8-13) If any of you wish to do a little brushing up on this subject, we refer you to a Reprint article on page 4479 entitled; “VARYING DEGREES OF LOVE.”

The reason we mention the foundation of Christian character is because some are talking a great deal about brotherly love today, as though it were the foundation of Christian

character. No, there is something that comes first, and that is love toward God, love toward Christ and love for the Truth. Then comes the refinements of Christian character as twigs or branches—fruits of the Spirit—growth of the spirit.

Apropos to this we quote from Volume VI, page 264, near the top—“Next to the Lord, the Truth is the most precious thing in all the world; it is not to be trifled with, not to be played with; and whoever is negligent along this line will himself sustain injury.” Love of the Truth comes before love of the brethren every time. In fact if we truly love the brethren, we will adhere to the truth at all costs. We will carefully proceed now with our study as we want to get a clear picture of these “fixed principles,” that are to develop in us the spirit of love in our hearts.

“Love suffereth long and is kind”—“have I this love, especially for the household of faith, as leads me to suffer considerable and for a long time, and yet be kind?” “Am I patient with the weaknesses and imperfections of those who give any evidence of good intentions?” “Am I patient even with those who are out of the way, realizing that the great adversary blinds the minds of the masses, and remembering that this manifestation of love was very prominent in our Lord Jesus, who was patient with his opponents?”

Our first “fixed principle” then is that “love suffereth long and is kind.” It must be a “fixed principle” with us that we are to be patient and kind in our viewpoint of others and patient and kind in our treatment of them. This is to include those who are “out of the way” because of being blinded by the Adversary and their general imperfection incident to the fall; and is to include too a special exercise of patience and kindness toward those who give evidence of good intentions. This first “fixed principle” should not be hard to remember. Incidentally, we might ask here—is this phase of love the secret of true politeness? yes, we think it is—“We are to be kind in our methods, seeking to guard our manner and tone of voice, knowing that others are affected by the way we act and speak.” We are even affected by our own actions, for if we are rude we are led into other paths of unrighteousness, and the results have a compound effect—first upon the ones we are talking to, and second, upon our own conduct. We as Christians, “above all others, should be kind, courteous, gentle in the home, in our place of business, in the church—everywhere.” “In proportion as this perfect love is attained, the constant effort of the heart will be to have every word and act, like the thought which prompts them, full of patience and kindness. And these are not to be mere outward adornments, but are to be fruits, growths from or results of having come into fellowship with God, having learned of him, having received of Him His spirit of holiness, love.

Have I the Love that ‘envieth not’ the love that is generous, so that I can see others prosper and rejoice in their prosperity, even if, for a time, my own affairs be not so prosperous?” “This is true generosity, the very reverse of jealousy and envy. This facet of Love rejoices with them that rejoice, in the prosperity of every good word and work,

and in the advancement in Christian grace and in the Divine service of all who are actuated by the Divine Spirit.” So here is the second “fixed principle” of Love—“we are to envy not.” This is a very exacting principle—there is to be no selfishness in our hearts that would be jealous of others—their prosperity in anything that is good or approved of God. The spirit of envy wants everything for self only.

Next, “Have I the love that ‘vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up?’—the love that tends to modesty, that is not boastful, not lifted up?” “Have I the Love that would prompt to good deeds, not to be seen of men, but that would do the same if no one saw or knew but God only?” “This facet of love will not boast of having heavenly knowledge or of some advancement in the graces of the Spirit, but will freely acknowledge the truth that everything we have is a gift from God. This facet of Love will express thankfulness to God for all the favors received at His hand. Such love has the spirit of a sound mind that is happy to acknowledge the good points of others and does not esteem self too highly, but is humble.” So here is our third “fixed principle”—“Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up”—does not boast of possessions or attainments.

“Have I the love which is courteous—‘doth not behave itself unseemly?’ This is the reverse of pride, thinking of self as somebody important in some way or another. Pride leads to snobbishness, looking down on others.” There is a little saying that applies here—“Politeness has been defined as Love in trifles; courtesy as Love in little things.” A true Christian is to be courteous to the Lord’s people, to those he lives with, in his home, and in his dealings with the world. Our fourth “fixed principle” then is “we are not to behave ourselves unseemly, but we are to be courteous from the heart.”

“Have I the Love which is unselfish, which ‘seeketh not her own’ interests exclusively, which on occasion might be willing to let some of her own rights be sacrificed in the interests of others? The selfish spirit is that which not only demands my own rights on every occasion, but which demands those rights regardless of the conveniences and comfort and rights of others.” So the fifth “fixed principle” is that we will be on guard against taking any unjust advantage of others, and will prefer rather to suffer a wrong than to do a wrong; to suffer an injustice than to do an injustice to anyone no matter who it is. This “fixed principle” put into practice, has a great influence upon all the affairs of life, inside as well as outside of the home and family. The world is in deep trouble today because this “fixed principle” is not put into practice.

Do I have a love which is good tempered, “not easily provoked” to anger—a love that enables me to see both sides of a question, that gives me the spirit of a sound mind, which enables me to perceive that exasperation and violent anger are not only unbecoming, but worse than that, injurious to those toward whom they may be directed, and also injurious in their effect upon my own heart and body? This is our sixth “fixed principle”—we are to have the spirit, the disposition that “is not easily provoked to anger.” What does it

mean to “be easily provoked?”—it means to have a bad temper, to be fretful, to be habitually in a bad humor, to be touchy, quick to take offence. This disposition is to be resisted and taken firmly in hand and overcome. We remember the precious promises to the seven churches in the book of Revelation were addressed to the overcomers. To the extent that we are “easily provoked” to that extent we fall short of the perfect pattern set before us—the spirit of our Heavenly Father, and the spirit of our Lord and Head. I think it is in one of our Manna comments that the Pastor reminds us that it is natural for us to want to excuse ourselves along this line, and say “it is my way.” It is part of our business as New Creatures to overcome our old ways. If we allow ourselves to be “easily provoked,” there are other evils that flow from this disposition. How much we annoy others if we are “easily provoked”—if we are touchy, quick to take offence, fretful. Also we make it almost impossible for others to talk to us on things that need to be talked about—for instance, if there is a misunderstanding of some kind, how difficult it is to approach anyone with an explanation of the facts, if we are inclined to “stand on our dignity” and not face facts squarely, honestly and humbly.

We might add another “fixed principle” here—the seventh—and that is that Love needs to be firm and inflexible where clear principles are involved, where valuable lessons are to be inculcated. There is a time when righteous indignation must be exercised, but it must be exercised in doing good, and must not lead to bitterness or harshness toward our enemies, or toward those of our friends whom we would assist or instruct or correct.

Have I the spirit of Love which “thinketh no evil?”—what does this mean “to think no evil?” This means a disposition to be guileless, not suspicious of evil or looking for faults in others, especially evil motives. So our eighth “fixed principle” is that we are not to “think evil.” This means that we will be willing to interpret the conduct of others charitably—to make allowances for errors in judgment as long as it is consistent to do this. Perfect love is good intentioned and prefers, so far as possible, to view the words and conduct of others from the standpoint of possible good intentions. Following this “fixed principle” means that we will not treasure up animosities and suspicions, not in our imagination to manufacture a chain of circumstantial proofs of evil intentions out of trivial affairs. If our thoughts would attempt to manufacture a chain of circumstantial proof against a person, we would be wasting valuable mental energy that is supposed to be consecrated to the Lord and used in useful ways. There is a wise proverb that “Faults are thick where love is thin.” What a benefit it is to make good use of this proverb in our Christian growth!

Incidentally, even though Love passes over offenses and takes no account of them, holding no bitter grudges, yet this does not mean that Love would treat evil-doers in precisely the same manner as it would treat its friends. Sometimes it is necessary to take notice of offenses on the part of others and to withhold a certain degree of cordiality; but no hatred, malice or strife should be manifested. If we maintain a kind and dignified

manner, then we leave the door of opportunity open for a full reconciliation as soon as possible.

Have I the Love that “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth?” This is a very important question that can be used to good advantage in self-examination. Do I love truth and righteousness and am I so opposed to iniquity, that anything wrong would be distressing to me? Do I feel sympathetic toward any who are beset with evil and temptations? Do I love the Truth so much that it would take precedence above anything wrong that might bring selfish advantage to me? Would I face the truth, no matter what it might cost me personally? Would I feel sad to see anyone fall away from goodness? Do I love the Truth so much that I would embrace it and serve it and stand up for it, even though this might mean the loss of religious friends and the loss of the esteem of my relatives and neighbors? “In the Lord’s estimation, it is all the same whether we are ashamed of Him or ashamed of His Word; and of all such He declares that He will be ashamed when He comes to be glorified in His saints.” So this is our ninth “fixed principle,” that I will never rejoice in iniquity, but rather I will rejoice only in the truth.

Paul ends up his analysis of Love by saying that Love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” The Weymouth translation renders this verse as “Love can overlook faults, Love is full of trust, full of hope, full of endurance.” Love beareth all things in the sense that it is impregnable against the assaults of evil—that resists evil, impurity, sin and everything that is contrary to the “fixed principles” of Love. It is both able and willing to endure, for the cause of God, anything that God would permit in the form of reproaches, reproofs, insults, losses and misrepresentations. The Apostle John tells us in 1 John 5:4 that the victory that overcometh the world, is our faith. And the very life and center of our faith is the Holy Spirit of Love for the Lord and for those that are His and sympathetically, for the world. God provides grace to enable perfect Love to bear up under all circumstances and bring us off conquerors. So this is our tenth principle—“Love beareth all things.”

“Love believeth all things” in the sense that it is unwilling to impute evil to another unless forced to do so by indisputable evidence. Such a love takes no pleasure in hearing evil. Godly love would rather be trustful than suspicious and would not want to accuse anyone unjustly. An unmerciful, evil-thinking mind results in unmerciful conduct toward others. The eleventh principle is that “love believeth all things.”

Paul says that Love “hopeth all things”—it perseveres under unfavorable conditions and continues to hope for and labor for those who need assistance—perfect Love is not easily discouraged. Love perseveres because having learned of God and having become a partaker of His holiness, it trusts in God and hopes undismayed for the fulfillment of His gracious covenant, however much the unbelief around us would reject everything that we might say or do in behalf of our religious belief and life. The twelfth principle is that

“love hopeth all things.” This hopeful element of Love enables the saints to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. This hopeful quality makes us strong against all discouragement in the work of the Lord. Love’s hopefulfulness knows no despair, for its anchorage enters into that which is beyond the veil, and is firmly fastened to the Rock of Ages.

“Love endureth all things.”—there is no other quality that will stand up as long as this Love quality. Love toward God will endure all things that God sees fit to permit for our training. Love toward the Lord’s people will endure all that is required to endure for the accomplishment of that which is good for the Lord’s people. And love toward man will keep functioning as long as it is possible to do so. The thirteenth principle is that “Love endureth all things.”

So we find indeed that Paul’s analysis of Love in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians is a revealment of the “fixed principles” of Love and we need to constantly study these principles so they become a very part of our mentality and character structure, and guidelines for our conduct as Christians. The 13th chapter of 1 Cor. is a vital outline of the various qualities of Divine Love.

But the word Love is a translation of other Greek words aside from agape. In Strong’s concordance we find an interesting explanation of the different shades of meaning of certain Greek words, all of which are translated by the English word love. Besides agape, there is philadelphia and also phileo. Philadelphia means fraternal affection, love of the brethren. (#5360) An example of this is found in John 15:19, “If ye were of the world, the world would love [*philadelphia*] his own.” Another example is Titus 3:15, “All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love [*philadelphia*] us in the faith”—this is a fraternal love.

Phileo (#5368, another Greek word translated love, means to have affection for, denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling. An example of this type of love is Heb. 13:1, “Let brotherly love [*phileo*] continue.” Another example is 1 Pet. 1:22, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love [*phileo*] of the brethren, see that ye love [*agape*—another type of love] one another with a pure heart fervently.” In this text two different Greek words are used and both are translated love.

In 1 Thess. 4:9 we also find two different loves—philadelphia and agape, but you would not know this because both of these Greek words are translated love, and this obscures the meaning. “But as touching brotherly love [*philadelphia*] ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love [*agape*] one another.”

Why the different words? Strong's concordance gives an explanation as follows: philadelphia means fraternal affection; phileo means to be a friend to, (i.e., fond of an individual or an object) to have affection for (denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling). Agape is wider, embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety.

The thought is that even though we might have a fraternal affection (*philadelphia*) for a person, or feel an attachment to a person as a matter of sentiment or feeling (*phileo*), we as Christians must go beyond both of these loves and have agape love. This agape love means the exercise of the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety, as Strong expresses it. This explanation by Strong is a great blessing to us in making clear that we are to go beyond mere fraternal love and go beyond phileo love—we must go on to agape love—we must do some thinking when it comes to agape love.

Agape love means that we are to follow out all those “fixed principles” that we touched upon—“love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, love doth not behave itself unseemly, love seeketh not her own; love is not easily provoked, love thinketh no evil, love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, love beareth all things, love believeth all things, love hopeth all things, love endureth all things.” THIS KIND OF LOVE COMES FROM THINKING on what we are doing!

With this explanation, we can read 1 Thess. 4:9 with greater understanding—“But as touching brotherly love [*philadelphia*] ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love [*agape*] one another.” The thought of the apostle is that we are to exercise agape love toward all with whom we have a Christian fraternal relationship. Let us read 1 Pet. 1:22 again, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love [*phileo*] of the brethren, see that ye love [*agape*] one another with a pure heart fervently.” Yes, even though we might feel fond of our brethren, we must go beyond this and love with agape love.

Agape love, as set apart from philadelphia love and phileo love, is sometimes spoken of as “disinterested” love. This expression needs an explanation because the word “disinterested” can be understood in two senses. In the dictionary the word “disinterested” has two definitions. One meaning is “not interested, indifferent.” This manifestly is not the meaning we want. The other definition is “unbiased by personal interest or advantage; not influenced by selfish motives.” This is the definition that applies—“unbiased by personal interest or advantage; not influenced by selfish motives.” A fraternal relationship or a personal attachment could have a measure of selfishness in it, but not so with agape love—divine love. So while it is true that we have a fraternal relationship with one another in Christ; and while it is true that we can feel a personal

attachment for one another in Christ, yet we are to go on to exercise divine love for or toward one another.

Incidentally, while we are on the subject of agape love, I think we should be aware of the fact that this Greek word, *agape*, is used also in an inferior sense—to describe a willing mental assent to something that has nothing to do with divine love—in fact it is the very opposite in some instances. We should know about this to increase our knowledge of the Word of God. For instance 1 John 2:15, “Love [*agape*] not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love [*agape*] the world, the love [*agape*] of the Father is not in him.” John 3:19, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved [*agape*] darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” This means willing, mental assent—some willingly love darkness rather than light. John 12:43 gives a somewhat similar thought—“For they loved [*agape*] the praise of men more than the praise of God.” 2 Tim. 4:10, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved [*agape*] this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.” 2 Pet. 2:15, “Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved [*agape*] the wages of unrighteousness.” Yes, such gave their mental assent to receiving the wages of unrighteousness.

Jesus, in describing the love that must be for him, if we are to receive his approval, tells us that “he that loveth [*agape*] father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth [*agape*] son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” This statement is found in Matt. 10:37. In John 12:25 we find these words, “He that loveth [*agape*] his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” Yes, those who give willing, mental assent to this life, will lose it; and those who are willing to sacrifice this life in the Lord’s service will gain life eternal. In Luke 11:43 we find these words, “Woe unto you, Pharisees for ye love [*agape*] the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market.” This was a deliberate mental assent on the part of the Pharisees. Well, I think this is sufficient to show how the word *agape* is used in an inferior sense, as well as used to describe the “fixed principles” of divine love.

Now we shall turn our attention to the uses of the word *agape* love that are used in a higher sense—to willing mental assent to that which is right and good. Luke 10:27, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” This means wholehearted mental assent. John 13:34, 35 is very interesting, reading from Fenton’s translation, “I give you a new command that you love one another; just as I have loved you, in the same way you ought also to love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love to one another.”

Emphasis shown in the Diaglott is extremely significant. In verse 34 it is just plain *agape* love—“that you love one another.” But in verse 35, it is *agape* love EMPHASIZED

—“By this all will know that you are my disciples if you have THE LOVE to one another.” This is the same emphasized love in 1 Cor. 13th chapter: THE LOVE. Jesus called this a “New commandment” and this is of great significance—it would be somewhat different than the disciples ever heard of before. When we study the life of Jesus and see how he used his life in sacrifice for the benefit of his disciples, then we grasp the meaning of the NEW commandment—Jesus meant that his disciples were to lay down their lives in behalf of one another.

This reminds us of John 13:1, “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, HE LOVED THEM UNTO THE END.” How true this was—after the memorial, Jesus spent his very last hours in exhorting his disciples and giving them words of encouragement and comfort. He did not allow the knowledge of his coming death to overwhelm him with grief or terror, but spent his time in preparing his disciples for the shock and tragedy of his impending death.

We note the tender words of Jesus to his disciples, beginning with the first verse of John 14, “Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Verse 12 and on, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Yes, Jesus said, “if ye love me,”—if ye have agape love for me, a deliberate assent of the will, show that love by keeping my commandments. Verse 19, “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also.” Verse 23, “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Verse 27, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

John 15th chapter contains that wonderful illustration of the vine and the branches—“My Father is the husbandman, I am the vine, and ye are the branches.” How comforting these words would be to the disciples—how much our Lord showed his love for his disciples—to the very end! Verses 9 and 10, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” Verse 14, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I charge you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

John 16:20, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” “And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again,, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

The 17th chapter of John is Jesus’ last prayer and expresses the most tender sentiments of loyalty to the Father and the most tender sentiments of comfort toward his disciples—truly did Jesus agape his disciples to the end.

The verse known as the “little gospel” uses the word agape—John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God’s agape love is shown to be great generosity in the gift of His only begotten Son to redeem the fallen race.

It is interesting to notice how varied is the use of this word in reference to God’s exercise of love. In the case of the world, God’s love is shown by His willingness to sacrifice His son for the world’s redemption. But in the case of the church, we are told in Heb. 12:6 that “whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Considering God’s character, we know that the scourging and chastening of the church class is for their advancement in character development in preparation for their eternal glory beyond the veil. This reminds us of 1 John 4:16, “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.” The Apostle tells us clearly what our love for God is or how it is shown—“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3) How consistent this is, for if his commandments were grievous to us, then we would not be in harmony with the principles laid down for our guidance.

I suppose we have all heard the expression, “Oh, I was so provoked!” Well dear brethren, there is one kind of provoking that has the Lord’s approval. This is touched upon in Heb. 10:24, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

Our 7th-Day Adventist friends are insisting that we bring ourselves under the Law Covenant—but Paul tells us that if we have the character of love, we fulfill the Law. This is found in Rom. 13:10, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law.”

Let us see what Paul says about being “rooted and grounded in love” in Eph. 3:17-19, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and

depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

We have important work to do, for this kind of life doesn't just happen, but as Jude says in verse 21, we must “KEEP ourselves in the love of God.” Yes, there is so much opposition to the life of love, all around us and in us, and we must put up a valiant fight of faith.

Well, dear brethren, there is so much that could be said on the subject, but I trust that this study will give us a few wholesome things to think about, and that we will be convinced of the fact that divine love does indeed have “fixed principles,” and we can discern them clearly, and thus discerning them we are to put them into practice. Let us remember that in the exercise of agape love we must think on what we are doing—think in accordance with the “fixed principles” outlined in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. This love is not based upon feelings but upon careful thinking. I close now with the thrilling thought found in 1 Cor. 2:9, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

Hymn: 113 - I Love Thee

Additional Scriptures: John 11:5; Rom. 8:28; 12:9; 13:9; 1 Cor. 2:9; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 1:15; 4:15; 5:2; 5:28; 1 Thess. 1:3; 3:12 (emphasized); 2 Tim. 1:7; 1:13; Heb. 6:10; 1 John 2:5; 2:10; 3:1; 3:14; 3:18; 1 John 4:7, 8 (Diaglott); 1 John 4:18 (Diaglott); 1 John 4:20 (Diaglott).