

# IMITATORS OF GOD

A STUDY OF 17 QUALITIES OF SPIRITUAL  
GROWTH

by

O. WILLIAM COOPER

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# IMITATORS OF GOD

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OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

O. WILLIAM COOPER

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## DEDICATION

The Spiritual Life Division of the North Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church holds several Spiritual Growth events each year. It is my privilege to be their guest speaker at the event which takes place October 17 - 19, 1996, where some the material of this book will first be made public. I count this a great privilege.

These are days when spiritual growth tends to receive a lower priority in many places. At such a time, these folks have clung to their roots. They have determined to give spiritual growth the high priority God intended it to have.

In recognition of this commitment, I humbly dedicate this book to all those who carry responsibility for this program and those who come to share together in it.

With Deep Gratitude,

*O. William Cooper*

O. William Cooper

Livermore, Colorado  
October 17, 1996



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Again, the cover design was prepared by our new friend, Dewaine Stoll. We are very appreciative of his ministry to us in this task.

Each of these people have gone the extra mile to serve God as they worked with me on the book. I am deeply grateful to each one.

Cordially in Christ,



O. William Cooper



## THE INTRODUCTION

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. Ephesians 5:1, 2*

"Be imitators of God,..." Thus the name of this book. In these words, Paul gave us some clues concerning spiritual growth. The word for "imitators" is "mimeomai" (μιμέομαι) which means "to act," "to mimic." It is to do another person's actions after them. Paul said we are to mimic and keep on mimicking God. We are to do, as a way of life, the things we observe God doing. This is the design for the process of spiritual growth.

Paul continued, "as beloved children." If you observe children in a family, you will notice that they imitate the things parents do and say. A child learns to walk, in part, by watching the people around him/her walk. A child will tend to imitate the things a parent says. In the way a child learns actions and words from adults, so we are to learn to grow spiritually by imitating the things we observe God doing. This means that we must immerse ourselves in Scripture.

Paul continued, "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you..." The way to discover what spiritual growth is like and implement it into your own life is to observe what Jesus and the Father do.

This study focuses almost exclusively on the teachings of the New Testament. This is because the topic is so vast one cannot do justice to the teachings of both testaments in a single book.

Our investigations will attempt to probe the depths of the New Testament presentation concerning a few carefully chosen topics. There are a host of topics dealing with spiritual growth, but the scope of a single volume cannot touch them all. It would require many volumes to accomplish that task.

This is a series of topical studies. It is an attempt to carefully observe every verse in the New Testament where a particular quality is mentioned. It is an effort to define, or at least describe, what the text means when this quality of character is mentioned. In some instances, more than one Greek word is translated by the same English term. In these instances, we will deal with each Greek word separately.

As we deal with each quality of character, an attempt is made to identify, as thoroughly as possible, what all the verses have helped us discover about that quality.

Our determined focus is, what does the New Testament tell us about this quality. Because of this, you will not find any wonderful quotes from great minds of another day. One can appreciate and learn from such insights, but our focus is straight forward, what does the New Testament say about this.

In this investigation, a concerted effort is made to focus exclusively on the positive. This grows out of an understanding that spiritual growth stresses what God wants us to become; not what we are forbidden to be or do.

Everyone who writes approaches the subject with a set of understandings. This writer is no exception. He is aware of at least some of his understandings which shape his approach to this immense subject.

1. This study grows out of years of the pain and frustration of longing to grow, but failing to do so.

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2. There is a strong conviction that the refusal to grow is as disobedient as violating one of the eleven commandments. (Jesus added number eleven.) We are commanded to grow.
3. There is a conviction that hosts of believers understand neither the process of growth nor the ingredients thereof. This is not always because they do not care, but often because they have not been taught.
4. Spiritual growth is God's intention for every one of His children.
5. People often want to grow because they are tired of feeling guilty. That is not the reason to grow. Growth will not really solve that problem.
6. Many people are afraid to try to grow because they fear failure which, in their minds, will destroy their walk with God.
7. A host of believers see "trying harder" as the key to spiritual growth. It does not work.
8. Spiritual growth is a process of becoming mature in faith rather than a strong decision to comply with God's commands.
9. One perceives a general tendency to see spiritual growth as a goal to attain rather than the means to an end that it is. If you listen to testimonies and discussions of the subject, this idea surfaces again and again.
10. The Church today tends to focus on getting people saved. That is good and right. Once these lives have been transformed, however, the New Testament focuses upon helping these new believers become mature in the faith. The New Testament epistles are almost entirely devoted to helping believers mature in their faith. It is fair to say that does not always happen now.
11. There is a strong conviction that God enables that which He commands.
12. One sees a sign of great encouragement. There is a rising choir of voices, many of them babes in Christ, who are determined to take seriously the commands of the New Testament. Their demand is simple, Tell me how to grow; show me how to mature in my faith. Eureka!

Finally, a confession is appropriate. This author is deeply involved in "on the job training." He has not arrived. Slowly, sometimes imperceptibly, he longs to be more like Jesus today than he was a year ago. He longs to be more like Jesus today than he was yesterday. Where growth has taken place, the credit belongs to God. He did it. Where growth is less than stellar, the responsibility is completely mine. I am the one who stood in the way of growing, again.

## THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spiritual growth is not simply increasing flawlessness, but increasing Christlikeness. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." John 9:5. He also said, "You are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14. It is clear that the desire of Jesus was that His followers become like Him.

Peter wrote of Jesus, "...and coming to Him as to a living stone..." I Peter 2:4 In the very next verse, Peter wrote, "You also as living stones, are being built up..." I Peter 2:5 Again, it is clear that the apostle considered our task to become more like Christ every day. As we grow, we become aware of a growing Christlikeness. There is a growing desire to be like Him rather than a stabbing sense of guilt. It is living His life after Him. Did you notice, in verse five, that Peter said, "You are **being built up**..." This is the process.

In John 15:10 Jesus described for us the pattern of spiritual growth:

*"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. John 15:10*

Spiritual growth is keeping Jesus' commandments just as He kept His Father's commandments. It is to abide in Him just as He abides in His Father. Spiritual growth is increasingly doing what we see Jesus doing; being what we see Him being. Hebrews tells us that Jesus is an exact representation of the Father. God revealed Himself by sending Jesus to us. As we grow spiritually, people should be able to look at our lives and understand something of who Jesus is and what He is like.

We have all heard people say, "I want to be more humble" or "I want to be more loving..." We cannot make ourselves more humble. We can become more and more like Jesus and we will become more humble and loving in the process. Spiritual growth is a by-product of becoming like Jesus. We tend to treat it like a goal for our lives.

People often want to mature to the point where spiritual growth will not be a struggle. They long for a time when temptation will not be a consuming preoccupation. This usually grows out of fear that they will fail in the temptation. Through spiritual growth, God seeks to increase our sensitivity to His will. He seeks to recreate His likeness in us. This happens as we open ourselves to His cleansing, changing presence rather than mounting our own super-human efforts to achieve new heights of spiritual maturity on our own.

Spiritual growth is becoming more and more like Jesus. He said,

*"If you have seen me you have seen the father." John 14:9*

It is to become increasingly like Jesus so that when people see your life, they will know something of what Jesus is like.

Spiritual growth is not a series of acts, but a process. The New Testament describes this process in at least two different ways. It shows in the tense of the verbs. Most of the New Testament exhortations are in the Present Indicative Active form. I Timothy 6:11 reads as follows:

*But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11*

Almost every exhortation to spiritual growth is a command. Because this verse is in the Present Indicative Active form, it might better be translated, "Pursue and keep on pursuing

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righteousness, pursue and keep on pursuing godliness, pursue and keep on pursuing faith, pursue and keep on pursuing love, pursue and keep on pursuing perseverance, pursue and keep on pursuing patience, pursue and keep on pursuing gentleness..." This is a process we begin and never complete in this life. We daily attempt, with God's help, to improve upon our Christlike way of thinking and acting.

The second way in which the New Testament describes this process is in the way the instructions are given. Observe the way the apostle describes this phenomenon.

*Tribulation produces steadfastness; and steadfastness produces approvedness; and approvedness produces hope and hope putteth not to shame. Romans 5:3*

In effect, Paul was saying that spiritual growth involves a number of steps. When you, as a Christian, encounter tribulation, it becomes the foundation upon which steadfastness is built. Without tribulation, there will be no expression of steadfastness. Each spiritual quality grows out of the one which precedes it and becomes the foundation for the one which follows.

You encounter something of the same nature in the writings of Peter. II Peter 1:5. In effect, Peter said, "Fill up or complete your faith with moral excellence, moral excellence will find its completeness as you add knowledge. Knowledge will be filled to the top as you add self-control. Self-control will find completeness as you add patience. Patience will find its maturity as you add godliness. Godliness reaches its completeness as you add brotherly kindness. Brotherly kindness becomes full grown as you add agape love.

We would like to initiate spiritual growth and be done with it. If we think about this, our reason is often a simple one. We are afraid we will fail, so we want to do it and get it behind us.

Spiritual growth is a process of discovery. Look at the declaration of Paul. (Philippians 3:10) He said, "That I may know..." three times. In effect, he was saying, "That I may know Him, that I may know the power of His resurrection, that I may know the fellowship of His sufferings." There are a number of words which are translated "know" in the English text.

- a. "Ginosko" (γινώσκω) - This describes progress in knowing or discovering. It is a process. Frequently found in the New Testament, and particularly in this passage, it describes a relationship between the person knowing and the One known rather than a list of facts. It is a process of discovery.
- b. "oida" - (οἶδα) - - on the other hand speaks of knowing perfectly.

Paul used the former word to describe the process. Paul wants to begin and never cease discovering who Jesus is and what He is like.

The form of the word also stresses this process. In effect, Paul said, "That I may know or discover and keep on knowing..." In verses 12 and 14, Paul continued this description. In both verses Paul literally said, "I press on and keep on pressing on."

Spiritual growth is a divine activity, not a Herculean, human effort. Paul used words that resonate in the heart of each one of us when he wrote:

*"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord..." Romans 7:24, 25*

## THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

We cooperate in the process, but God, through the sacrifice of Jesus, is the author of all spiritual growth.

Someone has said that spiritual growth is a lot like climbing a mountain - climb up three steps and slide back two. This is still a net gain of one. One might say that spiritual growth is a progressive return to the qualities with which our first parents were created. In these qualities, our first parents were equipped to relate to God in a positive fashion.

Exodus chapter 33 gives us a different glimpse of spiritual growth and maturity. Moses set up a tent in which to meet with God. When Moses went into the tent, every man in Israel worshiped at his tent door. Out of this grew one of the deepest, strongest relationships between Moses, Israel and God. Spiritual growth is a growing personal relationship with God. In this relationship, God said,

*"My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest. And he said to him, 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'" Exodus 33:14, 15*

This is the picture of spiritual growth you find throughout the New Testament as well. In effect, Moses was saying, "It would be great to go to the land of promise, but if God's presence is not with them, he would rather not go." That is the very nature of spiritual growth and maturity. This being the case, we must measure spiritual growth not by how our spiritual qualities have increased, but rather by how much our relationship with God has intensified.

Spiritual growth is the progression from reluctant adherence to what we see as harsh standards to the point where we realize that God's purpose in His demands is actually for our blessing and not for His austere control of every detail of our lives. God punished Israel in order to draw them to Himself rather than to vent His wrath. This is the whole story of Judges.

The writer to the Hebrews draws a parallel between the physical and spiritual infant to describe what spiritual growth is. As the physical infant needs milk to grow, so the spiritual infant needs to feed on the rudiments of the faith. Physical infants progress from milk to meat. The spiritual infant moves from the rudiments of the faith to full growth in following the example of Jesus and of those who in oppression cling to faith and stand true to God in patience.

Very often, our idea of spiritual growth is to try harder. The biblical model is just the opposite. Spiritual growth takes place when God's invincible power encounters our burning desire to become more like Him. Spiritual growth can be measured not so much by our closeness to perfection and flawlessness as by the measure of our growing personal relationship with God.

Unfortunately, in some areas of the Church, people are content to be forgiven of their sins. They give no attention whatsoever to spiritual growth. This is to totally miss the message of the New Testament.

There is no single prescription for spiritual growth. There are several lists of the ingredients of spiritual growth in the New Testament. These are qualities, characteristics which will enable us to become more Christlike. If you look at these lists, however, you will notice that they do not appear in the same order in the different lists. You will also notice that they do not contain the same spiritual ingredients. We need to remember that both Peter and Paul wrote these lists. They were not writing to the same audiences. They were

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not trying to give a complete list, but rather speaking to the spiritual needs of the particular church to which they were writing that epistle.

God has called us and commanded us to grow in our spiritual life. We can do nothing less.

## ONE ACCORD

The most common expression of unity, of oneness, in the New Testament, is to be "of one accord." Interestingly, the phrase never appears in the Gospels. Luke refers to it eight times in the book of Acts. It keeps recurring as a pervasive theme throughout the book. Paul speaks of it only once, and that in Romans.

The Greek word for "one accord" is (ἁμοθυμαδόν) and is a compound word. It comes from (ἁμοῦ) - same, and (θυμός) - passion. This describes a personal quality of unitedness in the broad spectrum of purpose and commitment. It is a singleness of passion, of intense participation in the Church, the body of Christ. Within that body, there will be differences, but there is an overarching, unique passion for Christ emanating from one and all.

This phrase is first found in the book of Acts:

*These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Acts 1:14*

The word "one mind" is literally "one accord." All these people were in prayer as Jesus instructed them. They anticipated the coming of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised. These people represented a variety of different views and feelings. Jesus' mother and brothers had been at least indifferent to Jesus' ministry. In fact, though Roman law allowed members of the immediate family to claim the body of a crucified person, they did not come forward and Joseph of Arimathea had to claim the body for burial. The family was new to the conviction that Jesus' death had brought redemption. People like Matthew had cooperated with the Romans, while men like Simon the Zealot had sought opportunities to kill Roman soldiers and officials. Nevertheless, there was a sameness of passion in this large crowd. We can only assume that the overarching unifying idea in their prayer was that the Holy Spirit would indeed come upon them. This does not mean that these people, before and after the ascension of Jesus, thought exactly the same thoughts. It means that they were bound together as a single soul in intense desire that Jesus' promise would become reality among them aside from the fact that they had different thoughts about the Romans.

In some manuscripts, this phrase appears in Acts 2:1. It would read as follows:

*And in the fulfillment of the day of the Pentecost, they were all of the same passion in the same place, and suddenly out of heaven was a sound as being borne of a violent wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and it appeared to them tongues of fire being distributed. And it sat on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1*

This is quite significant. The verse gives us at least two important pieces of information:

- a. "They were of the same passion." - This suggests that though there were differences in understanding and approach, there was also a sameness of passion for Christ that gripped the hearts of every person in that assembly.
- b. "...in the same place..." - This statement had significance for them that it does not have for us. In that culture, a person would only associate with people with whom

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he/she had no quarrel or division. This was the problem the Pharisees had when Jesus associated with tax collectors like Zacchaeus and Matthew.

The "one accord" precedes the "coming of the Holy Spirit" upon the gathered apostles and other followers of Jesus. This verse is pointed to as causative in that respect.

The phrase also appears in Acts 4.

*And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. Acts 4:24*

Peter and John had just been released from prison and reported their experience to the church. The whole church with a common passion for the faithful witness of the apostles to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, pleaded before God that the congregation might have boldness to bear witness to the truth with confidence. Their sameness of passion would have enabled anyone of them to pray and voice the burning petition of every person in the room.

Again, in their time of struggle, there was a "sameness of soul" as the church prayed following the release of Peter and John. The church petitioned God to protect them from the threats of the religious and civil authorities. They prayed with one accord" - a sameness of soul. The one accord that they had, was it because they were in prayer? Was it because they had a sameness of passion for protection, deliverance and ministry that was greater than their social or theological differences? The text does not say. These people had two things that are weak or absent from most congregations today: They were involved in intense, expectant prayer; they had a singleness of passion for their common agenda in ministry.

The phrase "one accord" was not exclusively used concerning the Church:

*But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. Acts 7:57*

The phrase "with one impulse" is really "one accord." In graphic terms, Luke tells the story of the witness and death of Stephen. In this description, Luke indicated that the Jewish crowd, to whom Stephen preached and accused them of murdering the prophets, became more and more angry until with "one accord" they rushed upon Stephen, threw him out of the city and stoned him to death. This mob-like crowd was not made up of believers. There were many religious leaders and common people who hated religious leaders among them. This group, however, was welded together by their common hatred of what Stephen said. Their singleness of soul enabled this group, who would otherwise have little to do with each other, to thoroughly embrace a common, overarching passion to kill Stephen as he witnessed against them.

The story of Philip presents us with another example of this sameness of passion in the lives of unbelievers.

*And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. Acts 8:6*

In the dispersion which followed Paul's persecution of the Church, Philip went to Samaria and preached there. Samaria was an unusual place in the first century. This area, between Galilee and Judah, was inhabited by a cultural group the Jews hated more than most any-

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one else, the Samaritans. Because of the location of the natural seaport on the Mediterranean coast, Samaria was teaming with Romans, another of the least favorite people for the Jews. Here Philip fled to preach the Gospel. Unlike Jerusalem, many people of this region responded positively to the Good News. Luke's description is interesting. These Gentiles responded with a sameness of passion, in a positive way, as the Jewish non-believers did in a negative way. It describes an intensity and pervasiveness of interest that was otherwise uncommon.

There is still one more situation where the non-Christians were "of one accord."

*And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. Acts 19:29*

These people, who were otherwise allied in no other way, developed a sameness of passion and purpose because the teachings of Paul threatened both their economy and religious beliefs.

In Ephesus, Paul was confronted by the silversmith, Demetrius. Paul's preaching threatened not only the silversmith business, but the temple worship of Diana as well. The people were enflamed and seized Paul's companions and "in one accord" rushed into the theater. The threat to their economy and worship welded their common passion against Paul and his companions.

Yet another example of "one accord" among unbelievers can be found in Acts 12:20.

*Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. Acts 12:20*

Political intrigue was rampant throughout Palestine. Acts 12:20-23 describes one of these situations. The people of Tyre and Sidon, though not usually as volatile as the people of Jerusalem, were a source of deep concern to Roman officials. These concerns were intensified because of their location near the garrison and seaport at Caesarea. It was in the best interest of both Herod and these rebellious enclaves to end their hostilities. Fortunately, this was accomplished through the good offices of Blastus, the king's chamberlain and their friend. Luke tells us that these two communities, who were often at odds with each other, came to Herod with a common passion for peace which was far greater than their individual differences and idiosyncrasies.

There is an interesting use of this phrase in Acts 15:25

*It seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul Acts 15:25*

At the Jerusalem conference, there was sharp disagreement about whether or not the grace of God was for the Gentiles. This caused intense division in the conference and in the Church. Notice how James said it, "having come to one accord..." This clearly indicates that on this issue they were not "of one accord." This teaches us that "one accord" is not a natural condition, but a cultivated one. It is a relationship developed through concentration on their uniting purpose and a diminishing of personal, selfish interest. A fellowship divided can come "to one accord." This common passion can be developed. It means

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that they somehow came to the point where they supported a position that required some or all of them to make adjustments in their thinking that they had been unable to make previously. They could see the mission of the Church and the call of God as being more important than their own preferences. The early Church did not have unanimity of thought, as some people think. They had a common passion in their love and obedience to God. When this was true, they were able to come to such unity, such oneness of passion. We tend to feel that the huge divisions in the Church today are insurmountable. They are immense, but not insurmountable.

In Romans 15, Paul exhorted these Christians to actively care for those weaker than themselves. There are four exhortations and/or illustrations in 15:1-7:

- a. 15:1 - The strong should bear with the weaknesses of those without strength.
- b. 15:2 - Illustration - Christ did not please Himself.
- c. 15:4 - This was a plea for perseverance and encouragement from the strong to be extended to the weak.
- d. 15:7 - Accept one another just as Christ also accepted us.

The emphasis is completely on ministry to the besieged people in the body of Christ. In the midst of these exhortations, Paul spoke of an intense expression of unity.

In Romans, Paul used this phrase.

*Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5, 6*

There are some important insights in these verses.

1. "God... grant you to be of the same mind..." - This sameness of passion is a gift, "a grant" from God. (The word "grant" means "to give," "to surrender control to another.") This suggests that God has this capacity to establish a sameness of passion and willingly surrenders that capacity to His children. The other side of this is that unless God gives this to us, we will not have it. This should affect the way we think about unity.
  - a. Romans 15:5 contains the phrase "the same mind."
  - b. Romans 15:6 contains the phrase "of one accord."
  - c. Verse six begins with the Greek word (ἵνα) - "In order that..." This tells us that the author will now deal with purpose.
  - d. The purpose of "being of the same mind" is to be "of one accord."
  - e. Said in a different way, When people are "of the same mind" the result will be that they are "of one accord" in their actions. One accord is the harmonious relationship developed when people come to one mind.

The "same mind" is "auto fronein" (αὐτὸ φρονεῖν). The word "same" suggests something that is not different in any way." Hebrews 13:8 reflects this when the author said, that Jesus is precisely today, what he was prior to creation.

## ONE ACCORD

The word "mind" identifies the ability to think. It implies moral interest or thought, as opposed to an opinion which has no reflective foundation.

The same mind is a mental relationship in which the participants, whether in agreement or not, each attempt to arrive at a decision in essentially the same thoughtful way.

Paul indicated, in verse five, that this ability is a gift from God. He also indicated that this "same mind" or common thoughtful approach is "according to Jesus Christ,," This suggests a process of critically comparing the results of our reflection with the thinking, teaching and example of Jesus.

The word "one accord" is "homothumadon" (ὁμοθυμαδόν). This is the sameness of passion of which we previously spoke.

The purpose of being in "one accord" is not just that there will be peace in the body. According to verse six, "one accord" enables the Church to "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a single mouth," a common expression of praise. Thus the ideas of praise and one accord are inseparable.

The phrase "of one mind" is a compound word:

"homos" - same

"fren" - mind

Again, this does not suggest that these suffering Christians thought exactly the same thoughts; approved exactly the same things. We know that was not the case, even among the apostles. There are several possibilities:

- a. This can mean that they all thought the exact same things. This, however, is contrary to known facts.
- b. It can mean that they had different opinions, but that they had a singular view concerning the message of the Gospel. The Gospel records as well as the book of Acts support this idea.

The latter view seems to be more acceptable in view of the experience of the early Church.

This suggests harmony - different sounds which produce a more beautiful, combined sound because of the various inputs of different sounds, rather than a unison sound, as in a symphony. It is using their diversity of function and vantage point to make the whole Church more beautiful. The composite sound is more beautiful than all their separate sounds.

The "mind" identifies the cognitive facilities of the human personality. This word for mind, "fren," (φρέν) is used to describe the mental function - thinking, choosing, remembering, a way of thinking, attitude. Individual choices may vary, but these people create harmonious efforts by their oneness of mind set in the midst of a variety of understandings.

Peter gave instructions concerning husbands and wives relationships to each other. He summarized in these words:

*To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. I Peter 3:8, 9*

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Like people, words and ideas are sometimes identified or even understood by the company they keep. In these verses, Peter exhorted the suffering Christians to the sameness of mind along with several other qualities, all of which tend toward unity.

- a. Harmonious - same mind
- b. "Sympathetic" - to suffer the afflicted, to show compassion.
- c. "Brotherly love" - Though not as strong and selfless as agape, still it takes responsibility for the needs as if they were family.
- d. "Kindhearted" - to be good-hearted and tender hearted as opposed to hard-hearted.
- e. "Humble in spirit" - friendly, literally friendly minded, or humble minded.

These qualities describe the atmosphere in which this sameness of passion thrives. Indeed, these qualities are essential for the full development of such unity. As opposed to "one accord," we tend to see an adversarial relationship within congregations and denominations. This is exactly the opposite of what Paul described in Romans chapter eight.

Paul described the unity of the Church by drawing a parallel with the human body. He shared some very helpful insights:

*For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also in Christ.*  
I Cor. 12:12

Without the individuality of the members, the unity of the body of Christ is not possible. We tend to think of unity as dispensing with individuality. Paul speaks of unity as requiring individuality, but under the rigors of the body as a whole.

It is the individuality of the separate parts of the body functioning harmoniously that enables the body to exist. The harmonious relationship is the essence of oneness that we observe.

*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*  
I Cor. 12:13

Our unity is in taking on a new identity, that of the body becoming more important than our former identity - Jew, Greek, Bond, Free, Male, Female.

The harmonious relationship of the diverse parts focuses our priorities on an overarching relationship which engulfs our needed diversity.

*For the body is not one member, but many. I Cor. 12:14*

Unity does not endure diversity, it requires it. The unity of the body will not function without diversity. Unity only functions properly when the body can use the differentness to enable it to survive rather than tear it apart.

*If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. I Cor. 12:15, 16*

## ONE ACCORD

Unity is not everyone doing the same thing, thinking the same thoughts. It is rather every part of the body performing its unique, necessary function in order to enable the other parts to survive as a whole.

The relationship of unity only functions when the diverse parts are unwilling and unable to accept levels of importance within the body. Oneness demands that every single part of the body be as necessary and vital as every other part. Without this, there is no oneness.

*If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be." I Cor. 12:17*

In the unified body, there is no hierarchy of function. Each function of every part of the body is equally important and vital. It is as necessary to be a custodian as to be the pastor. The functions necessarily differ; the importance does not.

Again, we must ask some penetrating questions: When have we seen a congregation or denomination which functions in the same manner as the human body? When have we seen the congregation that insists that each part fulfill his/her unique role? Have we not seen each part insist that every other part function exactly as it does? When have we seen different groups rejoice in the Lord that other groups within the body, are quite different from themselves?

Also, did you ever see a group of Christians where there was no hierarchy of task importance? Could the group enable the custodian to feel as vital as the pastor? Could they enable the usher to sense the same task importance as the elder?

*But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. I Cor. 12:18*

Unity in diversity is the divine design for both the human body and the celestial body. Unity in the body God designed was clearly His intent. To be disunited, therefore, is to be displeasing to God. What would happen if we really took this thought seriously? What would be changed in our thinking?

*And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." I Cor. 12:21*

There is no place in the unity of the body for a sense of superiority or exclusiveness. Unity is destroyed when self-sufficiency surfaces. The position of every part of the body is secure and equally necessary. The truth is, differences make us uncomfortable. We are afraid differences will create division and we do not know how to cope with division.

Every part of the body is mutually dependent upon every other part of the body.

*And those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness. I Cor. 12:23*

The unity of the body requires a sensitivity on the part of the stronger, more visible parts on behalf of the weaker, less presentable parts. Without this sensitivity, there is no unity. This sensitivity is the product of agape love. The vitality of any part of the body does not depend upon appearances and/or opinions. God created all the parts of the body of Christ to be essential, despite appearances. The cry of the modern Church and the world is for

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equality. In this chapter, Paul clearly declared that all parts of the body of Christ are not equal; they are sympathetically diverse. This diversity, however, gives no place for superior or inferior feelings. Have you ever seen this?

*That there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. I Cor. 12:25*

Schism is destructive of unity and is contrary to God's design and evidence of disobedience. Schism develops when opinions less important than the body itself polarize the individual members. We are experts in this field.

*And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. I Cor. 12:26*

Unity requires mutual care of every part of the body for every other part. When one part suffers every other part suffers with it.

Unity is only possible when every part of the body intentionally sacrifices its personal identity in order to become part of the greater identity - the body of Christ. In such a situation, competition is impossible because there is a shared identity. To compete with another is to harm yourself. What I think of others, I must think of myself. In our world, every group of people seems to need someone to look down on, to be better than. When we have an honest, shared identity, in the body of Christ, such superior feelings, thoughts and attitudes are impossible. This is an area where the difference between the Church and the world could/should be highly visible. Unfortunately, that is not the case now.

*All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way. I Cor. 12:30, 31*

The major ingredient in unity is not intelligence or mental activity. It is rather love, a matter of the heart. Again, Paul lifts up the idea of vital diversity which forms and shapes the greater unity.

In Philippians, Paul gives us some interesting insights into the idea of unity.

*If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Philippians 2:1-4*

1. Unity is made up of several ingredients:
  - a. We must have the same thought/mind.
  - b. Have the same love.
  - c. Be of one accord.
  - d. Be of one mind.
2. We need to remember that everyone can think the same thing and have no unity whatsoever.
3. Oneness requires the presence of Agape love.

*ONE ACCORD*

4. Thinking the same, being of one accord and being of one mind are three different entities:
  - a. **Think the same** - This is not lockstep thinking, but it is to have the same value or conclusion. One way people "think the same" is the conviction that a person is lost unless their sins are forgiven. They may have a variety of other values and choices, but on this they think the same.
  - b. **One accord.** - This stresses the harmonious relationship which results from "thinking the same." They have a common soul about basics, but the emphasis is on the harmony which results from this kind of mental agreement.
  - c. **One mind** - This is focusing our attention on the same direction or value. It is choosing the same value in which to invest our time and energy.
5. Unity involves being certain never to use faction, revelry or division as a means of achieving our own goals.
6. "Self glory" or self conceit will always tend to diminish the possibility of unity.
7. Humility is one of the qualities which are absolutely essential for unity.
8. The tendency to feel superior to others erodes the spirit of unity.
9. Selfishness, self-preoccupation is an enemy of unity.
10. Having the mind of Christ - humility, intense servanthood, self sacrifice - fosters unity.

Look at these verses again. Paul lists four conditions and four causes.

| CONDITIONS                     | CAUSES                      |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| "Encouragement in Christ"      | "Being of the same mind"    |
| "Consolation of love"          | "Maintaining the same love" |
| "Fellowship of the Spirit"     | "United in spirit"          |
| "Any affection and compassion" | "Intent on one purpose"     |

Now look at this table. Paul did not say that "encouragement in Christ" is uniquely, exclusively caused by "being of the same mind." He rather said that all of the conditions are created by, byproducts of all of the causes.

Unity requires mutual ministry.

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Col. 3:15-17*

It requires enough care and concern for each other that they would teach and admonish - to caution or to gently reprove each other. Many people are taught in the Church and still

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more are reprov'd, not so gently, as a way to put them down and not as a way to show care for the person.

Unity also involves a healthy experience of worship. It is what Paul refers to as "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Unity also requires a servant heart. Paul dealt with this when he said "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Slaves use every waking breath on behalf of their masters and not of themselves. Without such a soul view, unity is not possible. Unity also requires a healthy sense of gratitude to God through Christ.

Paul gives us another glimpse into the nature of oneness in Ephesians

*Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.  
Eph. 4:3*

Paul instructed the Ephesian Christians to "preserve the unity of the Spirit." In this exhortation, Paul asserted that it is possible for the believer to preserve the "unity of the Spirit." This suggests that the "unity of the Spirit" is a relationship that must be nurtured and maintained. It is not self-preserving. It also suggests that Christians are capable of preserving this "unity of the Spirit." It is, therefore, required of us. The other side of this idea is that this same unity of the Spirit can be damaged and destroyed. To the extent that we might fail to preserve it, we would be disobedient.

Unity is a life quality produced by the action of the Holy Spirit and not by our heroic efforts. In the next four verses, Paul expanded on his understanding.

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Ephesians 4:4-7*

The emphasis in these verses is on oneness - "One body and one Spirit." In the same way that there is One Spirit, the Holy Spirit, there is also one body, the Church. The word "one" identifies two things:

- a. It is a numerical quality. There is only one Spirit and only one body of Christ, the Church.
- b. The word "one" also suggests a level of unity and harmony. It is to be bound together in such a way that the presence of one makes the other stronger, more useful in the kingdom. In the same way that there is harmony between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there is also to be harmony within the body, the Church.

In deity, as well as creation and the Church, oneness is a vital ingredient. Remove that unity and the creation or the Church, as God conceived it, is distorted.

Observe, also, that this list of "ones" brings out an emphasis on God the Father as the ruler/controller over the whole Church. Think about this for a minute. Is God the Father the "controller" of your congregation? In most instances, there is one person or small group in control and often enforcing their ideas upon the church rather than encouraging the church to be under the headship of the Father.

Paul gives yet another insight into the unity that we find in the early Church.

## ONE ACCORD

*For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one; and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. Eph. 2:14*

Paul was talking about two specific groups - Jews and Gentiles. He was saying that it is the Lord who makes one group out of Jews and Gentiles. It was not their tireless efforts, but the power of Jesus. God removes the boundaries/walls which identify the two groups. By placing these very different individuals within another group, the body of Christ, their former alienation becomes meaningless. The former enmity between the groups was not removed by their Herculean effort, but by the sacrifice of Jesus' body. The unity which Paul calls "one new man" is the creation of Jesus. It is produced by reconciling both into a new body. They did not **learn** to love each other. In the cross the mutual disdain was put to death.

In this passage, Paul used some other figures to illustrate oneness.

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Eph. 2:19-22*

When a person from one country goes into a different country, he is a stranger, a sojourner. He has no rights, no privileges, in most instances cannot own property and because of language is almost totally isolated. In Christ, the Gentile is made a fellow citizen with the Jew. He belongs. He has roots. He has all the rights and privileges that other citizens of the kingdom have. We are part of the family and have an inheritance. We are all, Jews and Gentiles, made to be "of God's household." This means that in a common manner, we belong to Him; we are under His care.

Observe, also, that we share a common task. We are indistinguishably built together "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." We are inseparably held together by Jesus Christ, the cornerstone. Our common purpose, in this structure, is to become "a holy temple in the Lord, "a dwelling place of God."

Another illustration that Paul used to describe oneness is that of stones in a wall.

*Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. Eph. 2:20*

Paul was talking about an arch. These structures were built in such a way that there was no need for cement. Paul used this verse to refer to Jesus as the "cornerstone." We would speak of this as the "keystone." This is the center stone in the arch and keeps all the other stones in place. In an arch, every stone is equally vital to its own positioning and maintaining the place of every other stone in the arch. Each stone lends its density and strength to preserve the new structure. That is unity.

Paul used two different images in Philippians 1:27

*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Philippians 1:27*

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He spoke of "standing fast in one spirit." The word "spirit" is used in two ways in the New Testament:

- a. It is used to identify the third person of the trinity.
- b. Exactly the same word is used to identify "breath," "soul," or "wind."

In this instance, Paul was speaking of "soul" or "breath." He was encouraging the people to persevere, remain immovable in one overarching passion or commitment.

Paul's second illustration was for them to remain immovable in "one soul." Paul intended to convey the idea that these Christians should have a single sentiment or governing principle in their lives. This principle should be so important to them that their commitment to it would enable them to stand fast in the midst of fierce opposition.

Paul spoke to Euodia and Syntyche about the issue of unity.

*I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Philip-  
pians 4:2*

"To live in harmony" really means to have a singleness of concern, a commonness of interest. This, obviously, had not been the case. Paul wrote to correct this problem. Paul did not suggest that they agree about everything. He urged that within the framework of their differences they maintain a harmonious relationship which would not create or foster faction.

In Acts, Luke wrote:

*And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. Acts 4:32*

It should be noted that the previous verse identifies the fact that these people were filled with the Holy Spirit, they had been deeply involved in prayer and were being bold witnesses for the Gospel. This makes a great difference.

He was describing the mental outlook of the new converts. He did so through the use of two images:

- a. **"One heart and soul"** - The word "heart" referred to the place that controls our feelings. The "soul" on the other hand, described that part of a person which identifies his/her will, purpose or desire. This is a way of portraying these new converts as being unified in their feelings and purposes.
- b. **"Not one said that ought of the things he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."** This is an application of unity. The sense of oneness was so strong that personal possession was outside the realm of their consideration. They knew that certain possessions belonged to them. The claiming of selfish ownership was made void by their sense of oneness. Their concern for each other was so intense that it surpassed their emphasis on the ownership of things. This has sometimes been mistaken to suggest that the early Church was communistic in its makeup. This was not Luke's intent.

Peter described an interesting parallel between Christ and suffering Christians.

## ONE ACCORD

*Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. I Peter 4:1*

This word for "purpose" is literally "in thought." Peter was saying "be the same in thought" as Jesus was in His sufferings. Our single-mindedness must extend in two directions. We must be the same in thought as Jesus was. We must also be the same in thought with each other. Interestingly, if we are of the same thought it must include also being of the same thought with Jesus. Again, it is not unity unless we are also of the same thought with fellow Christians.

The Apostle John, in the Revelation, also wrote about oneness. He wrote:

*These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. Rev. 17:13*

John wrote about a group of non-believers. He spoke of them as having a single, common resolve, a solid opinion to which they gave consent. These are they, however who give their power and authority over their lives to the beast and war against the Lamb.

Peter used another word to describe the necessary relationship within the Church.

*To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead, for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. I Peter 3:8*

The word "harmonious" is literally "same mind." His message was that these persecuted Christians should be mentally harmonious. Peter listed this as the first among five qualities which we would categorize under spiritual growth. Peter was saying that it was every bit as important to be "like-minded" as it is to be compassionate or humble.

In Romans, chapter 12, Paul gives a list of about 17 exhortations that these Roman Christians should follow. One among them is "be of the same mind." The way Paul wrote this chapter suggests that it is as important to be of the "same mind" as it is to be humble, generous, forgiving, not vengeful, patient in tribulation or fervent in prayer. This puts "harmony" in perspective from the divine viewpoint.

The second most common reference to oneness is the word "one." The word is "heis" (εἷς). It is the primary number - one. It also carries the idea of unity, of singleness of purpose. You will notice that the idea of unity is intensified by the addition of a modifier.

It is interesting to note that the New Testament exhortations to Spiritual growth are illustrated in the life of Jesus. John helps us to see this concerning harmony.

*I and the Father are one. John 10:30*

The way Jesus made this statement suggests that He meant that He and the Father were "one minded." The word usually translated "one" literally means "mind" or "intent." Throughout the New Testament, we are instructed to become what Jesus is. In this instance that is an invitation to harmonious living.

Look at the way John records Jesus' petition:

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*"...that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." John 17:21*

In this prayer, Jesus illustrated the request for unity among believers by a parallel with His own relationship with the Father. It is a comparison. He said, "Even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." The oneness of the body of Christ is similar to the fact that Jesus is in the Father. Jesus' reference was **not** one of physical location, but rather a harmonious relationship in which Jesus was inseparably a part of the Father's being and ministry. At the same time, the Father was inseparably a part of Jesus' being and ministry. It would be appropriate to describe our harmonious relationship as being a part of each other in the same sense that Jesus is in the Father. Honestly, have you ever seen this in the Church?

Jesus also said, "That they also may be in us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." The uses of the word "that" suggests that this is a double statement of purpose:

- a. **"That they also may be in Us."** The purpose of our harmonious relationship with others is not to make life more pleasant. Our opportunity to be "in God;" to participate in the relationship which exists between Jesus and the Father requires that there be a sense of oneness between us.
- b. **"That the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."** One of the results of our harmonious relationship is that it will convince the non-Christian world that Jesus was sent by the Father. It lends credence to Jesus' claim to deity.

In both these statements there is no explanation of how these purposes are achieved. Jesus simply stated that they would be.

There is a deep sense of awe that accompanies this verse. Imagine! If we relate to each other as Jesus relates to the Father, then we will be given the awesome privilege of being "in God." In Greek, this is (en theos) from which we get our word "enthused." The human mind cannot fully grasp all that is intended when Jesus said, "That they may be in Us."

Imagine also, that not by our flawless logic, but by our relationship with others, we can help convince the world of unbelievers of the deity of Jesus.

In this prayer of Jesus, He pleads that the inseparable relationship existing between Himself and the Father be extended to include the believers. In this, the oneness between Jesus and the Father would issue in two directions:

- a. "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee..." The relationship within the body of believers would be a visible expression of the invisible relationship between the Father and the Son.
- b. "That they also may be in us..."
  1. This suggests that the results of our relationship of unity with each other is that we may be, as Paul described it, "in Christ."
  2. It also suggests that our oneness creates a harmonious relationship between God and the Church.

There is an interesting image in Romans chapter 12:

## ONE ACCORD

*So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:5*

The message of Paul's statement is that as we are members of "one body in Christ," we are "individuality members one of another." Two ideas would logically follow":

1. If something interrupts our relationship in the body, it would by the same token interrupt our being "members one of another."
2. Also, if something devastates or destroys our "members one of another" relationship, it would follow that it would have a destructive affect upon our being a part of "one body in Christ." It does not seem that many have taken this thought seriously.

Paul raised another consideration concerning our unitedness.

*Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. I Corinthians 10:17*

The partaking of one bread is a symbol of our redemption in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is this sacrifice that brings us into the body, the Church. The last part of the verse, "for we all partake of the one bread," begins with the word "for." This suggests that a reason is forthcoming. Our partaking of this bread, the symbol of our forgiveness, is the thing that brings us into the oneness of the Church. It is not by our extravagant efforts that this change takes place.

Dealing with the multifaceted unity of the Church, Paul said,

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28*

Despite our more obvious differences, our position of being "in Christ," creates a magnificent bond between us. Paul chose to describe this unitedness in the same way the author of Genesis described the oneness of the husband-wife relationship - inseparable, each unequivocally devoted to the other. It cannot be less than this. Our oneness is "in Christ."

In I Corinthians Paul wrote:

*God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. I Corinthians 1:9*

You will find a measure of the idea of "one accord" in what the early Church referred to as "fellowship." The word is "koinonia" (κοινωνία). It literally means to be in partnership, one who shares, a "mutual partaker," communion. We have twisted the idea of fellowship to mean something totally different. We have a "fellowship hall" in many churches. This is basically a place where we eat or hold informal gatherings. Someone has referred to this, indelicately, as "holy donuts."

The word translated "fellowship" is "koinonia." We have fellowship with Christ not just as we eat together, but as we share His mission and sufferings. Our fellowship does not center in our sharing or eating with each other. We are partners with Christ. It is a partnership which develops as we focus our lives and priorities in Jesus Christ. Our "koinonia" is not our enjoyment of each other's company. It is rather that we are knit-together in our participation in Jesus Christ.

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Writing to the Philippians, Paul said,

*In view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.  
Philippians 1:5*

The word translated "participation" in our text is "koinonia." Again, Paul said that our fellowship is not the enjoyment of one another's company, but the bonding of our lives together as we make the Gospel the focus of our lives and energies.

Paul also mentions our fellowship in chapter two.

*If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, Philippians 2:1*

Here the fellowship is a binding of our lives together as we become "mutual partakers" of the Spirit of God and His ministry of redemption in the world. This participation is not the result of imaginative programming, but is produced by the transforming power of Christ applied to our lives by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Again in chapter three, Paul wrote,

*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Philippians 3:10*

What a beautiful design for Christian living! Above all else, Paul wanted to begin to know and continue to know Jesus. As a part of that discovery, he knew that he would also become a fellow partaker of the sufferings of Jesus as well. It was not just that Paul would discover what Jesus was like in a social setting, but that he could participate in every way in the life and experience of Jesus. That is fellowship. It is also part of what is involved in being of one accord in the body of Christ. Inevitably this will involve suffering. The fact that we have known no pain for our faith suggests that by that much we do not now participate in the total life of Jesus.

The apostle John spoke extensively about this "fellowship" in his first epistle.

*What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. I John 1:3*

Perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, this verse describes the intent of fellowship. It is a binding of our lives together - "fellowship with us" - as we have fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ. It is not possible to separate these.

*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. I John 1:6*

John stressed the fact that fellowship in the body of Christ requires walking in the light. This is a Biblical way of describing an obedient, holy life. It is not just Christians enjoying a time of relaxation together.

Again, John wrote,

*But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.  
I John 1:7*

## ONE ACCORD

John describes this fellowship as a conditional relationship. It is conditioned on following Jesus in a life of obedience and holiness. Our fellowship with each other is inextricably tied to being like Jesus.

It should be noted that in every verse listed here, the emphasis is upon the fact that our fellowship, our partnership is in God and not in each other. We have a relationship with each other that grows out of our relationship with God and the Gospel.

In Colossians 3:11-17, Paul describes first what "one accord" looks like and then how it can be pursued. In verses 12-17, Paul identifies several qualities and expressions that go into this harmony within the body:

- Holy
- Heart of compassion
- Kindness
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Bearing with one another
- Forgiving each other
- Love
- Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart
- Be thankful
- Let the word of Christ dwell within you
- Teach and admonish each other in worship
- Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus
- Give thanks through Jesus to God the Father.

This list is awesome. It helps us to realize that "being of one accord" is not an instantaneous event, but rather a process of growing step by step. It is a way of life where these qualities increase day by day so that the image of Christ in us becomes more vivid. People will increasingly be able to see His presence in our lives.

### SUMMARY

Harmony was so important, following the Ascension, that Jesus instructed the members of the early Church to stay in Jerusalem and pray until they were of one accord. This quality of unity is carefully illustrated in the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

Division and disunity are very common ingredients in local churches. Most congregations are, to one degree or another, torn and devastated by the disease of disunity. Many of us have heard horror stories of people in a congregation who have not spoken to each other for 25 years. Is it possible to have "one accord" there? People are alienated from their pastors and church leaders. Pastors and church leaders often spend more time struggling with each other than in search of ways to proclaim the Gospel to a dying world. Is it possible to be obedient to the Scriptures in these situations? All of this comes at a time when the Church struggles to discover its identity before God and its place in the world. In far too many places, the world views us as a religious country club without a golf course.

It is thought by some that there could be "one accord" in the early Church because their differences were much less divisive than those we face today. That is false. Few ideas, in the first century, could be as controversial and divisive as whether or not a Gentile could

## *IMITATORS OF GOD*

be a recipient of the grace of God in salvation or not. The truth is that extending the grace of God to the Gentiles was at least as divisive as the issues of abortion, homosexuality, feminism and other issues faced by the Church today. The difference is that they found a way to be of one accord despite their differing thoughts.

We should be very clear about the way they brought unity in the Church. It was not that they compromised their way to oneness. They did not. The final statement about the issue was not a compromise between those who favored including Gentiles and those who opposed this move. They rather settled upon the position of those who believed that the Gospel was for both Jew and Gentile. They were convinced that this was God's will and intent. The opponents of the issue were able to accept the position of those they opposed and still preserve the unity of the body of Christ.

In the body of Christ, today, we have not been able to come to a point of unity as they did. In the midst of all this frustration, lack of identity and direction, no voice is being heard urging us, "do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father."

God waits for those beautiful words to be true again, "These all with one accord continued steadfast in prayer..." They turned their broken, tormented world upside down. What will happen in our broken, tormented world?

## OBEDIENCE

There are two Greek words that identify the quality of obedience and three words which describe disobedience. We will attempt to deal carefully with each one as it contributes to our understanding of this quality.

### Obedience

- a. "**Hupakoe**" (ὕπακοή) - It means, literally, to hear under. It is to listen as a subordinate, to listen attentively. It is to conform to a command or authority. It is to submit. It is an attitude that results in appropriate action, words or thoughts.
- b. "**Peitho**" (πείθω) - It means to persuade, to win over. It is an obedience, compliance which grows out of trust. It is the only possible, dependable evidence that a person really believes in God. It is the result of an inward persuasion. It is to conciliate, to have confidence in, to yield. It is what Jesus was talking about when he said, "not my will, but thine be done."

The results in both instances will appear to be the same, but the two words are quite different. Whereas the compliance and obedience with relation to "hupakoe" is produced by the pressure of power versus no-power, "peitho" is produced by persuasion and not by force. It is the result of conviction that the request for obedience is appropriate and right. It is obeying because I am convinced, not because I feel coerced.

### Disobedience

There are three words that are translated "disobedience."

- a. "**Apeithes**" (ἀπειθής) This is a compound word:
  1. a - means not
  2. Peitho - means obey

The word means incapable of being persuaded. This is different from unpersuaded. Unpersuaded means that one is not persuaded. Unpersuadable means that one cannot be persuaded. It is to be rebellious, obstinate, stubborn, headstrong, insubordinate, resisting authority, and unyielding. It also includes the idea of unbelief.

- b. "**parakoe**" (παρακοή) This, also, is a compound word:
  1. Para - aside
  2. akouo - to hear

This word describes a refusal to hear, an act of disobedience. It grows out of a careless attitude.

- c. "**Anupotaktos**" (ἀνυπότακτος) This is also a compound word:
  1. A - negative, not
  2. hupotasso - to subordinate, submit self to

It means to be unruly, not brought under control, unsubdued, not placed under authority. It could be used to describe a horse that has not been "broken."

Notice that all three of these words are compound words. In some instances, this gives us a hint that the author is looking for strong words and uses the compound words to lend emphasis to his words.

## I. OBEDIENCE

### a. "Hupakoe" (ὕπακοή)

This word for "obedience" is used in two different contexts in the New Testament.

- a. The submission of a subordinate power to an authority. We will simply list some of these.
  1. Calming of the storm Matthew 8:27
  2. Jesus commanded the demon to come out Mark 1:27
  3. Command mulberry tree to be cast in sea Luke 17:6
  4. Children obey your parents Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20
  5. Slaves obey your masters Colossians 3:22
- b. Spiritual submission of the believer to God, His will and the Scriptures. The following Scriptures deal with that context.

*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, Romans 6:12*

Paul described the battle which rages between the believer and the forces of evil. He reminded them that they were dead to sin, but alive to God. Because this is true, they should recognize their new authority, God, and refuse to obey the lusts of the flesh. Verses 12-14 are a word picture of this situation. They are not to present their members to sin as tools of unrighteousness because sin is no longer the authority in their lives. They are to present their members (servant picture) to God as tools of righteousness.

Obedience is not just doing what one is told. It is to recognize that there is a new authority in their lives because of Jesus Christ. Thus they should obey that authority. The action in obedience is a result of recognizing the authority to whom one is subordinate.

*Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, Romans 6:16-17*

In these two verses, Paul interjects another ingredient into the meaning of obedience. He talked about "...became obedient from the heart..." This new picture of obedience does not submit because another power is greater. It is "from the heart." It recognizes the unequalled power of God, but submits to it because of a great love for God, the all-powerful one to whom we offer ourselves as servants. The motivation for obedience is love, not the capitulation of weakness.

## OBEDIENCE

As you read through these verses and the balance of Romans chapter six, you discover that Paul has described the results of obedience, of subordinating yourself to God. The result is spiritual growth.

*However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" Romans 10:16*

In this verse, still another ingredient of obedience appears. The word for "heed" is really "obedience." Paul quotes from Isaiah 53:1 and adds, "...they did not all heed (obey) the Gospel." The ingredient that the apostle uncovered here is that the choice, the act of the will, is set in motion in our obedience. Obedience is more than doing as commanded. Prisoners of war do that. It is making the difficult choice to obey God rather than the enemy. It is obeying God out of desire rather than necessity.

*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; Philippians 2:12*

This verse immediately follows the great "kenosis passage" in 2:5-11. Jesus was sent to become a man; to become the ransom of those who seek God through Him. In the way that Jesus placed Himself under authority, Paul urged them to obey; to place themselves under his authority in the Gospel. It is more than that, however. He instructed them to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This is not "blind obedience." It is the careful examination of the heart which prepares one to choose, in love, how they desire to place themselves under the authority of God. This is the obedience of love, not force. You find this same idea in II Thessalonians chapters two and three, though it is put quite forcefully.

*Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, Hebrews 5:8, 9*

The author of Hebrews identified Jesus' priesthood with that of Melchizedek. he described Jesus as "a son." This is in contrast to a slave. A slave obeys out of forced subordination. A son obeys out of learning and preparing to take control when father is deceased. The text says that He learned obedience..."

The word "learned" is "manthano" (μανθάνω) and means to be disciplined, "to increase in knowledge by observation." This is knowledge discovered by experience. It is applying knowledge in such a way that one's behavior is different from those who do not know God.

It is this submission of cooperative mission of which the author spoke. Jesus obeyed; He placed Himself at the disposal of the Father to accomplish their common goal of redemption. In verse nine, the author spoke of "those who obey Him." We too place ourselves under His authority, as He placed Himself under the authority of the Father to achieve their common goal - the redemption of the lost.

In this scenario, obedience is placing oneself under authority in order to carry out the mission which is more important than life itself. It is to obey because we want to attain a goal rather than doing as commanded because we fear the consequences of failing to do so.

## IMITATORS OF GOD

*By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. Hebrews 11:8*

This is not blind obedience. Abraham did not know where he was going. He did know that God told him to go and that God would guide him there successfully. This tells us that obedience involves a high level of faith and trust. It is doing God's will even when we do not know what that will involve. Abraham did not know where he was going. Isaiah did not know where God might send him when he said, "here I am, send me." Certainly Paul did not know where God was going to send him to preach the Gospel. It has ever been the case. Obedience involves trusting God so completely that one can carry out His commands, even when the future and the directions are not clear.

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, I Peter 1:22*

In the confines of this brief verse, Peter has given us at least three pieces of information about obedience.

- a. Obedience to the truth leads to the purifying of the soul.
- b. One of the results of obedience to the truth and the purifying of the soul is the development of a sincere love of other Christians.
- c. Obedience to truth is part of a chain of change - Obedience to the truth leads to the purifying of the soul, which enables one to fervently love other Christians from the heart.

Obedience is a vital ingredient in the development of Christian character. It expresses itself in love for other believers. Unfortunately, obedience is usually seen as an end in itself. It is often thought of in negative terms.

*Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. I Peter 3:6*

In this instance, the word "obeyed" suggests that Sara did as Abraham said. The word "lord" is very significant here. It means "master," the owner, and controller of the servant. It was not just that Sarah did what Abraham said to do; she saw her purpose in life as seeking to carry out the wishes of the one she served. Peter continued by giving us a glimpse into another characteristic of obedience - confidence. The word "obeyed" can express many different levels of conduct. It can be action done in order to avoid punishment. At the same time, it can be a deep desire to please the master. Obedience is not just doing as a superior power instructs. It is doing as instructed in total confidence; without being pressured by any form of fear.

There are some verses which do not include the word "obey" or "obedience," but clearly speak of this quality of life.

*"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. John 15:10*

## OBEDIENCE

Usually, this is viewed as describing one of the results of obedience. That is true. It is more than that. The word for "keep" is "tereo" (τηρέω) and means "to watch over intensely," "to preserve," "to observe." In this text, Jesus used it to describe extremely careful attention to the commandments He had given those who follow Him.

Jesus said that doing precisely as He commanded would result in taking up residence in His love in an ongoing fashion. This describes a family relationship rather than a visitor.

Jesus compared our "keeping" His commandments with His keeping of His Father's commandments. In other words, obedience enables us to follow the example of Jesus.

*"You are My friends, if you do what I command you. John 15:14*

Another result of obedience is that it leads to a "friends" relationship between the obedient servant and His Lord. He said, "You are my friends." He did not speak of some future hope, but of a current relationship here and now. It is a conditional promise - "If you do what I command you."

### SUMMARY

1. Obedience expresses itself in actions which recognize God as the authority of our lives.
2. It is more than doing as we are told.
3. It is the result of recognizing the authority to whom we are subordinated.
4. Obedience is the evidence of spiritual allegiance.
5. It is submission based upon one's intense love for God. This makes it uniquely Christian.
6. The motivation of obedience is love, not the capitulation of weakness.
7. Obedience is a choice, an act of the will.
8. Obedience is doing as God commands out of desire, not necessity.
9. Obedience is placing ourselves under the authority of Jesus Christ.
10. Obedience is choosing, in love, to place ourselves under authority in order to carry out the mission more important than life.
11. It is placing yourself under authority in order to carry out the mission which is more important than life.
12. Obedience involves a very high level of faith and trust.
13. It is an inseparable part of a chain of spiritual change.
14. It is not an end in itself; it is merely a step closer to our master.
15. Obedience leads to several positive results:
  - a. It results in spiritual growth
  - b. It leads to purifying the soul.
  - c. It is necessary to sincerely love other Christians.

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- d. It leads to the purifying of the soul.
- e. It enables one to love other Christians, "from the heart."
- f. It enables us to follow the example of Jesus.
- g. Obedience opens up a "friends": relationship with Jesus.

### b. "Peitho" (πειθω)

This word means "to persuade," "to win over." It is an obedience, a compliance which grows out of trust. It is the basic, dependable evidence that one believes God. It is the result of an inward persuasion. It is to conciliate," "to have confidence in," "to yield." Again, our best evidence of this quality was Jesus' statement, "not my will, but thine be done."

*But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29*

Peter and the other apostles had been warned not to preach in the name of Jesus. They were arrested for disobeying that command. This verse was Peter's response to the charge. "We must obey God rather than men" is Peter's admission that he was totally convinced that Jesus was the Son of God and worthy of his total obedience. He admitted that he was willing to accept any punishment, but that he would not go against his persuasion that Jesus must be obeyed. One must obey because of choice, not because of divine pressure.

*"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." Acts 5:32*

This verse, also, is part of Peter's defense. In this verse he tells us one of the results of obedience. Those who obey God will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Part of becoming a Christian is being persuaded to follow the example of Jesus in the garden, to live for God whether in life or death.

*"For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. And he was slain; and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. "After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away some people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. Acts 5:36, 37*

These verses are a report of the discussion that took place within the Sanhedrin when they had arrested Peter and others for preaching Christ. Gamaliel talked about people claiming to be the Messiah who had "followers" These followers were people whom Theudas and Judas of Galilee had convinced that they were the Messiah and were worthy of being followed.

*but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. Romans 2:8*

Paul had been describing those who rebelled against the truth. He spoke of them in the following ways:

- a. They were selfishly ambitious.

## OBEDIENCE

- b. They did not obey the truth.
- c. They obeyed unrighteousness.
- d. They obeyed wrath.
- e. They obeyed indignation.

Paul's sentence structure is very intentional. He began by identifying the mental framework out of which these people function - selfish ambition. This being the case, they were not persuaded to obey the truth. They were convinced to obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation as these things satisfied their prior, selfish commitment.

*You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? Galatians 5:7*

Paul compared the Christian life to a runner in a race. Paul used numerous athletic comparisons in his epistles. In this picture, Paul said that obeying the truth will lead to living a successful Christian life. The contrary is also true. The word "hindered" is really much more vivid - it really means "to beat back." To be "beat back" from obeying the truth will cause one to falter in the Christian life. This is a way of saying that obedience, being persuaded of the teaching of Scriptures is essential to living the Christian life.

*Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, Titus 3:1*

The sense of this verse suggests that the word "kai" "and" is understood to be placed between the words "rulers" and "authorities." Some Greek texts, in fact, have included the word in the text. Observe Paul's instructions:

- a. **"Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities"** - The word "subject" means to arrange under authority. It is a military term which means to do what is commanded without even thinking of whether it is your pleasure or not. Each soldier must do exactly what his immediate superior commanded him to do.
- b. **"Remind them to be obedient"** - Again, Paul meant that they should do as commanded because they were persuaded that doing as God commanded was the only thing to do.
- c. **"To be ready for every good deed"** - It is like the picture of a runner in a relay race who can hardly wait to take the baton. Christians are to be just as eager to do good deeds.

One must ask, "What is the difference between "be subject to rulers and authorities" and "to be obedient"? This is much clearer in the Greek than in English.

- a. **"To be subject..."** is "hupotasso" (ὑποτάσσω), as indicated above means to obey a military leaders command without thought concerning its appropriateness.
- b. **"To be obedient"** is totally different. This is to obey, just as completely and decisively, but because you are persuaded, not because someone else has more authority.

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*Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17*

In this verse, the author gives us a glimpse into the attitude with which the Christian is encouraged to obey Christian leaders. They are to do this with "joy." It is an attitude of excitement and rejoicing. It is not begrudging compliance. It is much more than doing as one is told. It is obeying with rejoicing and intense excitement.

*Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well. James 3:3*

This is an unusual verse. It talks about controlling the horse by placing a bit in its mouth. Such a horse would comply, not because he thought it was such a good idea. He would obey because it was more comfortable to move in the direction the bit in his mouth indicated. It appears that James was painting a picture of the extent of this obedience, not the mechanics of it. Obedience is to be totally sensitive to the slightest direction of our master, Jesus Christ.

Obviously, our best example of obedience is the life of Jesus. Perhaps the next best example is what Paul referred to as a "bondservant." The bondservant is not a servant because he/she was captured in battle; nor because of financial irresponsibility. The bondservant serves the master because it is a personal choice. He/she chooses to remain a servant rather than to be free to pursue personal goals. The bond servant lives to place the master's interests ahead of every other consideration in life. It is not necessity. It is an eager desire to do the master's bidding because of his/her love for the master. That is obedience. It is far more than doing what is commanded. It involves the attitude in which the commands are followed.

### SUMMARY

1. Obedience is the product of confidence in one's master which leads to doing as commanded.
2. Obedience is the product of intentional choice, not irresistible power.
3. Obedience is "to win over," "to yield the self" because of an inner conviction.
4. Obedience reflects as much the worthiness of the commander as it does the submission of the commanded.
5. Rebellion grows out of selfishness; obedience grows out of selfless submission to our Master's agenda.
6. Obedience is acting upon one's conviction of the Lordship of Jesus.
7. Obedience requires an attitude of joy. Grudging compliance is not obedience.
8. It is to be totally sensitive to the slightest directive of our master, Jesus Christ.
9. One result of obedience is that God gives us His Holy Spirit to guide us and share fellowship with us..

## OBEDIENCE

10. Obedience is the subjection of the self. It is to position oneself under authority as a soldier places himself under the authority of an officer. It is not out of fear of the officer, but because one is persuaded that this is right. One chooses to do the right.
11. Obedience can and will result in taking some firm, costly stands for God because of one's commitment to God.
12. Obeying the truth leads to a way of life that is pleasing to God.

## II. DISOBEDIENCE

A careful understanding of the nature of disobedience will give us insights into the nature of its counterpart - obedience.

### a. "Apeithes" (ἀπειθής)

This is the same word as "peitho" except that it has the negative attached. Where "peitho" means "persuadable" "apeithes" means "unpersuadable." This word inevitably focuses our attention on the contrast between the "obedient" and the "disobedient."

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:6*

There is a contrast inherent in this verse:

- a. The "disobedient," the "unpersuadable," will inevitably receive the wrath of God.
- b. The "obedient," the "persuadable" will receive the blessing of God.

This is one of the basic differences between the results of "obedience" and "disobedience."

*For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? I Peter 4:17*

Peter precisely described one of the differences between the obedient and the disobedient.

- a. The obedient will be judged.
- b. The disobedient, however, will experience more severe judgment than those who are obeying God during their sojourn on earth.

*"And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17*

In this verse, an angel was speaking to Zechariah concerning the son who was to be born to him and his wife. As the angel spoke about the disobedient, there is an inference concerning the obedient. The Greek text reads a bit differently. "To turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just..." The word "wisdom" is "phronesis" (φρόνησις) and means understanding, the proper use of the mind. It is the ability to comprehend the results of certain actions in advance. It is a very practical form of understanding.

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In this statement the angel pointed out one of the differences between the disobedient and the obedient.

- a. The disobedient have turned away from the wisdom of the righteous.
- b. The obedient have turned toward the wisdom of the righteous.
- c. This is a way of saying that the obedient have a wisdom which characterizes the righteous. The disobedient do not have such wisdom.

There is a second contrast in this verse. It is found in the result of turning toward or turning away from the wisdom of the righteous:

- a. The obedient are a people prepared for the Lord.
- b. The obvious inference is that the disobedient are a people who are not prepared to meet the Lord.

*They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed. Titus 1:16*

By inference, there are at least two contrasts in this verse:

- a. The disobedient profess to know God, but their deeds deny Him. It is like their deeds saying that there is no God.
- b. By inference, the obedient really know God and their deeds affirm Him.
- c. This is a tremendous difference.

There is a second difference here:

- a. The disobedient are "worthless for any good deed."
- b. By inference, the obedient are valuable in the conduct of good deeds before the Lord.

*For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. Titus 3:3*

There is a characteristic lifestyle which is common among those who are not obedient. Paul listed only a few of the identifying characteristics:

- a. Enslaved to various lusts
- b. Enslaved to pleasures - self-satisfying
- c. Malice
- d. Envy - Displeasure experienced when we discover the benefit or blessing of others
- e. Hateful - loathing another individual
- f. Hating one another - malicious and inappropriate feelings toward others

By inference, there should be a list of characteristics which are common among those who are obedient to God. This list should be just the opposite of the other:

- a. Desires under control

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- b. Not enslaved to self satisfying
- c. Excellence, the opposite of malice
- d. Rejoicing at the blessing of others.
- e. Developing a fondness for other persons
- f. Loving feelings toward others that seek their benefit

Again, obedience is far more than just doing what we have been commanded.

*This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. I Peter 2:7, 8*

One of the results of obedience is that it gives us a totally different view of who Jesus is. For the disobedient, Jesus is a rock of stumbling. This eventually leads to their destruction. For the obedient, Jesus is the chief corner stone. This outlook, ultimately, will keep them from stumbling.

### SUMMARY

1. The obedient, the "persuadable" will receive the blessing of God, not His wrath.
2. Obedience delivers us from the very severe judgment of the disobedient.
3. The obedient have a wisdom which characterizes the righteous. The disobedient do not have this wisdom.
4. The obedient are prepared for their Lord.
5. The deeds of the obedient affirm that they really know God.
6. The obedient are valuable in the conduct of good deeds before the Lord.
7. Obedience is a learned lifestyle. We are not born that way.
8. There is an observable difference between the character and deeds of the obedient and the disobedient.
9. There is an observable lifestyle which characterizes the obedient.
  - a. They control their desires.
  - b. They are selfless.
  - c. There is an excellence in them.
  - d. They can rejoice as others are blessed.
  - e. They have a fondness for other believers.
  - f. They learn to love those who also serve Christ.
10. Obedience gives us a totally different view of who Jesus is - corner stone, not stumbling block.

**b. "Parakoe" (παρακοή)**

This is a compound word whose makeup is as follows:

- a. para - means beside
- b. akouo" - to hear, to give audience

This is an intensive form which emphasizes disobedience as an outgrowth of inattention, the refusal to hear. It reflects a careless attitude.

*For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*  
*Romans 5:19*

There is a serious contrast in Paul's writing here. Through disobedience, the absolute refusal to hear the command of God, Adam paved the way for many to become sinners. The opposite of this is that the total attention of Jesus to the command of His Father resulted in many becoming righteous.

*For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, Hebrews 2:2*

The author emphasized that every rebellion and refusal to obey the command of God would be properly punished; every chosen obedience would also be properly blessed.

**SUMMARY**

1. Obedience results in blessing, not only to the obedient one, but to those upon whose life his/her example has an impact.
2. Obedience always results in blessing and reward.

**YIELD**

The biblical idea of "yielding" describes the way in which obedience often takes place. "Paristemi" (παρίστημι)

This is a word compounded of two other words for purposes of strong emphasis.

- a. Para - beside
- b. Histemi - to stand, to be firm

It is to stand ready to assist, to present the self, to stand before authority ready to be commanded, to yield up the self. It is the image of a bond servant.

*and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:13*

Paul presents two vivid, contrasting pictures,

- a. He instructed the Roman Christians not to turn their lives over as tools to be used for unrighteousness.
- b. He instructed them to turn over their lives to be used for righteousness.

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Obedience, here, would be to present your whole life to God so that His will and program might be accomplished through your life. It is to live for the purpose of achieving God's agenda in your life.

*Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? Romans 6:16*

Paul gave a description of obedience in this verse. It is to exist for the benefit on your master. It is to be committed to expending the self for the goals and desires of the master. It is not just doing what is commanded, it is belonging to that master.

It should also be noted that the result of obedience can be determined by the nature of the master of the servant. If the master to whom we present or yield ourselves is God, then the resulting conduct will be righteousness. If on the other hand, the master to whom we present ourselves is sin, then the result will be death. Obedience is identified by the discerning of the one to whom we present ourselves as servants.

*I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. Romans 6:19*

The word "present" is in the First Aorist Indicative Active form. It is an action which is completed, but continues to be completed constantly as long as one lives. Obedience is not an action, but a way of life.

The result of obedience is sanctification. By sanctification, Paul does not mean a new, higher category of Christian living. He means as the definition of the word indicates, to be set apart for God's exclusive purposes and service.

*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1*

The idea is presented here, again, in more vivid terms. Obedience is to place your life on the altar, like the ancient sacrifices, and walk away. It is to no longer be the title-holder of your life having turned it over to God to do with it exactly as He pleases. It is to say, "I no longer lay claim to my life as the owner and master. God holds that position. I only do what He commands."

### SUMMARY

1. Yielding obedience is to be a bond-servant. It is the way Paul presented Jesus in Philippians 2:1-11.
2. It is to present the whole life to God to determine how that life can best be used to accomplish His proposes.
3. It is to exist for the benefit of your master. As such, obedience is an attitude toward self and God that results in service with absolutely no limitations.

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4. Obedience will always result in righteousness. The results of obedience will always reflect the nature of the master being served. If the master is sin - the result will always be death. If the master is God, the result must be life.
5. Obedience is not just an action. It is a lifestyle. It is something you are.
6. Obedience will always result in sanctification, in being set apart for the purposes and character of God.
7. It is to turn over the title of your life. It is what it means to call Jesus "Lord."

### **CONCLUSION**

Obedience is the presentation of the self, an act of commitment, because of our love for God. It is compliance with God's command based upon intense desire. It is a choice based upon a careful examination of the heart preparing us to choose, in love, to place ourselves under divine authority. It is to be persuaded of God's love to the point that we are moved to action. It is to be subordinate. It is to totally surrender to our Lord Jesus Christ. This enables us to exist for the benefit of our Master. This requires a special attitude toward God and ourselves.

Obedience involves great faith. It is doing God's command when you don't know all that it involves. It is a yielding of the self to the ownership of God.

Obedience requires an attitude of joy. A grudging compliance is not obedience. It is more than a specific action; more than blind compliance with a command. It is a lifestyle, a way to live life every moment of every day. It is not natural. It must be learned. It is far more than doing as commanded.

There are demonstrable results which are produced by obedience. That person who is obedient to God will discover that the soul is purified. Obedience will lead to the development of a sincere love for fellow believers. It leads us to take up residence in Christ as He abides in the Father. As we obey the commands of God there is a relationship of "friends" which develops with Christ. Because Jesus was obedient, our obedience will enable us to follow the example of Jesus. Doing the will of God grows out of a selfless submission to the Master's agenda.

Those forgiven individuals who obey the commands of Christ will receive the Holy Spirit. They will also discover that it will bring them to firm, strong stands in faith which are ultimately costly. God will bless them with blessings greater than their losses in confrontation with the forces of evil. Selfless obedience will consistently bring us to the place where our desires are brought under control.

Obedience results in a generous spirit which can rejoice at the blessing of others. Obedience will always lead to a gentle wisdom which characterizes righteousness and will ultimately result in our sanctification, being set apart for God and His service.

## MEEKNESS

The English dictionary describes meekness as

*tamely submissive; easily imposed on; too submissive' spineless; spiritless.<sup>1</sup>*

We tend to associate meekness with a lack of self-confidence; a person who is self-effacing; one who has no inner strength. Rightly or wrongly, we tend to identify withdrawn or retiring individuals as "meek." In many instances, it is considered a synonym for weak if not an inferior self image.

Whatever that may be, "meekness" is not a quality one wants to put high on his list of attributes when presenting his/her resume to a Fortune 500 company. It is generally considered a negative quality.

In spite of these tendencies, the Scriptures point to "meekness" as a quality we need to develop as followers of Christ. Both the old and New Testaments give us a careful picture of the meaning of this quality of God's treasures.

The Greek word for "meek" is "praus" (πραύς). This is very awkward in translation, because we do not have a word that adequately conveys the idea suggested in the Greek. Meek is not an outward expression of weakness, but an inner quality of outstanding strength. It is a relationship with God by which one can allow him/herself to accept God's dealings with him/her as good. Because this is true, that person does not find it necessary to resist or challenge what God allows to come into life. Meekness is to honestly accept our weaknesses and at the same time celebrate God's overwhelming power turned loose in our lives. The word "meek" is very often used in conjunction with the word "humility." Only the humble heart is capable of being meek. It is an open responsiveness before God that enables one to have the strength to be open and responsive to other people, even when that involves opposition and if necessary persecution.

Jesus said,

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29*

The word "gentle" is really the word "meek." The content of Jesus' statement is filled with pain and disappointment. He chided Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida because they were the site of great miracles and yet they did not believe in Jesus.

Jesus prayed to the Father and then gave a wonderful invitation. In this invitation, Jesus described Himself. He said, "I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls." Observe that this is a quality of the heart and not the intellect. Jesus is the example of the quality of meekness.

Throughout the Gospels, and the epistles as well, we are repeatedly instructed to follow the example of Jesus. Therefore, God expects us to become increasingly meek, even as Jesus was meek. There is no alternative to our obedience to this command.

Jesus saw Himself as "meek." Jesus' enemies accused Him of being many things, but never of being weak. It was rather the astonishing strength with which He held Himself in

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<sup>1</sup>Jean McKechnie, Ed., Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, New York, (Simon and Schuster, 1972 p. 1118

## IMITATORS OF GOD

the face of opposition and abuse that demonstrated this quality. In this verse, Jesus reminded us that meekness and humility cooperated to produce rest for the soul. It is not being the doormat that brings rest, but to so entrust ourselves in His care that we can accept whatever He allows to confront us without resistance and without fear.

*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5*

The word "gentle" is really a form of the word "praus" (πραύς) which means "meek". It is the root word and means "gentle," "humble" or "mild." In Matthew 5:5, Jesus quoted from Psalm 37:11 where David said,

*The humble will inherit the land, and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity." Psalm 37:11*

The word "inherit" can have several meanings, but in this instance it appears to mean the inheritance one receives from a deceased benefactor. The implication is that we have become family to God, the one who has the earth to bequeath to us.

David's readers and Jesus' audience would be stunned at such a statement. Had Jesus said, "The bold shall inherit the earth," no one would have been surprised. It is the same in our time.

David, however, said it and Jesus affirmed it by His quotation,

*Blessed are the gentle (meek), for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5*

The logical implications are simple: The meek are blessed; the meek are family members who inherit the earth. Said another way, those who are family members are meek. It is a family trait. If the trait is missing, then the membership in the family is called into question.

In Matthew 21, Jesus again referred to this quality:

*Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold your king is coming to you, gentle and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden." Matthew 21:5*

In this verse, Jesus quoted from Zechariah 9:9. He prophesied the coming of the Messiah. It does not seem reasonable for the Messiah, a king, to come riding on a donkey. That is because we have not adjusted to the culture of that day. If a king came in peace, he would ride upon a donkey. If, however, he came with intentions of war, he would ride a white horse. To speak of the Messiah coming riding on a donkey, was to say that He, indeed, was a king and that He came in peace. Again, Jesus stressed that one of His primary qualities was that of meekness. This does not make sense in our thinking. A king needs to be bold, strong and aggressive. Jesus was the king, but He was gentle/meek in Himself and His dealings with others.

Another use of this term can be found in I Corinthians. Paul said,

*What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? I Corinthians 4:21*

In his frustration, Paul described the opposite of meekness/gentleness. There are several pieces of information in this verse.

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- a. The use of the rod, for punishment, is the opposite of an atmosphere of love and a spirit of gentleness. Therefore, gentleness is the opposite of force. It is the use of an atmosphere of love to oppose and counteract abuse. It is a spirit of life, an attitude in which one seeks to bring change into the life of another in a constructive, humble way. It is the difference between desire and force. In one sense, it is the opposite of fear.
- b. Meekness is the essence of concern for the spiritual growth of others. It is the deep desire to lead and help rather than hurt or control. It is a deep determination to assist a person to choose right directions for their life, on their timetable rather than for our decisions or time frames. It does not represent a lesser desire to see a person do the right thing. It is just that meekness has a strong sense of respect for the person and their ability to choose for themselves. To this extent, it is following the divine pattern in His dealings with us.

In II Corinthians, Paul again refers to this quality:

*Now I Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who in your presence am lowly among you, but being absent am of good courage toward you: II Corinthians 10:1*

Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians on the basis of the meekness of Jesus. In this he said that the meekness of Jesus is the yardstick against which all meekness is measured. He also affirmed that this is a quality of the life of Jesus. Because of this, we are called upon to emulate this quality of His character.

In this verse, Paul paired up "meekness" and "forbearance," though our translation refers to "forbearance" as "gentleness."

(Incidentally, our text usually translates the word "meek" as "gentle." On other occasions, such as this one, it translates "forbearance" as "gentle" and then uses the word "gentle" as well. Observe that in this verse both the words "meekness" and "gentleness" appear. Both qualities are associated with Christ.)

The word "forbearance" means "suitable," "mild," "gentle." This is an intensive form. This was usually done for reasons of strong emphasis.

Notice that Paul spoke of himself as "meek." In the Greek text, however, the word is not "praus," but "tapeinos," which means humble.

We need to describe the difference between the words we have been using:

- a. Meek - (πραύς) - an inner quality of unusual strength. It is a relationship with God which can allow one to accept God's dealings as good. There is, therefore, no need to resist Him.
- b. Forbearance - (ἐπεικεῖα) - gentleness, clemency, suitable, mild. It is an intensive form.
- c. Humble - (ταπεινός) low lying, respectful of others.

Meekness stresses submissiveness to God. Forbearance, however, stresses a strong feeling of concern for the dilemma of others. Humility, on the other hand, stresses a respect for others which is moderated by our honest view of ourselves.

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*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22, 23*

The most obvious message in these verses is that "meekness" is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is produced by the activity of the Spirit in the believer's life, not by our Herculean efforts. The meekness brought about by the Holy Spirit develops within us is a process of growth, not an achievement. It is a process which begins and never ends this side of the grave.

In this list of the Spirit-enabled qualities, observe that "meek"/"gentle" is placed between faithfulness and self-control. This is as it should be.

"Faithfulness" is standing for God regardless of the price tag or the outcome.

Self control, as we will see later, is to be strong, the mastery of self and appetites, to be temperate.

Meek - again is an inner strength; a relationship with God which allows us to accept God's dealings with us as good and therefore in need of no resistance. Each of these three qualities the Spirit enables is an expression of strength and power over the self.

Paul closes verse 23 saying, "Against such there is no law." This is a way of saying that these qualities are good. They are things God wants to see in our lives.

*Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1, 2*

Notice that Paul said, "a spirit of gentleness/meekness." It is an attitude, a personal view of our relationships and responses to life. Paul used the word "meekness" here to describe an attitude of compassion. It is to allow your honest awareness of yourself to moderate your reactions to the weaker responses of others.

The final part of chapter 6:1 and 6:2 stress this attitude.

6:1b - "Looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted." We tend to look at the faults of others as though no one else, especially ourselves, would be guilty of such an error.

6:2 - "Bear one another's burdens..." Our natural tendency is to isolate ourselves from the errors of life. Meekness shares the load when a fellow Christian is unable to perform at the level of our expectation.

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love. Ephesians 4:1, 2*

In these verses, Paul described the way of life these Ephesian Christians should follow. He listed five qualities that characterize such a lifestyle:

1. **Humility** - An honest view of ourselves which holds others in respect because we accept ourselves and can thus accept others who are also imperfect.

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2. **Gentleness/meekness** - An inner quality of character; a relationship with God that accepts His dealings with us as good. Because of this there is no need to resist His ways.

3. **Patience** - This is to be long-tempered. It is to bear with, the opposite of anger, not because of our strong control, but because of mercy founded in love.

4. **Forbearance, bearing with one another in love** - It is to cause yourself to bear with the weaknesses of others because of your love and not self-restraint.

5. **Unity of the Spirit** - The word "unity" means "one." It is the singleness of purpose that is so harmonious that the parties become indistinguishable in their purpose. Jesus referred to this when He said, "I and the Father are one." John 10:30

6. **The bond of peace** - The word "bond" is a prison term or imprisonment itself. This is keeping in custody with each other within the body of Christ. It is brought about by peace, and not by force.

If you look carefully at these qualities, they have much in common. Meekness, however, is unique among them in that it exclusively a relationship between the believer and God. This is not true of the other qualities.

*And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Colossians 3:12, 13*

In Colossians chapter three, Paul described, for them, what it means to be raised up with Christ." In verses 12 and 13, he listed ten qualities that should be obvious in their lives:

1. Chosen of God - redeemed
2. Holy - separated unto God.
3. Beloved - They are recipients of the limitless love of God.
4. Heart of compassion - when one's heart is distressed at the pain of others.
5. Heart of kindness - goodness and graciousness
6. Heart of humility - low-lying, an honest views of the self
7. Heart of gentleness - meekness, accepting God's dealings with us as good
8. Heart of patience - to be long-tempered
9. Heart of forbearance - different word from II Corinthians 10:1.
10. Forgiving one another.

Unlike the previous list, a number of these qualities have to do with one's relationship with God. This is more than a shopping list of nice personal qualities. Paul in a number of places lists a series of virtues because they are intertwined with each other. The heart that is holy will have, at least, some vestige of the quality of meekness in it. Compassion will express itself in forbearance and forgiveness.

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Notice also, that the way this sentence is written suggests that Paul speaks of several qualities of the heart. The "heart" is not an organ that pumps blood so much as it is a part of our being where our deepest, most expressive feelings surface. Meekness is not the conclusion of a logical thought process. It is what I am because of my growing relationship with God.

*But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. I Timothy 6:11*

Here is another list of virtues, but a different list. Paul described qualities that his young protégé should eagerly pursue:

**Righteousness** - The quality of being right, just, that which is consistent with God's nature.

**Godliness** - Literally, well devout, piety which seeks only to be pleasing to God.

**Faith** - The firm persuasion concerning God based upon His word.

**Love** - This is love with no boundaries or expectations. It is a God kind of love.

**Perseverance** - This is patience, Literally to "stand under." This is a military term which describes standing firm under fire.

**Gentleness/meekness** - This is a relationship with God which enables one to accept all God's dealings as good, as requiring no resistance.

Again, Paul used a list of virtues to guide his protégé toward spiritual growth. This list is quite different from the previous lists. Only a couple of the virtues are repeated here. The remainder appear in neither previous list.

As in the other lists, though, Paul presents several interrelated qualities which are intertwined. As one grows in righteousness, there will also be growth in godliness, faith, love, perseverance\_and meekness. They are all a part of a holy lifestyle which seeks to duplicate, in visible form, the qualities of Jesus.

Paul wrote to Timothy concerning the importance of meekness:

*With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.  
II Timothy 2:25*

Paul instructed Timothy in the way to correct one who opposes the ministry of the Gospel. He is to correct with meekness. It is a delicate action which is more concerned for the unbeliever than for one's own feelings. It is based upon our relationship with God being such that we can accept His dealings with us as good. There is a single agenda. There is no pain or anger built up because of what God has allowed to come into our lives.

The response of meekness can open the door for an opponent to repent. It also opens the door for an opponent to discover knowledge and truth. This being the case, such persons can be spared the snare of the devil.

Paul also wrote to Titus about the quality of meekness:

*To malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice*

## MEEKNESS

*and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us..." Titus 3:2-5a*

Paul instructed Titus concerning the direction of his teaching of the people under his care. Notice the way Paul described this:

- a. **Malign no one** - speech which accuses others
- b. **Uncontentious** - do not approach them by attack
- c. **Gentle** - forbearing - bearing with the weakness of others because of love and not constraint
- d. **"Showing every consideration for all men."** - The Greek text is different. It says, "showing forth meekness to all men." This is allowing our awareness of our own faults moderate the way we respond to the faults of others.

Observe that each of these instructions is an expression of kindly, understanding treatment of people who do not necessarily deserve it. Imagine yourself in the board meeting of most any given congregation. We must ask ourselves, just how much of this instruction would you see there?

You will also observe that there are two lists in these verses - one favorable, the other distinctly negative. The negative list can help to describe the positive qualities. Paul listed these:

- **Foolish** - senseless - not understanding, not perceiving, one who has no control over his/her desires and impulses. It was sometimes used as an expression of moral incrimination.
- **Disobedient** - This is an unwillingness to comply with directives. It can take on the form of insubordination. It can also be an unwillingness to believe.
- **Deceived** - To be led astray, to wander, to be seduced into error.
- **Enslaved to various lusts and pleasures** - to be in subjection, in bondage, to serve the will of another without choosing to do so.
- **Spending life in malice** - This is wickedness with an evil, harmful intent. It is to do something bad in an effort to do harm intentionally. It is one thing to do such a thing. It is even worse for that to be your whole life.
- **Spending life in envy** - Envy is the dissatisfaction one experiences when realizing that someone else has surpassed them in achievement or possession. This is increased by the fact that it was not just that the person was envious, but that he/she saw this as a way of life.
- **Hateful** - This is to do something as an expression of one's hate, in a way that is intended to do as much harm as possible.
- **Hating one another** - This is a different word for hate. This is a malicious feeling toward a fellow believer, whether justified or not. It is a desire to see the fellow believer harmed. This is in contrast to everything that Jesus taught.

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In these verses, Paul resorted to a serious contrast. The meek righteous are the opposite of everything said in verse three. Meekness is a gentle, kindly quality which seeks to bless and help others rather than to be better than they are.

James also spoke of this spiritual quality:

*Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21*

In the Greek text, the word "humility" is really "meekness." Speaking to Christians, James instructs them to get rid of the "filthiness", the "dirt" in their lives. This word "dirt" is a reference to moral decay. He also instructed them to get rid of their wickedness. This is something bad; something evil even intentionally bad.

There is a serious contrast in this verse. James instructs these believers to get rid of the evil, on the one hand, and to receive the implanted word in meekness. He went on to say that this was able to save their souls. This meekness is an attitude. It is an essential outlook on life in which we are able to receive the word of God implanted in our lives. It is the necessary foundation upon which an understanding of God's word and instruction take on meaning in our lives.

There is also a sense, here, that meekness thrives in an atmosphere of purity. This is another situation in which one spiritual quality thrives in conjunction with another.

*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. James 3:13*

The word translated "gentleness" is really "meekness." Observe that wisdom and understanding are the atmosphere in which meekness thrives. On the other hand, meekness is a strong foundation:

1. On it good behavior is based.
2. Meekness is the appropriate atmosphere of wisdom.
3. Without meekness, neither wisdom nor understanding thrive.

*But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. I Peter 3:4*

Peter drew a strong contrast between inward and outward beauty. This beauty, from a Christian point of view, is neither physical nor visible. This beauty is an inner quality which Peter described. It is a quality of the heart.

Peter spoke of the "gentle/meek spirit" as imperishable. In a world which is increasingly disposable, meekness "is." It will not, cannot perish.

*But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. I Peter 3:15*

Again, our version used the word "gentleness" to translate "meekness". Peter wrote to persecuted Christians. In this chapter there is a long list of exhortations, both positive and negative, which focus upon our response to persecution. In this verse, Peter gives two basic exhortations:

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- a. "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts" - If we are to survive persecution, we must, by deliberate choice, make Christ the master who supremely rules in our lives. It is not possible to do this unless meekness, that relationship of inner strength with God which enables one to allow himself to accept God's dealings with him as good, is present.  
Meekness is the atmosphere in which the Lordship of Christ takes root and prepares us to stand firm when standing for the Gospel.
- b. "Always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you." - Meekness is also the necessary atmosphere in which one can stand ready to give meaningful witness to his/her faith. Without the atmosphere of meekness, our attempts at witnessing are little more than academic excursions.

Observe that "meekness" and "reverence" are the atmosphere, the attitude in which these exhortations are carried out. Meekness and reverence are equal and inseparable. Meekness, without reverence/awe is incomplete, it lacks direction and purpose. On the other hand, reverence without meekness lacks foundation and atmosphere. Meekness is the atmosphere in which reverence operates and survives.

### **SUMMARY**

To be meek is not to be weak, but to be strong, as Jesus was strong. It is to be like Him. It is a Godly attitude in which the believer is able to accept God's dealings with him/her as good, no matter how it may feel or seem.

Meekness is an inner quality of beauty, a holy relationship with God. Meekness is the basis upon which God's wisdom becomes active in the life of the believer. This badge of inner beauty; this cornerstone of holy living is imperishable. It is an attitude; the atmosphere in which we are able to bear witness to our faith and hope. It is a holy quality to be pursued, a process, not an act. It is the attitude in which we receive God's word to guide our lives and shape our service. It is the atmosphere in which we respond to the weakness of others in view of our awareness of our weakness.

Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit of God in the believer's heart. It is not the heroic decision to try harder, but a quality which grows out of making Christ Lord of our heart.

Meekness is the attitude and atmosphere in which the erring are able to hear our concern rather than our reprimand. It enables us to share a Christian brother's burden, when he fails, rather than condemning his weakness. It is the ability to see the weakness of others through the keen awareness of our own history of weakness and failure.

Meekness is the quality of the redeemed heart which enables us to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. It is the attitude in which our dealings with the unrepentent causes them to sense our mercy and concern. This opens the door for them to receive God's invitation for their own repentance.

Whatever else meekness is, it is obedience to God in which we are blessed, made members of His family and inherit the earth.

Think about this quality for a minute:

1. Did you ever ask God to help you day by day to become meek, like Jesus?

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2. Laity: did you ever ask God to cultivate the quality of meekness in your pastor? In yourself?
3. Pastor: did you ever seriously ask God to help you to become an example of meekness for your people? To lead them into a life characterized by meekness? Did you ever preach this?
4. Have you ever been willing to view everything God allowed to come into your life as "good" and then rejoice in it?

The truth is that there is a deafening silence in the Church concerning this vital ingredient of spiritual growth. What will it take, in your life and experience, to change this?

## VIRTUE

There are two different words which are translated "virtue" in the New Testament. We will deal with them separately.

### I. Dunamis

"Dunamis" (δυναμίς) is the most frequently used word for power in the New Testament. It is often thought of as raw strength. It is more than that. This shows even in the Old Testament. The difference between God's omnipotence and the power and authority of kings is not that God can do things kings cannot do. It is that there is a qualitative difference between divine omnipotence and human, royal authority. They differ in levels of strength, to be sure, but they differ qualitatively in terms of motive. God's power grows out of a holy motive. Human, political power is almost always selfish at root.

Jesus described something of this nature in the story of the woman with the issue of blood.

*And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" Mark 5:30*

Luke tells the same story in Luke 8:46. This does not describe the exhaustion we feel after extreme exertion. It is rather the awareness that a power had been used which was holy in its essence. The translators have used the word "virtue" to describe this and it is a good choice. It was not just that the woman had tapped Christ's power to heal. She was healed, but it was with power that had a distinct moral quality. You will remember that immediately she confessed that she had touched Jesus when it was culturally unacceptable to do so.

Whatever else may be taught here, Mark identified that virtue is at root holy; it is pure, selfless power.

Luke described Jesus' trip into an area that Mark identified as the Decapolis in much the same way as he did in Mark 5:30.

*And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all. Luke 6:19*

In this instance the people were trying to touch Jesus because they had seen healing power come from simply touching Him. Again, this was healing power with a distinct moral quality which is holy and selfless.

The unique quality of this word, in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, is that it represents a power whose identifying quality is holiness rather than brute force.

### II. Arete

Both Peter and Paul use a different word which has been translated "virtue." The word is "arete" (ἀρετή). This word identifies our highest possible estimation of another person. It identifies a broad spectrum of moral goodness and excellence. It is that which identifies the divine glory.

Peter used the word "arete" in this manner.

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*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. I Peter 2:9*

The word translated "excellencies" is really "aretas," virtue. Notice that Peter used the word to describe Jesus. Peter began the sentence describing the privileged position of these Christians: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Peter continued by saying that the purpose of being such privileged people was to proclaim the excellencies, the "virtue" of the one who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. This virtue was by what He had done. Note the contrast in this sentence. These believers had once been in darkness and were now in Christ's marvelous light as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." That which accomplished this startling transformation was not just brute force, but power which was holy and filled with purity and selflessness.

Paul exhorted the Philippian Christians to focus their attention on a higher level of concerns. He instructed them:

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. Philippians 4:8*

Paul encouraged them to focus their attention on a higher level of concerns. The way Paul wrote this passage indicates that he really wanted to emphasize the importance of these qualities. Look at the list:

- True - unconcealed, actual
- Honorable - reverent, venerable, serious, dignity, that which creates a sense of awe
- Right - just, judged right by the divine standard
- Pure - free from defilement, pure from fault, free from mixture of defiling elements
- Lovely - agreeable, friendly towards
- Good repute - praise, reputable
- Excellency - virtue
- Praise - only used of praise to God

The occupation of the mind is important to every Christian. To a group of Christians in a somewhat hostile environment and a church tarnished by friction between two leading women, Paul urged them to think on factors and qualities which build up. One of these qualities is virtue. This also suggests that virtue works cooperatively with all of these qualities. They have common characteristics.

Peter also wrote about this uplifting mental quality.

*Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. II Peter 1:3*

## VIRTUE

God has the ability to imagine, to conceive in His mind the virtue, the heights of moral excellence to which He can bring us. God's omnipotent power has presented to us the gift of achieving this moral excellence through the ongoing discovery of His greatness. This results in life and godliness.

We need to identify what this tells us about virtue:

1. Virtue is one of the qualities of the divine nature.
2. This virtue results in life and godliness.
3. To the extent that God's virtue fires our expectation for our own moral excellence, to that extent we obey the exhortation to pursue virtue.

Again, Peter points to the quality of virtue as he instructed these struggling Christians:

*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. II Peter 1:5-7*

This is one of the best pieces of evidence that spiritual growth is a process and not a single achievement. Peter described seven facets in this growth process:

- To faith, add virtue
- To virtue, add knowledge
- To knowledge, add self-control
- To self-control, add perseverance
- To perseverance, add godliness
- To godliness, add brotherly kindness
- To brotherly kindness, add love

This description gives us some important information :

1. Virtue grows out of a life of faith. This suggests that it is a uniquely Christian quality.
2. Virtue is the foundation upon which spiritual knowledge, along with self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love are built.
3. Next to faith itself, virtue is the most foundational of the ingredients of spiritual growth.
4. Spiritual knowledge grows out of virtue. It is dependent upon a Christlike attitude rather than simply intellectual ability.

### SUMMARY

Again, we need to summarize the things we have learned about "virtue" in this section.

1. Virtue is power which is holy in its essence. It possesses both power and moral quality. it is holy and selfless.

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2. Virtue is a lofty impression of moral goodness and excellence in another individual.
3. It is an apt description of both Jesus' power and the moral excellence of His life.
4. Virtue is holy power which is pure and selfless.
5. Virtue is the quality which occupies the holy mind; that which builds up both the one who focuses on it as well as the one who is being observed.
6. Virtue thrives in the company of truth, reverence, justice, purity, agreeableness and praise.
7. Virtue is an uplifting mental quality.
8. It is one of the qualities of God.
9. Virtue results in life and godliness.
10. It is commanded. To fail to have virtue is to be as disobedient as the thief or idolater.
11. Virtue grows only out of faith. It is uniquely Christian.
12. Virtue is the foundation for spiritual knowledge.
14. It is the basis upon which all other holy qualities grow.

In our culture, the only concept of power is force. No one ever seems to think of power as being capable of moral quality. As we observe the use of power in the Church, it appears that we have adopted the values of our culture.

It seems strange that during my whole lifetime in the Church, I have never heard anyone mention virtue in the Church. I never heard a sermon; never heard anyone pray for virtue. Did you ever hear anyone express deep sorrow over the lack of virtue in their life; did the thought ever cross your mind?

The Scriptures clearly call us to live a life of virtue. Yet, this is an almost totally ignored quality in the lives of believers today. It is possible that this strange condition grows out of our preoccupation with actions as opposed to inner qualities and relationships. This is not commendable, but it is probably an accurate evaluation of our condition.

Did you ever, even once in your life, ask God to increase the quality of virtue in you? Did you ever ask God to so deepen the relationship between Him and yourself that virtue could be observed by Christians and non-Christians alike?

We need to reiterate that virtue will not come suddenly in its fullness of expression. Like all spiritual growth, it will come as a process of growth. Our problem in the Church today is not the fact that it must be a process. It is that in most places there is no evidence or mention of it at all.

## FAITHFULNESS

The Greek word for "faithfulness" is "pistos" (πιστός), which means to convince by argument, to conciliate, to rely with inward certainty, to yield, to have confidence. Faithfulness is to yield, in obedience, the self with all its powers and potential on the basis of our inner certainty that God is true to us and His word. Faithfulness is oblivious to circumstances or results. This word appears 50 times in the New testament.

One who is faithful yields to the will of his/her master. The faithful person is one who obeys the commands and directives of God because he/she confidently yields to God and not because of fear of the consequences.

Whatever else faithfulness may be, it is what God is. This suggests that faithfulness is at least a part of what is involved in living a holy life. To follow the example of Jehovah, one must be faithful. This is what Paul meant when he said:

*God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His son, Jesus Christ our Lord. I Corinthians 1:9*

One of the evidences of God's faithfulness is the fact that we have been called into fellowship with His Son. If God were not faithful, then our call to fellowship with Jesus would also not be real.

The use of this word sometimes gives us insights into its meaning. The story of Lydia, from Thyatira, is a case in point.

*And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us. Acts 16:15*

Lydia's statement suggests some information about faithfulness:

1. It is observable.
2. Our faithfulness is directed to the Lord.
3. Faithfulness is a threshold. Lydia based her request for servanthood upon the observable presence of faithfulness in her life.
4. Faithfulness is found in company with a moving desire to serve God by serving His people.

Paul had an important insight into the nature of faithfulness,.

*In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. I Corinthians 4:2*

There were people in and around the Church who questioned Paul's ministry and apostleship. Speaking to the Corinthian church about the issue, Paul talked about what is required of those who would hold a position of leadership. If people are open, it is possible for them to accurately discern the presence of faithfulness in the believer's life. However, we as believers are not always open in our evaluation of each other. This was the case with the detractors of Paul. He reminded the Corinthians that though we can sense holy qualities in each other, God is, ultimately, the one who makes that final evaluation. For this gift I am very grateful.

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The word translated "trustworthy" is really "faithful." Paul used the term, in this verse, to describe one who is so yielded to God that whatever God might ask, it would immediately become his priority.

In the New Testament, the word "faithful" is used in several different connections. We will deal with each one separately.

### I. In Connection with God.

In Hebrews 11, the author dealt with Sarah's struggle to believe the seemingly impossible promise of God.

*By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.  
Hebrews 11:11*

As Sarah contemplated God's promise, her expectation of conception and giving birth hinged upon her view of God. "She considered Him faithful who had promised." The dependability of God caused Sarah to believe the seemingly impossible.

*God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. I Corinthians 1:9*

Paul associated the faithfulness of God with our call into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ. This suggests that God's faithfulness assures us of our fellowship with Christ who presents us before the Father as "blameless." The call to fellowship is as startling as being presented to an all-knowing God as blameless.

God will protect us from every form of evil. This is behind the statement by Paul,

*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. I Corinthians 10:13*

Again, Paul used the faithfulness of God as a means to assure these Corinthians that they would not be tempted beyond their ability to endure. God would provide a way of escape for them. Our contact with temptation is frightening because we know how weak we really are. Our assurance is the faithfulness of God.

*If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, he also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.  
II Timothy 2:12, 13*

There is an interesting truth here. Paul was dealing with Timothy's need to be faithful and how God deals with our failure to be faithful. Simply put, Paul said that when we are faithless, God remains faithful. This would be shocking to many people in that culture. They were used to vengeful gods. The next statement begins with the word "for." This indicates a coming reason or purpose. He said God is faithful because He cannot deny Himself. God's faithfulness was not just a decision to be dependable or His inability to be anything else but good. It was rather a conscious choice. If God was not faithful, He would be denying Himself.

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Notice that Paul said, "He remains faithful." This suggests that faithfulness is not a static life-quality. It is rather a quality which must be constantly reaffirmed and declared to be the priority of a person's life. My faithfulness must be "new every morning."

Observe, also, that Paul used the word "cannot." This suggests that it is impossible for God to deny Himself. This is reasonable, since to deny Himself, He would no longer be God.

Our faithfulness cannot be just our innate goodness. It is an intelligent choice. If I choose to be faithless, I must deny the "new self" that is mine in Christ.

*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.  
I Thessalonians 5:24*

Verses 23 and 24 are found on many plaques and with good reason. Paul's blessing upon these nearly isolated Christians in Thessalonica was far more than a beautiful statement. God's ability to enable them to overcome is as faithful and dependable as His call. Their call into God's family was very firm in their minds. Their certainty of successful survival of evil's attack seemed less certain. Paul identified this absolutely certain position with the faithfulness of God.

Peter also dealt with the quality of faithfulness in God.

*Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. I Peter 4:19*

These words are dynamite! Look at what Peter said:

1. There are those "who suffer according to the will of God." We want to think that now, no pain is according to God's will. Not so! Job suffered to demonstrate the power of God to sustain His servant and highlight His sovereignty. If we take up our cross daily, according to the Scriptures, we, too, will be faced with suffering. It is the faithfulness of God that is our support in such times.
2. Peter spoke of God as "a faithful creator." There are many things which are undependable. Nature, creation seems to be different. Day always follows night. Spring always follows winter. It never changes. Peter was ascribing this flawless changelessness and faithfulness to the God who is the Creator. Simply said, Peter urged the saints to do right and leave their suffering in the hands of the Creator who is flawlessly faithful.

In his first epistle, John also spoke of God's faithfulness.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9*

Dealing with people who were well aware of their sin, John described the way of freedom from this bondage. This is a conditional statement: **If** you do this, **then** that will happen. "If we confess our sins..." The guarantee John offered was the fact that God was dependable and righteous.

The author of Hebrews also spoke of God's faithfulness:

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23*

In effect, the author said these suffering Christians should be faithful because the one who gave the promise (God) is faithful.

There is a common thread running through each of the verses we have quoted in this section. God is changelessly dependable. Because of this; because we are part of His family, we must be like Him, faithful. To the extent, then that we are not faithful, we deviate from His likeness.

## II. In Connection with Jesus

Paul spoke of the faithfulness of Jesus.

*But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. II Thessalonians 3:3*

Paul urged beleaguered Christians to pray for them and the spread of the Gospel. As he spoke of their need of deliverance from "perverse and evil men" he contrasted them with Jesus, saying, "But the Lord is faithful." The faithful dependability and holiness of Jesus is what believers need in order to be sustained in their struggle against evil.

The author of the Hebrew epistle spoke of Jesus' faithfulness. These Jewish believers suffered greatly for their faith in Christ. The author held up Jesus as an example for them in their struggle. He said:

*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. Hebrews 3:1, 2*

He said that God appointed Jesus to a holy task. Jesus was undaunted in His determination to yield Himself totally to the Father who appointed Him to this immense, but glorious task.

In the Revelation, John was instructed to write these words to the "angel of the church of Laodicea."

*And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God says this: Revelation 3:14*

This message contained three specific names for Jesus:

- a. The Amen
- b. The faithful and true Witness
- c. The Beginning of the Creation of God

Jesus was called "the faithful and true Witness." This name grows out of Christ's actions. He witnessed faithfully to the grace of God, knowing it would cause His death; knowing that there was inevitable pain in such yielding of Himself and His will to the Father.

As John described the scene in Revelation 19, he gave Jesus another special name.

*And I saw heaven opened; and behold a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he judges and wages war. Revelation 19:11*

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A name was more than personal identification, though it was that. A name was given to describe what the person was or what the parents hoped the person would become. John was describing what Jesus was like: He was faithful and true.

In each of these verses, Jesus was described as being faithful to the Father and to us. We are admonished throughout the New Testament, to be like Jesus. Again, to the extent that we are not faithful; to that extent we are less than the followers we were called to be.

### III. In Connection with The Scriptures

Only the Apostle John speaks of the message of God as "the faithful word."

*And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."*

*And he said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Revelation 21:5*

John described Jesus sitting upon His throne and saying to John, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." We think of words as being as dependable as the one who speaks them. Most of us know people who, having given their word, would do almost anything honorable to keep it. We know some other people, also. The words of which Jesus spoke were faithful because He was unequivocally dependable; because He totally bent His will in total obedience to the Father.

Again John wrote:

*And He said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place. Revelation 22:6*

Jesus gave John a prophetic word which he could not then see, nor could he check its validity. Jesus validated the prophetic word declaring it to be "faithful and true." This prophetic word could not be more dependable if we had already seen it come to pass.

In both of these passages, the message deals with "faithfulness" in terms of "dependability." This dependability must be as true of our lives as it was of the messages Jesus spoke to John from the heavenly throne. This is not to say that we will be perfect, but we must certainly be moving in that direction.

Paul said to Timothy:

*It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

*I Timothy 1:15*

The word translated "trustworthy" is really "faithful." Our translators have attempted to help us understand this word a little better. Paul wanted Timothy to really understand that the grace of the Lord was much more than abundant. Paul even used himself as evidence of just how great that grace was. To say that this word is "trustworthy" or "faithful" emphasizes just how true Paul considered it to be.

Again in I Timothy, Paul spoke of "a faithful word."

*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. I Timothy 3:1*

This is a way of affirming the veracity of a statement. It is like saying, "You can depend upon the wisdom of this statement."

At a time when there was great emphasis on physical fitness, Paul wrote:

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*It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. I Timothy 4:9*

Paul drew a sharp contrast between the meager benefits of "bodily discipline" and the major benefits of a godly life. He then added his own affirmation by saying this is "a faithful word." Paul used the word "faithful" to describe a high level of dependability.

In II Timothy, Paul made a similar statement;

*It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. II Timothy 2:11*

They had heard these words before. Here he said the words again and added his own affirmation by saying, "This is a faithful word."

To Titus, Paul said,

*Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Titus 1:9*

Paul described for Titus how a pastor was to conduct his ministry. There is a long list of "do's" and "don'ts" for effective ministry. Titus could verify this "faithful word" in three ways:

- a. It was in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel.
- b. It was able to comfort/exhort in sound teaching.
- c. It was able to convict those who contradict the message of the Gospel.

"The faithful word" is that which is and does what God intended. It has not been changed or weakened by opposition.

As Paul disciplined young Titus, he talked about the things that are helpful and those which do harm to one's ministry.

*This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. Titus 3:8*

Concerned for the effectiveness of the ministry of Titus, Paul gave him some sound advice. Again, he spoke of a "word" whose wisdom is dependable.

### **IV. Concerning People who are Faithful**

The author of the Hebrews epistle drew a contrast between Christ and Moses. He wrote:

*Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. Hebrews 3:5, 6*

The meaning of the word "faithful," in verse five, and its implied presence, in verse six, both have the same meaning. Moses was faithful in that he yielded himself to do the things God called upon him to do. He was at the disposal of God. Jesus was faithful in

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that as Paul points out, in Philippians chapter two, he took the form of a servant, one who lives to accomplish the will of another. The difference between them was that Moses was faithful as a servant, while Jesus was the Son, still he carried out the role of the servant more completely and successfully than Moses did.

In I Corinthians, Paul spoke of Timothy in these terms:

*"... Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord..  
I Corinthians 4:17*

Paul used the word "faithful" to identify Timothy as one who as a servant of Christ was so yielded to the service of God that he was totally at the call of his Lord.

In Galatians, Paul said,

*"So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."  
Galatians 3:9 (NASV)*

The Greek text has a slightly different reading.

*"So as those of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham. Gala-  
tians 3:9 (Greek text)*

God told Abraham to go to a land He would show him and Abraham went. God promised Abraham a son and though it was a severe test of faith, Abraham expected the child to be born. Only the intervention of God prevented Abraham from sacrificing his only son, Isaac, when God told him to make such a sacrifice.

Abraham was totally yielded to the service of God. Therefore, God could depend upon him to do exactly as He instructed.

Paul said of Epaphras:

*"...our beloved fellow bond-servant who is a faithful servant of God on our  
behalf. Colossians 1:7*

Here again, Paul cited that total yielding of the self to God expressed in the service of God's people.

In Colossians 4:7 and Ephesians 6:21 Paul spoke of Tychicus in the same way. Again, in Colossians 4:9, Paul make a similar statement about Onesimus. This is interesting because at this time, Onesimus had become a Christian, had served with Paul during his incarceration, but this repentant, forgiven, run-away slave had not been restored to his master, Philemon, when the letter was written.

In a necessary, but awkward situation, Paul spoke of himself as faithful.

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He con-  
sidered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a  
blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown  
mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. I Timothy 1:12, 13*

Paul did not exaggerate. He had suffered extensively for the cause of Christ, but did not hesitate to enter into the hazardous scene to share the good news. He was faithful, yielded to Christ to do as commanded despite probable consequences.

Peter described the spiritual character of Silvanus in these words:

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*Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! I Peter 5:12*

Peter looked at the life of Silvanus (Silas) and concluded that he was faithful. Peter does not explain why he considered Silas "faithful." His missionary service and suffering as Paul's companion was enough for Peter to draw such a conclusion. Whatever the basis, Silvanus was yielded to God and dependable as a fellow servant.

The apostle John also wrote about the faithful.

*I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. Revelation 2:13*

Writing to the northern church of Pergamos, John was instructed to commend this suffering congregation who did not deny faith in Christ, even during the time that Antipas, their Bishop, was martyred under Domitian. Antipas was referred to as "My witness, My faithful one." The word "faithful," here, was used to describe one who was yielded to God to the point that he/she was willing to suffer on behalf of Christ.

Paul also wrote to Timothy concerning the conduct of Christian women.

*Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. I Timothy 3:11*

Paul listed four crucial qualities for these Christian women:

- a. (+) dignified - It means to be reverent, devout, honorable.
- b. (-) - not malicious gossips - not slanderers, fault finders
- c. (+) - temperate - sober - This word carries the idea of being free from intoxication, but also the idea of careful and intentional in thought.
- d. (+) Faithful in all things

Again, "faithful" is used to express that quality of being yielded to God, no matter what He calls upon us to be or do, the price tag will never be a consideration. The answer is always "yes." We must remember that the life yielded to the service and will of God will also be a dependable life.

Paul addressed the Ephesian Christians in these words:

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:1*

Paul used two words to identify these believers:

- a. Saints
- b. Faithful in Christ

In so doing, he conveyed the idea that both designations are uniquely Christian in nature. The unregenerate, no matter how honorable they may be, could never be called "a saint" or

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"faithful in Christ." These qualities grow out of a life changed by the sacrifice of Christ. Paul used the same kind of greeting at the beginning of his Colossian epistle (1:2).

John, in the Revelation, speaks thus of Jesus:

*And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood. Revelation 1:5*

John struggled to describe the indescribable greatness of our divine Lord in limited human terms. Note the descriptions he employed:

- a. The faithful witness
- b. The first-born of the dead
- c. Ruler of the kings of the earth

His first picture was "the faithful witness." The only thing that made a witness useful was if he was faithful. Here John stressed the dependability of the witness of Jesus.

John wrote about a faithful ministry in these words.

*Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers. III John 5*

This is a way of life and style of ministry which is yielded to God and totally available in divine service.

Finally, John spoke of the faithful overcomers in the Revelation:

*Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10*

John foresaw a time of intense persecution that the Church would face. The faithfulness was realized in their irrevocable commitment without regard to cost. You will find a similar message in Revelation 7:14

### V. The Results of Faithfulness

There are eight references to the word "faithful" in the Gospels. All of these deal with an image of a slave-master relationship; all of these focus on the results of faithfulness.

*Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Matthew 24:45*

Luke tells this story in Luke 12:42. One of the consequences of faithfulness is the element of trust. This is not surprising because faithfulness expresses itself in dependability. Jesus said that one who is faithful/dependable will be honored by being given additional responsibility. (see also Matthew 25:21)

Inevitably with additional responsibility comes additional benefits. This is true in human relationships. It is true in spiritual relationships as well. As Jesus said in Matthew 25:23

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*His master said to him, ' Well done good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master. Matthew 25:23*

Faithfulness, according to this verse, brings several blessings:

1. Affirmation - "well done, good and faithful servant."
2. It develops a positive reputation - "good and faithful servant"
3. It results in being trusted - "you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things."
4. The celebration of a job well done - "Enter into the joy of your master." There is a comparison here. When God completed creation He celebrated the completion of His work. In Jesus' parable, when the master returned, He invited His faithful servants to celebrate with Him the completion of their allotted tasks.

The same principle is involved in Jesus' parable of the unrighteous steward.

*He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Luke 16:10-13*

There is a principle involved in these verses. "Faithful" leads to trust, which leads to benefits. The reverse principle is also true. Unfaithful leads to mistrust, which leads to denial of benefits. This is an economic or cultural principle. The spiritual principle is precisely the same.

The second principle in these verses is, "faithfulness will ultimately result in commitment." Interestingly, it is also the product of deep commitment.

Paul wrote to Timothy about the development of church leadership

*And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. II Timothy 2:2*

"Faithful" is one of the prerequisites for anyone who is prepared to teach the faith to new believers. Teaching the faith requires more than the transfer of information. Only one who demonstrates dependability; one who is so yielded to God that the cost of discipleship is never an issue can adequately teach the infants in Christ.

### SUMMARY

It may be helpful to review again the pieces of information concerning faithfulness that we have observed so far:

- It is what God is.

## *FAITHFULNESS*

- God's faithfulness resulted in our becoming a part of His family. Faithfulness involves mercy.
- It is observable in the life of a believer.
- It is the basis upon which Christian servanthood is founded.
- It thrives in company with the deep desire to serve God by serving His people.
- It is the attitude which pervades any Christian leadership which pleases God.
- It is founded upon the faithfulness of God.
- God is faithful and we are called to be like Him.
- God's faithfulness is the basis upon which our fellowship with Christ is established.
- God's faithfulness is the guarantee that we will not be tempted beyond our ability to survive with His help.
- God's faithfulness is unconditional. Ours must be the same.
- Faithfulness is a conscious choice, a deliberate decision to be dependable as He is dependable.
- Faithfulness is a lifestyle which grows out of a life of faith. Faithfulness would be shocked if God, at any point, demonstrated a single situation where He was not dependable.
- The quality of faithfulness is inseparably linked with purity of life and righteousness of conduct.
- It is the faithfulness of God, not our intense determination which brings about our faithfulness to the confession of our hope in the midst of persecution.
- The faithfulness of Jesus is responsible for our strength and protection from the evil one.
- Jesus is the example, the model which we are to follow. We are to become faithful as He is faithful.
- The non-Christian should be able to see the faithfulness of Jesus in the way we live.
- Faithfulness is the atmosphere in which we follow the example of Jesus and resist the forces of evil, to the death, as He did.
- Faithful means totally reliable.
- Faithful, in Titus 1:9, speaks of the unaltered word God has given to guide us in holy living.
- That which is faithful will always support and establish the teachings of the Scriptures.

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- Faithful is the unconditional yielding of the self to the will and purposes of God.
- Faithful is a developed quality. It is not a quality some have naturally and others do not.
- It can be developed in the life of a bondservant of Jesus Christ.
- Faithful is a prerequisite for service and leadership in the body of Christ.
- Past disobedient behavior, like the early life of Paul, when forgiven and canceled does not inhibit one from becoming faithful.
- Faithfulness always takes a stand against evil forces.
- Faithful is not a quality reserved exclusively for those who are unusually pious. It is a quality of life common among believers.
- Faithfulness is an ultimate commitment. - "faithful unto death."
- Faithfulness leads to greater responsibility.
- Faithfulness pleases God.
- Faithfulness develops a positive reputation.
- Faithfulness results in trust.
- Faithfulness is a prerequisite to the training of new Christians.
- Faithful is a process of growth rather than a level of attainment.

Read this list again. Ask yourself how many times you have heard these things taught in the Bible class or from the pulpit. If these statements are true, and it appears that they are, then why do so many people treat this facet of spiritual growth as an option rather than a requirement?

Like every facet of spiritual growth, faithfulness is a process of growth, rather than an achievement. Again, granted that this is true, are you consciously seeking God's help to become increasingly faithful or are you, in general, simply hoping to be improving in this area of your life?

Faithfulness is a command of God. Why, then, do we so often treat it as one among many options for our consideration?

## GRATITUDE

The word "gratitude" does not appear in the New Testament, but its synonyms "thanks" and "thanksgiving" appear at least 45 times.

We tend to associate "thanksgiving" with two things:

1. A holiday on which every rule of temperance is bent to the breaking point.
2. A word a child must say loudly and clearly before he/she can eat the candy offered by a friend or neighbor.

This, of course, is not what the New Testament dealt with at all. There are five different words that are translated "thanks" or "thanksgiving" in the New Testament. We will look carefully at each word.

- a. "Eucharisteo" (εὐχαριστέω) means to express deep gratitude.
- b. "Charis" (χαρίς) is that which produces pleasure or benefit.
- c. "Homologeo" (ὁμολογέω) means to confess, to speak out of deep conviction, the announcing of personal allegiance to God.
- d. "Anthomologeomai" (ἀνθολογέομαι) means to respond in praise.
- e. "Exomologeo" (ἐξομολογέω) - It is to give thanks with promise

Three of these words reflect personal appreciation for what God is doing or has done. "Homologeo" and "exomologeo", however, are confessions based upon the other three.

### 1. "Eucharisteo"

This is a compound word made up of two other Greek words:

eu - well

charizomai - to give freely

When an author used this word, he was referring to the idea of giving freely, of expressing gratitude, of offering thanksgiving. It is the idea that David used repeatedly in the Psalms.

12 of the 30 occurrences of this word, in the New Testament, have to do with giving thanks for food. We will deal selectively with this list of 12.

*And He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn, to the multitudes. Matthew 15:36*

Some people will think of this verse as evidence in favor of the idea that you dare not eat until you have "said grace." That was not what Jesus was doing. One might suspect that large numbers of Christians "say grace", but are not giving thanks. The thought that all belongs to God might never enter their minds. The idea that God is the owner of all, but allows us to be benefited thereby could totally escape their thinking.

Jesus expressed deep gratitude both for the loaves and fish and for the miracle that would enable the multitude to be fed from this meager supply. It is an acknowledgment that God is the Creator and Controller of all we have and need. It is His, not ours. We only have access to these provisions because of His mercy and kindness to us. It is also an

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acknowledgment that without His generous provision, we would be helpless to provide for ourselves. It is adoration for His great power. It is exaltation over the mercy and power of God.

In Matthew 26:27, Jesus "gave thanks" in the midst of the Passover celebration.

*And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you." Matthew 26:27*

(This event was also reported in Mark 14:23 and Luke 22:19)

We must remember that the whole basis for Passover was a celebration of thanksgiving. It affirmed the truth that not only did God provide food, but He also delivered them from Egypt, destroyed the Egyptian army and guided them to the land He had promised to their ancestors hundreds of years earlier.

This celebration simply acknowledged that God had kept His word and provided for their every need. Passover gave thanks that God, the all powerful one, was master and owner of His people.

Luke gives us another illustration of thanksgiving.

*And he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him and he was a Samaritan. Luke 17:16*

This was part of Jesus' experience as He traveled from Galilee through Samaria to Jerusalem. He met 10 leprous men. Jesus healed the ten, but only one returned to give Him thanks. Notice, that Luke tells us that the Samaritan fell on his face at the feet of Jesus in an action of thanksgiving.

Now, it is possible to totally express gratitude without prostrating oneself. This action goes far beyond simple appreciation. This act had high symbolic significance. Basically, this action was performed by two types of people and both for the same reason.

- a. A slave prostrated himself before his master to symbolize his subservience to the master.
- b. A conquered soldier or general prostrated himself before the feet of his conquering general. Here again, it was intended to express, symbolically, that the defeated soldier was now the obedient servant of the conqueror. It was an expression of gratitude for a spared life; an admission that he owed his totally service and obedience to the new master who had allowed him to live.

In this particular verse, "thanksgiving" includes both the idea of appreciation as well as a commitment to obedience. We tend to affirm the former and ignore the latter when thinking of the meaning of thanksgiving.

The Samaritan was really saying, "You are my Master; I am your servant: command me!"

In the book of Acts, Luke used this term to describe Paul's actions during that frightening storm.

*And having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all; and he broke it and began to eat. Acts 27:35*

Paul tried to be an example to the frightened sailors. They were in the midst of a terrible storm and were certain that they would die. The sailors had eaten nothing at all.

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Paul assured them that not one of them would be harmed. Still, however, they would not eat. Paul knew he would have to show them an example.

Paul took bread, gave thanks to God, broke the bread and ate it. Only then were the frightened sailors encouraged to eat.

What did Paul do? He gave God thanks for food, but he did more than that. He acknowledged that what he could not do to preserve his life, God could and would do on his behalf. In this instance, thanksgiving is the celebration of both the providence and mercy of God. It was also a witness to God's faithfulness. The celebration of God's providence, mercy and faithfulness is an unbelievable part of the meaning of thanksgiving for God's people. With this in mind, thanksgiving is a uniquely Christian quality of life. Others may show genuine appreciation for what they have, but the content and motive of their appreciation and our thanksgiving are categorically different.

In Romans, Paul also used this word to describe a form of gratitude.

*Who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the gentiles. Romans 16:4*

Paul told the Roman Christians how Priscilla and Aquila had risked their lives to protect him. Paul used exactly the same word Luke use in Acts 27. There is a slight difference in the way the word was used in the two passages.

In Luke 27:35, Paul dealt with the celebration of God's providence, mercy and faithfulness. In Romans 16:4, Paul discovered the sacrificial love of two friends. Paul's thanksgiving was a sincere gratitude for the sacrificial love of a Christian brother and sister. This expression of gratitude was a response to the unworthiness he felt in receiving this life risking gift.

*Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I Corinthians 14:16, 17*

Paul was dealing with the problem of publicly praying in tongues. Paul used this word to describe an expression of thanksgiving which is enhanced and lifted to higher level of praise by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

One might ask how this is possible. There are definite levels of gratitude. I taught a Sunday School class and the people expressed what I felt was genuine gratitude.

I taught Bible two hours each evening for a week in a church in the Ukraine. One evening I reached a convenient stopping point in the lecture after one hour and fifty minutes. I sat down. My translator whispered to me, "They are all looking at you; you still have at least ten minutes." Two sincere expressions of gratitude, but on very different levels.

In verse 17, you will note that one person cannot give thanks because he does not know the reason behind the other persons thanksgiving. This suggests that thanksgiving is a qualitative activity of the heart prompted by a careful activity of the mind.

*You also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of the many. II Corinthians 1:11*

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The Corinthian church was deeply involved in the ministry of prayer that God would work through the apostle Paul. This prayer brought the favor of God upon Paul's ministry. This leads people to give thanks to God for the quality of ministry granted to Paul. One can give thanks for what God has done through the life of another individual. This is gratitude for a "good" not just for personal benefit. Unfortunately, much of what we think of when talking of "thanksgiving" is a mental or verbal response for benefits received. That is unfortunate.

*For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. II Corinthians 4:15*

Our home training has caused us to think of thanksgiving as a social necessity, a requirement. We are commanded to give God thanks. That, however, is not the purpose of thanksgiving. It is important to give God thanks for the redemption of many. This thanks brings glory to God. That is the purpose of our gratitude. We need to examine the content and purpose of our thanks to God. What appears to be thanksgiving, may not be gratitude at all. It could simply be an expression of social necessity with no heart involvement whatsoever.

*(I) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers. Ephesians 1:16*

Like II Corinthians 1:11, Paul here describes a situation where one person, Paul, expresses gratitude for others, the Ephesian Christians. Occasionally, we hear this in the church, but not that often.

Observe the context of this gratitude. Paul was praying. It may not be universal, but nearly all the expressions of this term "thanksgiving" involved prayer. One can show thanksgiving whether praying or not. Nevertheless, most New Testament examples occurred when someone prayed.

*But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among the saints; and there must be no filthiness, and silly talk or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Ephesians 5:3-5*

In these verses, Paul drew a sharp contrast between that which is impure and that which is holy. This is not a complete list of either the impure or the holy, but the contrast exists. Look at the qualities Paul mentioned:

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| IMPURE  | HOLY          |
|---|---------------|
| Immorality<br>Uncleaness, not purified<br>Greed<br>Filthiness<br>Silly talk<br>Coarse jesting<br>Covetousness<br>Idolatry | Giving thanks |

In these verses, Paul has opened a glimpse into the nature of thanksgiving. It is the opposite of moral decadence, greed and idolatry. Purity and holiness are integral ingredients of the make-up of gratitude. If it isn't pure; it isn't gratitude. As we said earlier, there is a serious contrast in these verses. Paul said, in verse five, "... no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." We must carefully consider, then, that the opposite side of this is that the pure and grateful do have an inheritance in the kingdom of God.

*Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. Ephesians 5:20*

You will find this same command in I Thessalonians 5:18 as well. In Ephesians 5:15-6:18, Paul described the way the people of God conduct themselves in a pagan world. In the midst of this description, you find Ephesians 5:20.

The words of this verse are haunting - "Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." "Always giving thanks for all things" is a very sweeping statement:

- a. It includes all the beautiful seemingly provident situations in our lives. That is easy!
- b. If it is "always giving thanks for all things," then, it must also include the painful, costly, humiliating, frustrating, devastating, confusing experiences which can keep us daily climbing the walls. That is not as easy!

How does one always give thanks in all things?

Part of the answer is found in the grammar of this sentence. "Always giving thanks" is what is known as a "present Active participle. Let me break that down. This form describes ongoing action which is already going on and does not stop. One might literally translate in these words, "Always giving thanks and never stop giving thanks in all things." It is a way of saying that gratitude is not a special set of words which convey the idea of appreciation. It is rather a lifestyle, a way of life. Gratitude is a way of looking at life; a way to view what God allows to come into our lives. It is not gratitude to only express thanks for the comfortable, appealing circumstances. We must also learn how to give thanks for the pain, loss and hardship God carefully monitors as it comes into our lives. One can unceasingly give thanks, not because one loves pain, but because we know that even the pain God allows will build us up; will strengthen us to be overcomers, to be more like Jesus.

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Job lost everything except his wife and himself. It seems that he voiced the most eloquent expression of gratitude when he said,

*"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21*

It was not that Job was insensitive to his pain. It was that he had learned to place himself in the hands of a merciful God without reservation. Then his thanksgiving could be an affirmation of the mercy of God, even in pain, rather than a measuring of the comfort level of what happens in life.

Look at Ephesians 5:20 again. "Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God." In this verse, two ideas repeatedly get overlooked:

- a. Our thanks is given to God. This is not smashing your thumb with a hammer and shouting, "Praise the Lord." It is rather to see God, our Father, as the one who carefully measures what He will allow to come into our lives to make us stronger, more like His Son.
- b. Our thanks is given to God in the name of Jesus.

It is under the authority of Jesus that we are enabled to offer gratitude. Like an ambassador, we speak on behalf of Jesus as we offer our thanksgiving. On our own name, we have no authority to speak our thanks to God. Jesus has released us to offer our gift of praise, our sacrifice of thanksgiving.

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6*

Paul portrayed thanksgiving as the atmosphere of intercessory prayer. This gives intercession an additional focus:

- a. We intercede for others because we are eager for their needs to be met.
- b. We intercede for others because it becomes an additional reason to give thanks and praise to God.

For too many believers, intercession is simply a way to get what they want from God. This verse provides such people with a whole new perspective for seeking God on behalf of the needs of others as well as themselves.

*Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Colossians 1:11, 12*

Our thanks to God is a response to the gift God has given us. It is an affirmation that it was God who has transformed us; it is God who has blessed us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints.

*Having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude. Colossians 2:7*

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Paul gave us a careful picture of the process of maturing in the Christian faith. It begins with faith in Christ. Having believed, it is essential to be firmly rooted; to develop a firm understanding of our relationship with Christ. Having been "firmly rooted in Christ," we need daily experience of walking with Him to establish our faith. In the midst of this ongoing understanding, development and strengthening, there is an atmosphere of overflowing thanksgiving.

This does not mean that everything will be comfortable and exhilarating. It means that there is an atmosphere, a mental attitude of inexhaustible thanksgiving which is initiated by our relationship with Christ and not by pleasant circumstances.

*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Colossians 3:17*

In a special way, thanksgiving is the atmosphere in which we do our work and live our lives. Thanks is a vital part of being a Christian servant. If we work for God, without giving thanks, our service is incomplete.

*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. Colossians 4:2*

Paul gave instructions to Christian people who owned slaves. Gratitude was one of the qualities Paul instructed the owners to demonstrate. He also instructed them to devote themselves to prayer. Paul's instructions were very intense, "Devote yourselves to prayer and keep on devoting yourselves to prayer. Keep on watching in prayer with thanksgiving. Prayer was the unending attitude, the unchanging atmosphere of their ongoing prayer life. Paul talked about a way of life, not an individual action.

*We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers. I Thessalonians 1:2*

This is a way to rejoice in the divine transformation which the apostle had seen in the lives of these believers. Paul was saying God has done a miraculous work in your lives.

*But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. II Thessalonians 2:13*

The word "should" literally means "to owe." A more literal translation might be, "...we have a never ending responsibility to give thanks to God..." In many instances, we must remind ourselves to give thanks, we think of thanksgiving as something one does, but often forgets. Thanksgiving is as continuous as breathing. It is our daily occupation because God has chosen us to be saved through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus.

*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men. I Timothy 2:1*

In this verse, Paul identified four expressions of communication with God:

- a. Entreaties
- b. Prayers
- c. Petitions

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### d. Thanksgivings

These are to be made for everyone. Thanksgiving is as much a part of this instruction to pray as petitions are. This verse also suggests that giving thanks to God for others is an effective way to seek God's face.

*Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude. I Timothy 4:3, 4*

In these verses, Paul suggests several pieces of important information:

- a. Thanksgiving is a way to fulfill God's intent.
- b. Thanksgiving is a uniquely Christian experience - "To be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth."
- c. Thanksgiving is the personal ingredient which enables everything to be able to be seen as "good."

*And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever. Revelation 4:16*

Observe that these creatures are described as responding to God in three ways:

- a. Give God glory
- b. Give God honor
- c. Give God thanks

The giving of thanks is part of our eternal vocation. We should also observe that the result of giving thanks is that others will give glory to God as well.

*Saying, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign." Revelation 11:17*

In these verses, John described a scene of heavenly worship for us. A vital part of the worship experience is a vital expression of thanksgiving. This thanksgiving is more than a perfunctory "We thank you, Lord..." It is a genuine expression of the heart seeking a way to rejoice in God's goodness. There is another outburst of pure praise and worship in Revelation 7:12.

## 2. Charis

The second word, in the New Testament, translated "thanksgiving" is "charis" (χάρις). It is that which produces delight, great pleasure; the provision of great benefit, great liberality.

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. II Corinthians 2:14*

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This, too, is an expression of gratitude. It deserves our attention because of what it accomplishes - This thanksgiving acknowledges the fact that God "Leads us in triumph in Christ." It is not our inner strength or unusual goodness. Our deeper discovery of the person and nature of Christ cannot be attributed to our keen sense of observation. It is praiseworthy that this is an accomplishment of God on our behalf.

*But thanks be to God, who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. II Corinthians 8:16*

The apostle Paul rejoiced in what God did to create an earnestness in the heart of Titus on behalf of these Christian brother.

We are grateful for what people do. We know, however, that ultimately God is the one who acts on our behalf.

The giving of thanks to God reflects our great pleasure and delight in the wonders He has worked in the lives of His servants.

*Thanks be to god for His indescribable gift! II Corinthians 9:15*

The grace of God extended toward us is so great, so delightful that we cannot but express that indescribable pleasure by giving thanks. Our thanks is a gift of our pleasure to God.

### 3. Homologeō

The third word translated "thanksgiving" in the New Testament, is "Homologeō" (ὁμολογέω). This is a compound word made up as follows:

- a. Homo - the same
- b. Lego - to speak

It literally means to confess, to speak out of deep, positive conviction. It is to speak freely. It was sometimes used to express the idea of confessing our allegiance to Jesus Christ as master and Lord. It was also used to describe one's profession of faith and loyalty.

*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Hebrews 13:15*

Thanks is too commonly thought of as kindly words, perhaps the most sincere expression of thanksgiving takes place when the word thanks is not used at all. The phrase, "Give thanks to His name," is sometimes translated "The fruit of lips that confess His name." There is real thanksgiving in the heart of that individual who chooses to accept God's grace and confesses Jesus as Lord and Savior.

### 4. Anthomologomai

The fourth word translated "thanksgiving" is "anthomologomai" (ἀνθολογέομαι). It is a compound word made up as follows:

- a. anti - opposite, instead of
- b. Homologeō - same words, same speech, same motives.

It is to confess in turn, to respond in praise.

Luke is the only one who used this term to express such intense gratitude. This is the story of the prophetess Anna finding the infant Jesus in the temple. She said,

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*And at that very moment she came up and began **giving thanks** to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:38*

This was indescribable praise because God had kept His word; had shown Anna the promised Messiah and set in motion the redemption of His people. Her heart was overflowing with praise and thanksgiving to God for His great kindness to them.

### 5. Exomologeō

The final Greek word for "thanksgiving" is Exomologeō." This is a compound word and is made up as follows:

- a. "ex" (ἐξ) - it describes origin, from, the point to which motion proceeds.
- b. "Homologeō" (ὁμολογέω) To give assent, to covenant, to acknowledge, to give thanks with a promise.

Paul used this word in Romans 14 to describe our response to God's goodness.. He said,

*For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." Romans 14:11*

This is far more than saying "thank you." It is to ascribe honor and praise by covenanting to serve. This is what Luke reported the words of Jesus,

*At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I **praise** Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. Luke 10:21*

He was saying that the extent of His honor for the Father was so great that He covenanted to do the Father's will, even to the point of death. That is thanksgiving. Thanksgiving that costs nothing, is not really thanksgiving.

### SUMMARY

Gratitude seems like a simple quality, but it involves more than we usually consider.

1. Thanksgiving includes the expression of a deep sense of gratitude.
2. It is a desire to provide pleasure or benefit for what another has done.
3. Gratitude is to speak out of deep conviction in announcing one's personal allegiance to God.
4. It is the response of praise for the goodness of God.
5. Thanksgiving is our affirmation that without God's provision, our physical needs would never be met.
6. It is the celebration, the acknowledgment, as in the Passover, that God has miraculously delivered His people from imminent destruction. It is a celebration of the faithfulness of God.
7. It is an affirmation that God has been faithful as he promised.

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8. Thanksgiving also takes the form of a commitment to obedience, especially to God.
9. Thanksgiving can also be an acknowledgment of God's great power to do what we have no power to do for ourselves. It is a celebration of God's faithfulness; a witness to His irresistible power.
10. Thanksgiving, as used in the Scriptures, is a uniquely Christian quality of character.
11. It is an acknowledgment that a person is inextricably in the debt of another because of that person's self-sacrificing actions.
12. Thanksgiving can be a shared, community experience. It is an intellectual, emotional response to specific situations and experiences.
13. One can give thanks for a "good" which may not have any self-serving characteristics whatsoever.
14. Thanksgiving is a command of God. As such, it is to be obeyed. Thanksgiving, at root, is intended to bring praise to God.
15. The giving of thanks, a holy quality, is the opposite of all forms of impurity.
16. The thankful, along with the pure, have an inheritance in the kingdom of God.
17. Gratitude is a lifestyle, an outlook on life in which appreciation and commitment are vital, normal ingredients.
18. It is a vital response, even in pain, because we know that God carefully monitors each painful incident. Gratitude is to rejoice in God's careful monitoring of the pain in life in order to build us up. Gratitude is the Christian response to every experience, not just those which are comfortable.
19. Gratitude is the attitude, the atmosphere in which we respond to every experience with God, not just the pleasant ones.
20. Thanksgiving is the atmosphere in which we pray for our needs and those of others. It is one of the vital ingredients in prayer.
21. Thanksgiving is a response to God's dealings with us no matter what form those dealings may take.
22. Gratitude is a part of the maturing process of the child of God.
23. Thanksgiving is a Christian attitude which characterizes our life of prayer.
24. It is the experience of rejoicing in what God has done to transform brothers and sisters in Christ.
25. Thanksgiving is one of the many different forms of prayer; a way of conversing with God.
26. It is the avenue by which the Christian is enabled to see everything as "good."
27. Thanksgiving is part of the eternal vocation of every believer, it is that to which we will devote our constant attention throughout eternity.

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28. Thanksgiving is a vital part of the worship experience. It is the believing heart seeking a way to rejoice in God's goodness.
29. Thanksgiving acknowledges the fact that God leads us in triumph in Christ.
30. Gratitude is the gift of our pleasure to God.
31. It is to speak out of deep conviction in confessing one's allegiance to Christ despite the conditions.
32. It is more often a condition of the heart than the content of one's speech.
33. Gratitude is to see the greatness of God as a background against which to view our lowliness.
34. It is the human means to give honor to God.

In effect, our culture teaches us to be grateful for benefits received. Many, however, have no concept of gratitude whatsoever. They feel the world owes them something.

The previous list has been placed in this form so that you could look at each statement more carefully.

As you browse through the list, it quickly becomes evident that gratitude is not a special series of words delivered at an appropriate time. It is not a conditioned response for benefits received.

Gratitude is, rather, an attitude, an outlook on life. It is a way to view every experience, including those that seem harsh and painful. Gratitude is a relationship with God that enables us to commit ourselves so completely to Him that we can see everything He allows to come into our lives as "good."

If one wants to grow in gratitude, it will not happen by becoming increasingly alert to say "thank you" for everything people do. The quality of gratitude in our lives will really increase as we deepen and strengthen our relationship with God in Christ. Gratitude is a byproduct of that growing relationship. It is our response to God as we receive all of life from His hand.

## HUMILITY

For most people, this word conjures up a host of mental images, most of them bad. The English word "humble" has its roots in the Latin word "humus" which means dirt, earth. It means lowly, small, to bring down, to be painfully aware of one's shortcomings and defects.

The Greek word "tapeinos" (ταπεινός) has undergone several rearrangements of its meaning. In ancient Greece, it carried the sense of being servile, a slave; the lowly submissive stance of a slave, the powerlessness of slavery.

In the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the New Testament, it was invested with a totally new set of meanings. In the New Testament, every occurrence of the word "humble" or its derivatives, comes from the same Greek word "tapeinos." This word is always used in a good sense in the New Testament. There are three separate facets of our understanding of this word:

- a. It means lowly, to bow down, poor, the opposite of arrogant pride.
- b. It is the full discovery and acceptance of one's self knowledge and worth.
- c. It came to represent the Christian's servant mentality - to be as prepared to serve our Master, Jesus Christ, as any slave could ever have been. It took on an air of respect. The apostle Paul introduced himself, in several of his epistles, as a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

We will enlarge on these understandings as we encounter them in the New Testament.

*"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29*

This is a part of Jesus' universal invitation,

*"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28*

Jesus described Himself as "humble in heart." He was saying that He existed to minister to others, not to serve Himself. He was also saying that He knew Himself completely and accepted Himself for what He was. For Him, to be humble did not mean thinking of Himself as a doormat. He could walk erect and thankful for what the Father had made Him. For Jesus, "humble" described the stance of his mind and heart, not His physical frame. It did not mean self-effacing. It was rather to be so accepting of Himself that He could accept others as people of worth.

Observe also, in verse 29, that when Jesus identified Himself as "humble" He immediately spoke of His ministry to others - "find rest for your souls." This is the heart and soul of humility. It is the delight in being able to serve others without looking down upon or demeaning oneself.

*"Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4*

Then as now, the pride of person, possession and position were adult preoccupations. The disciples had just asked Jesus who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. On another

occasion, the mother of two of the disciples asked Jesus if her two sons could have the two honored positions - on His left and right - in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus' answer was direct and cut to the bone. He said that the one who humbled himself like the child He held in His arms, that one would be the greatest. Jesus used the word "humbled" to describe a person who was so preoccupied with life itself that he/she would have no thought for being better than someone else. In this instance, "humble" meant one who gave no thought to being superior to others. This would be the opposite of pride.

*"And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Matthew 23:12*

The word for "humble" appears twice in this verse. This is a typically Jewish form of expression. They majored in contrasts and parallels. This, of course, is a severe contrast. Jesus used the word "humble" in two different ways here.

- a. "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled." The meaning is painfully clear. Anyone who presents himself as superior; as better than others: that person will be brought low and be seen as a slave. This is very much the old Greek idea of the term "humble."
- b. "Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." Here the statement was just reversed. Jesus was saying that a person who sees himself as a valuable servant of others will be exalted by others rather than by himself.

It is interesting that the word "humble," in this phrase, is in the future indicative active form. One might appropriately translate this word, "whoever humbles himself and never stops humbling himself,..." Jesus was describing a way of life, not an individual act. Jesus was also saying that the reward for humility was being exalted. Humility involves the ability to understand totally how great your worth is without becoming proud, but rather expressing gratitude by being servant to others.

*"He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. Luke 1:52*

This is part of Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1:46-54. Mary had made reference to her lowly estate in contrast to the great honor God had bestowed upon her - to give birth to the Messiah. In this particular verse, Mary made two very significant statements:

- a. **He has brought down rulers from their thrones.**" The ruler on his throne was almost universally understood as a symbol of pride and arrogance. This would not be hard to understand since many of them thought of themselves as god.
- b. **"He has exalted those who are humble."** That is exactly what God had done for Mary. She came from an unknown family in Israel. She was a woman and they had no real position in that culture.

In this instance, Mary used the term "humble" to identify a servant view of self; a willingness to be the bondservant of God no matter what the price might be. That was certainly true in her life. Humility was to give no consideration to superior station; to have no eagerness for superior possessions, but rather seeking opportunity to do as God has called upon her to do.

## HUMILITY

*"For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." Luke 14:11*

This is a truly Jewish maxim - stated in contrast. Jesus had just told a parable about guests taking the important seats at a feast. This is an excellent illustration of humility. The proud take positions of importance without being invited to do so. The humble individual knows his worth, but is able to take a lowly position and allow others to honor him by insisting that he take a more prestigious place. It is the ability to know your worth and not feel the need to insist upon it. It is to see yourself as one among many without needing to be superior to them. Humility is the ability to know who you are without insisting upon an acknowledgment of one's station.

*...serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; Acts 20:19*

Paul was describing the style of his ministry in Asia. He talked about, "Serving the Lord with all humility..." Humility is the atmosphere in which an obedient child of God offers his service to God. If there is no humility, then there is no service to God.

This humility in service is interesting to observe. What does it look like? There are at least two ingredients:

- a. **It is humble.** The servant knows his/her own abilities and value. This, however, does not become the priority of life. The extent of our skills only increases the level of skill we are able to offer as our sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. It does not present us with opportunity to feel superior to others.
- b. **It is service.** This kind of service is performed by the bond-servant. The bond-servant belongs to his Master. He is property. The servant has no rights. His agenda is determined by his master. The servant's life is lived to advance the values and agenda of his master. If there is a conflict between what is best for the servant and for the master, the concerns of the master take priority.

We should be aware of the fact that if we do serve the Lord with all humility, there will be difficulties to conquer. Paul talked about serving in the midst of tears and trials which were propounded by those who wanted him to fail.

*Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Romans 12:16*

Romans chapter 12 is the beginning of the practical application section of the epistle. There are four instructions in this verse:

- a. "Be of the same mind toward one another."
- b. "Do not be haughty in mind."
- c. "Associate with the lowly."
- d. "Do not be wise in your own estimation."

Each of the four is a command. There is a serious contrast in this verse. It is really a double instruction. "Don't do this...Do this."

## IMITATORS OF GOD

- a. This is for purposes of emphasis.
- b. Paul posed the negative side of the instruction first - "Do not be haughty in mind." A better translation might be, "Do not be high minded." This is a command against arrogance.
- c. "Associate with the lowly." The word "associate" is "sunapago" (συναπάγω). This is a compound word:
  - (1). σύν - with
  - (2). ἀπάγω - to bring

This word came to mean "travel together." In that culture, one would not travel together with, associate with anyone unless there was peace, harmony and acceptance between them. Paul commanded the Roman Christians to accept those who were poor and of no reputation. This is the way "humble" is used in this verse.

In the verse, the contrast also adds some definition to the word "humble." "Humble" is the opposite of "high minded." If "high minded" refers to arrogance, then "humble" refers to those who have an honest opinion of self; a view of self that does not need to compete with others for worth. This is the way Paul used the word "humble" in this verse.

*But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; II Corinthians 7:6*

Paul, in this paragraph, recounted the way he had struggled with persecution and depression. He affirmed that it was God who comforted the humble. A better translation might be "God who comforts and continues to comfort the depressed. The word translated "depressed" is "tapeinos" - "humble." Paul stressed the fact that God stands beside/comes to the aid of the humble. The "humble," in this verse, refers to those who do not see themselves as unrealistically important. These people know their worth and have no need to be seen as better than others. They have a good sense of self-worth and do not need adulation of others to strengthen their self image.

By saying that God continually comforts the humble, Paul was saying that one of the benefits of being humble is that God is always standing with us; God is always pleading our cause. This is a great benefit.

*Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? II Corinthians 11:7*

Paul was commenting on the fact that he had preached to the Corinthians without placing any responsibility upon them for his care. He worked to care for his own expenses. In doing this, Paul had assumed the position of a slave. In this instance, "humble" means to be as one who has no rights and input.

This meaning is appropriate, but it is not the basic use of the term. We must admit, however, that it is valid and has some affect upon the use of the term elsewhere.

*I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not*

## HUMILITY

*repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced. II Corinthians 12:21*

In this paragraph, 12:19-21, Paul was defending the firm way in which he reprimanded the Corinthian Christians for their sins. Frankly, a better translation of the first part of the verse might be, "...God may humble me..." He was saying that if he failed to give strong leadership to the church, in the form of chastening unrepentant sinners, God would humble him. It is a way of saying that God might remove him from his leadership position. God could leave him in a followers position rather than a leaders place.

Paul saw one of the possibilities was that if he was humbled, he might not be able to reach these sinners as he could under present conditions. That was a frightening thought to the apostle.

*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:8*

This is the well known 'kenosis passage.' In this passage, Paul dealt with a group of Christians who had division in their midst and some felt far superior to others. He urged them to follow the example of Jesus. He wanted them to humble themselves with one another as Jesus had.

In this passage, the word "humble" does not mean grovel. Jesus was no less God for having taken on human flesh. He set aside His majesty for the time, but even in His humanity He worked great miracles and released us from our sin. "Humble," for Jesus, meant to know full well who He was and what was His task, but to take a less acknowledged position in order to accomplish the task the Father had established for him. Paul suggested that these Christians from Philippi remember who they were in Christ and thus be able to take more of a servants position and attitude, toward each other, in order to accomplish the will of God for their fellowship - unity.

*I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. Philippians 4:12*

Paul's definition of "humility," in this passage is very clear. He described poverty in the sentence. He used a severe contrast to emphasize his point. The extremes of the contrast are as follows:

- a. Paul knew how to live in poverty.
- b. Paul also knew how to live in prosperity.

Poverty involves more than being without coins. To be poor is to be considered of lesser value and of lesser ability, or even of lesser ambition. Paul knew how to live with these social stigmas, but still remember that he was a person of worth, ambition for the Gospel and the ability to serve God at whatever task might be assigned him. That is real humility.

*Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, Colossians 2:18*

## IMITATORS OF GOD

The congregation at Colossi struggled with angel worship within the church. Paul wrote to attempt to correct this heresy. This is a command. In effect, Paul said to these Christians, Do not allow anyone to defraud you and keep on defrauding you of your prize. This is an ongoing lifestyle rather than a singular act. This tells us that to entertain the wrong definition of "humble" can deprive us of our prize, which God wants us to possess.

The words of the text, "self-abasement," are a translation of the word "tapeinos" or "humble." One of the tenets of angel worship involved the personal attitude that the person is nothing; the human being is bad. Using the word for "humble," Paul spoke of humble as being low in value. This is hardly the mainstream use of the term, though we do understand what he meant.

There is a contrast in this verse. He spoke of these Christians who were allowing someone to make them feel as though they were no good when this same person was feeling very proud of himself and his ability to see visions and think of himself as someone special. Self-abasement is not humility, but rather the opposite of it. Paul dealt with the word "humble" in exactly the same way in Colossians 2:23

*And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; Colossians 3:12*

This verse really begins with the "therefore" rather than "and so." This suggests that a conclusion is coming. If you look at the previous paragraph, 3:5-11, you will notice that in it Paul described the tragic qualities of their former life. Beginning with verse 12, Paul now talks about the qualities that should be discovered in their changed lives.

Paul identified these people in three ways: "Chosen of God, holy, beloved." People who fit this lofty description are required to have a very special heart. This heart has five very special qualities:

- a. Compassion
- b. Kindness
- c. Humility
- d. Gentleness
- e. Patience.

This suggests that humility is a condition of the heart, not a thought process of the mind. No amount of practiced action or thinking can produce humility in the child of God.

Humility does not exist in a vacuum. Humility works in concert with the other four qualities in the heart of the believer. It happens only as God does a work in the human heart to make us like our Lord. Observe that each of these five qualities expresses at least one form of concern for others, particularly those in need. It is reasonable to assume that humility is the same. It exists to minister to the needy and broken. Humility develops in the heart of one who knows his/her own strength and can share concern for others without fear of destroying the self.

*being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; James 1:8, 9*

## HUMILITY

Verse nine begins with the word "but." This indicates that there is a strong contrast between verse eight and nine. James contrasted the double minded man, on the one hand, and the humble man on the other. The double minded/double souled person is "unstable in all his ways." In contrast, this suggests that the humble man is stable in all his ways. At first glance, verse nine appears to be an instruction to a brother who has little of this world's goods. That could be deceiving. The Greek text reads a bit differently.

*But let the humble brother brag/boast/glory in his high position.*

This presents a humble person, whether he be of wealth or poverty, high reputation or low, who despite his humility stands in high regard among others. This appears to be a far better translation of the text.

This person is a Christian. The author called him "brother." Humility is a Christian quality and will be found in none others. Some non-Christians will not be braggarts, but the motive will be different. The truly humble person will be so in order to obey and please God. His/her humility will be a result of the work of God's Spirit in his/her life.

The humble brother is blessed. He has a lofty reputation because of his relationship with God as servant and his relationship with others as an equal. Verse ten begins with the word "but" rather than the word "and" as our text indicates. This suggests that there is a strong contrast between 1:9 and 1:10 as we indicated earlier.

*and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. James 1:10*

Again, the word "and," with which the verse begins, would be better translated "but." This is a contrast between "the humble brother" and "the rich man." The author contrasts the results between the two. The humble brother will experience a lofty reputation. The rich man will be humiliated, really frustrated, because no matter how hard he has worked or how successful he has become, he will ultimately be destroyed and forgotten.

*But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6*

This is part of the paragraph, 4:1-10. In this paragraph James challenged these Christians to make a deliberate, observable stand for God. This verse is followed by a long series of commands by which James challenges them to greater obedience.

In verse six, James drew a contrast between the proud and the humble. Humility is the opposite of pride. This gives us an insight into the nature of humility:

1. Humility sees itself as strong, but not superior to others.
2. Humility is not self-seeking or self-centered.
3. Humility focuses upon the power of God; pride focuses upon the power of self.
4. Humility is service oriented; pride is oriented on being served.
5. The humble are the recipients of the grace of God in a way that the proud are not.
6. God is the enabler of the humble - God does not oppose them.

*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.  
James 4:10*

## IMITATORS OF GOD

This verse is a part of the same paragraph as James 4:6. People tend to think of "humbling" as something humiliating that happens in relationship to people. James is very pointed in his statement. Our humbling is before God. It is not a demeaning, but a choice of priorities that places God first in our lives. It will have implications in our relationships with people, but it is always in the presence of God.

This is the only command, in this series, with which James includes a promise. He promised that IF we humble ourselves in the presence of God, THEN God will exalt us. This seems a contradiction. It is none the less true. This promise gets at the purpose of humility. The purpose of humbling is not to make Christians lowly or disenfranchised. The purpose of humbling is to enable us to be effective servants to God and others and in the process experience the exaltation which God alone can give.

If you study the commands in this paragraph, you will notice that they are intended to increase our focus upon God. If we take these exhortations seriously we will live a more godly life and take a much more dedicated stand for Him and His righteousness. Humility is a part of that commitment to godliness.

*To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; I Peter 3:8*

Peter was summarizing this part of his presentation. We tend to think of humility as something that is to be found in the lives of the unusually devout. Peter gives a different picture. Humility is a quality that should be found in every child of God. It will not always be perfect. It will not always be mature, but it will be present. It should be as universal, among Christians, as unity, sympathy, mutual responsibility and family care. Peter went on to say that these qualities are unique to the Christian and differ markedly from the way we formerly lived and the way others live even now. Humility is one of the things that causes the Christian to stand out among those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, I Peter 5:5-6*

Peter gave a long series of exhortations that were intended to help the body of believers live a more Christlike life. Some exhortations were to elders, others to the young men, but all intended to make a significant difference in their witness to the community.

One of the real difficulties in the church centered in their equality. The church insisted on this, but it created a different problem. When the women and the young realized that they had equality, they had difficulty placing themselves under the authority of those called to be elders. Peter attempted to deal with both the young and the elders in an effort to bring harmony and efficiency to the community.

Peter commanded the young men to place themselves under the authority of the elders. This had nothing to do with authority or power. It had to do with their attitude toward each other. As equals, the young were to place themselves under the control of the elders, not because they are older; not because they are always right: but because in the divine design of the Church He placed some in authority and commanded others to submit joyfully

## HUMILITY

to that authority. It was the appointed way for harmony to exist in a body that would otherwise be no more harmonious than any other non-Christian group.

He then instructed all of them, elders and the youth as well, to wrap themselves in humility. This is a household term. "Clothe yourself with humility toward one another," was a phrase everyone would understand. Let humility cover you completely as your robe covers you from the weather and the view of others. Let humility surround and protect you. Remember that this is "toward one another." It is an attitude, that results in a specific kind of action. Some think of humility as looking properly sad and unimportant. One can be humble toward every believer and walk erect, shoulders back, a smile on the face and a confidence that God will use every gift He has placed in their life.

Notice what Peter said, "For God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." This statement draws a strong contrast between Proud and humble. If "humble" is the opposite of "proud," then we have a clue as what constitutes humility. Pride is self-aggrandizement at the expense of others. If humility is the opposite of pride, then it is a balanced view of the self that is sensitive to the wrath of God. Therefore, humility receives the grace of God which it desperately needs, but cannot deserve.

We are to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God." Observe that he said "humble ourselves..." This is not something that others do to me. It is a deliberate choice on my part. I choose to place myself in the servants role on His behalf. Our humbling must be in proximity to people, but it is a response to who we are before God. "humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God" deals with our attitude. When I view the irresistible power of God against the backdrop of my own obvious weakness, it has a humbling effect upon me. It causes me to see, in honest perspective, exactly how weak I am and how I relate to God whose power knows no boundaries. On one occasion, Isaiah saw the holiness of God and immediately became aware of his own sinfulness. This works the same way. When I come face to face with the awesome power of God, I have a distinct awareness of just how weak I am. This enables me to become humble before Him in a way heretofore unknown to me.

Peter continued by describing the results of this encounter. Notice that Peter said, "That he may exalt you at the proper time." The word "that" suggests that a purpose is going to be described. Our humbling is not to make sure we know how weak and insignificant we are. God wants us to humble ourselves before Him in order that He might exalt us; that He might give to us a position that acknowledges our gifts without demeaning someone else. The exalting is what God has in mind for us. We resist this humbling because we fear that it will make us feel less worthy than we already feel.

### SUMMARY

We need to reflect upon what we have discovered so far.

1. Humble is the opposite of arrogance.
2. Humility is not demeaning, but to fully discover and accept one's own self-knowledge and worth.
3. In the first century, it came to represent the Christian's servant mentality. We serve each other, not because we are nobodies, but because we have a deep love for each other.

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4. Humility is, ultimately, to be Christlike.
5. Humility is not self-effacing, but rather being servant out of a self awareness of strength and confidence in God.
6. The inner being of humility is always that of ministry to others.
7. "Humility" is the stance of greatness in the kingdom, though not in the world.
8. Humility is a style of living, a way of looking at life, rather than specific acts.
9. God not only honors humility, He rewards it with exaltation.
10. Humility is the ability to know who we are without insisting upon an acknowledgment of that station.
11. Humility is the atmosphere in which the obedient child of God offers his/her service to God.
12. To be humble is to have an honest opinion of self and feel no need to compete with others to establish our worth.
13. To be humble is to be vulnerable. This is unnerving. God, however, is the comforter, the helper who stands beside the humble in their stress.
14. Jesus humbled Himself. To be humble is to be like Jesus.
15. Humility involves obedience. "Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient."
16. Humility is a condition of the heart, not a thought process of the mind or a specific act.
17. Humility works in the human heart, in concert with compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience, to minister to the needy and broken.
18. The humble person is stable/sound in all things.
19. Humility is a Christian quality.
20. The humble are strong, but do not feel superior.
21. Humility is not selfish.
22. Humility is service oriented.
23. The humble are recipients of God's grace.
24. Our humbling is always before God, but in the presence of other people.
25. Humility is an essential quality in every child of God.
26. Humility is a quality that marks the Christian as uniquely different from the non-Christian.
27. Humility involves our attitude toward each other in the body of Christ. It expresses itself in the ability to place ourselves under the authority of others without feeling inferior to them.
28. Humility must encircle every facet of our lives together - "Clothe yourself with humility toward one another."

## *HUMILITY*

29. Humility is our attitude toward ourselves viewed against the backdrop of the lives of our Christian brothers and sisters.
30. Humility is a balanced view of the self which need not demean others in order to value self.
31. Humbling is something we, as Christians, do, not something done to us.
32. Humbling is in proximity to people, but is a response to who we are before God.
33. God's purpose for our humbling is to exalt us, not to demean us.



## GOODNESS

The word "good," in English, is like the word "nice." It has been used to mean so many things that it has no meaning at all. Consequently, when we encounter the word "goodness," in the New Testament, we assume that we understand it, but it is a bit fuzzy at best.

There are two words which are translated "goodness" in the King James Version and we need to be very clear about what they mean:

1. "**Agathos**" ( ἀγαθός ) - that which is good in character. It is the inner moral excellence, the inner grace, kindness and gentleness of attitude which motivates the believer to Christlike conduct. God is consummate goodness. In Romans 12:2, this word describes one of the characteristics of the will of God.
2. "**Chrestotes**" ( χρηστότης ) It literally means "to be employed," "to be useful." It took on the understanding of moral excellence or moral character when used by Christians. It describes **acts** of gentleness and kindness; a person who is pleasant, gracious and upright. It is goodness in action. It is not an irritated reaction to sin it is rather a tenderness and compassion expressed toward the sinner.

These two seem very close. They are, and yet they are not. "Agathos" describes the inner quality of Christian character that identifies what we are. It is the stuff of Christlikeness. It is the inner, personal ingredient by which the Spirit enables us to be kindly, be gentle, be compassionate, be generous, be gracious, in fact become what Jesus is.

"Chrestotes," on the other hand, is the ACTS of kindness, acts of gentleness, acts of compassion, generosity, mercy and love which are the visible expressions of the inner Christlike character. "Agathos" is the goodness that I am; "Chrestotes" is the goodness that I do.

This differentiation is very important to our careful understanding of the instructions of Scriptures.

### 1. Agathos -

*"The **good** man out of his **good** treasure brings forth what is **good**; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. Matthew 12:35*

Jesus had been accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul. He defended Himself. As often happened, Jesus used an inanimate example to illustrate a human situation. A tree is thought of as good because it bears good fruit. He summarized by saying, "the tree is known by its fruit."

He then turned to human experience. This took on the form of a contrast. He spoke first of the Pharisees. He said,

*"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. Matthew 12:34*

He spoke of them as being not only doers of wrong deeds, but morally corrupt. Notice that he said, "The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." This is an illustration of the meaning of goodness. It is the morally good characteristics which compose the person's inner being.

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Jesus immediately followed this by describing the positive part of the contrast.

Jesus spoke of a "good man." This is a person who has the moral character which follows the example of God. It is being like Him. This man who possesses this moral quality has also a moral character which is also like God. Indeed, the moral character, or "good treasure of the heart" as Jesus called it, is the source of the person being called a "good man."

Jesus went on to say that a person who is morally good will perform actions which are also morally excellent in character. Luke 6:45 deals with the same incident.

*And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Matthew 19:17*

This story is commonly referred to as "the rich young ruler." Some have thought that Jesus' statement suggests that He took exception to being called "good." That was not the case. Jesus, as He so often did, indulged in question and answer sessions to teach a point. He did that in this case.

The Greek text may help us some. A rendering of the verse might be,

*"Teacher good, what good thing shall I do and keep on doing in order that I may have eternal life?" Matthew 19:16 (Greek)*

The man used the word "good" twice in his question.

- a. He ascribed moral character to Jesus by calling Him "good teacher."
- b. He assumed that one could gain eternal life by doing things which in their essence were morally good - things one would expect God to do.

You will find this same conversation reported in Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19

*And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man Luke 23:50*

This is Luke's report of Joseph of Arimathea's request for the body of Jesus for burial. In this paragraph, Luke provided a bit of information about the man:

- a. He was a good man 23:50
- b. He was righteous. 23:50
- c. He had not agreed with the Council's decision concerning the guilt and punishment of Jesus. This position was not politically correct in that day and was probably costly to his reputation in the Council.
- d. "He was waiting for the kingdom of God." This suggests that he had a level of devotion to God that was highly unusual even among the Jews.
- e. At great personal risk, he went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
- f. He, with others, buried Jesus in his own personal tomb. This was a level of personal identification with Jesus that could have cost him his political career.

What does this tell us about the nature of "goodness"?

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1. "Goodness" can be found in the company of "righteousness." It is the moral quality of life out of which comes the willingness to risk everything in order to take one's stand for God. "Goodness" accompanies that longing for God that seeks the coming of His kingdom and attempts to emulate His life and values in life every day.

*And there was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray." John 7:12*

In this paragraph, Jesus' brothers, who did not believe in Him, goaded Him to go to the feast of Booths, Succoth, in Jerusalem so that His disciples could acclaim Him. Jesus went to the feast, but not as they urged Him. As usual, the mobs were divided concerning who Jesus was. Some said He was "good." Some said, "He is not good, he leads the multitudes astray."

This diversity of opinion gives us some information about the nature of goodness. The two opinions represent strongly contrasting positions. In this contrast, "goodness" represents one who would not lead people astray. This identifies an intensive level of integrity and dependability. It suggests a high level of sincerity - the quality of being exactly what one appears to be. This is not a decision to be open and sincere. It is, rather, a relationship with God that enables one to accept and rejoice in who he/she is and rely upon God to use that potential for His glory. That is exactly what Jesus was like.

*for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. Acts 11:24*

Earlier in this chapter, God opened the doors to the kingdom to the Gentiles. Peter's vision, though frightening to him, opened a whole new ministry to him. Believers from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20) began preaching the Gospel to the Greeks.

The church became concerned about these events. They sent Barnabas on a fact-finding mission to see what had happened. In 11:24, 25, Luke gives us insights into the character of this great saint - Barnabas:

- a. He was a "good" man. 11:24
- b. He was full of the Holy Spirit. 11:24
- c. He was a dependable, trustworthy individual. (They sent a large offering by his hand to the Christians in Judea.)
- d. He was an encourager of the believers 11:23

What does this tell us about the "good" man?

1. The quality of "good" was found in a believer.
2. The quality of "good" was discovered in one who was filled with the Holy Spirit. Goodness and being filled with the Holy Spirit are compatible.
3. The "good" man was dependable and trustworthy. These qualities are also compatible.
4. The "good man" was an encourager. He had a deep abiding concern for the well being of those around him.

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At the least, the qualities of dependability, encouragement and the filling of the Holy Spirit are compatible with the inner, moral quality of "goodness." One might even say that these qualities are essential to each other.

*And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. Romans 15:14*

This passage is located in the practical section of Romans - 12:1 - 16:27. In the midst of this series of instructions toward Christian principles for everyday life, Paul inserted this description of the Roman Christians.

If you read the paragraph, 15:14-21, you will notice that it contains two basic ingredients:

- a. A description of their Christian character.
- b. A description of Paul's ministry - to pronounce the word of God as He gives it to Paul.

Paul was talking about believers, "brethren." He reported his evaluation of their faith. He observed at least three qualities of their personal character: They were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and very collaborative - "able to admonish one another.

This tells us that these people, if not all people filled with goodness, were also filled with all knowledge. They are also able to relate to one another in trust that they can receive and give admonition to each other in the spirit of Christ. This is a marvelous situation to have in the body of Christ.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, Galatians 5:22*

One of the most important factors about goodness is that it is the product of the Holy Spirit working in the Christian's life. We cannot be sensitive and intentional enough to become "good." Goodness is a quality of Character which develops within the heart of the believer by the direct activity of the Holy Spirit. It is a fruit, a product, a natural development of the Holy Spirit controlling and redirecting our lives. There is no new program which will bring about this marvelous, holy quality of "goodness" in us.

*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29*

In this paragraph, Paul contrasted their old lifestyle with their new life in Christ. Paul gave these Christians a list of instructions to enable them to live a more Christlike life.

In Ephesians 4:29, Paul drew a contrast. A careful focus on this contrast gives us some insights into the nature of "goodness."

A "good" word is the opposite of an unwholesome" word. It must always be viewed in this light. This is very important.

Unwholesome, on the other hand, is literally "rotten", it comes from the root which describes rotting and falling from the tree. It is to be worthless, vicious, malicious.

The "good" word, then, would be beneficial. It is that which builds up rather than causing decay and ruin. "Good" never does harm or causes degradation of the person.

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Paul spoke of that which "Is good for edification." "Edification" is a compound word - "Oikodome" (οἰκοδομή)

- a. Oikos - a dwelling, house.
- b. Doma - to build. The home or tent was their most beloved building.

The "good" word builds up the downtrodden individual like the home renews the weary. The purpose of the "good" word is that it brings grace to its recipients. "Goodness" that does not bring grace to the recipients, is not really goodness.

*for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth,  
Ephesians 5:9*

Our text speaks of "the fruit of the light." Nestle's Greek text says, "fruit of the Spirit" (Pneumatōs) while Textus Receptus says "fruit of the light." (Phōtos). Our best documents favor the translation of Textus Receptus and "light." In the immediate context, Paul talked about obedient believers as "walking in the light.".. He even spoke of them as being "children of light."

When Paul spoke of "fruit of the light..." he focused upon living an obedient life which is in contrast to the ways of the world, which he characterized as "darkness."

In verse nine, Paul talked about the results of living a Christian life, walking in the light." Such a life consists of at least three things

- b. First mentioned is goodness.
- c. Second - righteousness
- d. Third - truth

Again, "goodness" functions in an atmosphere of righteousness and truth. We need to remind ourselves that this word for goodness means the character of what I am. The source of this goodness is wrapped up in obedience to the direction of God.

*To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; II Thessalonians 1:11*

Goodness, though it is a gift, comes into our lives as a result of our burning desire for it. Observe that Paul was praying for three things:

- a. God would count them worthy of their calling.
- b. That God would fulfill every desire for goodness.
- c. That God would fulfill every desire for the work of faith and power.

This suggests that it is God who fulfills the desire for goodness, not our superhuman efforts. The "desire for goodness" and "the work of faith" are mentioned in conjunction with each other. A person is identified by the company he keeps. So is goodness. Goodness keeps company with "The work of faith with power." Observe that Paul suggested that this goodness would come through prayer, not by trying harder.

The second word which is translated "goodness" is "chrestotes" (χρηστότης). This is goodness which identifies the upright, the righteous. This refers more to a specific quality

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of actions rather than to qualities of character. It would be used to describe acts of kindness, gentleness, grace and compassion.

This word is translated "kindness" in Ephesians 2:7, Titus 3:4, II Corinthians 6:6 and Colossians 3:12

*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?  
Romans 2:4*

The word "goodness"/"kindness" appears twice in this verse. In both instances this "goodness" identifies those actions of God which are kindly in nature. Let us deal with the two statements separately.

a. *"Do you think lightly of the riches of his **kindness** and forbearance and patience?"* Paul spoke to these Roman Christians asking if they take God's goodness/kindness lightly. In this way, Paul said the goodness of God is extremely important, not to be taken lightly. In fact, he spoke of them as "riches" or treasures. This gives us an impression of just how important these actions were in the mind of Paul. He said that this was a very important ingredient in the way God deals with our lives.

Observe also that these good/kindly actions work in concert with both forbearance and patience. Both forbearance and patience refer to responses to experiences of stress. They are qualities of life and response that place our trust in God to such an extent that there is no tension over perceived dilemmas. Paul said that the goodly actions function in concert with these actions to the extent that the tensions of trauma are defused. This is a desperate need in our time. Imagine what the result would be if the non-Christian community could see these acts of goodness constantly expressed in our lives.

b. *"The **kindness** of God leads you to repentance."* These are actions of God, which we call "goodness" or "kindness," which lead us to repentance. The word "lead" is "ago" (ἄγω) and means "to bring," "to bear," or "to carry." it is a way of assisting one to move from one place to another. The "goodness" of God not only points to the way and repentance, but assists me to the point and place where I repent of my sins. The word "leads" is in the present active indicative form. This form describes the kind of ongoing action, rather than identify a specific time. One might translate it this way, "The kindness of God leads and keeps on leading you to repentance." If the goodness of God assists people to come to repentance; and if I am called to a life of goodness, then my life also should bring people to the place where they will want to repent. What a beautiful privilege! We are called to live a life characterized by goodly actions which will point others to follow with Jesus Christ. It seems fair to assert that if our goodness does not point people to repentance, then we need to look again at the nature of our goodness.

*Behold then the **kindness** and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's **kindness**, if you continue in His **kindness**; otherwise you also will be cut off. Romans 11:22*

In Romans 11:11-25, Paul dealt with the way these Christians have stumbled in their Christian walk. The apostle Paul used the word "goodness"/"kindness" three times in this verse. Paul used three different illustrations to make his point. Paul drew a parallel between their Christian walk and the way a woman baked bread. He said, verse 16, "If the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump." The first fruit is the first and best part of the harvest. If

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a woman took some of the dough, from the batch from which she was to bake bread, and found it good, all of the batch would be good as well.

On that basis, He drew another parallel between their Christian walk and the way a vine dresser cares for the vines under his care. The root of the vine is "holy," pure. The fruit of the vine should be the same as the vine. If the fruit of the vine is "holy," pure, then the vinedresser allows the branch to continue. If, however, the vine is good, but the branch brings forth unworthy fruit, that branch will be cut off.

Paul drew a third parallel between the grafting of branches into a tree and the Christian walk of these people. When a workman worked in his orchard, he observed how each branch produced. If a branch did not produce well, it would be worked on for a season or two. If it then produced well, it would be kept. If it did not produce well, it was destroyed.

Paul wanted them to observe how God deals with our failures. God is both "good" and severe." The word "severe" is the combined word "apotomia" (ἀποτομία). It is made up as follows:

- a. apo - which means "off."
- b. temno - which means "to cut."

In view of Paul's illustrations, he then talked about the goodness and severity of God. In other words, God would be 'good," He would care for the believers who failed and attempt to bring them to restored faithfulness. If however, like the vine that did not produce, they failed to return to obedience, they would be "cut off". "Goodness", in this phrase is the opposite of "severity." Severity is the cutting off of the disobedient. "Goodness" is the actions of God which seek to bring the erring one back to obedience and restored relationships. If we are to be filled with "goodness" then our actions, also, are to seek to restore a person to their faithful relationship to God, even if they have harmed us.

In the second use of the term "goodness," in this verse, Paul said, "To those who fell severity, but to you, God's kindness..." This "goodness"/"kindness" constitutes those actions of God which seek to restore us when we do not deserve to be restored. It is the action of God which offers us another opportunity to be an obedient servant. It is God's attempt to restore that which is not really worth restoring. Our "goodness" is that which we do to restore those who on the face of things do not seem to be worth restoring.

In the third use of the term, Paul said, "If you continue in His kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off." In this portion of the verse, Paul repeats his message another way. To "continue in His kindness" means to continue to be obedient, to continue to maintain a restored relationship with God. The import of this use of the word "goodness"/"kindness" is that it is not a single action. It is something that God does and never stops doing. God continues to act in such a way that He continually restores and maintains a relationship with us that enables us to be fruitful, to be like Him. If we would display "goodness" in our lives, then we also would deal with others in such a way that they would be enabled to return to obedience to God in an ongoing fashion.

You may have noticed that especially in the use of this second word translated "goodness," it ultimately means that we must become like God; we must repeat His actions after Him; we must do the kindly and gracious things that He does.

### SUMMARY

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There is a lot of material in this study. A brief summary might prove helpful:

1. Goodness is both an inner moral excellence of attitude and motive as well as acts of gentleness and kindness. It is increasingly becoming Godlike.
2. Goodness is the moral treasure out of which the holy individual speaks and lives.
3. Goodness keeps company with righteousness.
4. Goodness is that inner moral quality of life which enables one to joyfully risk everything to take one's stand for God.
5. Goodness is that inner godlikeness which longs for God and seeks the coming of His kingdom.
6. Goodness is that heart condition which would not allow itself to lead another astray. This is integrity; it is sincerity.
7. Goodness is a uniquely Christian quality of life.
8. Goodness is dependable and trustworthy.
9. Goodness and "being filled with the Holy Spirit" work together to enhance the Christlikeness of the believer.
10. Goodness is strong. It is able to be encouraged by others.
11. Sincerity, dependability, encouragement and being filled with the Holy Spirit are essential to each other.
12. Knowledge is essential to goodness.
13. Goodness requires unusual trust between Christians.
14. Goodness is strong enough to admonish and be admonished by other believers.
15. Goodness is the product of the Holy Spirit controlling and redirecting the believer.
16. Goodness is the opposite of unwholesomeness; of that which is detrimental.
17. Goodness edifies; it builds up the downtrodden.
18. Goodness functions in an atmosphere of righteousness and truth.
19. Goodness is the actions of God which are kindly in nature. It would be the same in Christians as they emulate the character and actions of God.
20. Goodness is a treasure from God.
21. Goodness works in concert with forbearance and patience in times of stress.
22. Goodness is a style of life, not a specific, singular action.
23. Goodness is the opposite of severity; the opposite of punishment.
24. Goodness actively cares for those who falter and fail when they do not deserve it.

We are instructed to express the quality and actions of goodness. It will not be by our extensive efforts to be good. It will increase as we love God more intensely and long to be

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more like Him. Only then can His Holy Spirit initiate these beautiful qualities and actions in every moment of our days.



## GODLINESS

"Godliness," like the word "nice," has been used to identify so many things that it has lost most of its meaning. It is, therefore, necessary to clarify what the scriptures mean when they speak of godliness.

There are four different words which are translated "godliness" in the New Testament. We will deal with them separately.

### I. "Eusebeia" (εὐσέβεια)

This is a compound word. In most instances, compound words were used to provide added emphasis to the meaning of the word. The words are as follows:

- a. **Eu** - well, good
- b. **Sebomai** - revere, adore, worship, devout.

It is to be pious toward God, to lift the heart in worship, to respect, to be reverent, godly. It is a piety characterized by a Godward attitude, doing what is well pleasing to God, that which is Godlike. The emphasis in this word is on a reverence which expresses itself in being like God.

*for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. I Timothy 2:2*

This sentence was Paul's request for prayers for people in high places. The words, "In order that," suggest that purpose is being discussed. The purpose of prayers for high officials was that there might be peace between the Church and the state and that this would allow the Church to live in godliness and dignity. Godliness thrives in an atmosphere of tranquillity and quiet. We may not agree with everything our "shaker" friends espouse, but their emphasis on serenity is worthy of note. Godliness, here, is the atmosphere in which the obedient believer lived amidst a culture that was not favorable to his/her position. The believer does this in such a way that his/her life reflects the qualities found in God.

"Dignity" is "semnotes" (σεμνότης). It is "to be venerable," "to revere," "to adore," "to worship," "to be devout." It is a deep devotion growing out of an increasing moral purity and responsibility.

In view of this information, we should note that dignity and godliness are mentioned in connection with each other. Indeed, it is necessary that they support and enhance each other. We should also note that the apostle urged Timothy to pray for people in authority, those who had often made life difficult for them. This was in order that they might have a peaceful life and focus their attention on growing in moral uprightness and the worship of God which flows from it.

*but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. I Timothy 2:10*

This is part of a paragraph in which Paul described how Christian men and women practice their faith and reflect the character of God. If a woman claims to live a godly life, then it is necessary for her to practice good works, not as a way of securing salvation, but as a way to verify her claim to living a life which is godly, reflecting the presence and

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quality of God. Reverence is not sitting in a stately manner in church. It is being so awe-struck with God's power and purity that we determine to be like Him.

*But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. I Timothy 4:7, 8*

Paul was preparing Timothy for his ministry. The word "discipline" is "gumnazo" (γυμνάζω) which literally means naked, which is the way they trained for Olympic events. Eventually this word came to mean to train the body, mind or senses. It is to subject the self to a strict regimen for the purpose of developing a godly lifestyle. This tells us that godliness is not a single event, but a process of training and development by which one is more and more prepared to live a life which reflects the character of God.

This passage also suggests the worth of godliness. Paul draws a contrast between physical exercise and the discipline of godliness. Physical exercise can prepare one to participate in an athletic event. It is a very temporary achievement. It will help one win the prize, a wreath that will die before the day is over, but then it is over. Godliness, however, is profitable for everything in life, both now and eternally.

*If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, I Timothy 6:3*

Paul described, for Timothy, how a Christian should behave in reference to his master or his slave. In so doing, Paul alluded to "doctrine conforming to godliness." The word translated "conforming" is "katabaino" (καταβαίνω) which is a compound word:

- a. **kata** - against, down
- b. **baino** - to walk

This word came to be used to describe the way one follows a pattern. Precise doctrine is not only determined by the words of scripture, but also by the life which follows the pattern of Godly character. Godliness is a standard of holy living which is established to reflect the character of God more carefully day by day.

*He is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. I Timothy 6:5, 6*

These two verses are part of the same paragraph as the previous verse. Notice that between verses five and six the word "but" appears. This indicates that there is a contrast between the content of the two verses. Look carefully at the contrast that Paul draws:

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| VERSE FOUR, FIVE  | VERSE SIX  |
|---|--|
| 1. Conceited  |  |
| 2. Understands nothing  |  |
| 3. Morbid interest in controversial questions                           |  |
| 4. Morbid interest in disputes about words                              |  |
| a. Envy   | Godliness is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. |
| b. Strife   |  |
| c. Abusive language   |  |
| d. Evil suspicions  |  |
| e. Constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of truth |  |
| f. Suppose godliness is means of gain                                   |  |

There are really two contrasts in these verses.

- a. There is a spiritual contrast. Verses four and five describe a life of spiritual depravity and great selfishness. Verse six, on the other hand, describes a life of spiritual growth which is void of selfishness, but characterized by contentment with what one has and is.
- b. There is a contrast of values. Notice that verses four and five describe a situation where there is nothing but strife in many forms. Verse six, however, identifies a life which is at peace; a contented life which expresses the character of God.

*But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. I Timothy 6:11*

Notice that the sentence begins with the word "but" which identifies a contrast. Having described an unacceptable way of life, Paul now turns to describe how he wants this young pastor to live. There is a list of godly characteristics that Timothy is to pursue. "Pursue" is "dioko" (διώκω) and means to pursue without hostility. It is unlike the pursuit of a conquering army. It is like a blood hound following a scent. The word "pursue," however, is written in the Present Active Imperative form. The only way we know to say this in English is to say, "pursue and keep on pursuing..." This is not a single action, but a way of life that one begins and never stops. observe also, that this is a command. It is not a suggestion. If we do not pursue these and keep on pursuing them, we are disobedient. All of these qualities are to be found in the character of God. Godliness, like the other six qualities listed in this verse, is a progressive growth. It is a bit more evident today than yesterday and should be even more evident tomorrow. It is a process of growth that one begins and never stops this side of heaven.

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*holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. II Timothy 3:5*

Verses two through four describe some terrible traits to be found in people in the last days. In verse five, Paul said that they are, "holding a form of godliness, although they have denied its power." This is a serious charge. The word "form" is "morphosis" (μόρφωσις) and describes an image, an impression, an outward semblance of something that it really is not. It is possible for a person to have what appears to be godliness, when in fact they do not. The thing that is missing is the power. Godliness is not just an appearance, it expresses the character of God, but there is power to go with that appearance. Evil men can give the appearance of godly character, but the power is missing; their expression is empty; powerless. Godliness without power is not godliness at all.

*Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, Titus 1:1*

Paul claimed to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ for "...the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." Godliness is a basic concern of Jesus Christ. The proclamation of godliness was one of the fundamental ministries to which Jesus Christ called Paul. Godliness, the expression of the character of God, was the pattern of truth Paul was called to preach.

Observe that Paul spoke of "the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." In effect, Paul identified the fact that godliness, not superior mental powers, was the key to grasping "the knowledge of the truth." It is not that he was saying that this is one's entrance permit. No godliness, then you are not invited. He was saying that godliness gives the believer the ability to comprehend the truth as nothing else can do.

*seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. II Peter 1:3*

With godliness, as with other qualities of spiritual growth, we tend to feel that we can attain them by trying harder. We are painfully aware that this does not work. Still, we try. Godliness, though it involves our will and deep desire, is a gift from God. Everything that we need in order to reflect the character of God in our lives is at our disposal through His gracious gift.

This gift comes through our growing awareness, "the true knowledge of Him," rather than through increased effort. This means that if we want to live more godly lives, we must get to know God more intimately. It is not as though we must beg God to help us be godly. He desperately wants us to be like Him. The lack is in our will, not His willingness. It will never be until we discover and continue to discover who God is and what He wants us to be. Increased and enriched Bible study and prayer are the keys to such a process of growth.

*and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. II Peter 1:6-7*

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This is a fascinating verse. As you can see, there is a list of six spiritual qualities mentioned in this verse, but there are nine in the entire paragraph. They are as follows:

- a. Diligence - eagerness
- b. Faith
- c. Virtue
- d. Knowledge
- e. Self control
- f. Patience
- g. Godliness
- h. Brotherly love - "philadelphia"
- i. "Agape" love

Peter prefaced the mention of each of these qualities with the words, "and in your ... **fill out...**"

In this paragraph, Peter was talking about what is involved in "becoming partakers of the divine nature." That, of course, is what spiritual growth is all about.

Observe that Peter said, in II Peter 1:5, "...In your faith supply moral excellence, (virtue). The word "supply" is "epichoregeo" (ἐπιχορηγία). The word, for purposes of emphasis, is compound:

- a. Epi - upon
- b. Choregeo - to furnish

It means to add to, to furnish beside, to provide

It should also be noted that this word is in the First Aorist Active form. It describes a command to "add to" or "to fill up" and never stop "filling up." This is a never-ending process.

As you study these verses an interesting fact comes into view. Peter instructed his hearers to begin with great enthusiasm and to add to their faith virtue, and to your virtue fill out moral excellence, and to their moral excellence fill up and keep on filling up knowledge, and to their knowledge fill up and keep on filling up self control, and to their self control fill up and keep on filling up perseverance, and to their perseverance fill up and keep on filling up godliness. and to your godliness fill up and keep on filling up brotherly love ( philadelphia) and in your brotherly love fill up and keep on filling up agape love. We should also remind ourselves that each of these instructions are in the First Aorist Active Imperative form. The word "epichoregeo" (ἐπιχορηγία) is understood to precede each of the nine qualities mentioned. These are commands, not suggestions. The command insists that they fill out and keep on filling out each of these spiritual qualities.

In this picture, Peter has described a process of spiritual growth. In so doing, he has told us something about godliness itself. Godliness is built upon a foundation of faith, virtue, moral excellence, knowledge, self control and perseverance. The practical implication of this discovery is that we falter unnecessarily. When we want to grow in godliness, we work particularly hard on this one quality. Peter told us that if we would grow in godli-

ness, we must experience growth in each of the spiritual qualities which make up its foundation. It is also a way of saying that if we would increase in agape love, it will not happen by just trying harder to love. It comes into being as we focus our attention upon each of the other qualities which form its foundation. Godliness is a vital ingredient in our spiritual growth.

*Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, II Peter 3:11*

In times of great spiritual stress, godliness is essential. Notice that Peter mentioned holy conduct and godliness together. It becomes essential to understand what is the difference between the two concepts.

- a. Holy conduct - Peter described this with two Greek words:
  1. "Agios" (ἅγιος)
  2. "Anastrepho" (ἀναστρέφω) - This is a compound word;
    - a. Ana - back
    - b. Strepho - to turn
    - c. It identifies general behavior and character.
  3. This is a lifestyle that is holy.
  4. It is a way of living that is set apart for God and His service.
- b. Godliness - "Eusebeia" (εὐσεβεία) - This too is a compound word:
  1. Eu - well
  2. Sebomai - to be holy, devout. It is a godly way of life which is characterized by an attitude which follows that of God. It is doing the things that are pleasing to God. The difference between the two is one of emphasis.
    - a. "Holy conduct" places an emphasis on one's conduct, actions which are pure.
    - b. Godliness, however, emphasizes the holy quality of one's character.

## II. "Theosebeia" (θεοσέβεια)

This, also, is a compound word. It is made up as follows:

- a. **Theos** - deity, divine
- b. **Sebomai** - to revere, adore, to be devout, to stress the feeling of awe and reverence toward God.

It is to adore and revere God by a devout and holy life. It is the fear (reverence) of God that is evident, not in trembling, but in an increasing holiness and purity of life. It is God-fearing. The emphasis, in this word, is upon living such a holy life that the adoration of God becomes evident.

*For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. II Corinthians 1:12*

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Paul had been talking about their affliction in the Gospel. Paul said that in the midst of that trial, they conducted themselves in a special way. Paul identified three things they did, even in the midst of severe persecution. We will focus our attention only on the claim which specifically deals with godliness.

Our Christian faith ultimately shows in the witness of our conscience. One of the three claims Paul made for their life and conduct was that they conducted themselves in godly sincerity. The literal wording is, "sincerity of God." This description is made up of two different words:

- a. "**Sincerity**" "elikrines" (εἰλικρινής). This word comes from the refiners trade. It was used to describe metal in which there was no mixture of alloys. It was pure. It was used in the New Testament to identify a moral purity, a lifestyle which was pure, a way of life which was exactly what it appeared to be before God.
- b. "**Of God**" - It is a way of saying that his purity of life and service was a God kind of purity. God was the pattern after which both their character and their service were patterned.

Godliness is a process of becoming increasingly sincere, exactly what we appear to be to others. Said another way, godliness is a process whereby the sincerity of God becomes increasingly clear in everything we think, say and do.

*For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. II Corinthians 7:10-11*

In this paragraph, Paul looked carefully at the repentance of the Corinthian Christians. It was not a shallow, casual sorrow for their sins. It was an "according to God kind of sorrow." These Corinthian Christians were as grieved over their sin as God was. Paul was constantly trying to get the young believers to pattern every part of their lives after God. He wanted them to do the things God does, the way He does them. This included their God-kind of sorrow for the sinful way they had lived.

Paul then described what this Godly sorrow would look like: It is sorrow which is indignant at the presence of sin; sorrow which produces great reverence for God; it produces great longing for God and great zeal to be His servant. It is a sorrow that is so incensed by sin that it longs to avenge the wrong done to people.

*For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. II Corinthians 11:2*

Paul followed Jesus' example when he used the word picture of the wedding situation to describe the relationship between believers and God. The father of the family was charged with the responsibility of bringing his daughter to the marriage ceremony as a pure virgin well trained to be a good wife. Paul uses that imagery to describe himself in this verse.

He used the words "godly jealousy." This sounds like a contradiction in terms, Look at the meaning of these words:

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- a. Godly - As we indicated earlier, the emphasis in this word is on reverence for God revealed through a holy life.
- b. Jealousy - Both the words "jealous" and "jealousy" appear in this verse. The two words, however, are different in the Greek
  - (1). "Jealous" - "Zelos" (ζήλος). It means "to burn with jealousy," "an anger driven by envy of another."
  - (2). "Godly jealousy" - "harmodso" (αρμόζω) This is the word used to describe a groom longing for his bride. It is the word for "betrothed."

Paul said he was jealous for these Christians with a godly jealousy in the way that a groom longs for his bride.

The word "godly," in this verse, refers to a quality of life which reflects the holiness of God which longs deeply to share the fellowship of God and His people.

*but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. I Timothy 2:10*

Paul described the adornment of Christian women. In this verse, Paul indicates that a woman who claims to be godly will adorn herself with good works. This is a way of saying that good works are a vital ingredient in a godly life. This removes "godliness" from the ivory tower and brings it down into the market place. Godliness is loving people as God loves them - caring for needs and strengthening them by example.

### III. "Axios" (αξιός)

This word means to be deserving, to receive praise, to be worthy, to think good, an appropriate lifestyle. The emphasis in this word is upon the transformation of life which is produced as one lives a godly lifestyle.

*and they bear witness to your love before the church; and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. III John 6*

John was speaking of the Gentiles who have become believers. When John said, "you do well to send them on their way," he was speaking of the custom of giving your blessing to a houseguest who is about to leave. John said that they would do well to send these Christians on their way in a manner that expresses the worthiness of God; a way that demonstrates the holiness of God's being. John spoke of that godly lifestyle which great saints in every era have striven to emulate. It was a way of life which shows the non-Christian what God is like.

### IV. "Eulabeia" (ευλάβεια)

This is a compound word. It is formed as follows:

- a. Eu - good, well
- b. lambano - to take, later it referred to being amazed, to hold in reverence.

It started out describing caution, and later was used to describe reverence and godly fear. It means to be circumspect, to be devout and pious; it is to have a holy dread, to have caution. It is the mixture of fear (Old Testament emphasis) and love (New Testament empha-

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sis) which develops a holy piety toward God. The emphasis in this word is on the holy lifestyle fostered by such reverence.

*Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; Hebrews 12:28*

The word translated "awe" is "eulabeia" and speaks of a purity of life growing out of a strong reverence for God. Observe that the basis for this kind of holy life is that they had received a kingdom which could not be shaken by the attacks of evil forces.

The author exhorted them to express gratitude to God. He also said that this gratitude was the basis for service which is acceptable to God. He concluded by suggesting that the atmosphere of this service and gratitude is reverence and awe.

We must identify the difference between "reverence" and "awe." "Reverence" and "awe" are two very different words, but we usually treat them interchangeably.

- a. **"Reverence"** is "aidos" (αἰδώς). It means "to have downcast eyes." It is the idea of being bashful, "to be modest toward God," to stand in awe, shamefaced. Sensing the purity of God, one is loathe to even raise his eyes in God's presence. It is what was described, though the word was not used, in the story of the Pharisee and the publican.
- b. **"Awe"** is "Eulabias" (εὐλάβειος) This is a purity of life which is sparked by a growing sense of awe at the greatness and holiness of God. It is a keen sense of both the justice and the mercy of God which causes us to stand in hushed awe at just how holy and marvelous God really is.

The difference between the two is in their responses to God. Reverence responds in deep humility to God's greatness and holiness. It is to see the difference between God's purity and our weakness and we are so affected by that discovery that we cannot bear even to look upon His countenance.

Awe, on the other hand, differs from reverence in that the shocking contrast between God's holy purity and our failed sinfulness causes us to respond in a deep, moving humbleness of heart.

This "awe;" this "godliness" emphasizes the worship of God in His power and purity.

### SUMMARY

#### I. "Eusebeia"

- a. It is to revere God, to adore His greatness and devote oneself to Him.
- b. Godliness is a Godward attitude which attempts to see all of life from His perspective. This results in actions which reflect His character.
- c. It is an atmosphere in which the obedient believer lived amidst an unfriendly and unfavorable culture.
- d. Godliness and intense worship support and strengthen each other.
- e. Intense worship grows out of an increasing moral uprightness.
- f. Godliness expresses itself in "good works" which reflect the character of God.

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- g. Godliness is a life lived in such a way that it showcases the moral character and compassion of God.
- h. Godliness is a life of intense moral discipline and training which is only completed when one is "promoted to glory."
- i. Godliness is using the Scriptures as a pattern for life and living in such a way that we become examples of what the Word teaches.
- j. Godliness is a process of spiritual growth which focuses upon unselfish contentment and provides astonishing eternal benefits.
- k. Godliness is an ongoing command. If we fail to pursue godliness as a cat incessantly stalks a mouse, we are as disobedient as a thief or a liar.
- l. Godliness is not simply a specific exterior appearance. It is an inner moral quality.
- m. It is living out, in the struggles of life, the character of God.
- N. Godliness is a process of spiritual maturing which is granted by God as we cooperate and yield to His daily changing of our lives and character.
- o. The goal of godliness is not to reveal how good we are, but to show others what God is like.
- p. Godliness increases in us as we discover and digest "the true knowledge of him." This is what Paul meant when he said, "That I may know and keep on knowing Him..."
- q. Godliness develops and grows as our lives increase in faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control and patience.
- r. Godliness is the foundation upon which "fileo" and "agape" love are based.
- s. Godliness is a lifelong experience of growth and development of moral character which expresses itself in adoration and praise.
- t. Godliness is the culminating expression of every facet of godly character increasingly flourishing in our lives.
- u. Godliness, the holy quality of the believer's character, works cooperatively with his/her holy conduct, actions which are pure.

### **II. Theosebeia**

- a. This word emphasizes the worship which grows out of an increasing moral character.
- b. Godliness creates an inner atmosphere of confidence which expresses itself in such a way that life is one of increasing integrity, one which more and more is exactly what we appear to be, as God is, in our relationship with each other.
- c. Godliness is the ongoing process of patterning every part of our lives after the nature of God. It is to intensify our efforts to do the things God does in the way that God does them.

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- d. Godliness involves the development of an intense God-kind of grieving over our sin as God sorrows over them.
- e. In part, godliness is to express our emotions in a way that reflects the character of God.
- f. Godliness is often expressed in good works which grow out of a holy character.

### **III. Axios**

Godliness is to conduct ourselves in such a way that a Christlike character is reflected. It is to care for others so that others will observe the compassion of Christ in us.

### **IV. Eulabeia**

- a. Godliness is a reverence for God which moves us to holy conduct.
- b. Reverence and godliness are inseparable.
- c. This godliness grows out of gratitude for who God is and how He deals with us.
- d. Godliness discerns the holiness and compassion of God against the background of our own weakness and bows in humble worship and grateful service.

As you reflect upon the information provided in these verses, it is clear that one of the areas that has avoided our discovery is that there is such a close connection between godliness and worship.



## FORGIVENESS

There are four different words which are translated "forgive" in the New Testament. We will look carefully at each word.

### I. "Aphthoria" (ἀφθορία)

This is a compound word. It is composed as follows:

- a. "a" - negative, "not."
- b. "phtheiro" (φθείρω) means "to destroy," "to corrupt," "to spoil," "to lead astray."

This word was later used to describe the process of sending away, to leave alone, to abandon, to forgive. Still later it was used to describe a temple sacrifice. The sins of the people were recited over the heads of two animals.

- a. One was sacrificed at the altar.
- b. The other was led out the eastern gate across the Kidron valley and up the Mount of Olives and out into the eastern wilderness, never to be seen again. This was Israel's primary understanding of forgiveness.

### II. "Aphesis" (ἀφεσις)

This word is related to the previous one. In this word, the emphasis was on the legal approach. This word means "to dismiss," "to release," "to pardon," "to release."

### III. "Charisomai" (χαρίζομαι)

This word means "to show favor," "to give freely," "to bestow." It comes from the root word "charis" (χαρίς) which means grace, favor.

### IV. "Apoluo" (ἀπολύω)

This is a compound word. It is designed as follows:

- a. "apo" (ἀπο) - means "away," "to separate," "to depart," "to reverse."
- b. "luo" (λύω) means "to loosen," "break," "destroy," "dissolve," "to put off."

It means to let it die, to pardon, dismiss, divorce, to let go, to send away, to set at liberty. It is a judicial act. In some ways it is like "aphthoria" (ἀφθορία).

Three of these four words are used to describe forgiveness in two ways:

- a. God's forgiveness of us.
- b. Our forgiveness of others.

Since this study focuses on human spiritual growth, we will consider only our forgiveness of others.

### I. "Aphthoria" (ἀφθορία)

*"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Matthew 6:14, 15*

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This is part of what Jesus taught the disciples in what we call "the Lord's Prayer." Notice that these verses begin with the word "for," which means that an explanation is in process. Jesus gave two scenarios of what would happen in relation to our forgiveness of others. The explanation is in the form of an "if... then" presentation:

- a. "If you forgive men for their transgressions."
- b. "(then) your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Though it is contrary to our thinking, Jesus taught that our forgiveness is dependent upon our forgiveness of others. This is not the only place where this message is recorded.

Verse 15 begins with the word "but." This suggests that there is a contrast with the preceding material, but you will observe that the teaching is exactly the same. In this verse, Jesus dealt with what happens when a person refuses to forgive another individual.

- a. "If you do not forgive men..."
- b. "then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

This is a bit frightening because there does not appear to be great understanding of this within the Church. It is not unusual to find people who claim to be forgiven, but who hold others in unforgiveness and have for many years. If you would ask them if they are forgiven, they would answer with a strong "yes!" This is a clarification which must be addressed by the Church in general.

This has nothing to do with God's forgiveness of our sins; that is available. It has to do with our response to that gift.

*Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Matthew 18:21-22"*

The source of Peter's question is quite common. It is the feeling that a person should be properly grateful for their forgiveness. Forgiven people should be grateful, but that was not the issue. One expression of this gratitude would be that it would not be necessary to extend it to that person again. Jesus was not dealing with numbers, as Peter was. The Lord was dealing with motive. The motive is not that there would be an appropriate response. The motive is agape love which offers forgiveness, no matter what the response may be or how long it may take. The use of the number "seven" helps us to understand the intent behind the use of it. The number "seven" was thought of as a perfect number. It is as though Peter said, "Should I forgive up to the point where my forgiveness could not possibly be mistaken. Dealing with this "perfect number," Jesus was not saying you should stop forgiving after 490 times. It was a demonstrative way of saying that our forgiveness should not be measured, but offered without restriction. Jesus probably shocked Peter and all the rest by insisting that their forgiveness must be infinitely more durable than they had always been taught.

Peter's question makes an interesting assumption. He had to assume that a human being had the ability to send away another person's guilt much as the scapegoat was abandoned in the wilderness. That is exactly what the story teaches.

"Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even

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as I had mercy on you?' ...'So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." Matthew 18:32, 33,35

Having given His answer to Peter, Jesus told a parable of two servants. As you read the story, you will notice that there were no circumstances which compelled the master to forgive his errant servant. Just the opposite; there was good reason for him to punish the servant.

One of the foundational teachings of this text is that forgiveness is God's intention for broken human relationships. Nothing less will suffice.

Notice that the master identified his motive in forgiving the debt. He said, "because you entreated me." This suggests that the motive for forgiveness is not requirement, but compassion, mercy. It cannot be different for us.

Observe, also, that Jesus drew a parallel between the master of the servants and God. In the same way as the master refused to forgive the ungrateful servant, so God will reluctantly withhold forgiveness for those who do not forgive others. The appropriate response to forgiveness is gratitude which extends the same mercy to others.

Jesus said, "If each of you does not forgive his brother from the heart." This identifies the scope of our necessary forgiveness of others. Our forgiveness of each other is not because God demands it. It is because in our hearts we want the other person to be restored. Nothing less is adequate according to the teaching of Jesus. Nothing less than "from the heart" forgiveness is really forgiveness.

*"Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:7*

The issue to which the Pharisees spoke was their understanding about forgiveness. They believed that only God could forgive sin. Jewish tradition did not deal with forgiveness, but rather with retribution. If you kill my ox, then I will take yours.

It appears that there is a difference between Old Testament and New Testament teaching on the issue of forgiveness. This is more apparent than real. II Samuel chapter 12 tells the story of David and Bathsheba. When Nathan confronted David with his sin, the king said,

*"...I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die." II Samuel 12:13*

In very practical sense, David sinned against God in that he violated one of the ten commandments. We are keenly aware, however, that he had also violated the sacred trust between Uriah and his wife. David sinned against God and at the same time had committed a sinful offense against Uriah and his wife. In this sense, all sin is against God. At the same time evil involves other people.

Observe Nathan's response. He told David that God had forgiven his sin. This was not the act of Uriah, but of God. God is the one who forgives sin.

Though the New Testament may speak of this tragic condition in slightly different terms, the issue is the same. Jesus did not deny that the woman taken in adultery should be stoned according to the statement of the law. He did suggest that the mercy of God was sufficient to cover this sin just as it would any other.

When we forgive another individual, we are extending to them the forgiveness that we have also received from God. Our forgiveness of those who sin against us is an expression

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of our gratitude for the forgiveness God has extended to us. It can never be less than this. In Luke 5:21 you will find the Pharisees dealing with the same issue about God being the one who forgives sin.

*"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions." ("But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.") Mark 11:25-26*

You will notice that part of verse 26 is in parenthesis. This is because there are some manuscripts that do not contain this information. We should remember, however, that none of the very best manuscripts agree with this omission. We, therefore, would not agree with omitting these words from the text.

Jesus said, "If you have anything against anyone." There is no room to hold anyone in unforgiveness for anything. There is no room for compromise in this position.

*"And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." Luke 11:4*

This is part of Jesus instructions to His disciples on how to pray. We refer to this as "The Lord's Prayer." In this prayer, we ask God to forgive us because we also forgive those who have come into our debt by their unfortunate actions. People say these words quite casually, but they are a definite teaching of Scripture. We must take them most seriously.

*"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." Luke 17:3, 4*

Jesus stressed just how important it was not to cause a child to stumble in faith. At the same time, He taught them how to deal with broken relationships. God forgives us no matter how often we sin. The forgiveness will only be ours when we repent, but God is always willing for us to receive His forgiveness. We are repeatedly instructed to follow His example. We must always be eager to forgive when the offender is prepared to receive our cancellation of his responsibility. Again the number "seven" comes into the picture. It is not so much a limiting factor as it is a symbol of total forgiveness.

*"If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." John 20:23*

The idea of forgiveness is often found in the Gospel of John. The word "forgiveness," especially where one person forgives another person, is found only in this verse. This takes place after the resurrection. Jesus had just sent His disciples as the Father had sent Him. In cooperation with this, Jesus made this statement. This did not make the disciples divine. It did give them authority to announce to people the forgiveness that God had already secured in Jesus Christ. By the same token, this did not make the disciples judges to keep sinners in their sin. It rather gave them authority to announce the retention of sin that God had already declared.

## II. "Aphesis" (ἀφεσις)

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This word is related to the previous word, "Aphthoria." Forgiveness is the same in both instances, but it is here viewed from the legal standpoint whereas "aphthoria" views this cancellation of guilt from the standpoint of the forgiven person.

This word appears 15 times in the New Testament, but it is always used to describe God's forgiveness of our sins. It is never used to describe the forgiveness of one person by another.

### III. "Charizomai" (χαρίζομαι)

This word comes from the word "charis" which means "grace" or "favor." Again, the forgiveness is exactly the same as in the two previous words. The difference is that it is viewed from the standpoint of God. He bestows this forgiveness upon unworthy individuals because of His grace, His urgent desire to restore them to His favor. Interestingly, though this word views forgiveness from the divine standpoint, there is only one verse in the New Testament where it is used in this way. There are five instances, however, where it is used to describe the forgiveness of one person by another.

*so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.  
II Corinthians 2:7*

Paul was instructing his problem church on the way to deal with people who have caused distress and sorrow in the church. In this verse, Paul instructed them to forgive and comfort the individual. The way it is written in the Greek indicates that this forgiveness is something that is completed and finished - forgive and let it be behind you. The forgiveness is linked with comfort. The word "comfort" is "paraclete," which is one of the names of the Holy Spirit. It means to stand beside to strengthen and comfort. This gives us a hint concerning the motivation for this response to their unfortunate actions in the church. Their forgiveness grows out of great concern for the individuals weakness and need for encouragement.

Notice that the apostle used the word "lest." This word indicates that a possible negative experience could take place. The negative experience is that the person could be so devastated that he was overwhelmed by the unexpected extent of his sorrow.

*But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, II Corinthians 2:10*

Again, Paul is still talking about the persons who have caused distress and disturbance in the church. Paul trusts these hurting believers so much that if they forgive the person; if they in grace bestow forgiveness upon the disturber, then he forgives that person as well. What confidence!

*For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! II Corinthians 12:13*

There is some good natured sarcasm in this verse. Paul mentioned that the only thing that he had done that might contribute to their being treated as inferior to the other churches was that he did not require them to care for his needs, but worked in order to support him-

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self. If that was a burden, Paul was sorry and asked them to forgive him this wrong-doing. Paul dealt with it, though tongue-in-cheek, as honest forgiveness, an expression of his grace toward them; his desire to see them restored and removed from their erroneous ways.

*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32*

In Ephesians 4:22-32, Paul gave 18 commands which were intended to help them understand how to live "the new life." Included in the lot were the three instructions in this verse. Each of the three commands is tied together by the word "and," whether written or implied. The way it is written suggests that "being kind to one another," being "tender-hearted," and "forgiving each other" are equally important. It also suggests that they contribute to each other. The expression of kindness assists them in being tender-hearted. Being kind and tender-hearted enable the person to forgive those who might offend him.

Observe that Paul used the way God in Christ has forgiven them as the measure of the way they are to treat each other. As someone observes the way we forgive each other, they should be able to understand, to some extent at least, how God forgives us. This is one more expression of the fact that Spiritual growth is becoming more like Christ.

*bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Colossians 3:13*

Paul described this group of Christian people in these terms:

- a. Elect of God
- b. Holy
- c. Having been loved

Any pastor would love to have a group like this with which to work.

Verse 13 identifies two out of a list of nine qualities to which Paul exhorts them in verses 12-14. Look at these qualities:

- a. **"Bearing with one another"** This word literally means to hold up high. It is a way of saying that the person is to endure the rough places in a spiritual posture. This is a Present Middle Participle. It describes something that you do and do not stop doing. You take endurance as a way of life in relationship to the weaknesses of a fellow Christian.
- b. **"Forgiving each other"** - This, again, is the expression of grace which one believer shares with another because of their compassion for the offending party. This assumes that there will be times when one believer offends another. Paul was saying that we must extend the grace we have received to each other when an offense takes place. This leaves no place for grudges and feuds which last for years and years in the church.

Again, Paul used the Present Middle Participle to indicate a process, a way of life. Forgiveness is something that one must do as regularly as breathing.

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Paul used the words "just as." This suggests that a parallel situation is going to be described. We are to forgive each other in the way that the Lord forgave us. We need to describe that forgiveness.

- a. It is complete
- b. It is unmerited.
- c. It is without reservation.
- d. It is offered even though the offending party does not seek it.
- e. There are no time limits on the offer.
- f. There are no restraints upon the forgiveness because it is needed more than once.

This is exactly what Paul told this church that they must do in relation to each other when one offends another.

### IV. "Apoluo" (ἀπολύω)

This is a compound word and is composed as follows:

- a. Apo - It means "away," "to separate," "to destroy," "to depart," "to reverse."
- b. Luo - It means "to loosen," "to break," "to destroy," "to dissolve," "to put off."

It means "to let die," "to pardon," "to dismiss," "to divorce," "to let go," "to send away," "to set at liberty from." It is like a judicial act.

We have to use many of the same words to describe this word as well as "aphoria" and "aphesis." While this is true, they are not exactly the same. The forgiveness, in each instance, is the same and employs the same language to describe itself. The three words differ in their view, their approach to forgiveness.

- a. "Aphthoria" - Views forgiveness from the standpoint of the forgiven sinner.
- b. "Aphesis" - Views forgiveness from the divine legal standpoint.
- c. "Apoluo" - Views forgiveness from the legal standpoint of the recipient sinner.

"Apoluo" is translated "forgiveness" only once in the New Testament. We will look carefully at this verse.

*"And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned." Luke 6:37*

The word that is translated "pardoned" is "apoluo." This appears to be part of Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount. In this verse, Jesus used three judicial words to describe a truth that was very important for these people to hear.

- a. (-) "Do not judge" - It means "to separate," "the act of determining, to pronounce judgment.
- b. (-) "Do not condemn" - This is a compound word which means to announce justice against. It is what happens after guilt has been established.

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- c. (+) "Forgive" - This is to separate the person from his very real guilt. It is to divorce a person from their very real guilt, to release them from their responsibility for wrongs actually committed.

This involves an admission of guilt, but the offended party releases the guilty one from any responsibility. Remember, this is from the standpoint of the forgiven one. To be forgiven is to be restored. It is to have the onus of wrongdoing removed. It is like having prison doors opened because the charges have been dropped.

### **SUMMARY**

1. Forgiveness is the willingness to remove the responsibility of a person who has sinned against us.
2. It is to treat their sins in the way God has treated ours.
3. Forgiveness is to express the grace of God to a person who has sinned against us.
4. Forgiveness requires a response of gratitude which expresses itself in compassion for those who have sinned against us.
5. Forgiveness, like agape love, is extended without concern for the person's response. The bad news is that it is only effective when one is able to receive it.
6. God's forgiveness is not tied to the idea that the sin would never be repeated. Our forgiveness must be like His.
7. Forgiveness is God's intention for broken human relationships.
8. When we forgive, we extend the forgiveness God has given us to a person who sinned against us. In effect, forgiveness starts a chain-reaction for forgiveness to all who have sinned against other believers.
9. When we do not forgive, we stand in the way and do not allow God's forgiveness to release a sinner burdened down with guilt.
10. God is the only one who really forgives.
11. Forgiveness must be extended to everyone. It may not be given selectively.
12. Forgiveness is never casual. It does not say that a person's sin does not offend us. It does cause pain. We must rebuke the sinner - help him/her to understand the sinfulness of their actions and then release them when repentance occurs.
13. We forgive others as we stand in the presence of Christ. It is not an isolated, personal act. It is a vital part of our relationship with Christ.
14. Forgiveness, kindness and being tender-hearted are interlinked and sustain each other. There is no forgiveness without kindness. The tender-heart, compassion for an offender, moves us to forgive the sins of others.
15. Forgiveness is a uniquely Christian experience.
16. Like every other spiritual quality, forgiveness must follow the pattern of Jesus or it is not real.

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17. Forgiveness takes into account the weakness and sin of another human being and cancels the guilt. It no longer exists.
18. Forgiveness is never deserved. it is always a product of grace.
19. Our only hope of personal pardon hinges upon our willingness to extend to others the grace we have received from God.

It gives one pause when we consider the implications of these teachings. Most of us know of some deep-seated situations of unforgiveness which have burdened local congregations for decades. Within denominations, there are serious alienations because of differences in understanding and conduct which is not becoming to Christians. The Scriptures never teach that there can be no differences of opinion within the body of Christ. It does teach that with our differing understandings there is room to extend to each other the grace we have already received from Christ.

We must forgive each other. Our own forgiveness hinges upon it.



## FILEO LOVE

This word is always translated "love" in the New Testament. There are three different words, however, that are all translated love in our Bible. The word under consideration is "fileo" (φιλέω). Some scholars say that this word and the most common word for love, "agape," are used interchangeably in the New Testament. This is a very delicate problem for linguists. Whatever the case, this word is never used when the Scriptures command us to love God. Only "agape": is used in that context. This is an important piece of information. Each person must consider this issue on a personal basis. For myself, I prefer to think of them as two distinct words which represent different forms or levels of love.

"Fileo" (φιλέω) literally means "to belong to," "to be a friend," "to be fond of an individual." It is to have a certain affection for someone; it is tender affection. It is to treat someone as your own people, the love for close relatives - spouse, children, parents, siblings. It is an affection based upon reciprocity. It often suggests "to like someone." It is a special kind of friendship. It is to cherish someone and represents an affection which is constant, but not without limits. It is a lesser intensity than "agape" and one of several words which indicate levels of affection of different kinds.

*And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. Matthew 6:5*

This is taken from the Sermon on the Mount. In this portion of Jesus' discourse, as indicated in 6:1, Jesus illustrated ways in which people practiced righteous deeds so that others could observe and give them recognition.

Hypocrites love to "stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners..." This is not an unconditional love, however. If people did not take notice of the hypocrites praying, they would not pray. This love extends right up to the point where it provides no personal benefit. At that point, it ceases. That is the reason Jesus called such people hypocrites - they pretend to be doing one thing for one reason while actually doing something else.

In Matthew 23:6, Jesus described the Pharisees in the same way. They loved the chief places at feasts and in the synagogue. If, however, it brought them no special recognition, then it would mean nothing to them. You will find the same expression of this love in Luke 20:46, where Jesus spoke of the Scribes loving long greetings in the marketplace.

*"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. Matthew 10:37*

Here, Jesus used the word "love" in a different sense. This is a positive use of the word. As indicated in the earlier definition, (φιλέω) means to be fond of, to have affection for someone in an ongoing relationship. This is a substantial expression of love, but there are limits. It is possible to love someone - (φιλέω) - , but to love someone else even more. Jesus was not pleased to be offered this form of love.

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*"For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel. John 5:20*

This is a different expression of this form of love and is quite positive. In this passage, Jesus described the working relationship between Himself and the Father. In the midst of this paragraph, 5:19-29, Jesus said, "The Father loves the Son..." It was important to establish that Jesus was accepted by the Father because the enemies of Jesus were presenting Him as though he were the enemy of God. Jesus' statement was very strong. It was not just that the Father accepted the Son. The Father loved the Son. This is a relationship of tender affection and friendship. The use of the word "love" (φιλέω) does not suggest that their love had boundaries so much as it suggests that there was a strong affection between them.

*And so the Jews were saying, "Behold how He loved him!" John 11:36*

This statement was made during the time when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This was a crucial event because the Messiah had certain miracles he had to perform. Raising the dead was one of these miracles. As in John 5: 20, the use of the word "phileo" (φιλέω) suggests that there was a very strong affection between Jesus and Lazarus. There was, indeed, a friendship that was firm and abiding between Jesus and Lazarus. John wanted to convey this idea to us and he did.

In this verse, there is shock in the minds of those who watched. They were stunned that Jesus and Lazarus were such good friends. There was no doubt of their friendship.

*"He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. John 12:25*

In this passage, men from Greece asked to see Jesus. Philip made the request known to Jesus. Jesus began to speak of His own death and concerning those who follow Him.

Jesus contrasted those who love life with those who hate life "in this world." The word hate is "miseo" (μισέω). It is "to detest," "to persecute," "to love less," "to have malicious feelings toward," "to have thorough disregard for." This last description most aptly fits in this verse.

"Fileo" (φιλέω) love, on the other hand, is just the opposite of this hate. The contrast would look something like this:

| HATE                              | LOVE                                 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| To detest                         | To prefer                            |
| To persecute                      | To protect out of affection for      |
| To have malicious feelings toward | To have constructive feelings toward |
| To have thorough disregard for    | To have intense appreciation for     |

Look at this table again. This verse gives us some careful insights into the meaning of this word "love." Jesus described two groups of people. One group were totally preoccupied

with this life to the exclusion of thinking about eternal life. This is also what the apostle John was saying, in III John 9. When he talked about Diotrephes' love, his deep affection with being first, he pointed out that this hindered him from offering even the most common courtesies. The other group were preoccupied with thinking about eternal life to the point that they were willing to sacrifice their experience of this present life.

*"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:19*

In this verse, Jesus used the same contrast we identified in the previous verse. There is a double contrast here. Jesus drew a contrast between those who believed in Him and those who were "of the world." Jesus also contrasted the relationship between Himself with His followers and the world with its followers. It is at this point that the meaning of the word "love" takes on meaning. The world has affection for those who sustain its point of view. Were that position to change, the world would also reevaluate its love response. Jesus chose people who did not share His point of view and loved them until they shared His values. He never ceased loving them. The world's love, at this point, is a matter of convenience, a matter of agreement. It stresses the limited nature of the affection. It extends only to the point of agreement. Beyond that point, this love does not exist.

*for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. John 16:27*

There is a level of divine love that we receive "because" we love Jesus Christ. If we did not love Jesus, that particular expression of love would not be present. This does not mean that saving grace would be removed. It refers to a particular form of affection God gives to those who love Jesus. Observe that this is a form of love that has distinct limits. Despite these limits, it is an intense form of love.

*And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." John 20:2*

This is an important verse for our consideration. It presents this form of love in a particular light. It was quite appropriate for Jesus to love this disciple, John, as opposed to the other disciples, with this kind of love. It means that Jesus had an affection for him that was different from the others. It did not mean that Jesus did not love the others, but that there was a special affection for John that was unique. There was love (agape) for every disciple. There was a tender affection for John which was somewhat different from the greater level of love Jesus had for every disciple.

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." John 21:15*

This is probably the most helpful verse comparing the two forms of love. Unfortunately, in English, both expressions of love are translated "love." That is not the case in the Greek text. Some scholars say that these two words are used interchangeably. Most of our best scholars insist, particularly in relation to this passage, that the two words represent two

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distinct expressions of love. Observe the difference between Jesus' question and Peter's answer:

- a. Jesus question, "Simon, son of John, do you love (agape) me more than these?"
- b. Peter's answer, "Yes Lord, you know that I love (fileo) you."

The word Jesus used for "love" had no limits whatsoever. It required no designated response in order to continue to exist. It was a total love that was self-giving. Peter's response, however was different. The "love" of which he spoke had real affection, but it was not intended to indicate a deep level of sacrifice. The emphasis, in "fileo," is on the tender affection involved. By his own actions, Peter had already demonstrated that his love for Jesus was firm right up to the point where it might place him in jeopardy with Roman officials and at that point it failed. Even when Peter failed Jesus, still the Master loved Peter with an everlasting, sacrificial love.

Jesus asked the same question, a second time, for purposes of emphasis. Unfortunately, Peter answered in exactly the same manner he had previously. This removed the possibility that Peter just did not recognize what Jesus was saying.

Jesus questioned him a third time, but this time there is a different sequence.

*"Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. John 21:17*

- a. Jesus' question, "Simon, son of John, do you love (fileo) Me?" Jesus asked him, "Do you have the deep penetrating love for me that a person has for their parent or for their child?"
- b. Peter's answer, "Lord you know all things, you know that I love (fileo) you." This answer makes it very clear that there was the tender affection of family that Peter had for Jesus.

John tells us that Peter was "grieved" because Jesus said to him the third time "Do you love (fileo) me?" This "grief" is an intense sorrow. Jesus had come to the place where Peter was. He accepted Peter at the level of devotion that Peter was able to honestly offer. Following each answer, observe that Jesus still invited Peter to serve him. That is the grace of God in action. No matter that Peter was unable to love Jesus with no reservations or limitations, still Jesus wanted him to serve.

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; Romans 12:9, 10*

Romans chapter 12 is the beginning of the practical section of the epistle. Paul instructed them to make the theological discussions of chapters 1 - 11 a viable part of their lives in chapters 12-16. As you can see, there is a series of exhortations in this and succeeding verses. This is an interesting verse in that both forms of "love" are included. Paul said,

- a. "Let love (agape) be without hypocrisy." This is a milder form of the word for hypocrite. Hypocrisy is the pretense to be or do something that one is not. In other

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words, let your love, which has no boundaries, be exactly what it appears to be. Let it be sincere.

- b. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love." The word "devoted" is a compound Greek word:
  - (1). "fileo" - tender affection for family
  - (2). "storge" - to cherish a parent or child
  - (3). This is an intensive form of tender affection which we reserve for family and those closest to us.
  - (4). Paul said he wanted them to give their tender affection with all the intensity they had.
- c. "Brotherly love" is the word from which we get our word "Philadelphia" - the city of brotherly love.
  - (1). "fileo" - tender affection
  - (2). "adelphos" - brother, family.
  - (3). This word describes the tender affection and responsibility one holds for a member of the family.
- d. The double reference to "fileo" was used for purposes of strong emphasis. It is like saying, "I really mean it."

*If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha.  
I Corinthians 16:22*

This is the very last brief paragraph in the epistle. The Corinthian church had its share of people who were not faithful to their commitment to Jesus Christ. There was an even greater number of people in town who had no use for Christ at all. Paul said to the church, in very forceful terms, "If anyone has no tender affection for the Lord, then let that person be anathema Maranatha." This gives us an insight into the meaning of "fileo." Though it is not as intense a form of love as "agape," still it is very good and meaningful. This "fileo" love is an affection born of an awareness of what Christ has done on our behalf. It is a fondness that is keenly aware of the sacrifice He made for us. Paul said, if anyone does not have this tender affection for Christ, let that person be devoted to destruction. The word "maranatha," on the other hand, was different. This word "maran" is evidence that there are some words in Paul's writings which are in Aramaic. This word is a combination of two Aramaic words "maran" and "atha." It literally means "Lord come!" In the thinking of some, it came to be used in situations where one implores God to destroy.

*Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;  
I Thessalonians 4:9*

This verse is part of a long series of exhortations to godliness that Paul gave to the Christians in Thessalonica. Paul did not want to ignore the need to love, but he also wanted them to know that he was aware of their real love for each other.

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In this translation, the word "love" appears twice. In the Greek text, however, the two words are different.

- a. The first word "love" is the word "Philadelphia" - the tender affection one reserves for members of the family.
- b. The second word "love" is the word "agape." This form of love focuses its attention on its sacrificial nature; on the fact that there are no limits to it and no necessary response. It is the kind of love God showed Israel in the book of Judges. God loved them when they failed Him. He only punished them to get them to return to Him.

*For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. I Timothy 6:10*

In this entire epistle, Paul instructed the young pastor concerning his decorum as a representative of God. This verse is located in the midst of several exhortations concerning the way he should live his life; the dangers he should prepare against.

In the midst of this list of exhortations, Paul said, "the love (fileo) of money is a root of all sorts of evil." This was a way of saying that when your affection for money is greater than your affection for anything else, including God, you are on an evil path.

Love "fileo," in this instance, is a force which guides and chooses our priorities. It is that which chooses what is important for us.

*For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, II Timothy 3:2*

Paul described the conditions in "the last days." The word "love" appears twice in this verse. In both instances, it is the word "fileo." Paul gives us an interesting situation. The word "love" is very good. To be a "lover of self" or a "lover of money," however, is very bad. The tender affection and responsibility of family is amoral, neither moral nor immoral, but rather identified by what it does. This affection can be used for great benefit if applied in the right way. On the other hand this tender affection can be turned toward selfish goals and only be destructive.

*treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; II Timothy 3:4*

This is a continuation of the previous passage. Again, in this verse the word "love" appears twice. In both instances the word is "fileo." Interestingly, the phrase "lovers of pleasure" is mentioned in stark contrast with "lovers of God." We must say that the other conditions described are anything but affirming. Paul illustrated the level of his thinking by identifying some of the problems they faced: "treacherous, reckless, conceited..."

In both uses of the word "love" it identifies an affection that is strong and enduring. Again, however, this love can be focused on self in terms of pleasure. It can also be withheld in terms of focusing one's affection on God. Basically "fileo" love is good and positive. It can be used, as we can see here, in a degrading, destructive manner.

*that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, Titus 2:4*

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Paul, in this epistle, instructs nearly everyone in the church concerning how they can live their lives in a way that focuses attention upon God. In this particular verse, Paul exhorted the wives and mothers to two expressions of love.

- a. Love "fileo" their husbands
- b. Love "fileo" their children

Both of these words for love are "fileo." It would not make sense for Paul to exhort these Christian women to love their husbands with a selfish form of love. The non-Christian women would love their husbands at least from a selfish point of view. Paul urged these Christians to love their husbands with tender affection that would be exemplary in their community.

Most any mother would love the child she bore. Paul exhorted these Christian women to love their children with a tender affection and responsibility that would be surprising to the rest of their community. In this instance, "fileo" is a strong, dependable form of love that is tender in its application and fitting for the family of which she was a part.

*But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:4, 5*

As you can see, this is just a portion of a sentence. In fact, the sentence covers Titus 3:4-7. In this sentence, the author described what the grace of God had done in their lives, even though they did not deserve the blessing. The text clearly states that God has a "fileo" love for "mankind." This gives another insight into the nature of "fileo" love. If God has "fileo" love, then "fileo" love is very good. It is appropriate and trustworthy. The emphasis is upon tender affection rather than other possible directions.

Observe that the kindness of Jesus and His "fileo" love worked in concert to bring salvation. Indeed, the kindness of Jesus is an expression of His "fileo" love. This salvation was an expression of His mercy in cooperation with the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

*All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Titus 3:15*

This verse gives us another glimpse into the meaning of the word "fileo." This is the closing verse in the epistle. In those days, it was difficult to send messages. Whenever one was sent, greetings were included to all who might know the sender. This is such a situation. There were those surrounding Titus who may have heard of Paul, but did not know him personally. They loved Paul not because he was family, not because he was a close friend, but because he also was a follower of Jesus. It is a tender affection based upon the fact that the person belongs to the family of God and though there is no blood tie, they are as close as brothers and sisters are to us.

When I travel in the Ukraine, I meet Christian brothers and sisters I have never seen before. Their intense needs pain me as much as any pain to my immediate family would. I have heard many Christians say that their "forever family" is much closer than their natural brothers and sisters.

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This love is a tender affection which has a deep respect for the person; a deep concern for their needs and struggles. This love focuses upon the person and the deep friendship one has for them.

*Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*  
*Hebrews 13:1, 2*

In this closing chapter of the epistle, there is a long list of exhortations by the author. If you read through the list of exhortations, you will observe that they appear to be a random list and have no necessary interrelationship. One of these exhortations is, "Let love of the brethren continue."

The word for "love of the brethren" is "Philadelphia." This is a compound word which is made up as follows:

- a. fileo - love
- b. adelphos - brother

This is an intensive form because "fileo" also means love which is appropriate for family.

The author said they should let this family love "continue." The word for "continue" is "meneto" (μενέτω). This word literally means "to abide," "to take up residence." This word is a Present Active Imperative. Simply put, that means that it is a command. This command instructs the Christian Jews to let love take up residence in them and never cease. Love is to become a way of life; a Christian lifestyle.

In the second verse, the author instructed the Jewish Christians not "to neglect to show hospitality to strangers..." This was part of their culture as well as their faith. The law of the desert required that they provide food and housing for travelers for a period of three days. Christians were particularly affected by this need. The only places where they could stay the night as they traveled was at a "caravanserai." We might call it a roadhouse or a brothel. It was not accidental that the author, out of several possible choices, used the word "philoxenia" (φιλοξενία). This is a compound word made up as follows:

- a. Φιλέω - love
- b. Κενός - stranger

You show your affection for the stranger by caring totally for his/her daily needs. The word "fileo," in this instance, means to have tender affection for the stranger in need of shelter and necessary food. It means acting upon the kindly affection you feel for individuals. This is, by no means, a weaker form of love.

We must remember that these are a group of suffering Christian Jews. They have lost everything except life and each other. In such circumstances it is easy to think first and only of yourself. The author urges, commands them to think of each other; think of the needs of the traveler who has no place to turn, but to you.

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. I Peter 1:22, 23*

## FILEO LOVE

Observe that the purification of the soul comes through obedience to the truth. The purpose of this purification of the soul is to bring about a sincere love of the brethren. The word for "love of the brethren" is "Philadelphia" and represents a strong love as one would share with intimate family. It reflects not only tender affection, but the action of personal responsibility for that person if need requires.

The author, then, commanded these Jewish Christians to "fervently love one another from the heart." This word for "love," however, is "agape." As we have seen before, this "agape" love is found in the heart of a person who is born again, and comes through the word of God.

There is a relationship here between the two forms of love. These verses describe a step-by-step process. Obedience to truth leads to purification of soul. Purification of soul leads to love of brethren. In this process of growth, "agape" love is produced. This is precisely what Peter meant, in II Peter, when he said,

*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. II Peter 1:5-7*

"Fileo" is the foundation upon which "agape" love is built.

*To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; I Peter 3:8*

Throughout chapters two and three, Peter instructed everyone in the Christian community to demonstrate their Christian faith by the way they lived. He did this with specific instructions. The words, "To sum up..." might be translated "finally." This word suggests that Peter will announce his conclusion to his discourse. The beginning of that summary is verse eight.

The word translated "brotherly" is really "Philadelphia." It is to have tender affection and responsibility for someone as if they were your biological brother.

If you look carefully at each of the words in this verse, you will observe that each one has an air of compassion about it. "Fileo" thrives and accomplishes its life-changing work in an atmosphere of compassion.

*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. Revelation 3:19*

Again, the word "love" is "fileo." John heard these words and recorded them for us. It was God's way of identifying the way He loves us. This word "fileo" describes one way in which God loves us. It therefore is not an inferior kind of love. It is different, in character, however, from "agape." God loves us so much that He is unwilling to allow us to mature in an undisciplined, evil lifestyle. God risked our displeasure to forcefully point us in the right direction. He would choose more moderate means, but was willing to reprove and discipline when necessary in order that we might be the very best we can become, whether or not we became fond of Him because of His disciplinary action. This is the family picture of a father.

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Again, God's "agape" love is not a good form of love and "fileo" a bad form. Fileo, rather, is a form of love that differs in its direction, priority and intensity.

### **SUMMARY**

We need to reflect upon what we have learned about "fileo" love in this study:

1. Fileo means "to belong to," "to be a friend," "to share tender affection."
2. This is the affection we express to family.
3. It is based upon reciprocity. If it is not returned, it does not exist.
4. It is an affection which is constant, but has limits.
5. This is not ultimate love. It is possible to have "fileo" love for someone and love God even more.
6. This word stresses the deep affection God the Father has for Jesus the Son.
7. It describes the deep, abiding friendship which existed between Jesus and Lazarus.
8. This love is intense and often is visually verified by the way we live and demonstrate this affection.
9. Like any other human being, Jesus had a special friendship with certain people - John and Lazarus.
10. Fileo love is to like someone in a deep, special way.
11. It does not have less affection than "agape," but it has limits "agape" does not recognize.
12. Fileo love focuses on the one loving rather than on the one being loved.
13. It focuses on the depth of affection.
14. It is an intense form of tender affection.
15. It carries the level of affection and responsibility we reserve for family. Still, it has limits.
16. This love is a response to what God has done for us. It is a reaction whereas "agape" is an initiated action.
17. It is as essential a form of love for God as "agape." We should have a sacrificial, unlimited love for God. We should also have a deep, abiding friendship with and affection for God.
18. It is the ability to share family affection and responsibility with other believers.
19. This love can also serve, for good or ill, as the basis upon which priorities are chosen. Fileo love is amoral, depending upon how it is used. That was never true of agape love.
20. It is a form of love that fans the flames of human friendship and devotion.
21. This is a love that takes up residence in us and never stops loving.
22. Fileo is the love foundation upon which "agape" is built.

## *FILEO LOVE*

23. Fileo thrives in an atmosphere of compassion. If we want our fileo love to pattern after God's fileo love, we must work at it in an atmosphere of increasing compassion.
24. Fileo is strong. It is willing to risk rejection, like a parent, in order to help the beloved become what God intended for that person.



## AGAPE LOVE

Different forms of the word "agape" appear in at least 175 verses of the New Testament. "Agape" love is a matter of the will and action, not of heart and feeling. It is to choose God with no reservation. It is to place the total self in His care. "Agape love" rejects everything that does not serve God. It places no priority on self-satisfaction or self-importance. Agape is a passion for God which requires no reservations or boundaries. This love for God and others is expressed most vividly through actions.

Agape love does not fit human logic, but does satisfy the divine care for everyone. Love, when it fills the human life, expresses itself in loving actions, not just kindly words. Everything the New Testament says about agape love is clarified and illustrated in the cross.

"Agape love" is most clearly expressed in the love of this perfect being, God, toward completely unworthy human beings. This love fosters, in the unworthy recipients, a loving reverence for God that moves them to share this undeserved love with other unworthy persons. This is an unselfish, sacrificial servant-love which requires no response. It will continue whether responded to or not. Agape love initiates acts of love rather than responding to love as "fileo" love does.

*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:43, 44*

There is a strong contrast in Jesus' statement, between hating one's enemies and loving one's enemies. In these verses, there are some pieces of information concerning "agape" love:

| <b>HATING ENEMIES</b>                    | <b>LOVING ENEMIES</b>   |
|--|---|
| Follows "eye for an eye" logic.          | It is beyond human logic, following the example of Jesus.   |
| <b>Reactive</b> - out of selfish concern | <b>Active</b> - They take the initiative; they act lovingly because of the worth of the beloved enemy. There is no allusion as to whether it is received positively or not. |
| It is contrary to the Divine example.    | It follows, precisely, the Divine example.  |
| It follows popular, cultural thinking.   | It stands against popular, cultural thinking.   |
| <b>They have enemies</b>                 | <b>They have enemies</b>  |
| It eagerly seeks destruction of enemies. | It eagerly seeks blessing of enemies.   |

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We must be reminded that this is a command, not a suggestion. In the Church, few people take seriously this command. They have no love for other Christians who hold views or take active positions which are different from their own.

"Love your enemies" is not only a command. It is what we call the Present Active Imperative. It would be appropriate to translate these words, "Love your enemies and never stop loving them." This describes a lifestyle, not a single act. This is what we are to be all day, every day.

In Luke's account of the sermon on the mount, Luke 6:20-49, Jesus dealt with the same issue. Had Jesus used the word "fileo" instead of "agape," this would have been a contradiction in terms. This statement is meaningful because "agape" love is unconditional and because it does not need to have a response to be genuine.

*"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? Matthew 5:46*

This verse follows the previous one by only two verses. Jesus was teaching as the rabbi's taught - asking questions. His question, here, is very carefully worded. If you look at it carefully, in view of the meaning of the word "agape," it is clear that He set up a contradiction in terms. The word "agape" describes a relationship which is not tied to a response. Love will be expressed whether it is responded to or not. The recipient does not need to deserve it. That being the case, it is impossible to only love those who love you.

Jesus, however, made a good point about "agape" love. Jesus said, "If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" The inference is that there is a reward involved in unconditional love of those who do not deserve it. To offer unconditional love does more than one might expect. The tax collectors and people will notice that love that has no limits. It is reasonable to understand that when we offer unconditional love to those in need, people will take note of that and it will be a witness to them. That is the reward of offering "agape" love. This story is also told in Luke 6:32-35

*"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24*

This verse is also a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was talking about allegiance. It is not possible to serve two masters. He said you will love one and hate the other. This is a contrast between love and hate in terms of allegiance. The meaning of "agape" includes the idea of total allegiance. Its opposite, the one hated, has no allegiance at all. It is not just that we offer unconditional love to an individual, but our allegiance goes with it in "agape" love. This same message can be found in Luke 16:13

*"Honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 19:19*

This is the story of the rich young man. Jesus listed the laws the young man should obey. In the midst of the list, Jesus said, "love your neighbor as yourself." Again, this is the word "agape." There are several pieces of information about "agape" in this statement.

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- a. The form of the word "love" suggests that it is a command. It also means that we are called upon to love and never stop loving our neighbor. According to Jesus' definition, a "neighbor" is anyone in need.
- b. Our agape love for ourselves is the pattern we are called upon to use to determine the way we love our neighbors. To keep this command will take some serious reflection.
- c. This is a way of life, not a specific action.
- d. If we fail to love our neighbor, we cannot claim to be obedient.

*"And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold."  
Matthew 24:12*

Jesus described the conditions which will surround His second coming. In this verse, Jesus pointed out that as lawlessness increases, love will grow colder. This suggests that love is not a permanent quality. It must be constantly encouraged and nourished, or it will diminish. This also suggests that the moral quality of the life has a determining effect upon the caliber of "love" in our lives. There is no danger our love will substantially increase without our knowledge or effort. There is the danger that our love will diminish unless there is a concerted effort to focus our lives on sincere obedience to the commands of Jesus.

*And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Mark 10:21*

This, of course, is the story of the rich young man. He was a man that most of the community would look upon with disdain, simply because he had wealth and because he claimed superior spiritual condition. Jesus did not see him in that way. Jesus was willing to show love for the man, even though the man would reject the instructions that Jesus gave him.

*'...And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that He is One; and there is no one else besides Him; and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. " Mark 12:30-33*

This statement by Jesus was given in answer to the lawyer's question about the greatest commandment. The form of the word "love" suggests that this is a command that they must do and never stop doing. He described a new way for the child of God to look at his/her daily response to God. Jesus gave an instruction that they would never be free to ignore. As you can see, the object of this love is "The Lord your God." Agape love is the basis for our relationship with God, who is our Master. Jesus spoke of loving God with "all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." This was a way of saying that the child of God must invest the total self in an intense ex-

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pression of love for God. Any relationship with God that is not an intense expression of Love is less than God intended it to be.

Even though only the first commandment was requested, Jesus suggested the second as well. Observe that the word "love" in this verse is exactly the same as the one used previously. This suggests that our love for our neighbor must be of precisely the same nature as our love for God and ourselves. These verses suggest that our love for our neighbor must be patterned after our love for ourselves.

Observe the way the lawyer closed his response, "To love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." Mk. 12:33. The sacrifices and burnt offerings were extremely important in Israel. To say that loving your neighbor as yourself is much more than these would be a shocking announcement to almost any Jewish person. This gives us an insight into the importance of this kind of love. You will find essentially the same story in Matthew 22:37-39.

*"When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" Luke 7:42*

There are a number of ingredients in the formation of "agape" love. One of those is found in this verse. Jesus taught that one servant would love his master more because he had been forgiven more. This suggests that one of the ingredients in the formation of this agape love is gratitude, a response to a gift one could not possibly deserve or earn.

There is another suggestion in this verse. If a servant will give "agape" love to his master more than to another, then there are levels of this "agape" love. It is a quality of life which though present can increase and grow in our lives.

*"For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." Luke 7:47*

A Pharisee, named Simon, invited Jesus to dine with him. As often happened at feasts, people not invited would come and stand around the walls of the dining room even though they were not part of the feast. The woman was, apparently, one of those. Jesus used the event to chide Simon because he offered Jesus none of the courtesies that should have been due him as a guest. Jesus then pointed to the woman, probably a woman of the street, and spoke these words. In this verse, Jesus tells us something about the nature of agape love.

He talked about agape love in terms of forgiveness. She had great love because she had been forgiven a great deal. This is gratitude. One of the ingredients of agape love is a deep sense of gratitude for the forgiveness that is ours in Christ Jesus. If the gratitude is not present, there is good reason to doubt if love is real.

*"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."  
John 3:16*

This is probably our best known verse from the New Testament. Jesus said that the evidence of God's love was His undaunting willingness to sacrifice on behalf of the whole world in order that they might have eternal life. This great gift was given even though it was clear that many of the people would reject it. There is a beautiful picture of the sacri-

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fice of agape love in this well known verse. Agape love is the harbinger of grace that brought forgiveness of sins to all who would believe.

*"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand."  
John 3:35*

When we think of the divine sacrifice, we most always think in terms of the sacrifice of Christ. That is appropriate, but it is not the whole picture. John, in this verse, points to the Father's willingness to sacrifice on behalf of the Son, demonstrating His selfless, unlimited love. The love of the Father for the Son is there and has no strings attached. Though it is His world, the Father willingly turned over all things into the hands of His Son. This is an unusual move when it comes to the power which has no limits.

*"but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves."  
John 5:42*

The Jews were upset with Jesus because he claimed God as His father. They were doing everything they could to kill Jesus, but without success. It was in Jesus' response to these angry Jewish leaders that He said these words. The only word used to describe the love of God is "agape." Because it is the love of God, it is good. It is self-sacrificing, it is without limits. These, of course, are the basic qualifications of agape love. This, Jesus said, they did not have within them.

*Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me." John 8:42*

Jesus was teaching some Jews who had believed in Him, but had some questions. They were bold to claim that Abraham was their father. They even claimed God as their father. Jesus responded saying "If God were your Father, you would love Me..." This is a reference to the family responsibility. People were to be so responsible to family members that they would be willing to die for them. Jesus was saying to them, "If you were indeed a child of God, then we would be brothers, and you would be willing to give your life for me." This is the sacrifice of love.

*"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." John 10:17*

Jesus had just told the parable of the good shepherd. He then talked about Himself as the good shepherd. Finally he said the words in this verse. Jesus said that the Father loved Him because He sacrificially gave Himself for the sheep of Israel as well as the Gentiles. This is one more confirmation of the fact that agape love involves the sacrifice of self, if necessary, without thought of return or response.

*"Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." John 13:1*

It is one thing to say that Jesus loved His own. Jesus demonstrated that love by not only sacrificing Himself for the human race, but by continuing to love them right up to the time of His death. This kind of sacrifice is part of the meaning of the word agape love.

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*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34, 35*

The setting of these verses is the Last Supper. Observe that Jesus referred to this as a "new commandment." These people knew of what we call the "ten commandments" and treated them as sacred. These are very significant verses in the understanding of the meaning of agape love. The form of the word "love" is Present Active Imperative. This means that it is a command and that it represents ongoing action - "love one another and keep on loving one another." This tells us that love can be commanded. It also tells us that the normal relationship between believers is one of ongoing sacrificial love.

Jesus gave them an example, "even as I have loved you." The sacrificial love we are to offer each other, in the body of Christ, is an exact copy of the love which God gave for us. It does not deepened upon a personal benefit or a favorable response. We are to be loved just because we are. We are to love others just because they are. Again, this is the nature of agape love.

Jesus also gave us another piece of information. Agape love is a signal that the person is a disciple of Jesus Christ. This suggests that agape love is the unique relationship that exists between Christians. We must see each other as brothers and sisters. We must care for each other, sacrificially if necessary, as though we were literal family.

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15*

This conversation took place during the Last Supper. This is a conditional statement, "IF...THEN..."The evidence that a person loves Jesus is that they obey His commandments. The vital ingredient of agape love is obedience to the commands of Jesus. The measure of our obedience is the measure of our love for Jesus Christ. It appears that this is not a common understanding in the Church today. Some who call themselves Christians treat the commands to grow spiritually as options rather than commands.

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." John 14:21*

Again, as in verse 15, Jesus states that obedience is the evidence of agape love. The informative thing about this verse is that it indicates the results of sharing agape love. Notice that Jesus listed three results of obedience which identify agape love:

- a. He will be loved by the Father.
- b. Jesus will love him.
- c. Jesus will disclose Himself to him.

*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." John 14:23-24*

This is the third time in this conversation that Jesus equated agape love with obedience to His commands. This is for purposes of emphasis. The important thing about these verses

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is that they give us additional information concerning the results of loving obedience. In these verses, Jesus gives a different list of the benefits for those who demonstrate this kind of love:

- a. My Father will love him.
- b. We will come to him.
- c. We will make our abode with him.

The following table will show the difference between the two lists:

| John 14:21                                | John 14:23, 24                            |
|---|---|
| a. Loved by the Father                    | a. Father will love him                   |
| b. Jesus will love him.                   | b. Jesus and the Father will come to him. |
| c. I will disclose, reveal Myself to him. | c. We will make our abode with him.       |

The issue is not that one is right and the other wrong. It is rather that one adds to the other. Jesus said that He and the Father would come to the one who demonstrated his love by his obedience. This is a way of saying that the two parties were in total peace with each other. There were no differences separating them.

He also said that He and the Father would make their abode with him. This is a picture of the traveling stranger. God, the Father and the Son, will take up residence with the one who shows his love by his obedience. They will be part of his life and family as a traveler would be to his desert host.

*"You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I." John 14:28*

Jesus' understanding of agape was quite accurate. Jesus had just told the disciples that He was going to leave. The impact of His words hinges on what Jesus meant when he said, "If you loved Me you would have rejoiced..." He was saying that if their love for Him was self-sacrificing rather than self-serving, they could rejoice that He was going to be with the Father, even though it meant that they would be separated from Him. The element of self-sacrifice, though difficult to understand, is a vital part of agape love.

*"but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here." John 14:31*

This verse is the fourth report, in this chapter, that obedience is the evidence of agape love. Notice, however, how Jesus said it. "but that the world may know that I love the Father..." The evidence, to the world, that Jesus had agape love for the Father, was that He did exactly as the Father commanded Him to do. Our obedience shows the world that we have sacrificial, unconditional love for the Father. This is one of the real benefits of agape love.

*"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." John 15:9*

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There are a large number of verses in the New Testament which salute the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father. This is one of those verses. There are two pieces of information about agape love in this verse. The agape love one receives can be passed on to another individual who needs to be loved. This piece of information is found in several passages.

Jesus also said, "Abide in my love." The agape love of Jesus is the atmosphere, the climate in which we live our lives. It is everything in our lives.

*"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." John 15:10*

This is a conditional statement, an "IF...THEN..." statement. IF you keep My commandments, (THEN) you will abide in My love..." The opposite side of this statement is that if they do not keep His commandments, then they will not abide in His love. It is another occurrence of the theme - "Obedience is the evidence of agape love." Observe, also, that Jesus drew a parallel, again, between His relationship to the Father and our relationship with Him. The kind of relationship He sustains with the Father is the kind of relationship He provides for us, if we are obedient. As before, it all hinges on obedience.

*"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." John 15:12-13*

This is a primary passage in the understanding of agape love. Jesus stressed, again, that He has commanded us to give agape love to each other. He illustrated this love by saying, "Just as I have loved you." We must ask what this means. Look at the life of Jesus. He loved us when we did not deserve it. He loved us when we were busy turning our back upon Him and His will for our lives. He loved us sacrificially even though He knew that we would reject that love. We are not being fully obedient and loving unless we offer that kind of love to each other.

Jesus qualified the kind of love that He meant. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." This is the perfect example of self sacrifice. He did not say that one would lay down his life if the person was properly grateful, or consistently obedient. He simply said, that "one would lay down his life for his friends."

*"This I command you, that you love one another." John 15:17*

Repeatedly throughout the Gospel records, the authors quote Jesus' command that His followers love one another. Here again, Jesus talked about love that is a lifestyle, not an action. This is a command. It is no less incumbent upon the disciples than any one of the ten commandments. Unless they love each other without condition and to the point of ultimate sacrifice, they are being disobedient to Jesus. If we are disobedient at this point, then the passages we have looked at suggest that our agape love for God is flawed by that much.

*"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which*

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*Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world." John 17:23-24*

These verses suggest that the Father's love for the Son is an agape love. They also suggest that God's love for us is exactly the same as His love for the Son. God's agape love for the Son is eternal. He loved the Son before the foundation of the world. It is a way of saying that the Father's love for the Son is changeless. This agape relationship expresses itself in the interrelationship between the Father, the Son and the Church. It is a mutual indwelling. This causes the Son to express a deep desire that the saints might be with Him in God's presence.

*"and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them. "*  
*John 17:26*

This verse is a continuation of the passage previously reported. It teaches us that the love of the Father for the Son can be shared with those who are perfected in unity and receive the love of God. Love is the means by which believers can dwell in Christ and He in them.

*When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"*  
*John 19:26*

John spoke of himself when he said, "The disciple whom He loved..." There was a love relationship between Jesus and John which is an example of His love for us. The reference to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was not an expression of preference so much as it was an identification of the oneness which permeated their relationship. There was no quality of their relationship that Jesus would have been unwilling to share with any of the other eleven disciples. It had more to do with their inability to sustain such a relationship rather than Jesus' unwillingness to do so. You have something of the same message in John 21:7 and 20

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." John 21:15*

Notice that this event took place immediately following breakfast. This would have no special meaning in our culture, but it was quite significant to them. In that culture you only ate with persons with whom you were at peace. This should have told Peter that Jesus accepted him just as he was. Jesus' question was, "Peter, do you love me (agape)?" We do not know what Jesus referred to when he said, "... more than these." We need to remember that Peter had denied even knowing Jesus. Now Jesus was asking Peter about his loyalty. Jesus asked Peter if he had a self-sacrificing love for Jesus that would endure any confrontation; that had no self-serving end; that required no specific response.

Peter responded in a way our translations do not report precisely. Whereas Jesus used the word "agape," for "love," Peter used the word "fileo." The word "fileo" was used to describe the affection one had for family. It involved a degree of dedication, but there were definite limits on this affection. Peter said, "Lord, you know that I 'like' you." This is a very different expression than the one concerning which Jesus asked.

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In spite of this, Jesus still called upon Peter to serve Him by caring for the "lambs," those who were new to the faith.

*He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"  
He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him,  
"Shepherd My sheep." John 21:16*

This verse records the fact that Jesus asked exactly the same question a second time. One must ask, "Why did He do that?" There may be several reasons, but one among them is the fact that it adds emphasis to what Jesus was trying to draw to the attention of Peter. That is the major reason for the use of repetition.

Jesus said to Peter, a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (agape) me?" The question is exactly the same. It asks if Peter has an affection that has no selfish agenda; no desire for personal response; no reason for being other than to serve the recipient of that love.

Peter's response was word for word the same as the previous answer. He said, "Yes Lord, you know that I love (fileo) you." He said he liked Jesus; that he had some dedication to Jesus, but that there were definite limits to this affection.

*He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter  
was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And  
he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."  
Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep." John 21:17*

This is the third time that Jesus questioned Peter about whether he loved Jesus or not. If one looks at the Greek text, however, the encounter is a bit different. In this question, Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love "fileo" me?" The text says that Peter was intensely grieved that Jesus on His third question said, "do you love "fileo" me?" It is clear that Jesus, failing to get a positive response to his question about "agape" love, came to the place where Peter was and said, "Do you love "fileo" me?"

Peter's response reflects some irritation when he said, "Lord you know all things; you know that I love "fileo" you." Peter said that he "liked" Jesus; that he had the same feelings and responsibilities to Jesus as he would have to his brother Andrew. This encounter gives us some careful insights into the difference between the two forms of love.

*and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out  
within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:5*

Paul, in the previous verses, described a process of growth which, interestingly enough, begins with tribulation and moves toward hope. Paul ends the list by saying that hope does not disappoint us, "because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit..." This is a thoroughly divine initiative. It is the love of God and it was poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. We are the total benefactors and our investment is nil. That is what agape love is. It is completely a gift and requires no repayment or response.

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet  
sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8*

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This verse represents our best illustration of the fact that agape love has no reservations or requirements. God loved us knowing that there would be no positive response from us. He loved us, knowing that we would respond to Him and then falter again and again. This love is the same whether offered to a repentant sinner or a hardened criminal. It is the same if we love Him or reject Him. That is agape love.

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28*

As Paul continued to describe the benefits of our salvation, he dealt with the way God participates in our lives. God works in every event of our lives in such a way that everything that happens to us is not necessarily good, but it eventually results in good because God manages everything that takes place in our lives. Paul specifically stated that God does this in the life of every person who loves, agape, Him. Paul was talking about all those who have an affection for God that has no reservations or restrictions. It is love when everything is going well. This affection is just as strong when everything seems to be going terribly. This love is not so much a good feeling as it is an intense commitment. This same message is found in I Corinthians 2:9

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Romans 8:35*

Again, Paul gives us another definitive word about agape love. He writes the way a rabbi would teach, by means of a question. The answer to this question is "no one." In effect, Paul said that there was no tragedy, no matter how great, that could cause the Lord to stop loving us. No price would be too great; no pain too intense for Him to feel it was too great a price to pay to show us His love. This is a picture of just how unconditional His love really is.

*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. Romans 8:37*

In the previous verse, Paul quoted from Psalm 44:22 seeking affirmation for his statements about the way these Christians suffer and how God sustains and keeps them in trial. Now, in this verse, Paul takes the idea a step further. He pointed out that believers under fire conquer overwhelmingly because of the love of God. It is not just that God has an affection for us. It is that this affection is so powerful that nothing can touch us without His permission and oversight.

*Nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39*

In this passage, Paul resorted to good Jewish logic. He affirmed his position, in verse 35. He supported his position, in verse 36, with a quotation from Psalm 44:22. Then, in verse 39, he emphasized his position by repeating his assertion in different words. It stressed the idea he wanted to emphasize. It was so exciting that there was no thing, no condition that could come between God and ourselves; no price too great; no pain too great to bear in order for God to continue to show us His great love.

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*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.  
Romans 12:9*

Chapter 12 begins the practical section of Romans. This chapter is made up of a long series of exhortations concerning the way a person presents him/herself to God as a living sacrifice. One of those is to let your love, agape, be genuine. The Greek word for "hypocrisy" is (ἄνυπόκριτος). This is a strengthened form of the word. This word was originally used to identify a stage actor, one who portrayed someone that he was not. Later it came to be identified with conduct which was less than what it appeared to be. Paul was direct. Love must be without any form of deception. One might say it another way - Love must be sincere, it must be exactly what it appears to be.

*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:8-10*

In this practical section of the Roman epistle, Paul continued to give exhortations concerning the way these struggling Christians could express their faith in a pagan setting. When Paul said, "owe nothing to anyone except to love one another," he said as much about their mutual love as he did about money. In effect, Paul was saying that we owe it to each other to love one another. This is not just a nice thought. It is our obligation as a follower of Christ.

Paul went on with a startling statement. Notice that the statement begins with the word "for." This suggests that a reason is coming. He said, "For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." Love is the epitome of what God had in mind when He gave the law to Israel. The word "fulfillment" is "pleroma" (πλήρομα) and comes from the marketplace. They, too, had problems with false weights in the market. They decided that a vessel was filled full when it was filled until it was running over all around. Paul used this term to describe the way that love fills full all the commands that were given at Sinai. Love accomplishes what all of these commands were given to achieve.

Paul went on to say that the ten commandments, and specifically those dealing with our relationships with others, are summed up in the statement, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Paul assumed that human beings love themselves. He stated that as a person loves him/herself, that same love must be extended to the neighbor. Love is measured against the unconditional affection one has for oneself.

Paul continued by saying, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor." The word for "wrong" is "kakos" (κακός) and means that which is evil in character; that which is morally and ethically evil. Paul said that love will engage in nothing that is morally and ethically evil in character against one's neighbor.

*Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, Romans 15:30*

In this verse Paul gives some information that would be shocking to many Christians. They would be unaware that any verse of scripture speaks of "the love of the Spirit." In

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the New Testament, each of the three members of the trinity are spoken of as loving with agape love. Paul appealed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit to join with him in intensive prayer.

*but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him." I Corinthians 2:9*

Paul found it impossible to describe all that God has in mind to bestow upon those who love Him. There are positive results for those who love God with agape love. There may be pain involved in unconditional love, but God also blesses those who love Him unconditionally.

*What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? I Corinthians 4:21*

Paul was dealing with the problems he discovered in the Corinthian church. He asked them if they preferred that he come to them with a "rod," which means in a disciplinary way, or would they prefer that he come to them with love and a spirit of gentleness. Paul clearly drew a strong contrast between "rod" and "love and a spirit of gentleness." The "rod" was intended to inflict pain in order to correct behavior. It represents the consequences of our actions. While "love" was intended to correct behavior, it came from a different perspective. It intended to correct behavior as a result of favorable relations.

Paul inferred that agape love was a means of establishing such strong relations that the behavior of the beloved would be affected in a positive way. This, of course, was God's intention in the cross.

*but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. I Corinthians 8:3*

Paul was telling the Corinthian Christians that if a person has unconditional agape love for God, that person is known by God. The word for "known" is "ginosko" which suggests a knowledge which is growing and increasing. This verse can be a bit puzzling. One would expect an all knowing God to know fully. In this verse, the emphasis is not so much on growing knowledge as it is on increased participation with; increased sharing with the one who has this unconditional love for God. The message for us here is that one of the results of having agape love for God is that there is a growing relationship with God such as the person has never known before.

First Corinthians chapter 13 is one of our most definitive passages concerning agape love. It is as though the chapter is a jig-saw puzzle of love with each piece of the puzzle describing one of the qualities of agape love. This passage portrays agape love as a lifestyle. To love is to take on a specific personality, namely the personality of Jesus.

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. I Corinthians 13:1-3*

In these three verses, Paul highlights four different areas of life.

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- a. Eloquence - v. 1 - "the tongues of men and of angels."
- b. Several forms knowledge of - v. 2 - prophecy, mysteries, etc.
- c. Faith - v. 2 - spiritual maturity which enables one to place unequivocal faith in God.
- d. Sacrifice - v. 3 - Give all my possessions to feed the poor; deliver my body to be burned

Each one of these is extremely important. Paul made it clear, however, that in themselves they are nothing. Love is the ingredient that makes great gifts and positions useful and meaningful in the kingdom. Love is not a separate ingredient of life, it is the atmosphere, in which all of these become useful.

*Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, I Corinthians 13:4*

Throughout this descriptive chapter about agape love, Paul mixes the things that love is and that it is not. That is particularly true in this verse. He lists two things that love is and three things that it is not:

- a. Agape love is:
  1. **Love is patient** - The Greek word is "makrothumeo" (μακροθυμέω). One might better translate this word longsuffering. It is literally to be long tempered. This is appropriate. Agape love does not need to have the books balanced or to have a proper response. It will love no matter what the recipient does. This allows agape love to be longsuffering.
  2. **Love is kind** - The Greek word is "chresteuomai" (χρηστεύομαι) and means something serviceable, good, pleasant as opposed to those things or people who are not serviceable, but bad and unpleasant.
- b. Agape love is not:
  1. **Agape love is not jealous** - The Greek word is "zelos" (ζηλῶς) and means to burn with jealousy, to eagerly desire. Since agape love seeks the benefit of others, it would not be possible for it to also burn with jealousy for what others may have. It is not that one who loves is disinterested in anything. It is that agape love is so strong that the person wants others to benefit at least as well as he/she does.
  2. **Love does not brag** - The Greek word is "perpereuomai" (περπερεύομαι) and it means to be vainglorious, it is to brag about self. One of the ingredients of this quality is pride, the ability to think of oneself as better than others. Bragging requires the use of other people, not concern for them. One cannot be both deeply concerned for others and brag about self in relationship to others. Agape love sees self as valuable along with others. It deeply desires to minister to others, even if they behave in a selfish way.
  3. **Love is not arrogant** - The Greek word for arrogant is "phaso" (φουσιόω) which means to inflate. Interestingly, the word comes from the word for "bel-

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lows" which they used to fan a fire. The person who has agape love for the neighbor has no need to hold an inflated view of self. Such a person knows his/her worth and is not diminished by valuing others.

*does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, I Corinthians 13:5*

This verse is a continuation of the contrasting qualities begun in verse four. This verse includes four things that love is not:

- a. **"Love does not act unbecomingly"** - The word "unbecomingly" is "aschemoneo" (ἀσχημονέω). It literally means not according to form. It would be anything that would risk danger or disgrace. The person who has agape love is very careful to monitor his/her actions so that nothing is done that would bring disgrace upon the kingdom or the family.
- b. **"(love) does not seek its own"** - The word "seek" is "zeteo" (ζητέω) and means to study carefully, to seek the way a murderer plots to commit his crime. It is an intense form. Paul said, Love does not search desperately to satisfy itself. Another way to say this would be, Love is not intensely selfish.
- c. **"(love) is not provoked"** - The word "provoked" is "paroxusmos" (παροξυσμός). The word means to stimulate; a contention, either good or bad. The form of this word suggests that love is not continually stimulated in an unfortunate direction; being upset is not the lifestyle of love.
- d. **"(Love) does not take into account wrong suffered"** - The text literally reads, "(love) does not keep score on evil," "(Love) does not calculate the evil that it receives,"

*does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;  
I Corinthians 13:6*

Paul continues the description of agape love in this verse. Here, it takes the form of a contrast - It does not do this, but it does that.

- a. (-) **(Love) does not rejoice in unrighteousness"** - The word "rejoice" is "chairō" (χαίρω). It means joy, or rejoice, "to be glad." It is an intense emotional response, but by the Christian, can be used to describe the response both to things that seem good and those that seem bad. Paul said that agape love does not experience joy when evil has been done either to self or to others. Compassion is an essential ingredient in agape love.
- b. (+) - **(Love) rejoices with the truth.** The root word for "rejoice," in this phrase, is exactly the same as in the previous one. Paul used a number of references to athletic events. When a gladiator was defeated and was being killed in the arena, the crowd would shout, scream and celebrate for joy at his downfall. In effect, Paul said, "Agape love rejoices with truth with the same intensity the arena crowd celebrates when an opponent is defeated and killed."

*bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
I Corinthians 13:7*

This verse, also, is a continuation of the description of love which Paul gave throughout this chapter. This well-known verse can easily be misunderstood. It could be taken to mean that the person who shares agape love is naive. That, of course, is not what Paul said.

- a. **"(Love) bears all things"** - The word "bears" is "stego" (στέγω) and literally means to protect by covering. When a mother animal senses danger, she will cover her young with her own body. It does not mean that love is a doormat. It means that agape love bears up under whatever trauma may present itself and protects the beloved from whatever might do harm. The form of each of these phrases suggests a lifestyle rather than an action. Love bears all things, with no exceptions, and never ceases bearing all things.
- b. **"(Love) believes all things"** - It does not mean that love is gullible, but rather in the midst of whatever tragedy may befall the person, the one who loves believes in God and expects God to be God in the midst of the most horrible catastrophe. The word for "believes" is "pisteuo" (πιστεύω) and means to be absolutely confident, to be unalterably confident, to trust without reservation. Love believes in the midst of the most horrendous tragedies and never ceases to believe that God is God. Agape expresses belief in God as a lifestyle, not an overt action.
- c. **"(Love) hopes all things"** - the word for "hope" is "elpidzo" (ἐλπίζω) and means a confident expectation of something future. It focuses on who God is and what He does, rather than on our logical expectation from a human point of view. This word expresses character more than intense desire. When Israel walked into the Red Sea, they got their feet wet, but as the water rose higher and higher on their bodies, their hope was no less than when they stood on the bank. They were not surprised when the waters finally began to pile up on either side. As a lifestyle, agape love hopes and never stops expecting God to be faithful to His word and would be shocked if that did not happen in His good time.
- d. **"(love) endures all things"** - The word endures is "hupomeno" (ὑπομένω) and is a compound word;
  1. "upo" - under
  2. meno - to abide

It means to stand under orders. This is a military word and is often translated "patience." When a band of soldiers realizes that the day is almost lost, they are tempted to flee for their lives. This inevitably leads to slaughter. The Trojan army was noted for the fact that when seriously challenged, they would stand and fight to the very last soldier rather than run for their lives. This is the word endurance.

Agape love endures as a lifestyle; it endures and never stops enduring whatever hardship may come its way; no matter how certain defeat may appear to be.

*Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. I Corinthians 13:8-10*

This verse, continues the description of love. It does so in an unusual contrast which poses love in opposition to three very highly prized gifts. Paul began with the positive:

"**Love never fails**" - This description can be frightening. It can be understood to mean that love is flawless. Because I am not flawless, it could cause me to feel that agape love is beyond my reach. That is not what Paul said.

The word "never" is "oudepote" (οὐδέποτε) and is a double emphasis word. We might translate it "not never." This would be poor English structure, but it is intended to give strong emphasis to the author's idea.

The word "fails" is "pipto" (πίπτω) and literally means to fall flat on your face. Notice, it does not say that love never falters. It literally says, "Love never falls on its face and keeps on falling on its face." Love does not make failure a lifestyle.

Paul then continues the contrast by observing the negative aspects:

- a. **Prophecies** - Some have a one-sided view of prophecy. They see prophecy as miraculously telling future events. Literally, prophecy is to speak forth, to announce the mind and counsel of God. In I Corinthians 12, Paul spoke of prophecy as a gift of God through the Holy Spirit. In these verses Paul gives us two pieces of information about prophecy that are often overlooked. He said that prophecy is temporary. It will "be done away." This word is "katargeo" (καταργέω) and means to abolish, to bring down like a useless tree. They will be abandoned because their temporary purpose has been fulfilled. Paul also said, in these verses, that prophecy, though it is a good gift of God, it is partial. The word "part" is "meros" (μέρος). It is a surveyors term which means to subdivide into sections. Because we are limited human beings, we can never fully comprehend the counsel of God.
- b. **Knowledge** - There are two forms of knowledge in the New Testament. "Ginosko" is the beginning and progress in knowledge. "Oida," on the other hand, is the fullness of knowledge. In I Corinthians 13:9, Paul used the word "ginosko," the beginning of knowledge. He mentions two things about knowledge. First, knowledge is partial. Because we are human and limited, we will never be all-knowing. Second, knowledge, like prophecies, will be abolished. They are temporary, at best.

In this contrast between love, prophecy and knowledge, Paul said that love is eternal. It will never be abolished. It will be complete, filled to the top rather than partial.

*But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.  
I Corinthians 13:13*

In this verse, Paul drew a comparison between faith, hope and love. First, observe that these three qualities "abide." Perhaps, another word might be "remain." It was intended to show that they do not go away like prophecy and knowledge. The comparison was not intended to depreciate faith or hope. It was a way of showing just how great agape love really is.

*My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. I Corinthians 16:24*

It sounds as though Paul's love of these Christians was not very strong. That was not the case. Paul dealt with His love for the Corinthians as an intense relationship.

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*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you. II Corinthians 2:4*

Paul explained the pain out of which he wrote the corrective message in the first epistle. He explained that he wanted them to know the love that moved him to painfully write the necessary corrective. Love is willing to suffer in order to benefit the beloved. This is a part of the self-sacrifice which is a part of agape love.

*Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. II Corinthians 2:8*

This is a reference to one who had been disciplined by the church. There are times when affection must be restrained in order to benefit the beloved. When the beloved changes his/her ways, however, it is then time to reaffirm that love and bestow it upon them again. This gives us an insight into the nature of love. The purpose of love's discipline is to benefit and improve the beloved, not to vent the spleen of the one who loves.

*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. II Corinthians 5:14-15*

These verses give us an insight into the effect that love has upon the beloved. The word "controls" is "sunecho" (συνέχω) and means to confine, to hold something together. The love of Christ for us holds us in place; it insists upon a response of gratitude because of what Christ has done for us in His death and resurrection. Love is powerful. It is so self-giving that decency compels us to respond to that love in a positive way.

*in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, II Corinthians 6:6*

Paul described the nature of his ministry among the Corinthian Christians. In the midst of this description, Paul said that he had displayed "genuine love." Love is one of the essential qualities of meaningful ministry. This also says that love is a quality of life which helps verify the holy quality of life essential for ministry.

*But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. II Corinthians 8:7, 8*

This is the kind of control that Paul had spoken of earlier, in II Corinthians 5:14, 15. The love one receives motivates that person to show similar love to another and the circle continues. It is a way of saying that love is contagious; love inspires love.

*Therefore openly before the churches show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you. II Corinthians 8:24*

In the same way we cannot see the wind, but we can see what the wind does, so we cannot see love, but we can see the effects of love. It is possible for visible actions to display the

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love that is invisible. In this verse Paul also said that love provides good reason for a believer to give thanks for the life of the one who loves.

*Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. II Corinthians 13:11*

To speak of "the God of love and peace" is to speak of the God who is the source of love and peace. Love is not produced by our striving, but by the power of God at work in our lives.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. II Corinthians 13:14*

This is the closing verse of II Corinthians. This is Paul's benediction upon the believers in the Corinthian church. Paul invoked the self-sacrificing love of God to surround these believers as they lived their lives in grace and fellowship with God and each other.

*"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. Galatians 2:20*

Paul talked about his new relationship with Christ. He said, "the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." In these words, Paul stated the love of God and illustrated it immediately thereafter. It is one more emphasis on the fact that agape love is sacrificial and has no relationship to responses.

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. Galatians 5:6*

Paul was trying to show the Galatian Christians just how important love is. To the Jew, circumcision was extremely important; it was his entrée into the covenant. Paul said, "circumcision, though it seems important to you, is nothing, but faith working through love is ultimately important." He was also saying that love is the atmosphere in which faith can work effectively.

*For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:13-14*

This is a contrast between two kinds of actions. One action is mistaking freedom for the opportunity to take advantage of another person. The other action is to serve one another as an expression of agape love. This also reaffirms that love never uses freedom to take advantage of others.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, Galatians 5:22*

In the preceding verses, Paul had described, in careful detail, the deeds of the flesh. This verse begins with the word "but" which indicates that this is part of a contrast. Paul contrasted the deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. He said that "the fruit of the Spirit

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is love..." There is a wonderful list of beautiful qualities in this verse. We should remember that such lists are usually presented in the order of their importance. All of these qualities are very important, but love is more important than all of them.

Paul said that the "fruit of the Spirit is love...." The word "fruit" is "carpos" (καρπός) which means fruit. It is a living organism's attempt to reproduce itself. Love is the product of the Holy Spirit. It is not produced by the Christian trying harder to be like Jesus. It is a quality of life produced in the Christian heart by action of the Holy Spirit. Love is the attempt of the Holy Spirit to reproduce His likeness in the believer. When there is love within our lives, there is a serious effort, on the part of the Holy Spirit, to produce a God-like life within that believer.

*Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, Ephesians 1:4, 5*

Our predestination to be "adopted as sons through Jesus Christ..." is an expression of the love of God. This is because our actions warranted anything but love, but He loved us just the same and insisted that we become His children, for whom He would take full responsibility. In this verse, Paul reported information about the agape love of God. Love is an enduring quality. God expressed this love, in His choice of our adoption, before the foundation of the world. Love exists in an atmosphere of kindness - "the kind intention of His will." Whatever else this love may be, it will always be kind.

*For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, Ephesians 1:15*

Paul began each of his epistles by telling the people what it was about their life of faith that gave him great joy. This is true in this epistle as well. From this message of praise, we know that it is possible for Christians to love each other with agape love. Their faith expresses itself in love. This must be the case with every believer.

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Ephesians 2:4*

In this passage, Paul described the former life of every child of God - disobedience. In so doing, he focused our attention upon the fact that the agape love of God issued in mercy which produced our redemption. Without love, there is no mercy; no redemption. Love is the foundation upon which mercy is built. The basis of our relationship with God is His love, not ours.

*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17-19*

It is not accidental that the expression of love follows the dwelling of Christ in the heart of the Christian. Love finds its source in God's presence within us. We must remember, that if Paul can talk about being rooted and grounded in love, it is also possible to not be rooted

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and grounded in love. Again, being rooted and grounded in love is the basis upon which the believer is able to comprehend the depth of our relationship with Christ. Paul went on to say that it is possible to know the love of Christ. The word "know" is "ginosko" (γινώσκω) and means to begin to know and progress in that awareness as opposed to total knowledge. The love of Christ is an intense matter. It is not easily discerned, but can be grasped. As our love grows, so will our awareness of the love of Christ. As we grow, the indwelling presence is increasingly complete.

*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, Ephesians 4:2*

Love is the atmosphere in which humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance develop; love is the foundation upon which these four qualities are based. If you read the entire paragraph, it becomes clear that love is the atmosphere in which these qualities develop and this enables us to develop in our relationship both with God and with the rest of the body of Christ.

*but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:15, 16*

It is possible to speak the truth in either love or in bitter harshness. Paul was speaking of our witness to those who might mislead or deceive. It is not unusual to see believers who renounce error with such venom that the truth has no chance to be effective.

Paul said that as they spoke the truth in love, they would grow up in all aspects into Christ. Love is the necessary ingredient in that relationship. Paul went on to say that this agape love having established the relationship with Christ enables individual Christians to develop as a functioning body of Christ. Love builds up efficiency and promotes growth within the body of Christ.

*and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. Ephesians 5:2*

The word "walk" is a Present Active Imperative form. This means that it is a command. It instructs the believers to walk and keep on walking in love. In other words Paul ordered these Christians to make love for each other a lifestyle, not an individual action. The words "just as" suggest a strong comparison is about to be given. Paul instructed them to use the love of Christ for them as the model for the love they offer to each other. He specifically said that they should be willing to sacrifice themselves for each other and that this would be an offering to God with which He would be well pleased. The love we give to each other is an offering we bring to God which is only expressed in our relationship with each other.

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; Ephesians 5:25*

In this verse, again, Paul used the Present Active Imperative form. He instructed the Christian husbands to love and keep on loving their wives. This is a way of life, not an

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act. This love for their wives is to be patterned after Christ's love for the Church. The Christian husband's love for his wife should be sacrificial. Love will enable him to see himself as expendable for the betterment of his wife. This is an excellent example of the sacrificial nature of agape love.

*So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; Ephesians 5:28*

The first part of this verse reiterates the message of 5:25. Read 5:28 again. Paul hinted at a piece of information about agape love in the first sentence and then says it clearly in the second sentence - the love we sacrificially give to others is an expression of our love for ourselves. Our sacrificial love for ourselves should be the model for our love for our wives. Paul repeated this message in 5:33.

*Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible. Ephesians 6:23-24*

Spiritual qualities do not work separately, but together. In this verse, Paul spoke of peace, love and faith. These qualities orchestrate together to build up the Christian life. These three qualities come from God and from His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul bestowed the blessing of grace upon the Ephesian Christians who love Jesus Christ. This clearly suggests that we can give the gift of sacrificial love to our Lord. Paul continued by saying, "with a love incorruptible." The word "incorruptible" is "aphtharsia" (ἀφθαρσία). It means "to destroy by corruption," "to destroy by moral taint." Agape love is free from moral taint. Said another way, agape love is pure in every sense of the word.

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; Philippians 1:9, 10*

Love creates an atmosphere in which an intensive form of knowledge and total discernment thrive. This will enable the one who has agape love to affirm the things that are excellent. As a result, the person will become sincere and blameless. Agape love is the basis upon which all this happens. These results are produced by this condition.

*If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Philippians 2:1-2*

Paul listed a number of ingredients which are essential for unity to exist. They are as follows:

- a. Encouragement in Christ
- b. The consolation of love
- c. The fellowship of the Spirit
- d. Affection

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### e. Compassion

Observe the way Paul spoke. He listed several qualities which would make his joy complete.

- a. "Being of the same mind" - some translations say, "think the same." This does not mean that if we have any different understandings we are apart from the body of Christ. It does mean that our priorities will be in harmony.
- b. "Maintaining the same love" - The word "maintain" is literally the word "have," "echo" (ἔχω). It means to hold in your hand, to place under your control. Love is not a completed experience. It is a relationship which must be held, focused upon continuously or it will dissipate.
- c. "United in spirit" - in some texts, this reads, "having one soul." It means to be moved by the same longings, sacrificing to reach the same goals and priorities.
- d. "Intent on one purpose" - this is sometimes translated, "Minding the same things." It is to be totally involved in the same mission on behalf of Christ.

If you think carefully on these qualities, you will discover that these are ingredients in the unity of the body of Christ.

If there is no agape love, there can be no unity in the Church. Again, the way Paul said this suggests that one of the qualities inherent in love is consolation. The word for "consolation" is " a compound word in the Greek text - "paramuthia" (παράμυθία):

- a. para - near
- b. muthos - speech

Like "paraclete," this word means to comfort, but it involves a much greater measure of tenderness. It is the picture of a mother whispering into the ear of her distressed infant. There is an intense form of tenderness in our love for other members of the body of Christ.

*That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, Colossians 2:2*

Love is the ingredient that binds the hearts of Christians together. It is not proper thinking or proper acting. It is the presence of love that binds Christians to each other and this results in a knowledge of Christ Himself.

*Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. Colossians 3:19*

Paul used the word agape to describe the marriage relationship. The husband is to love his wife and never stop loving her. It is an ongoing relationship. In this verse there is a contrast. In this contrast, Paul gave us some information about the nature of love.

The contrast has a "do this, but don't do that" quality to it. The men are to love their wives. They are not to be embittered against them. If love is the opposite of "embittered," then love means to embrace rather than resist, to have affection for rather than to despise.

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*Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; I Thessalonians 1:3, 4*

Paul spoke of a "labor of love." This love is not so much a feeling as it is an affection which finds expression in actions which affirm the beloved without thought of response. The actions are not love, but they give evidence of the presence of love.

Paul wanted these Christians to keep three things in mind:

- a. The work of faith
- b. The labor of love
- c. The steadfast hope in Christ serving before the Father.

These three things are the Christian response to the love of God which chose us while we were yet sinning.

*and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; I Thessalonians 3:12*

Love is not the product of trying harder or intensified dedication. Paul was specific, "The Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another..." This is a quality that God initiates and nurtures in our lives.

This love is not restricted to the members of the body of Christ. Notice that Paul spoke of this love as being for one another and for everyone. Love becomes our outlook upon life and people everywhere.

Paul also spoke of this love as increasing and abounding.

- a. **Increase** - The word "increase" is literally "exceed." It is "perisseuma" (περισσεύμα) and means such an abundance that there is much left over.
- b. **Abound** - the word is "pleonazo" (πλεονάζω) and means to be greater than before.

Love is not a static condition, but rather a growing vibrant relationship which increases and becomes something more beautiful and helpful than it ever was before. We never reach the place where love is totally realized, but it is becoming what it never was before.

*Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; I Thessalonians 4:9*

This verse is unique in that it contains both of the words for love - "fileo" and "agape." The phrase "love of the brethren": is "fileo." This describes the acceptance of each other as family and accepting responsibility for each other. The love of Christian brothers and sisters is not something worked out by the believer but rather is taught by God Himself. As God teaches, we learn to love. This suggests that it is a uniquely Christian quality of life. This is not a single course of instruction. This is a very emphatic form. They are continually being taught by God to love and keep on loving each other. One might translate it, "You are being taught by God..." In essence, Paul taught them that they knew they should be responsible for each other as family, but God taught them to go beyond this to love believers as we love and sacrifice for God.

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*But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. I Thessalonians 5:8*

The breastplate and helmet are protective armor intended to preserve the life of the soldier in battle. Love is one of the means of protection God has initiated for the believer. Paul called for alertness for the times were crucial. He suggested that love was one of the ways God used to protect us from being trapped by the enemy.

*and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. I Thessalonians 5:13*

God intended that believers have a special love for those He has placed over them within the body of Christ. One of the byproducts of love is that it enables us to hold leaders in high esteem because of their place within the body of Christ.

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, II Thessalonians 2:16*

Paul said, in this verse, that there are three things that God gives us by grace:

- a. He loved us.
- b. He gave us eternal comfort.
- c. He gave us good hope.

Grace is the ground out of which love grows. Were it not for grace, love would have no visibility whatsoever.

*And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. I Timothy 1:14*

Paul was bent on sharing the fact that faith and love find their source in Jesus Christ. Thus, trying harder is absolutely useless when it comes to producing or increasing love. We must be willing, but the will cannot produce love. It can only be available for God to produce love in us.

*But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. I Timothy 6:11*

Paul wrote to Timothy to describe the way a man of God conducts his life and ministry. He listed several things Timothy should avoid as well as a number of things such a person should seek out. In this verse, Paul gives Timothy a specific command. He is to pursue and never stop pursuing a list of godly qualities - righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

This suggests that agape love is a godly quality that one can never take for granted. It is a quality we must continually pursue for our spiritual growth. It cannot thrive in separation from these other godly qualities.

*For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. II Timothy 1:7*

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Paul has given Timothy a contrast between "a spirit of timidity" on the one hand and "power, love and discipline" on the other. The word "timidity" is "deilia" (δειλία). The root word means to be frightened. It suggests cowardice. The word "deilia" is never used in a good sense in the New Testament. The contrast of this fearful, cowardly, frightening attitude is power, love and discipline. Each of these three alternatives is an expression of confidence, strength and ability to achieve. Paul was saying to Timothy that these are the attitudes that love conveys.

*Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. II Timothy 1:13*

Love is the framework in which sound teaching can be held without wavering. Observe also that both faith and love are in Christ Jesus. Love is not in ourselves. It is in Christ. If we would express love, we must first be in Christ as well. This suggests that love is a uniquely Christian quality of life. You will find some nice people in the world, but that is not agape love.

*In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. II Timothy 4:8*

Paul talked about "all who have loved His appearing." In this context, the word "loved" is used to describe an intense longing that involves such a deep devotion that sacrifice is not considered an imposition in order to please and serve the beloved. The emphasis, here, is on the depth and intensity of the longing.

*because I hear of your love, and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints; and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother. Philemon 5-7*

Paul wrote to his good friend, Philemon, urging him to accept Onesimus as a Christian brother rather than as a run-away slave. The difference was forgiveness versus punishment and possible death. The love of Philemon for ALL the saints had been obvious to the entire Christian community. Paul now appealed to this love; this willingness to sacrifice on behalf of those who had become family to him in Christ. This love and faith, which was in Philemon, produced a level of fellowship which he shared with everyone who loved Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives. Paul was certain he could count on the firm expression of that sacrificial love in the instance of the return of Onesimus. Love is dependable and is not contingent upon perfect performance.

Love results in the refreshing and encouragement of the saints, even when they are less than they want to be. Love provides comfort when we falter. Love gives joy and strength even when we are not at our best. This is because love does not have preconditions. Love is!

*"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy companions." Hebrews 1:9*

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In the first division of the Hebrews epistle, the author described the character of Jesus. Part of that description points to His holiness. The author described it in two ways: Jesus "loved righteousness." It means to have a sacrificial affection for this righteousness no matter what the cost may be. He was repulsed by anything that focused in a lawless direction. This love of righteousness allowed God to be pleased with His Son and anoint Him to be messiah ahead of all angels and all men.

The second description is that "He hated lawlessness." There is a balance here. There are some who hate lawlessness and attack it viciously. They do not have the same enthusiasm for righteousness. The holy hatred of lawlessness was visible when Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple.

*For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. Hebrews 6:10*

The author said that these Christians had shown their love by ministering to their brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the willingness to sacrifice to provide needs, comfort and assistance to those whom you have accepted as part of your family in Christ. This is compassionate action.

The author was also saying that such sacrificial love would unquestionably be rewarded. It may not seem that way, but it is certainly true.

*And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, Hebrews 10:24*

This verse tells us at least two things about agape love. This love is not set in stone. It can increase. It can diminish. Second, love can be stimulated by those who also are part of the divine family. That being the case, God can use our love to motivate each other to greater heights of spiritual growth and deeper maturity.

*For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives. " Hebrews 12:6*

Hebrews 12 and 13 are the conclusion, the practical application of the epistle. In this paragraph, the author encouraged the suffering Christians to stand firm. This particular verse is a quotation from Proverbs 3:11, 12. It is a way of saying that love is so concerned about the beloved that it is willing to sacrifice, to be cut off from the good will of the beloved in order to discipline him/her to become what God intended that person to be. Love is more concerned with the spiritual maturity of the beloved than with the good will and understanding of that person and will gladly sacrifice self for the benefit of the brother.

*Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12*

Love results in perseverance in trial. There is a difference, in terms of motive, between trial and temptation. Temptation is intended to destroy. Trial is intended to show us our strength and help us discover just how greatly God has worked in our lives. We are called upon to demonstrate our ability to persevere with the help of God. If we demonstrate our

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perseverance in trial, God will give us the crown of life. This is the reward for loving God and being loved by Him.

*Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. James 2:6-8*

James identifies his readers as "beloved," as people whom he loved sacrificially, with no need for response. James wrote of "loving your neighbor as yourself." This idea, as you know, came from Jesus. The love of self is the measuring stick for the love of all others.

*and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, I Peter 1:8*

In our culture, love has a visual, emotional quality. That is not so in the New Testament. Agape love is a sacrificial love, not a self-serving one. It has nothing to do with appearances or responses.

*Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. I Peter 2:17*

The word "love" is in the Imperative Indicative Active form. This means that it is a command. It also suggests that this is a style, a way of life, not a single action. Loving God should be as natural and perpetual as breathing. It should be a preparation to sacrifice on His behalf without stopping to consider the matter.

*For, "Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. I Peter 3:10*

In this verse, "love" is the top priority of life, that for which all else can be sacrificed without sense of loss. That is what love is.

*but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: I John 2:5*

The faithful keeping of one's word is evidence that the love of God has been completed in that Christian's life. It is also evidence that we are in Him; that we are part of His family, affected by His way of life. Love is the foundation on which faithfulness is built.

*The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. I John 2:10*

Loving the brother is certainly beneficial to him. However, there are benefits to the one who loves the brother. He abides in the light. The light is sometimes used as a way to describe the guidance of Scripture and the will of God. Second, such a person is not apt to cause others to stumble. The Scriptural warnings against causing others to stumble are very serious.

*Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I John 2:15*

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The love of the Father is exclusive. He will not share our affection with any other priority. One way to know if God's love abides in us is to determine whether there is a sacrificial dedication to the world.

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. I John 3:1*

The fact that God has adopted us into His family is evidence of the great, sacrificial love He has for us. The reception of God's love will place us at odds with the world. You will find the same kind of information in 3:10

*For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; I John 3:11*

Again, the message here is that Christians should make loving each other as natural a part of life as breathing. There has not been a time when this was not the expectation.

*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. I John 3:14*

The giving of sacrificial, unconditional love to other members of the body of Christ is evidence that we are born again. John goes beyond this statement to deal with the reverse situation. A person who does not love continues to abide in death. He is not a part of the body of Christ.

*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. I John 3:16-18*

There are several pieces of information about agape love in these verses. The definitive understanding of love can only be found in the example of Jesus. He laid down His life for us and we did not deserve it. That is love. We ought to do the same for every Christian. That would be following His example. If we have the means to help a needy brother/sister and do so, this is evidence of the presence of love. Love is not something one says, it is actions that show sacrificial concern.

*And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. I John 3:23*

Believing in the name of Jesus is of no effect if we do not also love other Christians. This is a command, not a suggestion.

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has beheld God at any*

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*time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. I John 4:7-12*

The agape love we share is not our own, it comes from God. This means that we can take no credit for it whatsoever. Love is from God. The more we love others, the more we begin and continue to discover who God really is. God is love. The ultimate expression and illustration of love is that God sent His Son into the world to save people who do not deserve that love.

We have no inherent love in ourselves. What love we have is God's love shared with us and then shared with others. The fact that we are recipients of God's love makes it incumbent upon us to love each other. We can do no less. John identified two marvelous results of displaying love in our lives. When we love, God abides in us. This is a picture going back to the Old Testament tabernacle. When the place of worship was complete, the shekinah glory came and resided in the tabernacle, in the midst of Israel. When we obey God's will and love others, He abides in us, just as He took up residence in the midst of Israel to be their guide and defense. The second result is that God's love is perfected, filled to the top, completed in our lives as we love others. It is the product of loving, not trying harder.

*And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. I John 4:16*

Twice in this short epistle, John said, "God is love." This is more a description of love than a definition of God. If we have unconditional love, there is an interrelationship with God - God abides in us and we abide in Him. This is a way of saying that there is harmony in the relationship between the two. There is synergism, the love of the two together is greater than the sum of the two separately.

*By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. I John 4:17*

The word "this" refers back to verse 16 where John described this harmonious interrelationship. One of the products of this harmonious relationship is that God's love is brought to completeness in our lives. It is so strong that when we face the judgment, we will have total confidence of His acceptance. Loving as He loves is excellent preparation to enable us to reveal His presence in our world. When people look at our lives, they should discover something of the goodness and nature of God.

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. I John 4:18*

The more the love of God is completed in our lives, the less the likelihood of fear being present. One of the benefits of love is that it removes our fear. There is no thought of punishment in love. Love which reaches its completeness is void of fear. Love stimulates confidence in us.

*We love, because He first loved us. I John 4:19*

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We have no love of our own in ourselves. What love we share is God's love. Our love is a response to His love in us. It, therefore, should be seen as a reflection of His love to a needy world.

*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. I John 4:20*

Love is consistent. If we love God, it is only real if we love our Christian brothers. One of the purposes of receiving the love of God is to share it with other members of His family. It is a dishonest claim if we do not love those around us.

*And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. I John 4:21*

As indicated earlier, this is a command, but there is an interesting fact in this verse. John says that this is a command, but he phrased it as something that we "ought" to do, rather than something we must do. We are commanded to love each other without exception. John places this irrevocable command in the subjunctive, indicating something we "ought" to do because there should be a desire to love, an intense longing to express the love that we have received even though God has so commanded us.

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. I John 5:1*

The person who has faith in Jesus as Messiah, is born of God, a member of His family. The one who loves God also loves His other children. If that is not true, then the person's faith is questionable.

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. I John 5:2, 3*

The loving of God is primary in our experience. If we really love God, then we are going to love His children as well. If we really love God, we are going to obey His commandments. Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word." John 14:23. Observe that it is not sufficient to keep Jesus commandments. We must also come to the point where it is not a burden for us to keep these commandments.

*And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. II John 5, 6*

John wrote this letter to a Christian lady whom he did not identify. The evidence of love is not kindly speech. It is obedience to the commands of God as a daily walk. Love is the lifestyle of the believer. It is the earmark of everything that cements the abiding of the Christian in God and God in that Christian.

*May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Jude 2*

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This is part of Jude's greeting to his recipients. He identified them as Christians in several ways and pronounced this blessing on them. The word "multiplied" means to be superabundantly increased. This is significant in that these three qualities are not static, but ever-changing, ever increasing in the sincere Christian. Jude wants these beautiful qualities to grow astronomically in these beleaguered Christians so that no one could mistake their presence. If we really want it, love will increase in a way that will amaze us.

*keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. Jude 21*

The word "keep" is "tereo" (τηρέω) and means to watch over with great care, to preserve. It is the picture of the eagle watching over her young so that none can harm them. We are to watch over ourselves within the love of God because there are many forces at large that would destroy our faith. Jude wants these Christians under fire to watch with eagle eye, that nothing deprive them of their faith; that nothing rob them of the life eternal that is theirs in Christ Jesus. The love of God is like a fortress, a place of safety and protection that is ours if we so desire.

*and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, Revelation 1:5*

This is another illustration of the way New Testament authors, particularly John, announced the love of God in Christ and then illustrate it in the life of Jesus. The love of Jesus was expressed in His releasing us from our sins by His blood, even though we did not deserve such affection.

*'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Revelation 2:4*

John quoted the message from Jesus to the church at Ephesus when he said these words. "Left your first love," is a way of saying they had been faithful to their relationship to Christ, but since then they had changed and abandoned that commitment. Love can change, even cease.

*'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Revelation 3:9*

John reported the message of Jesus to the church at Philadelphia. It was a stinging denunciation of those who pretend to be righteous when in reality they oppose the truth. Jesus said, "I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you." There are two expressions of love in this statement.

- a. **"I will make them to come and bow down at your feet.."** - This is a picture of the protective nature of love. These people had humiliated the church and now they were going to have to pay for that error. God will protect not only their person, but their reputation.
- b. **"I will make them...to know that I have loved you."** - There is a very deep loyalty in agape love. God wants the enemies of the Church to know that He was on the side of the believers despite the abuse they had taken from these people.

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*"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.  
Revelation 12:11*

The voice out of heaven made this statement about the believers who had endured great persecution. This is another illustration of the willingness of agape love to sacrifice even life, just as Jesus did on our behalf.

### SUMMARY

Because there is so much information concerning agape love in the New Testament, we need to review what has been reported.

1. Agape love is a matter of the will.
2. It is unselfish and sacrificial.
3. Love requires no response.
4. Love initiates acts of love rather than responding to the actions of others.
5. Matthew 5:43, 44:
  - a. Love is beyond human logic.
  - b. Love take the initiative.
  - c. It has no concern over response.
  - d. It follows the divine example.
  - e. Love is willing to stand against popular opinion.
  - f. Love seeks the blessing of its enemies.
6. Love is a divine command, not a suggestion.
7. Love is a lifestyle, not a distinct action.
8. Matthew 5:46:
  - a. Love is not tied to a favorable response.
  - b. There is a reward for unconditionally loving the unlovely.
  - c. Love has no boundaries.
9. Matthew 6:24 - Loves expresses total allegiance.
10. Matthew 19:19 - The pattern for our unconditional love is our love for ourselves.
11. Loving is obedience; not loving is disobedience.
12. Matthew 24:12:
  - a. Love is not a permanent quality. It can grow cold. It needs nourishing.
  - b. The moral quality of a person's life has a determining affect upon the caliber of our love.
  - c. Only obedience to God can keep our love from diminishing.

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13. Mark 10:21 - Love can be rejected without being diminished.
14. Mark 12:30-33 - Love is the basis for our relationship with God.
15. Luke 7:42
  - a. Gratitude is a fundamental ingredient in love.
  - b. There are levels of love. One person can love God more than another.
  - c. These levels can be increased.
16. Luke 11:42
  - a. Love can be rejected.
  - b. It is an intense desire worthy of any necessary sacrifice.
17. John 3:16 - Love is the harbinger of grace that brought forgiveness to all who believe.
18. John 3:35 - Love involves a high level of trust.
19. John 8:42 - Love exhibits a family responsibility without thought of the response.
20. John 10:17 - Love sacrifices voluntarily without thought of response.
21. John 13:1 - Love has no time limit. It goes on as long as life continues.
22. John 13:34, 35
  - a. The normal relationship between believers is agape love.
  - b. Our love for each other is an exact copy of the love with which God loves us.
  - c. Love is an indicator that we are disciples of Jesus. It is a unique relationship among Christians.
23. John 14:15 - Obedience to the commands of Jesus is valid evidence of our love for Him.
24. John 14:21 The obedient will experience an interrelationship of love with the Father and the Son.
25. John 14:23, 24 - Jesus and the Father will take up residence in the heart of the person who shows his love by his obedience.
26. John 15:10:
  - a. The obedient will abide in Christ's love. This suggests a harmonious relationship in love.
  - b. Agape love abiding in Christ's love helps us understand Christ's abiding in the Father's love.
27. John 15:12, 13 - The love of the Father and the Son are the pattern for our love of God and each other.
28. John 17:23, 24
  - a. God's love for the Son is eternal. It is changeless.

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- b. It expresses itself in an interrelationship between the Father, the Son and the Church.
  - c. It is an intense longing for the presence of the beloved.
29. John 19:26 - There is a oneness which permeates our love relationship with Christ.
30. John 21:15
- a. The love of God involves an ongoing willingness to forgive and accept the rebellious.
  - b. Love accepts us where we are, not where God desires to bring us.
  - c. The love of God is so great he can use us even when there is question about our love.
31. Romans 5:5 - The Holy Spirit is the agent whereby God's love becomes effective in our lives.
32. Romans 5:8 - God's love is the same whether offered to a repentant sinner or hardened criminal.
33. Romans 8:28 - A result of loving God is that He causes every event in life to work for good in our lives.
34. Romans 8:35, 37 - Nothing can separate us from God's love.
35. Romans 9:13 - God continually blesses all who love Him.
36. Romans 12:9 - Love is sincere, genuine; it must be what it appears to be.
37. Romans 13:8-10 -
- a. We are commanded to love fellow believers.
  - b. Love does nothing evil to a neighbor.
38. Romans 15:30 - Father, Son and Spirit are spoken of as living with Agape love.
39. I Corinthians 2:9 - God blesses those who love Him with an unconditional love.
40. I Corinthians 8:3 - Loving God enables us to begin to know God.
41. I Corinthians 1-3 - Love is the ingredient, the atmosphere that makes great gifts meaningful and useful.
42. I Corinthians 13:4 - Love is patient, kind and unselfish.
43. I Corinthians 13:5 - Love is gracious.
44. I Corinthians 13:6 - Love is excited about truth.
45. I Corinthians 13:7 - Love does not fluctuate with conditions (bears, believes, hopes, endures).
46. I Corinthians 13:8 - Love does not keep on falling on its face.
47. I Corinthians 13:13 - Love is greater than faith and hope.
48. II Corinthians 2:4 - Love is willing to suffer to benefit the beloved.

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49. II Corinthians 5:14, 15 - Love is powerful. It is so self-giving that decency compels us to respond.
50. II Corinthians 6:6 - Love is an essential ingredient in meaningful ministry.
51. II Corinthians 8:7, 8 - Love is contagious; it inspires love.
52. II Corinthians 13:11 - Love is an essential ingredient in the nature of God.
53. II Corinthians 13:14 - Believers need the self-sacrificing love of God to live in grace.
54. Galatians 5:6 - Faith works through love. Love is the power which enables faith to operate.
55. Galatians 5:13, 14 -
  - a. Love is the platform upon which Christian servanthood is displayed.
  - b. Love is the fulfillment of the law.
56. Galatians 5:22
  - a. Love is a fruit - produced by - of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Fruit is the attempt by an organism to reproduce itself.
57. Ephesians 1:5
  - a. Love is an enduring quality.
  - b. Love is kind.
58. Ephesians 1:15 - Faith issues in love.
59. Ephesians 2:4 - Love is the foundation upon which mercy is built.
60. Ephesians 3:17-19
  - a. Love finds its source in God's presence within us.
  - b. Love enables us to progress in our love for God.
61. Ephesians 4:2 - Love is the atmosphere in which qualities of compassion grow - humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance.
62. Ephesians 4:15, 16 - Love enables the believer to be lovingly and compassionately direct and sincere.
63. Ephesians 5:2
  - a. Love is an ongoing lifestyle.
  - b. Love is an offering we bring to God and share in our relationship with each other.
64. Ephesians 5:25, 28
  - a. The husband's love for his wife is patterned after Christ's love for the Church.
  - b. The husband's love should be sacrificial. He should see himself as expendable for her benefit.
65. Ephesians 23, 24

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- a. Love comes from God and His Son, Jesus Christ.
  - b. Love is free of moral taint.
66. Philippians 1:9, 10 -
- a. Love is the atmosphere in which spiritual knowledge thrives.
  - b. Love enables the believer to be sincere.
67. Philippians 2:1, 2
- a. Comfort is an essential ingredient in love, both in receiving and in giving.
  - b. Unity in the Church requires love.
  - c. Love is a relationship in the Church which requires constant attention.
68. Colossians 2:2 - Love binds Christians to each other and this results in a growing knowledge of Christ.
69. I Thessalonians 1:3, 4 - Love is an affection which finds expression in actions which affirm the beloved.
70. I Thessalonians 3:12
- a. Love is a quality God initiates and nurtures in our lives.
  - b. Love is not static. It increases and matures in the believer.
71. I Thessalonians 5:8 - Love is a means of protection God initiates in the believer.
72. I Thessalonians 5:13 - God intended Christians to have special love for their leaders.
73. II Thessalonians 2:16 - God's love to us is a gift which comes to us through grace.
74. I Timothy 1:14 - Love finds its source in Christ.
75. I Timothy 6:11 - Love is a godly quality one must constantly pursue.
76. II Timothy 1:7 - Love is an expression of confident strength.
77. II Timothy 1:13 - Love is the foundation on which sound teaching can be firmly held.
78. Philemon 5-7 - Love is dependable.
79. Hebrews 10:24 - Love can be stimulated in us by other members of the body of Christ.
80. I John 2:5 - God's love leads to faithfulness.
81. I John 2:10 - Love of fellow Christians keeps us from causing others to stumble.
82. I John 3:1 - God's love resulted in our adoption into His family.
83. I John 3:11 - Loving the saints is evidence that we have been born again.
84. I John 3:16-18 - The evidence is love is action, not words.
85. I John 4:7 - If we love one another, God abides in us.
86. I John 4:16 - God is love.
87. I John 4:17 - Love is a spiritual quality which grows and matures in obedient lives.

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- 88. I John 4:18 - Love destroys fear.
- 89. I John 4:20 - Love is consistent.
- 90. I John 5:2 - Love always leads to obedience.
- 91. Jude 21 - The love of God is like a fortress, a place of safety.
- 92. Revelation 3:9 - There is a deep, intense loyalty in God's love.

## PATIENCE

Patience is the moral quality that we are most grateful for in God, but which few would ever seriously seek for themselves. This is a highly prized quality among believers, but can you imagine what would happen if you included patience as a personal quality on your resume to Ford or General Motors? For the non-Christian community, patience is great for the watch maker or one who handles dynamite, but little else. That is the checkered reputation of this important Christian quality.

There are four different Greek words which are translated "patience" in the New Testament:

Hupomone - To stand under authority

Epeeikace - To yield one's place/power even when it does not seem right

Makrothumeo - to be long spirited, long passionate

anexikakos - To stand against terrible evil

We will observe each one of them separately.

### 1. Hupomone

The most commonly used word for "patience" is "hupomone." This is a compound word made up of two other words:

a. hupo - under

b. meno - to stay, to remain

This is a military term used to describe the way Trojan soldiers fought. They would stand under the authority of their leader even when they knew they would all be killed. It is a strong endurance without concern for outcome. This quality was found only in trial and hardship. To seek patience is to invite trial.

This word appears only twice in the Gospels, both in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus used this term in the parable of the Sower.

*And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold fast and bear fruit with perseverance.  
Luke 8:15*

The word "perseverance" means patience. Jesus used the word "patience" or "perseverance" to describe far more than stubborn endurance. He described people who learned the Scripture and have an honest commitment to live according to its teachings. They cling to the Scriptures and cannot be diverted by cares, riches or pleasures. This quality is a staunchness of choice as much as of action. Some translations use the word "steadfast" instead of "patience." In either case, it is more than passive inactivity. It is knowing exactly what you believe and being totally unwilling to compromise that knowledge for one moment. It is a patience born of love, not stubbornness.

Again, Luke quotes Jesus' use of this term.

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*And you will be hated by all on account of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.  
Luke 21:17-19*

Again, the word "endurance" means "patience." Jesus had mentioned the destruction of the temple as He answered questions. When asked when this would take place, He taught His disciples about coming destruction and persecution. In that answer He used the word "patience." It should be noted that this word was used in a context of pain and persecution. Against such a background, Jesus said, "By your endurance (patience) you will gain your lives." Having described legal abuse, family betrayal, murder and social rejection, Jesus taught that their choice to stand true under the fire of persecution would be their salvation.

The picture of patience, here, is a duplicate of its original meaning - standing true under fire without respect to the outcome. The difference between patience and dogged determination is purpose. Dogged determination has nothing necessarily to do with faith or obedience. It is the stubborn determination to maintain one's position one breath longer than the determined opposition. Patience, on the other hand, believes in God and chooses to obey God and longs to be faithful to Him with no thought of the cost.

The Apostle Paul gives us a number of insights into the nature of patience.

*And those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. Romans 2:7, 8*

Paul spoke of God as the righteous Judge. In fact, three times in Romans 2:1-16, Paul asserts that God is no respecter of persons. In that description, he drew a contrast between the judgment of the obedient righteous and the disobedient evil person. Speaking of the righteous, Paul asserted that by their choice to do the good and righteous thing and steadfast refusal to be deterred from that pursuit, they seek glory, honor incorruption and eternal life. This is a way of saying that these are the results of patient pursuit of obedience.

There are some interesting insights here:

1. The text talks about seeking glory, honor, immortality and eternal life. The Greek text is stronger. It talks about those who "seek and keep on seeking these things. The word "seeking" "zeteo" (ζητέω) it is to seek for something the way a murderer would plot against a person's life. It is an ultimately intense search in which one invests everything.
2. There is always the struggle between good and evil; between doing good and doing evil. In this struggle, there is an unrelenting desire to seek and keep on seeking glory, honor, immortality and eternal life through patiently doing good. The patient doing of good has a causative effect upon what happens in our lives.
3. The unrelenting choice to do good and refuse to do anything but good opens the door to many blessings - glory, honor, immortality and eternal life.
4. Patience is an essential ingredient in receiving these blessings.

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5. Patience, the unrelenting choice to do good because of loving obedience, is the means by which one avoids punishment - wrath, indignation, tribulation and anguish.

In Romans 5:1-11, Paul gives us a number of insights concerning spiritual growth. Writing to persecuted believers in Rome, he said,

*And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulation, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope; Romans 5:3, 4*

Paul started his message where his readers were - suffering. Observe the insights he provided:

1. Persecution (hardship) is the soil out of which patience grows.
2. Perseverance (patience) is the foundation upon which proven character is based.
3. People long for hope, but they forget that it comes by way of persecution, patience, and proven character. For some reason, people tend to think that hope comes about by way of a change of attitude. It comes through the struggle to stand firm in obedience to God, against all forms of evil.
4. Paul taught that the Christian would exult (boast, glory) in persecution. Unfortunately, we look for ways to totally avoid persecution, rather than to exult in it, knowing that it will bring patience, proven character and hope. One reason for this is that we are afraid that we will falter in persecution. We also seek to avoid persecution because we shrink from pain.

The apostle Paul wrote of the relationship between faith and patience.

*But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. Romans 8:25*

Paul described the process of waiting. Again, this is not stubborn refusal to give in. It is standing firm in our faith expecting God to be irresistibly faithful. Our only surprise would be if His promise was unfulfilled.

Observe how Paul described this perseverance/patience - "we wait eagerly for it." This is not passive expectation. It is a high emotional expectation. It is the near inability to wait for God to show His faithfulness. Patience is cast in a beautiful, exciting context.

All appearances were that their standing in the face of daunting persecution was for naught. Their faith could see victory in Christ when the only thing visible was apparent destruction. This points out that the faith and patience are integral parts of each other. The faith was one of the ingredients that made patience possible.

Paul had a way of seeing things in perspective. This was true regarding patience as well.

*Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. Romans 12:12*

Obedience to Christ follows many avenues. In this verse, Paul identified three of them for us:

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1. "Rejoicing in hope" - It doesn't mean that the struggle of faith is fun. It means that despite conditions, one can rejoice in the hope of God's presence now and eternity in His presence in the future.
2. "Persevering in tribulation" - Again, notice that perseverance/patience occurs in the midst of tribulation. Patience in persecution is more than gritting our teeth and refusing to give in no matter how much they hurt us. Persevering is to maintain not only our resistance to evil, but also our godly outlook longer than persecution persists. It is standing lovingly under orders. It is not surprising that the word "patience" does not appear in Philippians, the epistle of joy.
3. "Devoted to prayer" - This "steadfastness" in prayer identifies the source of their strength to persevere and rejoice.

Paul gave interesting insights in Romans 15.

*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:4-6*

1. Paul linked patience and the encouragement of the Scriptures. The instruction of Scripture is the basis upon which believers patiently stand for righteousness, having been encouraged by the teaching of Scriptures.
2. Hope results when the believer is instructed by the Scriptures and stands firm in loving obedience, rather than stubborn resistance.
3. Romans 15:5 clearly states that God is the one who gives patience and encouragement. Patience, then, is not the result of trying harder. It is produced by pleading with God to grant this holy firmness in our lives.
4. Patience is one of the necessary ingredients in being "of the same mind" and being "of one accord."
5. This unity is the foundation for the praise of Jesus.
6. In the Greek text, Romans 15:5 reads, "The God of patience and encouragement give you the same mind in one another according to Jesus Christ."
  - a. Paul described God as being characterized by patience. It is one of the flawless qualities of His character.
  - b. God's patience is involved in bringing a sameness of mind in the fellowship of believers.
  - c. The text implies that God is the source of patience. It is not the result of trying harder.

Again, in II Corinthians, Paul addressed the subject of patience.

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*But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love..." II Corinthians 6:4-6*

Paul, in II Corinthians 6:1-10, described the atmosphere in which he gently worked with them in their struggle:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. In much endurance | 15. In the Holy Spirit                     |
| 2. In afflictions    | 16. In genuine love                        |
| 3. In hardship       | 17. In the word of truth                   |
| 4. In distresses     | 18. In the power of God                    |
| 5. In beatings       | 19. By the weapons of righteousness        |
| 6. In imprisonments  | 20. By glory and dishonor                  |
| 7. In tumults        | 21. By evil report and good report         |
| 8. In labors         | 22. Regarded as deceivers yet true         |
| 9. In sleeplessness  | 23. Unknown but well known                 |
| 10. In hunger        | 24. Dying but alive                        |
| 11. In purity        | 25. Punished but not yet dead              |
| 12. In knowledge     | 26. Sorrowful yet rejoicing                |
| 13. In patience      | 27. Poor, but making many rich             |
| 14. In kindness      | 28. Having nothing, possessing everything. |

Spiritual growth is a lot like physical therapy. The therapist discovers the places in one's spiritual life that need development. He/she works with the Christian to strengthen and develop these weak areas. That is what Paul did in this passage. This is a ministry we need to offer and be able to receive from each other.

In II Corinthians, Paul described the task of the true apostle. There is a clear picture of the patience it requires.

*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. II Corinthians 12:12*

Paul gave us an insight into the nature of patience. Rather than being just stubborn resistance, patience, as Paul described it, was standing firm for the truth in love and compassion. While taking such a stand, they will experience the miraculous power of God actively working with them to show His greatness and accomplish His will. Part of what Paul meant was that patience works with the power of God to show His greatness.

Again in Colossians, Paul contributes more information about the nature of patience:

*strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously. Colossians 1:11*

Paul identified some important pieces of information in this verse:

1. Patience is not a natural quality. It is an acquired quality of the Christian life.
2. It is a quality of the Christian life made possible by the power of God.
3. Our ability to become patient is determined by the glorious might of God's power.

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4. The process of becoming patient is a joy, even though it is always involves pain.
5. Paul links patience with steadfastness. They have similarities, but they are not the same quality:
  - a. Steadfastness is a loving immovability from one's commitment. There is no necessary tie to persecution.
  - b. Patience is a loving response to opposition. It always involves the tensions brought on by persecution and opposition.

Again in I Thessalonians Paul gives us a different view of patience.

*Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father. I Thessalonians 1:3*

Paul identified three areas that characterize the lives of these believers:

1. Their work of faith
2. Their labor of love
3. Their steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

Steadfastness, of course, means patience. In a somewhat hostile environment, Paul urges these believers to keep in mind their Christian response. One of these is steadfast hope in Christ. While faced with painful opposition, our hope in Christ enables us to stand under His command. Patience is enabled by the dependability of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his second epistle to the Thessalonian church, Paul described how happy their patience had made him:

*Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. II Thessalonians 1:4*

Paul was overjoyed that the patience and faith of these Christians were as great as their afflictions and persecutions. In effect, Paul described what patience is. You have patience when your ability to lovingly stand under attack is as great as the persecution which necessitates it.

Observe also that again Paul has linked faith and patience. This reinforces our earlier discovery that patience is not just our stubborn refusal to give in. It is standing under the command of God because of our faith; because our expectation of what God is like and what He will do is greater than our pain.

Again, Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica:

*And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. II Thessalonians 3:5*

Again, "steadfastness" means patience. Paul pleaded that God would direct the hearts of these people into the patience of Christ along with the love of God. Patience involves something of the love of God as the attitude, the atmosphere in which resistance took place. When Paul sought that they possess the patience of Christ, he was saying that they should be like Christ.

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Writing to Timothy, Paul listed a number of qualities that he should cultivate in his life.

*But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. I Timothy 6:11*

Having listed a number of evils that Timothy should avoid, Paul now lists six Christian qualities that he wants Timothy to cultivate:

Righteousness Love  
Godliness Perseverance  
Faith Gentleness.

1. The person committed to making God the first priority of life is going to develop these six qualities.
2. To the extent that the believer lives in such a way that these qualities are deficient or absent, to that extent he/she is less the person of God that he/she was intended to be.
3. The word "pursue" is a present active imperative. This tells us:
  - a. It is a command to pursue patience, not an option as we usually treat it.
  - b. It is not a single action. The present active stresses the action, not the time. One might better say it in this way, "Pursue and never stop pursuing..." This is a lifelong pursuit. It is a way of life, not a short-term burst of energy. As long as we are this side of the grave, we are commanded to pursue patience as the mercy of God pursued us in our sin.

In his second letter to Timothy Paul instructs him to follow his example.

*But you followed my teachings, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! II Timothy 3:10, 11*

Observe that Paul used both "perseverance" and "patience" in this sentence. In most of our translations "perseverance" is the word for "patience." In this, and a few other instances, they are two very different words. This makes for confusion, but we need to be aware of it.

Paul listed nine things in which Timothy followed his example. The way this list is written, Paul has placed them all on the same level of importance. It is as necessary to follow Paul's patience as it is to follow his teachings. This is not always high on our priority list. Observe, again, that patience is mentioned in conjunction with persecution.

Observe also that as Paul mentioned these situations of struggle, he commented that God delivered him out of them all. It is the power of God that enables us to have patience in the first place. It is not our strength and determination.

Paul described, for Titus, the qualifications for older men in the faith.

*Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Titus 2:2*

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Paul attempted to describe what a mature man in the faith might look like. This was important because many of the people, had never seen a mature Christian living their faith before the Lord. This suggests that patience is one of the qualities that develops as a person grows in the faith. It would be most uncommon to find this quality in a new believer. It does not so much describe the difficulty of patience as it does the skill of Christian living.

The author of the Hebrew epistle also spoke of this Christian quality.

*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. Hebrews 10:36*

Again, observe that the writer is appealing to people who are being hammered by persecution to the point that they have lost everything except each other. The word "endurance" is literally "patience." The author identified the presence of patience with the will of God. The other side of this is that if there is no patience, by that much, the will of God is not being fulfilled.

The author also indicated that when patience is present, there will be a reward that God has promised to those who are faithful. This suggests that the pursuit of patience is the pursuit of obedience in our lives.

The author of Hebrews refers to patience again in the famous chapter 12.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1*

In this verse, the author has hinted at several pieces of information:

1. The mention of the "cloud of witnesses" suggests that there have been a host of people long past who have lived this life of patience.
2. "Encumbrances" and "sins" will deter us from living a life of patience.
3. We are to run with patience. This is a description of how we are to face persecution. Patience is the attitude, the mental framework in which we stand firm under attack in our spiritual journey.
4. The author spoke of "the race that is set before us." This suggests that the persecution, the vital ingredient for patience, was not an accident, but rather a design by which God seeks to develop our faith at a higher level than it has been up to this point. If there is no patience in our standing firm against evil, then a part of what God has in mind for our growth is missing.

James chapter one contains some very important pieces of information about patience. We repeat the words often, but they apparently do not really impress upon us what the author had in mind.

*Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:3, 4*

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This is the clearest statement of the need for persecution in order for patience to grow. The implication of this is that if there is no testing, then there will be no patience. The word "produces" or "works" is a very emphatic form. James wanted to stress the fact that there is no other way to produce patience, except by the trials of persecution. Along with this emphatic form of the word, James also placed it in the present active form. It is like saying that persecution of the faith produces and keeps on producing patience. He could hardly have said it in a more forceful way. This is especially important for the American church, because we have had no trial in our lifetime. The absence of patience is obvious.

Patience/endurance is a rung on the ladder of spiritual growth. When patience has developed in a believer, there are consequences that will follow. Patience enables a person to become complete, to become all that God wants us to be. Again, the implication is that if there is no patience, then we are to that extent less than complete; lacking in several things that God wants to find in our lives.

In chapter five, James points to a vivid illustration of what patience is all about.

*Behold we count them blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. James 5:11*

Have you ever, in all your life, heard a person seriously talk about how blessed they are because they are persecuted for their faith? I have not. Again, James has given us several important pieces of information in this verse.

1. Patience leads to blessing. That is not necessarily the way we look at patience.
2. James used Job as a primary example of patience. If you look at the life of Job, it is clear that he did not express patience without struggle. He struggled severely. Patience came about because with all the struggle, Job stood under orders from God. God said he would not curse Him, and Job did not.
3. In the midst of a discussion of persecution leading to patience, James talks about the outcome of the Lord's dealings. He intimated that this struggle is definitely a part of God's desire for each of us. It is only in the pain of persecution that our patience can develop.
4. We are often afraid that persecution can get out of control. James drew a picture of God watching over our persecution as He did over that of Job. What He allows in our lives to help us grow is always tempered with His compassion and mercy.
5. James referred to the patience of Job. The temptation through which Job went was carried out by Satan, but monitored and controlled by God. Ours can be no different.

Peter urged his readers to practice patience in the midst of their suffering.

*For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. I Peter 2:20*

The word "patience" and "patiently" both appear in this verse. The meaning in both instances is the same. We must remember that Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering for what they believed. He was talking about people who suffered wrongfully.

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There was no way to understand their suffering as being appropriate. They did the right thing and suffered for it. In this verse, Peter identified two things:

- a. The way to suffer for their faith - Notice that in this verse, Peter talked about patience when you suffer for wrong and patience when you suffer for doing right. They were to stand under attack as though they were being punished for having done something wrong. This patience was not just gritting one's teeth. It was standing under orders thoughtfully. It was like saying, I know I did nothing wrong, but I must stand under orders as though I were being punished for my misdeeds.
- b. "This is acceptable to God" - It is acceptable, in the sight of God, for us to stand under authority when we suffer for our faith. If you think of this for a moment, the implication of the statement is that if we do not patiently endure persecution when we have done nothing wrong, it is not acceptable to God.

Peter does not present this as an option. He was saying that if we fail to be patient, we will act in a way which is unacceptable to God. This is serious.

Earlier in our study we looked at II Peter 1:6. This is a very informative passage. Let us look at it again.

*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness, love. II Peter 1:5-7*

Again, the word "perseverance" is literally "patience." Peter has presented a design for spiritual growth. As one looks at this progression, one begins with faith and moves toward love. On the way to patience, one moves through five steps of spiritual growth - faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control and finally patience. We must be clear. Peter was not saying that one must become masterful in faith before moving to the moral excellence. He was saying that faith is the foundation upon which moral excellence begins to develop and moral excellence is the foundation upon which knowledge begins to form. Perseverance is not the byproduct of one's spiritual doggedness. It is, rather, a steady development in the areas of moral excellence, knowledge and self control. It is the foundation upon which godliness, brotherly kindness and love develop.

People sometimes talk about a person being naturally patient. No one is born with this quality. As we observed earlier, patience is an acquired quality. It cannot be found in the life of a non-Christian. It is a spiritual quality that develops along with our faith.

The apostle John spoke of this quality in the book of Revelation.

*I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance, which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Revelation 1:9*

There are several pieces of information, in this verse, concerning patience:

1. Observe that patience is again mentioned in connection with tribulation. It was even mentioned in connection with John's persecution on Patmos.

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2. Patience is part of what believers share in the kingdom.
3. John said that this patience is "in Jesus." That would cause us to infer that if a person is not "in Jesus," then there is no possibility that they possess this wonderful Christian quality of life.

Again, John wrote of patience in the Revelation, when he quoted Jesus' words to the Ephesian congregation:

*I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false. And you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.*  
*Revelation 2:2, 3*

Again, John identified perseverance/patience with hardship. Jesus said, "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance." In this sentence, Jesus said that patience is as discernible as works and toil. Jesus then illustrated His statement as He talked about the way these Christians tested the so-called apostles to see if they were real. They refused to make a snap-judgment, but were determined to ascertain the truth of the person's claim to apostleship.

We must also be aware of the fact that there is a certain level of unwavering determination to do right and stand under orders as God has commanded. As usual, this is described in the context of persecution and trouble. As Jesus described it, the purpose of the patience is to stand firm; to endure hardship for the name of Jesus.

John quotes Jesus, again, as He dealt with the quality of patience:

*I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.* *Revelation 2:19*

Patience is one of five qualities that Jesus mentioned concerning the believers at Thyatira. Again, Jesus indicated that the patience was as identifiable as the deeds, love, faith and service. Jesus also mentioned the fact that this patience is a progressive quality. Their recent expressions of patience had been greater than those previously observed. We have observed this fact in several settings. Patience is not an attainment, but a process of increasing growth. We do not achieve patience, but we are becoming patient.

Writing to the church at Philadelphia, Jesus said,

*Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.* *Revelation 3:10*

The word "kept" means to watch over carefully. It is in the present indicative mood. One might say it more accurately, "keep and never stop keeping." Again, the word "perseverance" means "patience." He was describing something that they should do and never stop doing. Patience was to become a way of life, not a single act. This verse is a commendation of their conduct. They obeyed His instruction to be patient. They, therefore, received a blessing. They would be spared the testing of that terrible hour that was to come upon the earth. Patience is never easy. In this verse, He said that it would be worth while.

## 2. Epeikace (ἐπιεκτής)

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The word "epeeikace" is a compound word:

- a. ἐπι - upon, over
- b. εἴκω - to be weak, yield, to give place.

The basic idea of this word is that patience is the ability to yield over one's place or power to another, even though it may not seem right to do so. It involves the ability to refrain from insisting on one's rights. In order to be able to do this, one must have a strong faith that God will make even what appears to be a travesty of justice to work out right for the child of God. Patience is not just the ability to grit your teeth, but the ability to trust so completely in God that you can endure what appears to be inappropriate knowing that God will ultimately make it right. Nothing is beyond the ability of God to control the conditions of life.

Talking about the lifestyle of a bishop, Paul said to Timothy:

*Not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. I Timothy 3:3*

The word "gentle" is "patience." Observe that the word "gentle" appears between two contrasting words - "pugnacious" and "uncontentious." A Bishop, a leader in the church, was to be patient/gentle. Rather than being a person who is constantly looking for a fight, he must be one who has the ability to stand for the right, even when persecuted, rather than fighting for his rights. An uncontentious person is one who never looks for an argument or a fight.

### 3. "makrothumeo" (μακροθυμέω)

This compound word is made up as follows:

- a. μαχρός - which means "long," "far"
- b. θυμός - passion, fierceness, indignation, wrath. It is akin to ψυχός - soul.

It is to be long spirited, forbearing, to bear long, long suffering, to have patience, to patiently endure.

Jesus described patience in these terms:

*The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything." Matthew 18:26*

The slave asked his master to be slow to impose just judgment upon him. The judgment was appropriate, but the slave asked that mercy be employed. This gives us an insight into the nature of patience. It is more than just the ability to restrain oneself instead of venting wrath or administering justice. It is the ability to be long-tempered because of our mercy for those in need of this grace. Mercy is a vital ingredient in patience.

As Jesus continued the story, He spoke of patience again:

*So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, "Have patience with me and I will repay you." Matthew 18:29*

The slave that had pleaded for patience, and received it, was now being petitioned to show the same mercy. The context indicates that he did not offer that patience. Thus indicates that though we have received the blessing of the patience of others it does not mean that we

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will offer that same patience to others in their time of need. It is possible to forget how important that grace was when we received it.

This verse also indicates that the presence of other weaknesses can inhibit the presence of this Christlike quality. In the story Jesus told, it could have been greed; it could have been the slave's need to blame someone for his weakness: Whatever the problem, it made it impossible for this slave to have the patience with others that he had received.

The apostle Paul spoke of patience when writing to the Thessalonian church:

*And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. 1 Thessalonians 5:14*

There are three parts to Paul's exhortation:

- a. "Admonish the unruly."
- b. "Encourage the fainthearted."
- c. "Be patient with all men."

Each one of these requires a degree of sensitivity and tenderness with other people. Patience deals with people. Patience must be universal - our patience must be available to everyone. It involves a sensitivity to the weakness of others; a way of attempting to build another up by giving them a lift in the area where they are weakest.

The writer to the Hebrews spoke of patience to these suffering Christians:

*That you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:12*

The context indicates that this requires careful diligence in order to show patience in suffering. The author also indicated that we have a clear example in the lives of those who have suffered for their faith across the centuries.

Also, in this verse, the author identifies the benefit of showing patience in suffering. Faith and patience become the means through which a person inherits the promises of God, even though they are persecuted in this life.

Notice that the author did not just say patience, but "faith and patience." Faith is an essential ingredient in the life of patience. This means that patience is a uniquely Christian quality of life.

Later in this same chapter of Hebrews, the author speaks again of patience:

*And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. Hebrews 6:15*

People sometimes think of patience as a lack of drive. That is not true. Real patience is a burning passion that is as controlled as it is intense. The author described the results of being patient - obtaining the promise. God promised Abraham the land, but He did not say when. Abraham patiently waited. God promised Abraham a son, but He did not say when. Under great strain, Abraham waited; held himself in check until God gave him the son of promise.

Patience can seem like wasted tension. In the end, patience will always bring the fulfillment of God's promise, but always under fire. There are times, however, when it does not seem possible.

James also tells us something about patience:

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*Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. James 5:7, 8*

Patience is more than simply holding ones burning passion in check. It involves a goal. James instructed these Christians to be patient, "until the coming of the Lord." The goal and motivating force for our patience is the fact that Christ is coming again.

Notice the way James makes this statement, "Be patient; strengthen your hearts,..." We often look upon patience in the opposite perspective. We see it as wearing us down. James described it as a way to strengthen our hearts as we stand against persecution and live in anticipation of Christ's return.

James continued his discussion in verse 10.

*As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. James 5:10*

Observe, again, that he spoke of suffering and patience in the same breath and sentence. Suffering, especially undeserved suffering, is inseparably linked to the expression of patience. He spoke of the prophets as examples of patience in suffering. The prophets were sent to make announcements that would prove to be unpopular and would not be positively received. Every prophecy was given with an element of risk. How would the prophet know that his message would prove to be true? There were a number of prophecies that did not prove to be true. Nevertheless, they faced the antagonism of the rulers and peoples to whom they prophesied with the determination to speak on behalf of God without considering what their response might be. This tells us that there is an element of faith involved in patience. Patience is only real when it involves a conviction that God will ultimately conquer the elements that would destroy His prophets. Where there is no faith, there is no patience.

#### 4. "Anexikakos" (ἀνεζικακος)

This too is a compound word. It was derived as follows:

- a. ἀνέξομαι - To hold oneself up against, to put up with, to sustain oneself.
- b. κακός - worthless, depraved, evil, wicked, harmful.

It is to forbear, to hold yourself up against terrible evil.

Paul used this word in his second letter to Timothy:

*And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged. II Timothy 2:24*

Basically, patience does not usually demonstrate itself except in the presence of pain and wrongful abuse. It is not difficult to be patient when everything is going well. It is a different matter when we are wronged. Paul said that the Lord's bond-servant has the ability to hold him/herself up against all manner of evil and falsehood when he has done nothing wrong.

There are four different attitudes in this verse.

- a. Not quarrelsome - to strive or struggle. It is to be congenial, pleasant

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- b. Kind to all - to be affable, gentle to everyone, not just those who are kind and pleasant to us. It is active, not reactive.
- c. Able to teach - There is a gentle spirit in those who are able to teach well.
- d. Patient when wronged - Gracious firmness when wrongfully attacked.

You will observe that each of these has an attitude, an atmosphere of tenderness about them even when wrongful abuse is tendered. Patience is inseparably linked to this tenderness of spirit.

### **SUMMARY**

As indicated earlier, there are four different words translated "patience" in the New Testament:

- 1. To stand under authority
- 2. To yield one's place or power even when it doesn't seem fair
- 3. A passion which is as controlled as it is intense
- 4. To stand firm against terribly evil expressions

Let us summarize what these passages have shared with us concerning patience:

- 1. It is not stubborn endurance.
- 2. It is not passive inactivity.
- 3. It is a firm resolve born of love, not stubbornness.
- 4. It always occurs in an atmosphere of pain and pressure.
- 5. It is standing true under fire with no thought concerning the cost.
- 6. The patient pursuit of obedience leads to glory, honor, incorruption and eternal life.
- 7. It is the intense search in which one invests all of him/herself.
- 8. It is the unrelenting desire to seek and keep on seeking glory, honor, immortality and eternal life by patiently doing good.
- 9. It avoids wrath, indignation, tribulation and anguish.
- 10. Persecution is an essential ingredient in the development of patience.
- 11. It is the foundation upon which "proven character" is built.
- 12. Hope grows out of patience.
- 13. It is our source of glorying.
- 14. It is standing firm in our expectation of God to be irresistibly faithful.
- 15. It is the near inability to wait for God to show His marvelous faithfulness.
- 16. Faith and patience are integral parts of each other.
- 17. Patience is not gritting the teeth.

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18. Patience is maintaining both our resistance to evil as well as our godly outlook. It is to lovingly stand under fire.
19. It is linked with the encouragement of the Scripture.
20. Its source is in God, not our strength.
21. It is a necessary ingredient in "being of the same mind."
22. It is a divine quality.
23. It is a quality which must be developed.
24. Patience is enabled by the dependability of our Lord.
25. God directs us into the patience of Christ - It is enabled by God.
26. It is vital to becoming all God wants us to be.
27. It is a lifelong pursuit.
28. It is as important to pursue patience as it is to pursue love.
29. The power for patience is in God.
30. Patience develops as we grow and mature in faith.
31. Patience is essential if we would do the will of God.
32. To pursue patience, one must pursue obedience.
33. "Encumbrances and sin" will deter us from living a life of patience.
34. Patience is the attitude; the mental framework in which we stand under attack.
35. God intended that persecution should help develop patience.
36. Without patience, there is no spiritual maturity.
37. Patience leads to spiritual completeness.
38. Patience leads to blessing.
39. Impatience is unacceptable to God.
40. Patience is one part of spiritual development.
41. Patience is a Christian quality.
42. Patience is a necessary foundation for godliness, brotherly kindness and love.
43. Patience is as discernible as works, toil, love, faith and service.
44. Patience is a lifestyle, not a single act.
45. Patience necessarily involves the expression of mercy.
46. Patience can be hindered by our spiritual weaknesses.
47. Patience requires a degree of sensitivity and tenderness.
48. Patience results in inheriting the promises of God.
49. Patience is enabled by our anticipation of the Lord's coming.

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50. Patience results in strengthening the heart.

51. There is an attitude of tenderness in patience.

52. Patience is ultimately illustrated in the life of Jesus.

As you contemplate this long list of information about patience, doesn't it cause you to yearn for God to work patience in your life, even though you know that will mean pain?



## GENTLENESS

From our English understandings of the word "gentle," we think of this Christian quality as an expression of smooth pleasantness, of unruffling ease with any frustrating situation. This is not the case.

Where gentleness can be smooth in its actions and reactions, it is basically an attitude out of which we face difficult, even seemingly impossible situations.

There are three different words which are translated "gentle" in most versions of the New Testament.

- a. "**Kataxioo**" (καταξιώνω) - This word means to be like, to be fair, to use moderation in everything. It is to not insist on the letter of the law, to be considerate. It is sweet reasonableness, to be gracious.
- b. "**Epious**" (ἤπιος) - The word means to be affable or easy to approach. It is to be courteous, accessible, mild or polite.
- c. "**Chrestos**" (χρηστός) - This word means to be employed, to be useful, to seek moral excellence, kindness.

I. We will begin our study looking at the passages which focus on the word Kataxioo.

*But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. I Thessalonians 2:7*

In this chapter Paul reminded the Thessalonian Christians about how he came to their city to preach the Gospel. He reminded them of the way he had been treated while preaching in Philippi. He had been illegally jailed on false charges. He was beaten without a trial. After the earthquake, the city officials tried to get him to secretly leave town. This would have left him a guilty man in the minds of the people.

Nevertheless, when he had been released openly, he went on to Thessalonica, while his wounds were still healing, he lovingly preached the Gospel to them as though he had never been persecuted.

Paul compared his treatment of the people of Thessalonica to the intense love of a mother for her nursing child. She is that child's entire life. This is what it means to be gentle. It is to prize another person with an affection so deep and intense that they may be treated as one's most prized possession.

Gentleness, as illustrated, has another side. The nursing mother, whether the human mother with her nursing infant, or a lioness with her newborn cubs, proves to be the fiercest of fighters when danger threatens her little ones in any way.

Writing to Timothy, Paul wrote,

*And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth... II Timothy 2:24*

The Greek text would present this in a slightly different way:

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*But it is necessary that the servant of the Lord not be quarrelsome, but to be gentle toward everyone, teaching those who oppose him, ..II Timothy 2:24 (Greek translation)*

The word translated "kind" is really gentleness.

As Paul instructed Timothy, concerning the way he must conduct himself as a servant of God, he made an interesting pronouncement - "The servant of God must ...be gentle to all men." Observe that Paul did not qualify the command in any way. It is not an instruction to be gentle IF others are considerate and helpful. It is, rather, a command to be gentle to everyone no matter what others do or how they treat you.

Notice also, the concluding statement in the sentence, "showing all meekness to all men." Meekness is an outstanding relationship with God by which one can allow him/herself to accept God's dealings with him/her as good, no matter how it may appear. Paul said, in effect, that patience and the desire to teach are the attitude, the atmosphere in which one expresses the gentle spirit.

II. There is a second word which is also translated as "gentle." It is "epeiekes" (ἐπειεκής). This compound word was produced by putting these two words together:

epi - over, upon, toward

eiko - to resemble, to be like, fairness. This is a very intensive form. It was used to describe something in moderation, gentle, patience, something fitting, something equitable, considerateness, not insisting on the letter of the law, something intensely fair, gracious, sweet reasonableness.

As you look at these synonymous descriptions, observe that there is an atmosphere of openness, a congenial spirit, a level of confidence which makes it unnecessary to defeat others. It is a level of confidence which is able to trust in God to do the necessary. It is therefore not necessary to be destructively aggressive or abusive.

Again, Paul, Peter and James are the only ones who use this term in the New Testament. You will not find it in the Gospels, Acts, Revelation or any other epistles besides those which are referenced in this text.

Writing to Titus, Paul said,

*To malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. Titus 3:2*

Having given specific instructions to old men and to young men, old women and young women, as well as servants, Paul now gave more general instructions to Titus to share with all of these people in the church. In this verse, Paul gave four instructions:

- a. **"To malign no one"** - The word is "blaspheme." It means to injure with speech, to be slanderous, contemptuous.
- b. **"Uncontenteous"** - Not a brawler, invincible, to abstain from fighting, to be peaceable.
- c. **"To be gentle"** - It is to be fair to others; to be gracious in conflicting situations; to be generous when the meaning of the law is in dispute; to be considerate of the opinions and positions of others.

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- d. **"Showing consideration for all men"** - This quality acknowledges differences in people and their positions, but refuses to allow this to dim your consideration of the persons with whom differences may exist.

Now, look at this list of four instructions again: Some observations are appropriate:

1. Two are negative and two are positive.
2. All four result in kind consideration of others, especially those who might differ.
3. None of the four is confrontive or inconsiderate
4. Gentleness is listed in company with other qualities which are equally gracious and generous.

The apostle James also speaks of "gentleness:"

*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:13-18*

In this paragraph, James attempted to describe heavenly wisdom. In so doing, he also gave us some important information about gentleness:

- a. v. 13 - "The gentleness of wisdom" - Gentleness is one of the characteristics of heavenly wisdom.
- b. Gentle deeds are the evidence of wisdom and understanding.
- c. v. 13, 14 - Verses 13, 14 stand in sharp contrast. (The word "but" separates the two verses.) In verse 13, James spoke of wisdom, understanding and gentleness. In verse 14, James spoke of bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance and dishonesty. This suggests an understanding of gentleness.
  1. It has similar qualities and atmosphere with heavenly wisdom and understanding.
  2. Gentleness is the opposite of bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance and dishonesty.

Now, we need to discover what this really means.

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| GENTLENESS IS...   | OPPOSITE              |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Not threatened by others<br>2. Not possession oriented<br>3. Wants others to have nice things - Generous.<br>4. Not willing to harm others to provide for self  | Bitter jealousy       |
| 1. Unwilling to attain selfish goals at the expense of others.<br>2. Senses the value and importance of others.<br>3. Is blessed when others succeed or benefit.   | Selfish ambition      |
| 1. Unwilling to boast against another.<br>2. It is unwilling to rejoice at another's expense.<br>3. This implies a serious level of self-worth.<br>4. It celebrates the worth of others.<br>5. It does not see others as existing for its own pleasure and comfort.<br>6. Accepts no separation from other people. | Arrogant              |
| 1. Unwilling to use falsehood to justify one's position.<br>2. one who is unwilling to reject values when goals are threatened.  | Lie against the truth |

The apostle Peter also gives us insight into the deep meaning of this word:

*Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.*  
*1 Peter 2:18*

Peter described the way Christians dealt with non-Christians. The ill treatment of slaves, in that part of the world, was proverbial. On the other hand, the deception and fraud perpetrated by slaves against their masters was equally notorious.

Many members of the church were slaves. Peter was dealing with the way believing slaves treated non-Christian slave owners, who were often abusive.

Peter identified two kinds of masters:

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| GENTLE   | PERVERSE  |
|--|---|
| 1. They used moderation in administering justice.                            | 1. Those who were crooked   |
| 2. They were not looking for the smallest infractions of his instructions.   | 2. They punished excessively.   |
| 3. They were ultimately fair.  | 3. They exaggerated the charges against a slave to increase the punishment.                           |
| 4. They used sweet reasonableness even when the slave was less than perfect. | 4. To be untoward - to be insensitive to the harm his words and deeds might cause to the slave.       |
| 5. Not eager to punish, eager to restore.                                    | 5. One who is easily and excessively annoyed.   |
|  | 6. To make lean - a master who extracts every possible service, but withholds every possible benefit. |

Peter's message was simple - the slave's relationship must relate, in an equitable way, to the perverse master, in precisely the same manner that he would relate to the gentle one.

As you look at the contrast Peter drew, it gives a deeper insight into the real meaning of gentleness.

The apostle Paul spoke of gentleness again in II Corinthians.

*Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! II Corinthians 10:1*

Paul was dealing with those who attacked his Christian walk and his apostleship. He drew a careful comparison between his own conduct and the character of Jesus.

He compared the tenderness of his appeal to the gentleness of Christ. We must remember, however, that Paul spoke firmly concerning his detractors. This gives us some helpful information about gentleness:

1. Gentleness is one of the characteristics of Jesus. This being the case, gentleness is a quality we are to emulate.
2. Gentleness may be firm, but it is always fair. There is nothing soft about its character.
3. If you look at the context, in 10:2-18, you will see a person of deep caring, engaging responsibility and sincere humility.

III. The final word that is translated "gentleness" is "chrestos" (χρηστός). It means to be employed, to be useful, having kindness, and moral excellence.

This word is found in a very familiar passage:

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*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, self control; against such things there is no law.  
Galatians 5:22, 23*

In these verses, Paul gives us some very helpful information.

1. Gentleness is the product of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.
2. "Against such there is no law." This suggests that this quality has everything to recommend it.
3. The Holy Spirit recreates in us the qualities of the life of Jesus. One among these is "gentleness."
4. Gentleness, this expression of moral excellence, is the atmosphere in which every quality of the life of Jesus is expressed in the life of the believer.

### SUMMARY

We need to review what we have discovered about gentleness.

1. Gentleness is to be affable, mild, easy to approach. It is to be moderate, considerate, not insisting on the letter of the law, intensely fair, reasonable.
2. Gentleness is to prize another person with affection so deep that they would be seen as one's prized possession.
3. Gentleness is not softness. It will fight fiercely to protect the helpless.
4. Gentleness is God's intent for every human relationship.
5. Gentleness is a considered, intentional action, not a reaction.
6. Gentle means to be intensely fair.
7. Gentleness conveys an atmosphere of openness, a congenial spirit, a level of confidence that makes it unnecessary to be destructively aggressive.
8. It is to be fair to others; gracious in conflict.
9. It is to be generous in applying the law. It will use great moderation in administering justice.
10. It is always to be considerate of others.
11. Gentleness is unwilling to attain selfish goals at another's expense.
12. Gentleness is a quality of wisdom.
13. Gentleness is not threatening "by" or "to" others.
14. Gentleness accepts the value of others.
15. Gentleness is humble and caring.
16. Gentleness is totally honest.
17. Gentleness is not eager to punish.
18. Gentleness is a quality of the life of Jesus that we must emulate.

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19. It is a product of the work of the Holy Spirit.
20. Gentleness is the atmosphere in which every quality of the life of Jesus expresses itself in us.

Many people think of gentleness as softness of word and touch. As you can see from this summary, it can include these qualities, but much more.

Gentleness is an inward quality, an attitude of the Christian life that expresses itself in deep concern and value for others.



## KINDNESS

In English, we tend to think of "kindness" as a sweet, thoughtful, generous act. The Biblical idea, though not often found in Scripture, is different from this.

The word for "kindness" is "chrestos" (χρηστός). The word originally meant "to furnish," "to employ." Only many years later did it come to indicate something much more personal. It is something useful, something very gracious, pleasant. Though the Greek word "chrestos" (χρηστός) is used to identify "goodness," "gentleness" and "kindness," still they are not the same. We must, therefore, carefully identify the difference between the three qualities.

When "chrestos" is translated "**goodness**," it means specific acts of compassion, generosity which express an inner quality of Christlikeness.

When "chrestos" is translated "**gentleness**," it means to be "polite," "courteous," "to respond moderately to life," "to be considerate of others," "sweet reasonableness," "to be gracious."

When "chrestos" is translated "**kindness**," on the other hand, it includes the gracious and polite response, but stresses the idea of moral excellence rather than social graciousness. The difference between the two has to do with their emphasis rather than their appearance.

Obviously, there are similarities between the three, but they differ in emphasis.

Because of translations, there is some confusion concerning this word. For instance, in II Peter the New American Standard Version gives this translation:

*And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.  
II Peter 1:7.*

The word translated "kindness" is really the word "Philadelphia," which is the word which defines brotherly love, which has responsibility and some dedication, but has some definite limits. It is not appropriate to deal with this verse in terms of "kindness."

*"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return;  
and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for  
He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." Luke 6:35*

This is part of what appears to be Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. In this verse, Jesus described what "kindness" looks like. In the previous verse, Jesus described how the people of the world treat others - they lend expecting repayment. Here are the exhortations Jesus gave them:

- a. Love their enemies - this is "agape" love. It has no limits; no expected response.
- b. Do good - that which is good in character, that which is a benefit to others.
- c. Lend, expecting nothing in return - this is the understanding of the Jewish community. They lend to other Jews in need expecting no return and certainly no interest. They did not do the same for Gentiles. Jesus removed the proviso which limited this generous gift to Jews.

Jesus gave His hearers two promises:

- a. "Your reward will be great."

## IMITATORS OF GOD

b. "You will be sons of the Most High."

Jesus next used the word "for." This suggests that an explanation is forthcoming. "For He Himself,(God) is kind to ungrateful and evil men." If you look carefully at the verse, you will note that the three exhortations describe what Jesus meant by the kindness of the Most High.

Whatever else it may mean, Jesus told them that God is kind. This is exactly the opposite of what the people thought of their idols. The kindness of which Jesus spoke expressed itself through the three exhortations of this verse - love enemies; do good; lend without hope of return. It is a gentle expression which is evidenced in the overt actions of loving enemies, doing good and caring for others without design for unscrupulous gain.

*Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, I Corinthians 13:4*

Kindness is a distinguishing characteristic of love. If love does not possess this moral excellence; this gentle concern for the needs of others, which characterizes kindness, then it is not love. It is not a natural or learned graciousness, it is rather a loving concern for others growing out of the quality of one's moral commitment to Jesus Christ.

*...in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, II Corinthians 6:6*

In chapter six, Paul was exhorting these Corinthian believers not to "receive the grace of God in vain." He described for them how he and his party had lived their lives as an example before them. Basically, Paul described two kinds of example that they had been - in suffering and in holy living.

As Paul described his example in holy living, he mentioned kindness in the company of purity, knowledge, patience, genuine love and "in the Holy Spirit." This identifies some of the qualities that go with "kindness." Paul said that these qualities provided no occasion for stumbling in the lives of seekers, left no occasion for blame, but commended his ministry to these Corinthians. Whatever else kindness does, the sincere compassion which grows from the believers moral quality of life builds people up in Christ, rather than tearing them down.

*In order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:7*

In verses 1 - 10, Paul talked about the transformation that took place in the lives of these Ephesian Christians. He described just how far they had strayed and then how great was the grace that brought them back to God. In the midst of this picture you will find this verse.

Observe that the verse begins with the words, "In order that..." This suggests that an explanation is forthcoming. Paul explained that God would use this great grace to show the tremendous riches of His grace through kindness to us in Christ. Paul was saying that "kindness" is the vehicle, the means by which the grace of God is demonstrated in our lives through the ministry of Christ Jesus. That being the case and since we are to be like Him, we must be showing the grace of God to others who do not deserve to receive that grace.

## KINDNESS

All of this will take place in the ages to come. This suggests that this kindness of God to us does not fade away. It will be as obvious in eternity as it is today.

*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32*

As described earlier, "kindness" expresses its moral character through acts of generosity and graciousness. In this verse, Paul admonishes the Ephesian Christians to extend this magnanimous spirit to Christian brothers and sisters in lavish amounts. The words "be kind" are a Present Middle Imperative. This is a state of being that is kind and, by command, does not cease being kind to other Christians. Paul was telling them to make a life-style out of being kind to other Christians.

Observe also that there are three exhortations in this verse.

- a. Be kind.
- b. Be tenderhearted.
- c. Be forgiving each other.

Each of these is a never-ending way of living. Paul also identified the pattern for this kind of generous relationship - "as God in Christ also has forgiven you." The way God, in Christ, has dealt with us, we are to deal with others. The kindness, the compassionate concern with which God has nurtured us is the way we are to deal with each other.

*And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; Colossians 3:12*

In this chapter, Paul reminded the Colossian Christians of just how evil their former life had been. He then turned his attention to what Christ had done in them. In the midst of this, you will find this verse. Paul spoke of these people as being "chosen of God." It is a way of identifying people of faith. This suggests that each of these five qualities are, at center, uniquely Christian qualities. He commanded them to "put on a heart of compassion..." The form of the word for "put on" suggests something that is a completed action. Notice also that he instructed them to put on a "heart" of compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience. The word "heart" is a translation of the word "bowels." In that culture, they thought of the whole intestinal cavity of the body as the seat of all feelings. It suggests that this is a feeling, an emotional response rather than a position which one thinks through. Paul listed five qualities of the heart which the Colossian Christians were to adopt. As indicated earlier, many qualities are identified by the company they keep. That is true in this instance. When you encounter compassion, humility, gentleness and patience, you will also find kindness in the midst.

*But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, Titus 3:4*

Paul had carefully described just how sinful people are prior to their salvation. Notice that this sentence begins with the word "but." This suggests a strong contrast. The contrast is between what sinful people had once been and what the kindness of God was able to accomplish in their lives. It was the kindness of God that forgave the undeserving. It was the kindness that transformed the sinful lifestyle from gross evil to a holy habitation for

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God. In Paul's description, kindness was the power which motivated God to perform this miracle of transformed life.

### **SUMMARY**

We need to review what we have learned about kindness. This quality includes the gracious, polite response; it includes generous acts, but the thing that causes kindness to stand out from other generous, gracious actions is its moral excellence. It stresses the moral character, something holy, rather than the appearance.

Kindness is a divine quality of character; a gift to evil men. This suggests that God's kindness is always undeserved.

Kindness is one of the distinguishing characteristics of love. It is a gracious expression of our moral character. It is not a goal to be reached, but a byproduct of daily spiritual growth. It is one facet of a holy life. It results in building up believers, rather than tearing them down.

It is the vehicle; the means by which the grace of God is demonstrated in our lives through the ministry of Christ. This enduring quality will be as obvious in eternity as it is today.

Kindness expresses its moral character through generous, gracious gifts. It is a life-style, not an action. It is a feeling, an emotional response rather than a position to be carefully considered. This expression of grace is repeatedly described, in the New Testament, as God's gift to the undeserving.

As we contemplate this expression of grace, we are reminded that it is a divine quality that we are to emulate. The holy character which motivates Jesus to extend this grace to us must motivate us to extend this grace to others. When people look at our kindness, they must be reminded of the kindness of God expressed in Jesus Christ.

## COMPASSION

There are five different words that are all translated "compassion" in the New Testament. We will attempt to define each word and then show how they are used in the text.

1. "**Splagchnizomai**" (σπλαγχνίζομαι) literally identifies an intestine. It later came to describe pity or sympathy, the bowels which were thought to be the seat of intense emotions, inward affection, tender mercies. It is to yearn with compassion. The word was often used concerning Jesus and His feelings for people in need.
2. "**Eleeo**" (ἐλέεω) This is tender mercy, compassion, pity, to have mercy, feel sympathy for the misery of another person.
3. "**Metriopatheo**" (μετριοπαθέω) This is a compound word which is made up as follows:
  - a. "metrios" (μετρίως) - Moderate, slightly
  - b. "pathos" (πάθος) - suffering, passion.

It is to be gentle, to be moderate in passion on behalf of the suffering. It is to treat with mildness, to bear gently. It is not to be devastated by the weakness or faults of others.

4. "**Oikteiro**" (οικτείρω) to exercise pity, to show mercy, to experience distress through the ills of others.
5. "**Sumpatheo**" (συμπαθέω) This is a compound word.
  - a. "sun" (συν) with
  - b. "Pascho" (πάσχω) to suffer with

It is to have a fellow-feeling, to commiserate, to be affected as they are. This is what the author of Hebrews meant when he said,

*For we do not have a high priest who cannot **sympathize** with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15*

It is to be touched deeply with the intense pain of another person.

### 1. "**Splagchnizomai**" (σπλαγχνίζομαι)

*And seeing the multitudes, He felt **compassion** for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36*

In this chapter, Jesus healed many people. From the Decapolis area, He crossed over to the city of Capernaum. Matthew not only tells us how Jesus felt, but the reason He felt that way. Jesus saw the great crowd and He yearned with compassion for the fact that they were downcast and distressed. Jesus could see that they wandered aimlessly, like sheep who lost their shepherd. He felt such pain, He wanted to help them. Compassion is to feel such intense pain for their needs that you act to bring relief. Mark 6:34 tells the same story.

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*And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick. Matthew 14:14*

In this verse, Jesus was exposed to the pain of the multitude and the suffering of their sick ones. He was so moved that He healed the sick; He did for them what they could not do for themselves. This quality involves a great deal of selflessness.

*And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." Matthew 15:32*

Having left the highly paganized area around Tyre and Sidon, Jesus returned to the area on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Once there, He went into the hills, where He met a great multitude. Jesus thought about the fact that they had been with Him for three days without much to eat. He knew that this would make them very hungry. He also knew that to send them away hungry would be bad for them. Matthew tells us that this caused Him to have deep compassion for these people because He feared they would get sick on their long way home. This compassion was being so deeply moved by the troubles of the needy that He acted to solve their problem. This compassion is an active concern, a participation in the pain of the helpless. This compassion expresses an intense love for people who cannot repay one's generosity. You will find the same message in Mark 8:2

*"And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. Matthew 18:27*

Jesus was answering Peter's question about how often to forgive. Jesus told a parable about the king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. The story Jesus told would seem strange to the people. Kings did not feel compassion for much of anyone, especially slaves who did not do what was expected of them.

Observe the story again. This verse describes both the feeling and the action that it fosters. This is a cause and effect relationship. The king, in Jesus' story, forgave the debt and canceled the punishment. This is concern that goes beyond the legal requirement to deal with the needs of the helpless. Compassion is interested in restoration, not administering punishment.

*And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him. Matthew 20:34*

There is a strong contrast in this chapter between the mother of James and John and Jesus. Salome wanted places of power for her sons, James and John. Jesus was moved with compassion for two blind men who needed to be restored, but could do nothing in return to benefit Him. This encounter stresses the fact that compassion requires great love. It comes from a selfless heart. It uses every possible avenue to alleviate need and suffering. You will search the Scriptures in vain to find an expression of compassion that was bad.

*And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." Mark 1:41*

A leper came and fell down before Jesus and begged Him to heal him. Jesus saw a man with deep need and love caused Him to violate the laws of good health and touch the debil-

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itated man. Notice that Jesus said, "I am willing..." Compassion involved an act of the will; a burning desire to alleviate pain and suffering. This yearning to minister to the helpless caused Jesus to cast aside concern for Himself and change the life of the needy. Compassion is sacrificial.

*"And it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" Mark 9:22*

Returning from the transfiguration, Jesus found a man with his demon-possessed son confronting the other disciples. The man knew his son needed help and he wanted to get whatever help was possible. This verse reports the man's statement to Jesus. The word "pity" is really "compassion." The man's understanding of compassion was that Jesus would feel sorry for them and use His power to help them. The difference between feeling sorry for someone and having compassion for them is in the character of the one showing compassion. Compassion is the product of agape love that found an expression while feeling sorry for someone is sadness that a person or thing has encountered devastation. Love is not a necessary ingredient in that scenario. You will find something of the same character in the story of Jesus when He met the widow going to bury her son as recorded in Luke 7:13

*"But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, Luke 10:33*

Jesus was under attack concerning the identity of one's neighbor. He told the story of the Good Samaritan in answer to this question. This raises some questions for our consideration:

- a. We have talked about the ingredients of spiritual growth being uniquely Christian. Does this parable tell us that the Good Samaritan, as a non-believer, showed compassion?
- b. Was the "compassion" of this Samaritan different from the compassion of Jesus for the leper?

The honest answer is, "We do not know." Jesus did not say whether this Samaritan was a believer or not. Our tendency is to assume that if a person is a Pharisee or a Samaritan that they could not be a believer. We know that is not necessarily true. Jesus was not dealing with this issue in this parable. It is just as possible that Jesus thought of a believing Samaritan as it is that He thought of an unbelieving Samaritan.

The real issue in this parable is that the Samaritan used his compassion to deal with the pain of the unfortunate Jew.

*"And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him. Luke 15:20*

As you know, this is the story of the prodigal son. There are a number of cultural elements in this parable. It appears the father was watching for the undeserving son. The way the story is told, it appears that the father, in good Jewish terms, had disowned the son who had disgraced the family. The father embraced the prodigal son - he gave the son visual evidence that he would come to no harm. The father kissed the son - this was visual evidence that the son was forgiven. In this instance, the compassion was extended toward one

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who was totally undeserving. Compassion, like the agape love it expresses, has no boundaries and requires no specific response.

*You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.  
II Corinthians 6:12*

Paul dealt with some strained relationships between himself and the Corinthians. In that discourse, he said these words. The word "affections" is the word for "compassion" - "splanchnizomai". Paul said that our compassion, our inner yearnings have a restraining influence upon our actions.

*For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ  
Jesus. Philippians 1:8*

Again Paul used the same word to describe the inner seat of affections, our compassion. It was his way of saying that his compassion was on their behalf and not his own. Compassion is a selfless quality. It acts only on behalf of others. Compassion is also a very strong quality. It will enable one to attempt great things because of the needs of others.

*If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation  
of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compas-  
sion, Philippians 2:1*

The intense use of repetition in this verse indicates that Paul has placed great emphasis upon the content. The word "compassion" is "splanchnizomai." Paul mentioned a number of Christian qualities. Look carefully at the list.:

- a. **If there is any encouragement in Christ** - The word "encouragement" is "paraklasis" (παράκλησις). This is the word the New Testament used to identify the Holy Spirit. He is the one who comforts. The word comfort means to stand alongside, to defend. Paul said that Christ is our source of comfort and defense.
- b. **If there is any consolation of love** - The word "consolation" literally means to speak near. It is the picture of a mother whispering softly into the ear of her screaming child. Paul asked if there was any love in the body of Christ that calms the fears of the people.
- c. **If there is any fellowship of the Spirit** - The word "fellowship" is the well-known word "koinonia." Fellowship literally describes communion. It is the quality of oneness of harmony within the body of Christ. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit within the Church.
- d. **If there are any affections** - The word "affections" is really "compassion." If there is no compassion in the Church, then it is less than complete.
- e. **If there are any pities** - The word "pities" is "oiktirmos" (οἰκτιρμός) which means mercy, or the exercise of pity.

Notice the way Paul wrote, "if there is any..." This can be viewed in at least two different ways. It can question whether or not any of these qualities do exist. This pattern can also be used to place a strong emphasis on the statement. It would be like making the statement this way: "If there is any encouragement in Christ, **and there is**, if there is any consolation of love, **and there is**..."

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It is possible to assume that these qualities seriously contribute to the sense of unity within the body of Christ. Look carefully. Each of these qualities expresses a serious concern for a fellow Christian. These are qualities which help to build up a person rather than hinder or devastate them.

*And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; Colossians 3:12*

There is a contrast between paragraphs 3:5-11 and 3:12-14. Paul was contrasting their former life with what they should be like now. The contrast would look like this:

| 3:5-11              | 3:12-14                     |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>PUT TO DEATH</b> | <b>CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH</b> |
| Sexual immorality   | Compassion                  |
| Impurity            | Kindness                    |
| Lust                | Humility                    |
| Evil desires        | Gentleness                  |
| Greed = idolatry    | Patience                    |
|                     | Bear with each other        |
|                     | Forgive grievances          |
|                     | Love                        |

Study the list again. Observe that the list from Colossians 3:5-11 all focus on the satisfaction of self. By contrast, the list from 3:12-14 all focus on ministering to the needs and failures of others. Whatever else compassion is, it is an active concern for the needs and failures of others. In some cases, the qualities listed deal with wrongs done to the person who extends the compassion. As we have seen in other verses, compassion works in concert with other qualities that care for the needs of others in trouble.

*For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother. Philemon 7*

The word "hearts," (literally "bowels" in the Greek) in this verse, is "σπλάγχνα" or "compassion." In this sentence, Paul gave some additional information about compassion:

- a. This compassion, strictly speaking, is a uniquely Christian quality.
- b. Christian compassion can be stimulated by the agape love of other believers.
- c. As Christian love stimulates compassion in other believers, this becomes obvious to yet other believers and produces joy and comfort in them.
- d. "The hearts (compassion) of the saints have been refreshed through you." The word "refreshed" means to interrupt one's labor, to rest, to withdraw from strain. This statement suggests that it is possible for one's sense of rest, one's feeling of refreshment to be lost or dissipated.

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- e. The quality of compassion, when found in our lives, has a changing affect on us as well as a beneficial affect upon fellow believers.

Compassion leads to concern which leads to affecting a change in the struggles of our fellow believers.

*And I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart,  
Philemon 12*

The word "heart," again, is "splanchnizomai" or "compassion, which literally means "bowels." In the Jewish mind, the "bowels" were considered the seat of all human emotions. This changes the meaning of the statement. It was Paul's way of saying all of his compassion was focused in this runaway slave who had become a Christian. The benefits of compassion always rest with the recipient. This verse gives us an insight into the intensity of Christian compassion. It also suggests that compassion is tough. Compassion, though extremely intense, will still do what is right no matter what natural inclinations might be.

*Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in  
Christ. Philemon 20*

Again, the word "heart" is literally "compassion." The Greek text reads, "Brother, I of you may have help, in the Lord, refresh of me the compassion (bowels) in the Lord. Paul was instructing his close friend very carefully. In this instruction, Paul gave some insights into the nature of compassion:

- a. Compassion can not only be diminished. It can, also, be refreshed. This suggests that compassion is a quality, a way of life rather than an achievement.
- b. The refreshment of compassion has a uniquely Christian quality. It is not just an attempt to create excitement in the depressed individual. It is an act of concern in which the natural relationship with the Lord plays a primary role in the refreshing of the believers compassion.

*But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and  
closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?  
1 John 3:17*

What a statement! Look at both sides of this statement:

1. The word "heart" is really "bowels" and is translated "compassion." Compassion is the deep pain one should feel at the misfortune of a brother or sister.
2. Lack of compassion would be to see a brother in need, have the ability to meet that need and still close your heart against him.
3. Compassion, then, is the devastating pain caused by one's observation of another human being's suffering when the observer has the ability to meet that need.

By way of illustration, some years ago, there was a Roman Catholic Bishop in South America who refused to allow any more marble altars or inlaid gold so long as the people of the area struggled in starvation and squalor. That is compassion. People were upset with him, but still he had compassion. Compassion must sometimes express tough love. The bishop's compassion for the rich was strong in that he wanted to help them see their

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need to minister to the poor. His compassion for the poor was to see their most minimal needs were met.

Notice, also, that John said, that the love of God does not abide in the person who shows no compassion. This has some strong implications. It suggests that one of the basic pieces of evidence of our redemption is our compassion for need. If there is no compassion, there is reason to question whether the person involved is a believer, a child of God; one who shows the family resemblance in the things he/she does.

Observe that in each instance where compassion was expressed there are some common elements:

1. A deep need existed.
2. Compassion was the response to that terrible need.
3. The result was action to deal with the need.

This tells us something about the nature of compassion. It is an inner feeling that finds expression in actively meeting human need. It is the outgrowth of love and concern. Compassion demands personal action. To say, "Be warmed and filled" while doing nothing, is not sufficient.

### II. "Eleeo" (ἐλεέω)

As indicated earlier, this word means tender mercy, compassion, to have mercy, to feel sympathy for the misery of another. It is important to identify the difference between "splagchnizomai" and "eleeo." The former word is the strongest expression of compassion in the Greek language. "Eleeo," on the other hand, is a less intense expression and much less frequently used.. You will notice that in each of the three verses in which this word is used, it is translated "mercy" rather than compassion.

*Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' Matthew 18:33*

This is the story of the forgiven slave who had no mercy on another slave who was indebted to him. The word "mercy" (ἐλεέω) was used twice in this verse, once by the master and the other by his slave. It is interesting to note that there are two different motives for mercy given here. The master offered mercy simply because his servant was in a financial bind from which he could not extricate himself. The master had a compassionate, merciful feeling for the slave and not only extended the deadline, but forgave the debt completely. The master condemned the forgiven slave because gratitude did not cause him to have mercy on the other indebted slave and at least give him an extended opportunity to repay the debt in spite of the fact that it was late.

*And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." Mark 5:19*

This is part of the story of the Garasene demoniac. When he was delivered, he wanted to go with Jesus back to the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus refused to allow this. He rather instructed the man to go tell his people the great things the Lord had done for him.

He further instructed the man to tell his neighbors " how He (the Lord) had mercy on you." The word "mercy" is "eleeo". Compassion should not go unnoticed.

*And have mercy on some, who are doubting; Jude 22*

The word "mercy" is "eleeo" - "compassion." The author instructed these Christians to have compassion on people who entertained some doubts about the Christian faith. This is difficult. When we encounter people who doubt, our tendency is to be impatient with them.

The author said to these Christians, "have mercy on some and keep on having mercy on those who have doubts." Compassion is the general attitude the Christian should entertain toward those who have doubts concerning the faith. This is not a single action, but an ongoing relationship as long as their doubts persist.

The author was saying that you do not prove the point to those who doubt, you win them by compassion and love. Compassion is powerful to do that which logic cannot accomplish.

### III. "Metriopatheo" (μετριοπαθέω)

This is a compound word, as previously indicated. It means to be gentle, to be moderate in passion toward the suffering. It is somewhat akin to "eleeo" except that it is not nearly as intense. This word was never used to describe the Jesus or the Father.

*he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; Hebrews 5:2*

The word "gently" is "metriopatheo" or "compassion." This compound word, by its makeup, adds emphasis to the statement. The author said that the condition of the ignorant and misguided requires special care. The ignorant are offended and pushed away when chastised and attacked. Gentle mildness will bring change to the misguided which confrontation can never accomplish.

In this instance, this compassion does not condone ignorance or misdirection, but understands that they need gentleness, not vented wrath. This compassion is a response to need and limitation.

### IV "Oikteiro" (οικτείρω)

As indicated earlier, this word for "compassion" means to exercise pity, to show mercy. It is to experience distress through the ills of others. This is a form of reaction to pain observed in others. It is, by nature, a reaction to distress.

*For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." Romans 9:15*

Paul was describing the way God sovereignly deals with human beings. Paul used two of the five words which are translated "compassion." The word "mercy," which Paul used is really "eleeo," while the word translated "compassion" is "oikteiro." In effect, Paul was saying that when God sees a person who desperately needs mercy, God will have mercy upon that individual as He sees fit. On the other hand, God will show "compassion," "oikteiro" to the person whose pain causes Him to reach out to help that person.

### V. "Sumpatheo" (συμπαθέω)

## COMPASSION

This compound word means to suffer with the suffering. It is to feel the pain that they feel, as intensely as they do.

*For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. Hebrews 10:34*

The word "sympathy" is really "compassion." The author talked with people who were themselves suffering the loss of their belongings and experienced great suffering. He said that their compassion found its roots in the fact that they knew that they had a better possession than the things of earth and life itself. The exciting thing about their new possession is the fact that it is eternal. It will never run out and it can never be depleted. It is eternal.

This suggests that compassion can be stimulated by the fact that we have an eternal inheritance awaiting us in heaven. This inheritance is far greater than anything that might be bequeathed to us by some terminal member of the family.

This verse also suggests that this form of compassion can be stimulated and intensified by being reminded of the greatness of our eternal inheritance. In the midst of pain, it reminds us that there is something of eternal value beyond our tears.

*To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; I Peter 3:8*

The word "sympathetic" is really "compassion." In this chapter, Peter talked about the things that will further our spiritual growth. Observe that in this verse, each of the qualities focus on a loving relationship within the body of Christ. Compassion is one of those qualities.

### SUMMARY

1. Compassion is to feel such intense pain for the needy that you act to bring relief.
2. Compassion is a selfless action on behalf of people in need.
3. Compassion is participation in the pain of the helpless.
4. Compassion is interested in restoration, not punishment.
5. Compassion requires great agape love.
6. Compassion involves an act of the will which motivates efforts to bring relief.
7. Compassion is the product of agape love while feeling sorry for someone is sadness over untoward circumstances. Compassion is active, while feeling sorry for someone is reactive.
8. Compassion does not consider whether the needy person is deserving or not. It is grace.
9. Compassion, our inner yearnings, have a restraining influence on our actions.
10. Compassion can contribute to the sense of unity within the Church.
11. Compassion is directed toward others, not toward self.

## IMITATORS OF GOD

12. Compassion is extended to the one who has done wrong to the one extending compassion.
13. Compassion is a uniquely Christian quality of life.
14. Compassion can be stimulated by the love of a fellow believer.
15. Compassion can be diminished to the point of extinction.
16. Compassion affects change in us as well as the ones we seek to benefit.
17. The believers relationship with Christ plays a primary role in refreshing a believers compassion.
18. Compassion is the outgrowth of love and concern.
19. Gratitude for compassion received is a basic ingredient in the motivation of further compassion. This is the kind of motivation of which John spoke when he wrote,  
*We love, because He first loved us. I John 4:19*
20. Compassion is a way of seeing and living life, not a single action or incident.
21. Compassion is a powerful witness. It can win the doubter when logic fails.
22. Compassion is a loving, Christlike response to need and limitation.
23. Compassion is a divine quality.
24. Compassion is strengthened by our awareness that our hope is an eternal one which cannot be taken from us.
25. This Christian quality can be stimulated by the reminder that our hope is eternal.
26. Compassion is one of the Christian qualities that focuses on a loving relationship within the body of Christ.

## WORSHIP

We have developed an understanding of worship which is quite different from that described in either the Old or New Testament. Essentially, worship, today, is something that takes place in a beautiful building, lasts less than an hour and we are spectators while the professionals perform. During each service, the spectators evaluate the quality of the performance of each professional. It is often a passive experience for all but the performing musical and theological professionals. In most instances, the focus of the service is the spectators - the professionals search for a way to please those who listen.

The Biblical description is vastly different. Instead of thinking of worship as a physical action, the New Testament tends to portray worship as something that takes place in the mind and heart.

Again, "worship" and "worship service" are not synonyms in the New Testament. The early Church spoke of what we call a worship service as "the gathering of yourselves together." "Worship," on the other hand, was a way of life, a constant attitude of the believer's heart.

There are at least four New Testament words which are translated "worship" in our Bible. We will look at each word.

Two other New Testament words describe worship. They are usually translated "fear." We will look carefully at both. There are many instances when these words, translated "fear," are used to describe trembling fear. We will not be looking at these examples.

### I. "Proskuneo" (προσκυνέω)

This is a compound word which is the most common word to be translated "worship."

- a. Pros - to be near to
- b. kunon - dog

This literally means to kiss like a dog licks the master's hand. It came to be understood to mean to prostrate oneself, to make obeisance, to adore, to give reverence.

*"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him." Matthew 2:2*

This word for worship, depending upon the context, can be used to describe the actual worship of God. It can also be used to describe the acknowledgment of a king's power and authority by prostrating oneself before him. Though the text does not say, it would appear that in this instance it was used to describe the acknowledgment of royal power.

*and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me." Matthew 4:9*

This is part of Matthew's description of the temptation of Jesus. Here the intent is clear. Satan meant for Jesus to worship him, to adore him and give him reverence.

*Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Matthew 4:10*

In this verse there are two words which are often translated "worship."

- a. Worship - "proskuneo" (προσκυνέω)

## IMITATORS OF GOD

### b. serve - "latreuo" (λατρεύω)

From this verse, we are reminded that the worship of God is a command. This command would be translated, "You shall worship and keep on worshipping God" The worship of God shall be our constant preoccupation. Jesus referred to Deuteronomy chapter six when He made this statement.

*"You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. Deuteronomy 6:13*

In this statement, the Lord made at least two points:

- a. We are commanded to worship.
- b. We are commanded to worship only Jehovah.

*And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Matthew 8:2*

The word translated "bowed down to" is "proskuneo" and means to prostrate and to worship. In this verse, the word certainly means to prostrate oneself. It may also mean that in the prostrating of himself, the leper was also giving reverence to Jesus. He was certainly affirming the mighty power of Jesus to heal - "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

*While He was saying these things to them, behold, there came a synagogue official, and bowed down before Him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live." Matthew 9:18*

This is the story of the healing of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. Again, the word translated "bowed down before Him" is "proskuneo," which means to prostrate and/or to worship. The man affirmed that he believed Jesus could raise his daughter from the dead. Though the text does not say, it appears that the ruler fell prostrate before Jesus and literally worshiped Him, giving him reverence and adoration.

*And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" Matthew 14:33*

This is the story of the calming of the storm. It is doubtful there was room in the boat for 12 men to prostrate themselves on the deck before Jesus. They were giving Him adoration and praise because of His power to control even the fierce forces of nature which appeared to be about to destroy all of them. Worship, though a complex experience, involves a measure of intense adoration and praise whether or not the worshippers prostrate themselves on the floor before God.

*But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" Matthew 15:25*

This is the story of the Canaanitish woman who pleaded with Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter. The word "bow down" is "proskuneo," which means to prostrate oneself, to worship, to give reverence. It appears that Matthew suggested that the woman prostrated herself before the Lord. In that culture, servants would prostrate themselves before their master as an act of submission to authority. No doubt this was her intent.

## WORSHIP

*And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Matthew 28:9*

This is the account of "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" when they went to the sepulcher. The angel told them that Jesus was risen and then told them to tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. The women met Jesus as they went to tell the disciples. The women took hold of Jesus' feet and worshiped him. This is an act of reverence; an expression of worship. The text tells us that this was an event of great joy. It expressed their adoration of His person and power.

*And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. Matthew 28:17*

This is a continuation of the story mentioned in verse nine. The disciples went to Galilee as Jesus instructed. "When they saw Him, they worshiped him." Notice that the conclusion of the verse is, "but some doubted." These disciples did not worship Jesus, on this occasion, because of their doubts. This tells us that faith is a vital part of worship. It was doubt concerning His resurrection that kept these disciples from worshipping Jesus, from giving Him praise and adoration that He deserved.

*And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, Luke 24:52*

The Greek text reads a bit differently. One might translate it this way:

*"And they having worshiped him returned to Jerusalem with great joy."*

This is Luke's report of the ascension. Immediately following this report, Luke told of the actions of these disciples. They spent their time in the temple praising and blessing God. This is the natural result of worship, worship at its finest.

*"You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:22-24*

This is John's report of Jesus' visit with the Samaritan woman. As you read this paragraph, it is clear that both the Samaritans and the Jews focused upon the location of the worship experience - Samaria or Jerusalem. Jesus spoke of a time when the primary concern would not be location, but attitude.

We must ask, what did Jesus mean when He said, "Worship the Father in spirit and truth"? There are a number of things to which "spirit" **does not** refer:

- a. The Holy Spirit. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is uninvolved in worship. It simply means that this was not Jesus' reference at this point.
- b. The soul. Jesus gave us some assistance in this understanding.
  1. He used the same word to identify God - "God is spirit."
  2. Whatever Jesus meant, it is one of the qualities of God.
  3. Just as God has no limiting location, so worship will take place independently of location.

## IMITATORS OF GOD

4. The attitude of worship is far more important than the location thereof.

We must also ask, what did Jesus mean when He used the word "truth"?

- a. It is doubtful that He meant only the opposite of falsehood, though it would be involved.
- b. It could mean the opposite of mere symbolism and ritualism. It would be like God to be exactly what He appears to be. By the same token, it could mean that worship must be exactly what it appears to be, it is totally sincere.

Notice the way Jesus described the Father's preference, "For such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers."

Observe that Jesus said, "Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." Location may be unessential, but a godlike quality is absolutely essential. What I am is much more important than where I stand or what I say. Notice, also, that this is stated in the form of an inescapable command. It is something that they must do.

*And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. John 9:38*

This is the story of the man born blind. He had been put out of the temple because he confronted the Pharisees concerning the identity of Jesus. The Lord found the man and questioned him concerning his faith. The man then said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Him." The man's faith and his worship of Jesus were interlinked. The worship of God is an experience reserved for those who believe. The pagan cannot worship God in his/her present state.

There is another subtle identification. The man born blind said, "Lord, I believe." Contrary to what some may think, "Lord" was not Jesus' first name. Lord was a term that a servant used to address his master. The man born blind identified himself as a servant of Christ. Worship takes place when servants adore Jesus as their master. Again, one's servant attitude toward God is far more important than being able to say the right words.

*And he arose and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship. Acts 8:27*

The worship, of which Luke spoke, had two major foci:

1. It focused upon giving praise and thanks to God for His greatness and goodness.
2. It was petitioning God for forgiveness for their sins.

These foci were present in each of the great feasts of the Jews.

*And when it came about that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. Acts 10:25*

This verse reminds us that this word for "worship" can focus upon God, but it can also focus upon some other being, whether a person or an idol. Cornelius, the centurion, had worshiped idols and emperors, but had not worshiped the true God. It is not surprising that Cornelius would worship at the feet of Peter. It should be noted, however, that Peter would not allow Cornelius to worship him.

## WORSHIP

Whether for Jehovah or some idol, this word represents the submission of the will to the one being worshiped. This is a primary ingredient in worship.

*the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.  
I Corinthians 14:25*

In this chapter, Paul was in the midst of a discussion of the use of tongues. His point was that prophesy was more instructive, for the non-believer, than speaking in tongues. At this point in the discussion, Paul made the statement quoted above.

The thing that precipitated worship, in this instance, was the disclosure of the secrets of this person's heart. What did Paul mean when he said, "The secrets of his heart are disclosed"? A "secret" is not something that a person knows, but others do not yet know. A secret is something that is hidden intentionally. It is something one does not want others to know, ever. It is fair to assume that these "secrets" refer to the man's sins and failures.

If that is the case, and it appears that it is, then Paul was saying that the reminder of his failures will cause him to reflect upon the holiness of God and the mercy of God in forgiveness. It will also cause the man to worship because of the greatness of God in revealing to the believers the sins of the unbeliever.

In this situation, worship is a response to the holiness, mercy and power of God. It is recognizing the great difference between God's greatness and our limitations and failures and giving praise for such greatness.

*And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, " And let all the angels of God worship Him." Hebrews 1:6*

There are a number of pieces of information here, but one stands out: The worship of Jesus is a command of God the Father. This worship which the Father commands, is universal. Every angel is commanded to give reverence to Jesus, the Son of God. From a logical point of view, if every angel is commanded to worship the Son, how much more does God expect the same from us?

*By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. Hebrews 11:21*

It was customary for a father to give his blessing to his sons before his death. They thought that these blessings were determinative of the future of each son. The father of a family would do the same for each of his grandsons. They were, in effect, considered to be his sons also. The author of Hebrews could have simply stated that as Jacob was dying, he blessed each of the sons of Joseph. The addition of the fact that he worshiped and that he was leaning on the top of his staff are significant additions to the story.

The fact that he worshiped says that he was convinced that God was leading him in his prediction of the future of his sons and grandsons. This is an act of submission on Jacob's part.

The fact that Jacob worshiped leaning on the top of his staff was another symbol of submission. The staff was the symbol of power within the family. The same is true in any kingdom. The king has a staff or orb which symbolizes his power. "Leaning on the top of his staff" tells us that he was very weak. It also tells us that holding the symbol of his own power, he submitted himself to the power of God in worship.

## IMITATORS OF GOD

*the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Revelation 4:10*

There is more information about worship in the book of Revelation than in any other New Testament book. This is a prime example of such worship. First, John tells us that the 24 elders "will fall down before Him." This is to prostrate themselves. It is a symbolic way of saying that they are totally at His command. They are His servants. They are totally under His control. It is a picture of the master, slave relationship.

Second, the 24 elders "will worship Him who lives forever and ever." Again, this word means to adore and give reverence to one who is worthy. The 24 elders worship the one "who lives for ever and ever." The elders will live unendingly into the future, but they are not eternal. They did not exist before time, as God does. It is to adore the one who alone is eternal; the one who in His royal position never ceases to be God. It is to stand in awe of the ruler of the universe.

Third, the 24 elders "will cast their crowns before the throne..." This is a statement which symbolizes rulers casting their crowns, the symbols of final authority and power, before the Ruler of rulers. It is a statement of the awe these elders offered to God.

*And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped. Revelation 5:14*

The elders prostrated themselves before the Father and the Son. All creation gave reverence to God. The elders symbolized that reverence and adoration in their prostration before God and their worship of His greatness.

*And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; Revelation 9:20*

In this verse, John reports on the worship of idols. As indicated earlier, some words for "worship" deal only with the worship and adoration of Jehovah. This particular word, however, was used to describe worship whether addressed to God, an idol or a person.

*and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." Revelation 14:7*

After a lengthy depiction of the evil forces who cause people to worship false gods, Jesus comes on the scene. This is a very emphatic statement. The phrase "fear God," is another word for worship which will be discussed a bit later. Later in this verse, Jesus told them "worship Him who made the heaven and the earth..." This is a means of adding strong emphasis to His intent that these people worship God with all that is in them. It is to stand in awe of His greatness; to present oneself before God as a servant to do the master's bidding whatever the cost.

"Worship Him" is in the First Aorist Active Imperative mode. It is to worship and keep on worshipping as a lifestyle.

## WORSHIP

*"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; For all the nations will come and worship before Thee, For Thy righteous acts have been revealed." Revelation 15:4*

This is part of the song of Moses and of the Lamb. In this song, people are urged to fear, (another word for worship), and worship before the Lord. The important thing in this verse, for our consideration is that the emphasized worship takes place because of the unique holiness and righteousness of God move the believer to bow in adoration and submission to the all-powerful God who does righteous deeds to those who do not deserve it.

*And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" Revelation 19:4*

This verse reflects the meaning of worship as John described it. There are three pieces of information which inform our thinking here:

1. The 24 elders fell down and "worshiped God who sits on the throne." This identifies reverence and awe which grows out of the royal position which God occupies. The elders stand in awe because God rules the universe.
2. The elders said, "Amen." This word literally says, "Let it be so." This was a New Testament way of saying that the 24 elders agreed with what was said or done. The thing that had happened was that "the great harlot" had been judged because she had killed so many of the servants of God. The elders affirmed that great victory and gave praise to God for His irresistible power.
3. The 24 elders said, "Hallelujah" This word literally means "Praise ye Jah" or Jehovah. The elders gave praise to God because He had judged "the great harlot." It was a celebration of God's surpassing power over the forces of evil in the world.

John has described worship as rejoicing at the power of God to rule the world; as an affirmation of the power of God to subdue evil; as a celebration of the victory of God over evil.

*And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God." Revelation 22:8-9*

Very often the Scriptures give us two pictures of something as a way to clarify the message and emphasize it. In this instance the emphasis came in the form of, "Do not do this, but do that." John was overcome with awe and fell down and worshiped at the feet of the angel. The angel immediately said, "Do not do that." This was an emphatic command. The second statement was also a command, "Worship God." Literally, the angel said, "Worship God and keep on worshipping God." Let your lifestyle be described as constantly worshipping God. The worship of God is to be our vocation. Our daily work is just a way to put food on the table.

### SUMMARY

## *IMITATORS OF GOD*

1. Worship takes place in the heart and mind. Any verbalization is only an expression of the relationship existing between God and the individual.
2. We are commanded to worship God.
3. Worship is not so much a specific action as it is a way of life.
4. Worship is the "prostration," the presentation of the self as a servant would fall down on his/her face before the master to symbolize subservience. It is the no strings attached presentation of the self to God, as in Romans 12:1, 2, to do His will and serve His kingdom.
5. Worship is to acknowledge the awesome power and mercy of God.
6. It is to adore who God is and what He does.
7. Faith is an essential ingredient in worship.
8. Worship is also rejoicing in the triumph of the sacrifice of Jesus and the hope of His return in glory.
9. Worship does not focus on location, but on the attitude of the one who stands in reverent awe.
10. Worship is not ritual, but it is focused by the attitude and a Godlike quality of life and hope.
11. God seeks those who worship in spirit and truth to worship Him. This identifies God's intense desire and pleasure.
12. Faith and worship are inseparable.
13. Believers, who see Jesus as Lord, can worship. The servant-of-Christ self image is far more important than saying the right things.
14. Among other values, worship focuses upon giving thanks and praise for God's greatness and goodness.
15. It includes petitioning God for forgiveness.
16. Worship is the submission of the self, the will to the one being worshiped.
17. Being reminded of our failures and being aware of God's holy forgiveness will initiate a sense of reverence and worship.
18. The worship of Jesus is a divine command.
19. Worship of Jesus is a constant lifestyle, not a single act.
20. Worship involves intense personal submission to God.
21. Worship is the adoration of the one who is uniquely eternal.
22. Worship is a response to the unique holiness and righteousness of God.
23. It is standing in awe because of God's royal power - the Ruler of rulers.
24. Worship is the moment by moment vocation of every child of God.

## WORSHIP

### 2. "Sebomai" (σέβομαι)

This word means to revere, to adore, to be devout, to worship. There is a stress on the feeling of awe, and devotion.

*'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' " Matthew 15:9*

Jesus was dealing with an attack by the Jerusalem Pharisees accusing His disciples of not washing their hands before eating. Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29:13 to deal with their attack. In doing so, Jesus said something about worship. Jesus made a definite tie between their worship and their teaching. The command to wash one's hands before eating was a human decision, not a divine command. The Pharisees gave this rule as much credence as they did the ten commandments. Jesus said that their worship was in vain because their life outside worship was in conflict with it. Worship requires that our life be in accord with our adoration of God.

*And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:14*

Luke identified Lydia as "a worshipper of God." You find this same designation in Acts 18:7 when Paul went to the home of Titus Justus. Lydia was a Jew, but that was not Luke's meaning. There was no synagogue in Thyatira, so the Jewish people gathered at the seashore to worship. This was a common practice for Jewish people who lived in an area where there were not enough Jews to support a synagogue. Though Lydia was not yet a Christian, she revered God and tried to live a holy life. She was "a worshipper of God."

*saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." Acts 18:13*

Paul was preaching in Achaia and the Jews there took him before the judgment seat of Gallio. This was their charge. The argument between Paul and these Jews was over the meaning of worship. They believed that worship was keeping the ten commandments as well as the hundreds of other laws that Jewish leaders had instituted. For Paul, however, worship was not in keeping the laws of men, but in adoring Him because of His greatness and His mercy toward one's sins and failures. It is praise to God because of who He is and what He does.

### SUMMARY

1. Reverence is more than bowing the head and the knee. It is adoration expressed with a life which parallels the integrity of the reverence.
2. Reverence is adoration coupled with a holy life.
3. Worship is not rigid adherence to the ten commandments.
4. It is adoring God for His greatness, mercy and holiness.

### 3. "Latreuo" (λατρεύω)

This word represents a hired servant. It came to identify the rendering of homage; to do service and to worship. By definition, this is not fines in ritual, but giving adoration to God by our depth of service to Him and His kingdom in the world.

*"But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? Acts 7:42*

This verse is part of Stephen's defense prior to his stoning. He described the exodus scene where the people demanded an image, a golden calf. Stephen challenged them by saying that God gave Israel over to serving and giving reverence to the angelic hosts which had been a part of the pagan idol worship.

The words "to serve" are a translation of the word "latreuo." Again, it means to worship by serving. God gave Israel over to doing the will of the idols they demanded. In most instances, this involved the participation in sexual orgies and acclaiming of unrealistic powers to these pieces of wood, stone and precious metal.

*"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; Acts 24:14*

Paul had been arrested and taken before the governor, Felix. Paul had been accused of insurrection and being a ringleader of the Nazarenes.

In his defense, Paul admitted that he belonged to "the Way" which the Jewish leaders called "a sect." In this group, Paul said, he served the God of their fathers. The word "serve," again, is "Latreuo" and is not just to do work. Paul was saying that he was a servant of the God of their fathers. He existed to do the will of God. His service was, in fact, an expression of reverence, an adoration of God for His grace to Israel.

*for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, Philippians 3:3*

Our text reads "in the Spirit of God." The Greek text translates this "by the Spirit of God." The difference is subtle, but important. The use of the word "by" suggests enabling, the means by which the worship takes place. Paul was saying that the Spirit of God was deeply involved in their service to God and reverence due His name. Without the assistance of the Spirit, such servanthood would not happen. It is the Spirit of God that enables them to present themselves as servants to the God of Israel. It is the Spirit of God that enables them to give reverent awe to God for His mercy and grace which they had experienced.

#### SUMMARY

1. Worship is also expressed by the presentation of the self to God as a servant. Paul regularly identified himself as a "bond servant" - one who, by choice, belongs to a master, God, and adores Him by sacrificial service.
2. Worship is daily living for the Master, God, and adoring Him through our selfless service.

## WORSHIP

3. Worship is not enabled by our skill with words, but by the Holy Spirit. Without the enabling of the Holy Spirit, service to God could not be rendered and reverent awe could not be offered to God.

### 4. "Enopion" (ἐνώπιον)

This is a compound word:

- a. **En** - in, position
- b. **Optomai** - To watch from a distance, intense form of the word to stand in the presence of, it is watching intensely. This is a throne room scene. Those privileged to serve here must be very alert to everything that happens; everything that the king requires. The compounding of the word adds both emphasis and intensity. To "stand."

*"Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." Luke 4:7*

This is the story of the temptation of Jesus by Satan. He was asking that Jesus give him deference, which is the meaning of "from a distance." It would be treating Satan like a king from whom one maintains a respectful distance. The idea of standing in a king's presence is a sign of reverence and respect.

There are two other words translated "fear" which also signify worship. We will observe them as well.

#### I. "Phobos" (φοβός)

Originally, this word had the meaning of flight or terror because one was frightened. Eventually it came to refer to reverential fear of God. It was not being frightened of God, but recognizing His greatness, one stands in reverence and awe. This holy dread becomes a motive that urges the believer to avoid displeasing God at any cost. It does not shrink back from God's presence, but longs for His fellowship. This fear initiates an unwavering care to painstakingly deal with others as He deals with us.

As indicated earlier, this word also means to tremble. We will not deal with any verses where this is the author's intent.

*"And His mercy is upon generation after generation Toward those who fear Him." Luke 1:50*

This is a statement taken from Mary's song. In this statement, Mary talked about the results of giving reverence to God. It results in receiving the mercy of God. Not only so, but His mercy will be given from generation to generation. It will be a blessing God will give and continue to give.

*But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" Luke 23:40*

This is a scene from the cross. One of the criminals being crucified with Jesus railed upon Him. The other criminal rebuked the first. His words, "do you not even fear God..." were crucial to his message to the other criminal. He was saying that the least the man could do would be to have respect, to hold God in awe and reverence. Certainly if the thief did so, he could not possibly talk this way to Jesus.

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*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase. Acts 9:31*

Here again, the "fear of the Lord" deals with a sense of awe and respect. In this instance, it also suggests a way of life which is characterized by such reverence and worship. Notice that the "fear of the Lord," was associated with "the comfort of the Holy Spirit." We do not fear God on our own. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to enable us to give God reverence and awe.

Observe, also, that Luke indicated that one of the results of the reverence and awe that these Christians presented to God was that their numbers would greatly increase.

*a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people, and prayed to God continually. Acts 10:2*

This is a description of Cornelius, the centurion. He had many wonderful qualities of character. One of those was that he "feared God." He recognized God's greatness, power and mercy so intensely that though he was a man of frightening power, he stood in awe of the greatness of God. This godly fear caused him to live a devout life; to give alms to the Jewish people and pray continually to God.

*And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you." Acts 10:22*

In this verse Peter received an introduction to Cornelius, the centurion. Notice the way the text describes Cornelius:

- a. He was righteous.
- b. He was a God-fearing man.
- c. He was well spoken of by the entire nation of Jews.
- d. He lived so as to be directed by God.

What a recommendation! Such worship always has implications for the rest of life.

*And Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: Acts 13:16*

Paul spoke at Athens. He addressed two groups of people -

- a. **"Men of Israel"** - these were the Jews in the crowd.
- b. **"You who fear God"** - this is a way of identifying Gentiles who worship God and give Him praise for His goodness and mercy.

These are people who, though they are Gentiles, stood in awe of the glory and power of God. They are the ones who recognized something of the mighty power of God and rose to stand in respect of His greatness and mercy.

*"There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:18*

## WORSHIP

In Romans 3:10-18, Paul quoted from the Psalms and lists a series of 12 indictments that the Psalmist announced concerning the people who rejected God. At the close of the list, the Psalmist said, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." The Psalmist said that not only did they sin, they had no reverence for God. Nothing about the greatness of God caused them to stand in humility and awe before the God who made them. This reverence and fear is based upon an awareness of just how great God really is.

*Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; Romans 11:20*

Paul was speaking to Gentile believers. Some had become proud and arrogant because they were members of God's family while Jews, God's chosen people, were living in disobedience. Paul wrote to correct this arrogance. In so doing, he gave us some information about worship.

Worship was presented as the opposite of arrogance. Whatever one might say about worship, it must be viewed in the deep humility. Proud worship is a contradiction in terms.

Our text says, "but fear." The Greek text is much more direct. It says "fear(worship) and keep on fearing". It is not an action so much as it is a lifestyle; a way of thinking about life.

Paul also gave this in the form of a command. Worship is never an option. It is always a command. It is a requirement that cannot be waived. To the extent that one fails to worship, it is no different than rejecting one of the commandments.

Observe also that Paul draws a contrast between these believers and the non-Christian Jews. The inference from this is that worship is a uniquely Christian experience. It is not possible for an unbeliever to worship. He/she may take part in a worship service, but they do not worship.

*Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.  
II Corinthians 7:1*

Paul closed chapter six quoting the paraphrase of a very important promise from Hosea 1:10. In this promise, God was claiming the people as family, in spite of the fact that they had failed and abandoned Him repeatedly.

Paul, therefore, issued two instructions to help them. He commanded them to "cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit." This tells us that purity of heart is essential to the worship of God. The symbolism of the cleansing of the priests, in the Old Testament system is very meaningful at this point. Worship takes form in a pure heart.

Paul went on, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Paul was saying that worship is the foundation, the atmosphere in which the process of becoming holy takes place.

*and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:21*

The word "subject" is "hupotasso" (υποτάσσω). It is a compound word:

- a. Hupo - means under
- b. Tasso - means to arrange under.

## IMITATORS OF GOD

This is a military term which describes the way they place soldiers in rank under authority. Paul's instruction is most interesting. He is saying that they must all be subject to, arranged in rank to each other. It means that there would not be an ultimate authority in the Church. Every person is under the authority of all the others. Paul said that the fear, the worship of Christ is what enables them to do this almost impossible task.

Incidentally, to the best of our knowledge, this is the only place where the phrase "fear of Christ" appears in the New Testament. There are several places, however, where "the fear of the Lord" or "fearing the Lord" appear.

*Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Colossians 3:22*

In Colossians, chapter three, Paul attempted to describe for these young Christians, how they should conduct themselves in the pagan world. It was no secret that slaves gave half-hearted service and no allegiance to their owners. Paul told these young believers that they should obey their earthly masters. He then qualified that obedience:

- a. **It was not to be external service** - doing one thing, but desiring to do another. He illustrated the point by highlighting the fact that there were those, both bond and free, who were busy just trying to please men to further their own interests. Modern politicians might fit into that category.
- b. **It must be obedience with heart sincerity** - They are to obey their owners because they have a deep desire to be obedient to them and further their goals.

This was a very difficult and divisive issue. Many slaves were mistreated at best. The thought of obeying because you long to do so was impossible for many to imagine. Paul was saying that the difference between the attitude and conduct of the Christians and non-Christians was a witness in itself.

*Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. I Peter 2:17*

This brief verse is really composed of four short sentences. Each sentence is a command. Peter was telling his readers how to live in a sinful world and still please God and reflect well upon His kingdom. There is an interesting pattern in this verse. There are two levels of commands:

- a. dealing with common people
  1. **"Honor all men"** - Honor means to value, to hold in honor as we are to honor our parents.
  2. **"Love the brotherhood"** - This is a love that has no limits; it is "agape" love, love that places no conditions upon the beloved. You love the brotherhood because they are there; no matter how they behave.
- b. Dealing with powers
  1. **"Fear God"** - This is reverence which recognizes the greatness of God and joyfully responds in submission to His will.

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2. **Honor the king** - In the Greek text, the word for "honor all men," and "honor the king" are exactly the same word.

Peter was saying that we should treat everyone outside the kingdom with the same kind of honor whether royalty or commoner. By the same token, he was also saying that we should treat every member of the kingdom of God with love, just as we worship God.

In this verse, the fear of God becomes the basis upon which Peter appeals to these Christians to treat every other human being with honor and respect.

*"And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." Revelation 11:18*

John described the approach of the judgment. All who were dead were to be judged. Observe that the 24 elders gave four different designations to the people of God in this verse.

- a. Bond servants
- b. The prophets
- c. The saints
- d. Those who fear Thy name

Three of these designations identify persons with specific tasks or ministries. The fourth one is all encompassing. It includes all those who recognize the greatness of God and present themselves as His servants. This group includes all those who are bond-servants, prophets and saints.

There is a contrast in this verse as well. The 24 elders mention four groups of people who worship God and talks about their rewards. He identified other people and spoke of their destruction.

*And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." Revelation 19:5*

In this verse, there is a synonymous relationship between the bond-servants of God and those who fear God. Worship goes hand-in-hand with being a bond-servant. Worship is the attitude, the atmosphere of the bond-servant. If one is not a bond-servant, it is questionable whether one can say that they worship God.

### SUMMARY

1. Reverent worship results in the blessing of God.
2. It is the Holy Spirit which enables us to offer reverence and worship to God. We cannot do that on our own.
3. "The fear of God" is a process of growth for those who offer God worship. It leads to growth in the body of Christ.

## IMITATORS OF GOD

4. To fear God, to worship Him, is to recognize His greatness and act in accordance with that discovery.
5. Worship never exists in isolation. It always exists in the company of qualities like: righteousness, good reputation and a closer personal relationship with God.
6. Worship is a uniquely Christian experience. Reverent awe grows out of an awareness of just how great God is.
7. Worship is the opposite of arrogance; a humbling of the self before the God of mercy and grace.
8. Worship is not a 45 minute experience once a week or "Christmas And Easter." Worship is a lifestyle. It is what we are when humbled before our maker. As Paul said, "worship and keep on worshipping."
9. We are commanded to worship. It is not an option. It is as much a command as the ten commandments.
10. Purity of heart is essential to worship.
11. Worship is the atmosphere in which the process of becoming holy takes place.
12. Worship is the foundation upon which the interdependent relations among believers takes place and grows.
13. Fearing the Lord, active worship, goes hand-in-hand with Christlike conduct, even under the most difficult circumstances.
14. God, alone, is the recipient of active worship.
15. Worship includes praise to God, but it is not limited to that.
16. Worship goes hand-in-hand with being a bond-servant. Worship is the atmosphere in which the bond-servant lives life. This fact helps us to understand why Paul repeatedly refers to himself as "a bond-servant of the Lord."

## II. "Eulabeia" (ευλάβεια)

This word means to be exceedingly devout. You will note that this word is sometimes translated "godly," or "godliness." It is to be circumspect with our lives because of the greatness of God and His mercy toward us. It is to show deep reverence, not because we must, but because it satisfies a deep longing within us. We want to adore God for who He is.

*In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Hebrews 5:7*

In this verse, the author spoke of Melchizedek. The word translated "piety" is "eulabeia." Now, piety has an unfortunate connotation in our culture. It reminds one of stiff, starchy people whose faith is painful, and not godlike. This "piety" is to lead a life that is very godly because we have a burning desire to adore God and to be like Him. It is to be keenly aware of the greatness of God and respond in holy living and praise for His greatness.

## WORSHIP

In this verse, the author of Hebrews points out that one of the benefits of this "piety," this godly way of life, is that our prayers are heard. This suggests that the reverse would not be true.

*Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; Hebrews 12:28*

The word translated "awe" is "eulabeia." It describes a life which is exceedingly devout. It is to express an intense godliness which grows out of a burning desire to respond to the greatness and mercy of God. The author of Hebrews was saying that gratitude is the means by which we present to God service along with intense worship. You may have noticed that the purity of worship is repeatedly accompanied by sacrificial service.

The author was also saying that the basis of our worship is the gift of an unshakable kingdom. This is unusual, for every kingdom is volatile in one way or another. Our eternal kingdom is not. Our response to that gift is a gratitude which is the vehicle of reverence and worship. If you think carefully about this, worship without gratitude is a contradiction in terms.

### SUMMARY

1. Worship is the intense longing of the godly heart to ascribe honor to God and adore Him.
2. The result of a holy life which expresses itself in holy living, humble service and worship is that person's prayers are heard.
3. Gratitude is the basis upon which worship is based.
4. Repeatedly, the Scriptures link sacrificial service and intense worship.
5. All worship is a response to who God is and what He does on behalf of His undeserving children.

The New Testament speaks of the worship service or experience as "the gathering of yourselves together." Worship, however, is dealt with as a combination of the emotional (the expression of the heart) and the mental (the expression of the mind/intellect). This is vastly different from a worship service, though it can happen during what we refer to as a "worship service." Unfortunately, people tend to limit worship to that hour on Sunday morning. It should be a part of every day.

It was suggested that worship grows out of gratitude for what God does. Unfortunately, many people in the Church are not aware of anything God is doing in their lives for which they should give thanks. Personal observation suggests that people who regularly seek God to help them become more Christlike each day have a lot to express their gratitude for each time God enables them to overcome some spiritual weakness that has been troubling them. Each day becomes an experience of intense praise because God is giving them victory upon victory in the areas where they have failed for years. This is the stuff of worship.



## CONCLUSION

Spiritual growth is becoming increasingly more Christlike. It is not becoming a super-Christian; it is not being elevated to higher levels of faith: it is becoming more and more like Jesus every day.

We must begin, again, to see spiritual growth as a process, not an action; as a journey, not a destination. Many Christians falter in their zeal to grow instantaneously rather than accepting the Biblical image of regular, steady growth.

Some people want to grow spiritually and complete it because they are afraid they will fail. The truth is that we probably will falter, but God forgives saints who fail and strengthens them to try again. God will forgive us one more time than we fail. Spiritual growth is a way of life. It is a burning desire we pursue every day. It is the first priority of the people of God. Spiritual growth takes place when the ever-present, omnipotence of God encounters the burning desire of the child of God to be more like Him.

Spiritual growth is a uniquely Christian experience. There is absolutely no way that changes in an unrepentant sinner's life can be appropriately referred to as spiritual growth. One cannot grow into faith, but we can grow once faith has been established.

The Scriptures tell us we are created in the image of God. Spiritual growth is the process of increasingly reflecting the image of God in which we were first created.

Every quality of spiritual growth is vitally important. Agape love, however, appears to be the currency, the atmosphere in which all forms of spiritual growth take place.

There is a growing number of new believers who are reading the Scriptures and taking Spiritual growth seriously. They are determined to live a life that is holy; determined to open, again, the new frontiers of the Church. These new frontiers, however, are not out there, but within the Church itself. This has caused serious concern, for some, that this will cool the ardor of the Church toward social concerns and the needs of people. This concern, based upon history, is somewhat well founded. Historically, as believers become more concerned about personal holiness, many became less concerned with the plight of the needy. Conversely, in some instances, when believers became more involved with social concerns, their fervor for spiritual growth began to cool. Neither scenario is necessary or acceptable. Indeed, if a person takes spiritual growth seriously, as the Scriptures describe it, they **must** become equally concerned with the needs of people. Compassion demands our sincere, intense concern for the needs of those around us.

The process of spiritual growth is not experienced by focusing our attention on a single facet of growth. Granted, one facet of growth builds upon another. Still, spiritual growth thrives as we focus our attention on becoming more and more like Jesus in every respect.

The "warm fuzzy" era of the Church is not dead, but people within the body of Christ are becoming increasingly aware of its inability to stimulate us to become obedient servants of Jesus Christ.

Believers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to live a holy life. This will introduce them to a level of spiritual confrontation that they have never experienced before. This is what Paul meant when he wrote these words:

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12*

## IMITATORS OF GOD

As spiritual growth takes place, one will experience a shifting of values. This is an essential change. There develops within the body of believers such a shift in values that they will place as much emphasis upon the inner beauty of Christlikeness as they have upon the outward beauty of their church facilities.

The consumerism of our culture has crept into the Church. In many places we have fallen into the trap of trying to capitalize on this misdirection rather than to get rid of it. We need to focus, again, on the servanthood of Jesus as we have the consumerism of program that has moved into the Church.

As believers, we are convinced that we experience all of life in the presence of God. In the Exodus, Israel crossed the desert with the shekinah glory, the visible presence of God, going before them. When David sinned with Bathsheba, it was brought to his attention by the prophet Nathan and the king responded to God,

*Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die." II Samuel 12:13*

Ananias and Sapphira lied to church leaders about the money they gave to the church. The leaders of the church said to them :

*"While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." Acts 5:4*

Jesus said,

*"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'" Matthew 25:40*

In the same way, every effort to grow spiritually takes place in the presence of God. He presides over our effort to become more like Jesus and is a participant in that effort.

Spiritual growth was what Peter had in mind when he wrote,

*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. II Peter 1:4*

It is to become increasingly like Him so that when people look at our lives and the way we deal with problems, they will see something of the nature and character of Jesus.

The apostle Paul encouraged the Ephesian Christians, "Be and always continue to be imitators of God..." Ephesians 5:1. An "imitator" is an actor, one who does another's actions after them.

It is incumbent upon us to declare our allegiance. We are either with Jesus or against Him. We are either actively seeking to grow in our faith every day to be more like Jesus, or we are turning against Him. As the non-Christians of our culture looks at your life and mine, what do they see? Do they see spiritual growth - a life that each day looks more and more like the life of Jesus? What do they see?

If, indeed, we are members of the family of God, then there ought to be a growing family resemblance.