

Women & More

Agape' Strikes Again

Lesson 1: September 3, 2016—*agape'*

Human love won't go the distance: it won't love on!

I love you for now while our friendship is warm
But my love will grow cold in the strain of some storm!
As long as my love for you benefits me,
I'll love 'til the end... whenever that be.

I'll love you for real while our friendship is new
As much as is helpful, I will love you!
But as your need for me lessens but other's do not
You'll find my love shifting as a result.

I mean well, you know, with this love of mine;
I intend to be faithful and *patient* and *kind*.
But as much as I mean and intend to do well,
I'll fall short, be fickle, and ultimately fail.

Unless I have God's love for you my friend,
I'll fail you and fall short, and my love will end.
Because He has promised to love you through me,
I can love on with *agape'* through eternity!

06-10—Jeanene Moore

We must have God's love—*agape'*—described in John 3:16-17 “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall **not perish** but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*”

John 3:16 is called “the gospel in a nutshell” and is the most often quoted Scripture to present salvation to the lost. Notice that **God's love is overwhelming: He loved so much that he gave his one and only Son!** What love; what a *Gift* of love! Those who receive Christ's forgiving work place themselves **squarely in the goodness of God's love**. Because when God looks at the believing and forgiven individual He sees His very own sinless Son!

But notice something else in this very verse that is critical: “*whoever believes in him shall **not perish**.*” This presents the possibility that some will perish...but why? If God loves us so much, why would some people perish? Why can't God just love everybody, the ones who receive His Son and the ones who do not—and ignore sin—after all, verse 17 says that *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world...?*

This is the crux of the gospel message: Jesus—the one and only Son of the Living God—need not have come and died, if God would acquit sin against Him arbitrarily, without blood payment. But Holy God cannot and will not abide sin—and therefore the sinner and the sin-factory within stand condemned. Verses 18-19 of John 3 explain: *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹This is the verdict (insinuates a judgment): Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”*

God completed his work of redemption through the atoning sacrifice of His Son’s cleansing blood—paying for all of our sin—and now it remains the responsibility of the individual to make the choice to believe in the name of God’s Son and have forgiveness of sin and *“eternal life,”* or **not**—to perish—to sin against *Light!* God has mercifully given us *Light* and some chose darkness instead, *“because their deeds were evil.”* They made a choice against the *Light!*

When people sin against *Light*, to perish rather than believe in Christ, does that in any way diminish or discredit the goodness of God’s great love? Absolutely not! But they who chose darkness may forever miss the opportunity to be presented with *Light* to see the Truth of the gospel again. For those who believe in Him who died for our sins, and love Him because He first loved us, **God is so very good: His love endures forever!** But to those who reject—overtly or through neglect—so great salvation, God’s wrath remains on them!

Some unbelieving have asked: “If God is love, how can he send people to hell for not believing in his Son?” **The reason Jesus came and paid for the sins of the world, was to appease God’s wrath toward sin and the sinner.** All of us were headed for hell’s fire—eternally out of the presence of God—because we are all sinners. But God sent his rescuing Arm for sin, so that those who reject will sadly continue on to their just end in hell and away from God’s presence forever. We are reminded that the consequences of rejecting Christ are severe!

One of the most striking components of God’s unbounded love (agape’) is His bounded justice—His punishment for sin! God, who is *LOVE*, is “good,” and also is “just”—severe in judgment! Agape’s goodness and severity—juxtaposed—must not become dissociated in our thinking, **for as great as God’s goodness is to those who love Him, so great is his severity upon those who do not!** This lesson is two-fold: **1)** That God’s love—agape’—will love on and on, and those who are His, by faith, stand sheltered in His great love forever; and **2)** that those who have spurned and rejected His Son’s gift of redemption—**every lost person in the world—will incur God’s wrath!**

There are far more references to God's wrath in Scripture than there are for His love. So the lost are in imminent and eternal peril! And it will help us to understand that **no one stands under the wrath of God, except those who have chosen to do so.** The disciple who went to hell—Judas Iscariot—walked in the personal presence of Jesus, *the Light of the world*, yet chose darkness because his deeds were evil—Scripture says that Satan entered him to do the evil that he did, and we know that Satan cannot enter a believer. It's not often that we are privy to a person's eternal decision—except by their own words—but Scripture let's us know Judas' choice, calling him *"the son of perdition."*

There also are the two criminals who hung on either side of Jesus: Scripture tells us that one chose eternal life and one chose eternal death. What we do with the cross will be our crossroad—the road we choose and the eternity we choose. **Proverbs 16:25** *"There is a way that seems right to a man (woman), but in the end it leads to death."* **And Jeremiah 21:8b** *"...This is what the Lord says, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death."* And 1 John 5:16c *"There is a sin that leads to death,"* refers to the sin of rejecting the Holy Spirit's call to repentance for the last time—leaving this world unpardoned—the unpardonable sin.

The world will hear John 3:16 about God loving them, but often they will shut out what God did to express his love—*gave his one and only Son*—and more often than not they won't consider the fact that their choice not to believe will have eternal consequences. The world will not hear God as Judge: God as having wrath toward sin to the degree that his own Son had to die to pay for it; and that they, in fact, are included among "sinners" and that their sin can only be paid for through Christ's atoning death—receiving him by faith alone.

► False teachers will perpetuate heresy by teaching things like: 1) we are all the sons of God; 2) a God of love will not send anyone to an eternal hell; 3) not to worry, because in the end God will change his mind and let everyone go to heaven, and 4) if you do end up in hell, it won't be as bad as all that, because all your friends will be there. These are lies perpetuated by the father of lies: Satan himself. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: *"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. **Their end will be what their actions deserve.**"*

We must teach and preach the whole Gospel: the goodness and severity of Agape' operating equally as we read in John 3:16. **Men and women come face to face with the wrath of God because His goodness and mercy—remember the 23rd Psalm's "goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"—has been refused!**

And to those who would listen to false teachers, Paul says in Galatians 1:6-9

*"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, **let him be eternally condemned!** ⁹As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, **let him be eternally condemned!**"*

Judgment for sin is prolific in God's word: In **Genesis 6-8** we read about the great flood—judgment upon the sin of the world, saving only righteous Noah and his family. There was Abraham's nephew, Lot, who'd chosen to live in Sodom, and when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness in **Genesis 19:1-29**, Lot and his daughters were spared—his wife looked back and perished. We see God's mercy to the believing in the midst of judgment upon the world. This is why believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air—taken out of this world—before the just severity of the great tribulation occurs.

► **Justice = morally and legally right = righteous.** God plans and purposes judgment; he prepares and pursues *justice*, and his just judgments are right!

-Isaiah 30:18 *"For the LORD is a God of justice..."*

-Isaiah 61:8 *"For I, the LORD, love justice..."*

-Zechariah 7:9 *"Administer true justice; show mercy..."*

-Luke 11:42 *"...you neglect justice and the love of God."*

-Revelation 16:4b *"You are just in these judgments..."*

In Revelation, we see that the Lamb of God who was slain before the foundation of the world for the sins of the world—**love's goodness—is** the roaring Lion of **love's justice**: the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is indignant with evil: It is impossible for him not to judge sin—God's holiness demands it! Psalm 9:7-8 *"The LORD reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. **He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice.**"*

Revelation 18 describes the judgment of that great symbol of evil "Babylon the Great"—the archetype of all evil cities! John, though, is not describing the fall of an earthly city, but "**the great satanic system of evil**" that has corrupted the earth since soon after its creation. And Babylon possesses an interlocking web of sin: **1) Satiety** (luxury to excess—v 3); **2) Pride** (boastful), and **3) Avoidance** (at all cost) of suffering (to any degree)—v 7. And it is interlocking because as **luxury** leads to **boastful** self-reliance and –sufficiency (Ezekiel 28:5), the desire to **avoid suffering** leads right **back to the dishonest pursuit of luxury** (Ezekiel 28:18)!

“Woe! Woe, O great city” (Revelation 18:10, 15, 19). The double “woe” is repeated three times at the sudden and striking downfall of Babylon by those who had reaped from her evils and now were feeling empty and estranged apart from her. The last of 18:8 says, “*She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.*” The three great “lamenters” of Babylon’s destruction were:

1. the **kings** of the earth who committed adultery with her—v 9
2. **merchants** who traded with her and grew rich from her luxuries—v 11
3. **sea captains** who became rich from the cargos they took to her—v 17

And Revelation 18:18-20 and 21-24 describes Babylon’s final death knell because she had deceived the nations, and she had killed God’s people.

The Barker-Kohlenberger *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* says, “One of the great sins of Babylon was her luxury (18:7-9). Because wealth may lead to pride, the prophets and John viewed **excess (surfeit)** as a manifestation of Babylon. Wherever there is idolatry, prostitution, self-glorification, self-sufficiency, pride, complacency, reliance on luxury and wealth, avoidance of suffering, and violence against life (v 24) there is Babylon!” **Does that describe our nation?**

Christians are to separate themselves in every way—ideologically and physically—from all forms of Babylon. Revelation 18:4 “*Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins so that you will not receive any of her plagues.*” Scripture warns professing Christians who are seduced by Satan to abandon their loyalty to Jesus that Agape’s justice is coming—it will come!

We do not need a better world; we need a redeemed world—one soul at a time! Isaiah 30:18 “*Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!*”

1 Corinthians 2:8-9 “*None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written (Isaiah 64:4): ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.’*”

Agape’ compels us who believe to **respond in loving goodness to the plight of lost people**—those who have not received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. **Their greatest need is salvation!** We must, in word and deed, share the gospel with people, and plead with the *Light* of the world to give them another opportunity to repent and choose Him! **And, because we can’t know, we pray this for everyone.** Fanny Crosby in her 1869 hymn, *Rescue the Perishing*, says:

“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.
Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save!”