

## DEFINING SIN

The word “sin” is not used in Genesis, chapter 3 however it *is* described in that chapter. Let’s look at why we say that this is the first description of sin mentioned in the Bible.

I John 3:4 says;

*“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” (NIV)*

So what is he saying here? What is sin? According to this verse, sin is going against the law. Was there a law that Eve went against in Genesis 3? If so, where is it? It’s in Genesis 2:16.

*“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’” (NIV)*

God gave a command. He then gave the consequences of disobeying that command. So what is a command? A command is a law. So what did Adam and Eve do? They broke God’s command. They broke God’s law and what is that called? It’s called sin because sin is lawlessness.

Sin says; “OK, you’re not going to put any restrictions on us. You’re not going to tell us how to walk. You’re not going to tell us how to obey. We don’t want those laws in our lives. You’ve told us but we’re not going to obey You”. That is lawlessness and that is sin.

So what is sin? Sin is not believing God. What is faith? Faith is taking God at His word or taking someone at *their* word. In this case, it’s taking *God* at His word. So sin is not believing God. Sin is acting contrarily to what God commands. The whole point is that we must operate according to what God has said and if we’re acting contrary to that, then that constitutes sin.

Sin is to know that there is a law, that there is a command and say, “We don’t care.” We break the law and we think, we can get away with it — or this law surely wasn’t meant for us. But if it’s a law that’s in the Word of God, we can know it was meant for us because God created us. He made us and put us on this earth and He intends for us to honor Him as God and to keep His commands.

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# DILIGENCE

*“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11*

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*“Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’” (Matthew 22:37-40 KJV)*

*“We love Him because He first loved us.” (I John 4:19 KJV)*

*“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (I John 4:8 KJV)*

Love is obviously a vital theme expressed throughout the New Testament. But what does it mean in today’s culture? Does it always have the same meaning simply because we use the same word? Most of us would readily admit and understand that “love” *does* have different meaning when we use it in different ways. For example, we might say to someone; “I really love the color of your new carpet” or a young man “in love” might say to his fiancé; “I love you very much.” While it may not be *correct* for us to use the same word in so many different ways, it is a fact that we do. And for the most part we understand that the meanings are sometimes quite different. We learn to automatically adjust our interpretation of the word to allow for the various ways the word “love” is used in *our* language and culture today.

So, since we use “love” in so many different ways and automatically (or mentally) adjust its meaning on an “instance by instance” basis, how can we be sure that we understand what is meant each and every time the word “love” appears in the New Testament? Does it always have the *same* meaning when it’s used in the New Testament? If so, which *one* of our English usages should we consistently apply? Should we desire to have a better understanding of what was meant by the writers of the New Testament when the translators chose to use our word “love” when translating from Greek to English? The answer to that question is “yes!” Yes, we should.

Most of us are already aware that the writers of the New Testament used several *different* Greek words that have been translated as our one word “love.” So, would a knowledge of which one of those Greek words was used make a difference as to the way we would understand the Word of God? If it *would* make a difference, what difference would it make? Would we react differently

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to the use of different *Greek* words used for love? Would one Greek word for love manifest itself differently from another in our practice of it depending on which word the New Testament writer used? The answer to that question is also “yes!” Yes, it would (and *does*) make a difference, a significant difference.

When we come across the word “love” while reading the Bible, it is not only important but *necessary* that we go beyond just reading that word and actually determine which *Greek* word was used in any given passage of Scripture. Without this knowledge, our understanding of a Scripture is not complete. A failure to distinguish which *Greek* word was used is quite likely to result in some very erroneous conclusions and practices — especially since the meaning of our word “love” is so ambiguous in society today.

Let’s begin a study of this subject by starting with a list (and very brief definition) of some of the Greek words used for “love.”

**Eros** — generally has to do with sexual love or a passionate love which desires another for itself. *Eros* seeks the fulfillment of its own hunger through using others. It is a self serving love with a sensuous quality. The English word “erotic” is derived from *eros*. *Eros* is generally the love that is experienced when one speaks of “falling in love.” *Eros* is *not* found in the New Testament.

**Storge** — refers to family or natural affection such as parents for children or children for parents. This word is primarily used for love of kindred. Paul used a form of *storge* in a negative sense when he spoke of those who were “without natural affection” (KJV) in Romans 1:31.

**Phileo** — represents tender or genuine affection. One might say this is “heart love” or what we “feel” for those closest to us. *Phileo* denotes an inclination prompted by emotion and senses. Jesus had this kind of love for his disciples (John 20:2) and for Lazarus (John 11:3). Philadelphia (the city of brotherly love) gets its name from this Greek word.

**Agape** — the noblest form of love or the love indicated in the nature of God. *Agape* has to do with the mind. It is *not* an emotion that rises unbidden from the heart but is a principle by which we *deliberately* live. *Agape* is not an impulse from the feelings.

In the next several issues of *Diligence* we will be studying the use of the word “love” in the Scriptures. Our focus will be primarily on *phileo* and *agape* and the use of those words in various passages. We pray that the study will be of benefit to each of us as well as an aid to a more thorough understanding of this vitally important theme woven throughout the Word of God.

Since neither *eros* nor *storge* is going to be the *focus* for this study, let’s begin with a very brief overview of each of those.

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First, *eros*. We stated earlier that *eros* is generally associated with sexual feelings or desires. For example, we do not “fall in love” with our children even though we love them very much. “Falling in love” is almost always sexually motivated — whether consciously or unconsciously and is therefore most closely associated with *eros* feelings. “Falling in love” is temporary. In other words, the feeling of infatuation or ecstasy that is associated with “falling in love” will eventually dissipate. “Falling in love” is also not an act of the will. Nor is it something we choose or choose not to do. It has nothing to do with nurturing one’s spiritual development.

Next, *storge*. We might best describe *storge* by the old phrase “blood is thicker than water.” In Romans 12:10 *storge* is combined with *phileo* to describe the family of God’s people who are tied together by the blood of Christ using the term “kindly affectioned” in the KJV and “devoted” in the NIV. Understanding *storge* may help us to better understand the bond being spoken of when we sing the hymn “Blest Be The Tie That Binds.” Just as “blood relatives” have a relationship that others can not have, so those related by the “blood of Christ” have a spiritual relationship that non-Christians cannot perceive or fully appreciate.

Now, let’s look at *phileo*. We stated earlier that *phileo* is what we might “feel” for those to whom we are the closest. Therefore, since *phileo* is something we “feel” it is obviously connected with our emotions. Love as an emotion, cannot be commanded but rises unbidden from our inner self. *Phileo* (in various forms) is used 31 times in the New Testament. In the KJV it is translated “kiss” 3 times (Luke 22:47; Matt 26:48 and Mark 14:44) and “love” many times. A few examples of the use of some form of *phileo* in the Scriptures are:

“For the Father loveth the Son...” (John 5:20 KJV)

“He that loveth his life shall lose it...” (John 12:25 KJV)

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...” (Matt. 10:37 KJV)

“Let brotherly love continue.” (Heb 13:1 KJV)

*Phileo* is also translated “brotherly kindness” and other similar phrases a few more times. The important thing to remember about *phileo* is that it is an emotional kind of love that is generated through feelings and therefore there is warmth involved with *phileo*.

Since our study of *agape* will be more lengthy than space would allow in this issue, we will wait until the next issue of *Diligence* to begin our study of that Greek word.