

— *AFTERTHOUGHTS* —

The *AFTERTHOUGHTS* articles are a bonus column included in *Diligence* when space permits. These articles include a continuing theme just as the main *Diligence* articles often do. Back issues of *Diligence* can be found online.

MORE ON SIN

We saw in the last “*AFTERTHOUGHTS*” article (issue 6) that sin is lawlessness (I John 3:4). Sin is not believing God. Sin is acting contrarily to what God says. In I John 5:17 we have another definition of sin. It says that

“*All unrighteousness is sin...*” (KJV)

Sin is not *some* unrighteousness but *all* unrighteousness is sin. What is unrighteousness (or “wrongdoing” as the NIV says)? Unrighteousness is to know what is right and not do it, to act contrary to it. So we may say, “But who knows what is right? Everybody has his or her own opinion.” So which opinion is right and which opinion is wrong? Well, that’s easy to know if we know the Word of God, because if it doesn’t line up with the Word of God, then it’s wrong. If it doesn’t fall in accordance with the “plumb line” of the Word of God, it’s wrong! What’s a plumb line? A plumb line is something that we drop when we’re building a house or putting up wallpaper, or when we want to put up a straight board. A plumb line is a string with a weight at the bottom of it. We drop the weight, and when the string stops swaying back and forth the line of the string shows us what is absolutely straight. Well, the Bible talks about plumb lines in the Old Testament (Amos 7:1-9) and the Word of God is *our* plumb line. The Scriptures tells us what is right. That is where God lays down a plumb line. He lays down a standard. *That* is what is right. There is a path of righteousness and God is the one who says what is right and what is wrong.

We’re living in a day, an age, and a society where people are saying; “Everybody’s doing it so it’s not wrong”. Society says that it’s alright for a man and a woman to co-habitate together, to live together, and to sleep together outside of marriage. Society says that’s perfectly acceptable. People are also saying that homosexuality is all right and that we should vote to allow homosexuals to have the same status that married couples have. Is that right? Well, how do we know? We know for certain by going to the Word of God and seeing if *God* says it’s right or if *God* says it is wrong. *That’s* where we find our answers to such questions.

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

“*He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*” John 12:25 (KJV)

“*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*” Matthew 10:37 (KJV)

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

Familiar scriptures? Probably so. But do you remember from an earlier issue which Greek word for “love” was used by the New Testament writer in each of these? All were some form of *phileo*. This should make it clear to us that *phileo* is a *very* important part of the Word of God — especially when we read John 12:25. Its importance becomes even *more* evident when we read I Corinthians 16:22.

“*If anyone does not love (phileo) the Lord — a curse be on him....*” (NIV)

If you’ve been studying along regularly with us, we’ve already learned quite a bit about *phileo* love. We know that it is an emotional kind of love prompted by the senses and that it is generated through feelings. We also know that emotions cannot be commanded but rather rise unbidden from our inner self.

Phileo is not only important to God, it is also important in our relationship with each other. However some of the Scriptures we have just read indicate that *phileo* can be both acceptable (John 5:20 and Hebrews 13:1) and unacceptable (John 12:25 and Matthew 10:37) to God. *That* should pique our interest to want to know more about it.

So how can we know when *phileo* is acceptable and when it is *not* acceptable to God? John 16:27 states:

“*...the Father Himself loves (phileo) you because you have loved (phileo) Me and have believed that I came from God.*” (NIV)

This Scripture tells us that the emotional affection God has for us is *because* we have emotional affection for Jesus *and* because we believe that He sent His Son to us.

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The opposite is true as well as noted in John 3:36.

“...whoever rejects the Son...God’s wrath remains on him.” (NIV)

So the Scriptures indicate that we are to *phileo* God and He will *phileo* us because we believe that it is His Son that was sent for our reconciliation.

Let’s move forward now and consider our relationship with one another. In Romans 12:10 we read:

“Be devoted (*phileo*+*storge*) to one another in brotherly love (*philadelphia*). Honor one another above yourselves.” (NIV)

As members of the Body of Christ who have acknowledged God’s Son as our Savior, we are to continue to extend *phileo* love to one another. If we read on in Romans 12, verse 18 we find the following:

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (NIV)

It is clear that we are to pursue peace. However when we read Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:34-39 it also becomes clear that division will sometimes occur because of doing the right thing.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth (*phileo*) father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth (*phileo*) son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.” (KJV)

Now, when we put all of this together with an understanding of how *phileo* and *agape* love differ from each other, we begin to see more clearly just how loving (or *phileo*-ing) “father or mother more than (God)” can prevent us from being worthy of the Salvation that is available to us through the Blood of Jesus. We now understand that *phileo* is a product of feelings and emotions and that *phileo* is the word used for “love” in Matthew 10:37. Therefore, if we *phileo* others to the extent that we cannot acknowledge God’s Son for fear of rejection by family, friends and etc, we are not worthy of His Son’s Salvation. The unworthiness is a result of our being unwilling to put God above our selfish need to maintain “warm, fuzzy feelings” that accompany *phileo*.

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God commands us to practice a love (*agape*) that will override our natural inclination to act in response to a selfish desire that is driven by our need to be liked by others. Submitting *only* to the need to have others like us (an emotional response) without practicing the love we are *commanded* to obey (*not* an emotional response) is quite easy. For by doing so, we never face the risk of offending someone by telling them that their soul may be lost for eternity. Neither do we ever have to confront anyone with the truth if they are engaging in some sin forbidden by the Scriptures. Therefore, one who exercises *phileo* love to the point of placing “warm fuzzy feelings” above souls or rejecting Salvation because of fear of offending family or friends is indeed not worthy of Him.

So, can we overcome our fears of placing a relationship in jeopardy in order to serve God in an acceptable way? We surely can! It may not be easy but remember that we are *commanded* to do so in John 13:34.

“A new command I give you: Love (*agape*) one another. As I have loved (*agape*) you, so you must love (*agape*) one another.” (NIV)

So it is certainly not impossible. Let’s read I John 4:18.

“There is no fear in love (*agape*). But perfect love (*agape*) drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love (*agape*).” (NIV)

There it is! That’s it! Perfect love — *agape* love — drives **out** fear! If we practice, obey and understand *agape* love, we will not fear the things that frighten us emotionally. As Christians who are to *phileo* others, we will do *everything* we possibly can to protect a relationship, but will not allow our fear of jeopardizing that relationship to *overtake* us. For —

“The one who fears is not made perfect in love (*agape*).”

We can know that we are allowing our fears to overtake us when we are tempted to avoid being truthful in order to protect ourselves or our own feelings.

Let’s go back for just a moment and discuss the vital role that *phileo* plays in the life of a Christian. In our relationship with Christians and non-Christians, showing love (*phileo*) toward one another is essential. When dealing with non-Christians, their acceptance of us on an emotional level through *phileo* may be the *only* way they will be receptive to hearing the Gospel. Application of *agape* with no regard for the emotional side (or *phileo*) can be destructive if not handled carefully. The love that God has entrusted to us — be it *phileo* or *agape* should not be treated lightly if we are to be known by our love.

In the next issue, our study will continue with “Known By Our Love.”.