

LOVE DIVINE

1.0 Greetings, brethren around the globe, in the name and merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- We bring you the love of your brethren in the Connellsville, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. ecclesia

2.0 Our subject is Love Divine - the love of God. God personifies this highest standard of love.
- Consequently, all meritorious discussions on love must be built on this one superlative standard.
- Our Central Ohio brethren chose love of the brethren as the theme of this convention.
- 1 Jo.3:14 "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren..."
- Before we can profitably discuss love amongst each other, we must discuss God's love.
- That's why the Central Ohio brethren rightly elected to begin this convention with the love of God.
- The focus of this hour is not love of brethren. Our focus is God's foundation for love of brethren.

3.0 Love is one of God's attributes, but it is not the only one. God has three other attributes.
- Rev. 4:7 identifies all four of God's attributes. Each attribute is symbolized by a creature.
- The 4 creatures are a lion, calf, man, and an eagle representing power, justice, love, and wisdom.
- Every attribute is living - involved in every one of God's thoughts and actions. They are who he is.
- Rev.4:8 "And the four [living creatures] had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.
- Notice that not a single one of these attributes ever rests day or night. They are always engaged.
- By focusing on God's love during this discourse, we do not imply the other attributes are dormant.
- When God exercises love, he is inherently involving all his other attributes as well, to some degree.
- With any given activity, one of God's attributes might be more prominent than the others.
- But God never exercises love or any attribute to the complete exclusion of any of the other three.

4.0 Why are we deeply interested in the love of God? We offer three reasons.
- First, attaining the love of God is what God wants for us. It's what he wants to see us become.
- God wants his character to be reflected in you and in me – and in every single one of his children.
- Because it's what God wants, it's what we want. We want to understand it. We want to gain it.
- We want God's character, his love, to dwell in us, in each other, & we in Him. 1 Jo.4:16; Rom.5:5
- Second, attaining the love of God in us is not just important. Its presence determines our future.
- Unless we attain the love of God in our hearts in this life, we have no future in God's family. QB449
- If we don't develop the love of God in our hearts, the theme text says we will abide in death. 1 Jo.3:14
- Third, the love of God is what we will be developing in the world of mankind – the restitution class.
- Any person who does not develop the love of God will not be granted eternal life on any plane. QB449
- In the mediatorial kingdom, The Christ will be primarily responsible to teach the world God's love.
- In order to be best qualified to teach it, we need to know it. And we need it to be who we are.
- The best professors I had in college were those who had personally become what they taught me.

5.0 Exactly what is the love of God? God's love has two different, yet harmonious dimensions.
- These two dimensions are commonly referred to in the New Testament as agape and phileo.
- But there's more to it. Agape is a noun. The verb form is agapao. The grammar teaches two things.
- First, the love of God is a subject. A character trait. Second, the love of God is an activity. It's action.

- The same grammar distinction applies to phileo. Phileo is a verb. Its noun form is philos.
- One way to remember the verb forms of these words is that each ends in "o". Agapao and Phileo.
- Our remarks today discuss God's love in the context of these four Greek words – nouns and verbs.
- We omit discussing Old Testament love. Not because God's love is not there. God's love IS there.
- However, the Greek language makes the two dimensions of God's love more easily distinguishable.

5.1 Apostle John tells us that God is agape. Agape is the first dimension of the love of God.

- 1 Jo.4:8 "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.
- Agape is of God. God is the origin of agape. God is its chief exemplar - its personification.
- 1 Jo.4:7 "...love is of God and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God."
- What exactly is agape? Admittedly, our thoughts fall short of a full explanation. But we'll try.

5.1.1 We start our discussion on what agape is by identifying what it is not.

- God's agape is not a feeling. It is not an emotion. It does not involve crying or laughing or affection.
- Agape is not a warm feeling. It's not a happy feeling. It's not a sad or a cold feeling.
- But to say it is not an emotion is not to say that God exercises his agape without passion or focus.
- We believe that God exercises his agape with considerable passion, energy, purpose, and resolve.
- Our point is that agape is not a feeling. It's a steady and unchangeable character trait - a principle.

- Now that we have an idea of what agape is not, let's consider the qualities that comprise agape.
- The authoritative source that identifies these qualities are the scriptures themselves.
- More than 250 scriptures use agape or agapao. Many more describe it without using the words.
- Obviously, we'll be limited in what texts we use to identify the qualities of agape and agapao.

5.1.2 One of agape's chief qualities is that of impartiality.

- God manifests and exercises his agape toward everyone in every situation without bias.
- There is no time, place, person, or circumstance where God withholds exercising his agape.
- This is why agape is properly characterized as impartial, unbiased, without prejudice, objective.
- God's agape does not play favorites. Why not? Because his agape prohibits being arbitrary.
- God never says: "I'm going to agapao this person because I really like them."
- "But I'm not going to agapao that person because I don't like them or what they've done."
- God's agape benefits everyone whether directly or indirectly, whether realized now or later.
- Agape could be labelled as "best interest always for everyone love" or simply "best interest" love.
- However, the love of God does not necessarily result in the same exact blessings to all.
- God's blessings clearly differ among the new creation, great company, angels, world of mankind, etc
- The church receives immortality. The Great Company and angels do not.
- The world – the restitution class – gets what Adam originally had – human perfection.
- But these differences do not constitute partiality. These differences are not arbitrary or biased.
- For every creature on every plane of existence, God ultimately gives the fullness of his blessing.
- By giving the fullness of his blessing to each one on each plane of existence, God shorts no one.
- There is no partiality by each receiving the maximum amount of blessing they can contain.
- Let's now consider specific examples of God exercising his agape, his impartiality, benefitting all.

5.1.2.1 God manifested and exercised his agape toward his own begotten son. Jo.3:35; 15:9; 17:25,26

- Jo.3:35 "The Father loveth [agapao] the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."
- God exercised his agape when he created the logos and offered him some special work to do.

- God offered the logos a partnership with him in the creation of all things and beings. Prov.8; Jo.1:3
- This was a great act of love toward the logos. But it was also an act of impartial love toward all.
- Every creature benefits from the work the logos did to create the heavens, earth, & inhabitants.

- God further exercised his agape toward his son when he offered him another special work.
- God offered him the opportunity to exchange his spiritual existence for that of a man. Heb.12:2; Phil.2:7,8
- He offered his son the opportunity to save the entire human race by sacrificing his humanity. Jo.10:17
- And when Jesus successfully endured the cross, God highly exalted him above all. Eph.1:20-22; Phil.2:9-11

- In offering Jesus these special opportunities, God was not acting arbitrarily for two reasons.
- First, from God's standpoint, Jesus merited God's offer for Jesus to become a man & be a savior.
- The logos faithfully carried out God's will in the creative work and thereafter up to his earthly birth.

- As a man, Jesus voluntarily and faithfully humbled himself to manhood and voluntarily died. Jo.10:18
- In giving his human life for the world, Jesus did a work that was impossible for God to do himself.
- A divine being cannot die. Therefore, God could not give his life as a legal offset for sin – a ransom.
- In virtually all things, past, present, and future, Jesus has the preeminence. Col.1:18
- Jesus labored tirelessly for ions – more than anyone else - in doing the will of his Father.
- By giving up his life as a ransom, he did something that nobody else could do. That's preeminence!
- There is nothing prejudicial by one getting a preeminent reward in exchange for preeminent service.

- There is another reason that God did not act arbitrarily in giving Jesus these special opportunities.
- What Jesus did in carrying out God's will and the high exaltation he received benefits everyone.
- His work as the logos – his giving his human life – his exaltation to the divine nature benefits all.
- Those benefits may be past, present or future. And they may be direct or indirect.
- God's exercise of his agape toward his son benefits all who are willing to receive those benefits.
- Doing what is in everyone's best interest is the keynote of agape – the love of God. R4809:3

- God exercises his agape toward us, the prospective members of the new creation. 1 Jo.4:8,9; Jo.14:21
- Jo.14:21 "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."
- God first manifested his agape toward the body members of the new creation by giving his son.
- That certainly benefits us because it enables us to be faith justified, faith reconciled to God. Ro.5:1

- It enables us to enter into a covenant of sacrifice with God and lay down our humanity. Psa.50:5; Rom.12:1
- God giving us his son enables us to have life, and if we are faithful, life more abundantly. Jo.10:10
- The body members have experienced privation, suffering, and hardship in an unfriendly world.
- They have not suffered as much as our Lord Jesus when he gave his life, but still they suffered.
- Jo.16:2,33 "...the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. ...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
- As part of their covenant with God, he agreed to give them, if faithful, a crown of life. Rev.2:10

- God's exercise of his agape toward the body members obviously benefits them.
- But by creating a corporate Messiah, one with a head and body, goes far beyond benefitting them.
- Creating a divine corporate Messiah with all power in heaven & earth ultimately benefits everyone.
- This corporate Messiah is comprised of one former perfect man and 144,000 former human sinners.
- That's the ideal combination. It's the most effective at redeeming the greatest number of sinners.
- Former sinners can say to recovering sinners, "I understand. I went through that. I had to fight that."

- This Messiah will have the power and experience to develop individualized recovery plans for each
- This Messiah will be able to relate to every single sinner who desires to be reconciled to God.
- Conversely, every sinner will get the maximum benefit from the recovery plan designed for them.
- The result for all the willing and obedient will be their character restoration to God's image. Gen.1:26

- However, God exercising his agape to benefit The Christ and the human race goes beyond them.
- By creating and empowering this unique Messiah results in the maximum blessing to all of creation.
- The grand result of the work of the Messiah will be the reconciliation of all sentient beings.
- In the fullness of time, all things and beings will be gathered together in harmony in Christ.
- Eph.1:10 "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:"

- All beings on all planes of existence will be at one with God & in harmony with each other. 1 Cor.15:28
- Having a fully restored and re-unified spiritual & human family is a result that benefits everyone.
- The grand result will be that God - his character - will be all in all. That's God's agape! 1 Cor.15:28

5.1.2.2 Let's look at a second example of impartiality - God exercising his agape that benefits all.

- This example pertains to the disciplinary actions that God orchestrates involving many.
- Our thesis for this multi-part example is that God's disciplinary actions manifest his agape. Let's see.

- We first consider the disciplinary action God takes with regard to his spiritual sons – the saints.
- God exercises his agape toward every one of sons by developmental experiences.
- Heb.12:6 "For whom the Lord agapao he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."
- This verse applied to our Lord. He learned obedience through the things he suffered. Heb.5:8

- When Jesus was first begotten as a new creature, he was not fully developed. He had to be tested.
- He had to learn obedience under the most adverse conditions to crystalize his character. R1759
- The captain of our salvation had to be made – and was made - perfect through suffering. Heb.2:10
- Also, Jesus' unrelenting faithfulness demonstrated to everyone his worthiness of the highest reward.

- God treats us, as embryo new creatures, just as he did with Jesus. We need pruning experiences.
- Our Heavenly Father, as the great husbandman, exercises his agape to help us develop.
- He knows we're weak. He knows we tend to cling to earthly things too much. So he prunes us. Jo.15:2
- He wants us to be robust spiritual fruit bearers. The only way to do that is by proper pruning.

- Instinctively, we might think that orchestrating hard experiences is a sign of God's lack of agape.
- Not so. Disciplinary experiences are a clear manifestation and exercise by God of his agape.
- God wanted Jesus to succeed. He wants us to succeed. He knows hard experiences are vital.
- And he knows that the successful development of the new creation is key to blessing everyone.
- God's agape exercised by way of developmental experiences ultimately does benefit everyone.

- God also carries out disciplinary action on a collective basis to all mankind.
- We're speaking of the permission of evil. It's a disciplinary action that began when Adam disobeyed.
- The permission of evil has resulted in considerable suffering for every member of the human race.
- Is the permission of evil a manifestation of God's agape toward the human race? We believe so.

- God created man and equipped him with two vital qualities: a conscience and liberty of choice.
- Man's conscience gave him a moral sense - the ability to distinguish right from wrong
- Man's liberty of choice enabled him to choose to do right -- or choose to do wrong.

- God knew that the only way his creatures would be eternally happy was to choose to do right.
- So, the question became what is the best and most effective way to get man to choose right?
- God's answer is not just tell him about the consequences of doing evil but have him experience it.
- That's the permission of evil. Giving man a severe experience with sin and the suffering it brings.
- This nighttime of suffering is followed by giving the human race the polar opposite experience.

- On a collective basis, our returned Lord has already begun showing the benefits of choosing right.
- For example, by increased knowledge, man collectively has begun to choose clean water over dirty.
- Since 1874, nearly every nation has chosen to imbed in their constitutions man's right to clean water
- This is just one example of how collective man has begun to choose right and to disapprove wrong.

- During the Mediatorial kingdom, man individually will experience the rewards of doing right.
- That contrasting experience will likely cause most to choose God and choose to do right eternally.
- The mediatorial kingdom will not just change man's collective conduct. It will change his heart Jer.13:31
- God seeks those who genuinely want to voluntarily worship him in spirit and in truth. Jo.4:23,24
- That's what God wants for all because he knows that choosing God maximizes man's quality of life.

- God's plan that includes 6000+ years of sin, evil, dying, and death manifests his agape for all.
- Permitting evil has affected everyone in some way or degree. And it benefits everyone. Gen.3:22; A135:2
- It benefits humanity by experientially teaching them to hate sin. To never want to sin again.
- It benefits the angels as observers of what results from sin and disobedience.
- By the end of the little season, it will have demonstrably vindicated God and his agape for all.

5.1.2.3 There are many other examples of God's agape that may be counterintuitive.

- God chose to incarcerate the disobedient angels in chains of darkness, then give them liberty. Jude 6
- The incarceration was a disciplinary action. It gave them time to think and to repent, if they would.
- God could have just executed them for their rebellion, but no, he wanted them to choose life.

- Adamic death is another manifestation of God's agape.
- God allows each individual enough time and experience with evil to get the needed lessons.
- But he limits each one's experience by limiting the length of their lives.
- If God allowed sinners to live too long, it is likely that some may degrade beyond recovery.
- Again, God manifests his agape because he wants everyone who will to be recovered and to live.

- Second death to Satan in due time and to all who are incorrigible is a manifestation of God's agape.
- God's ways are the only ways to true happiness. Those who choose otherwise will be miserable.
- God cannot and will not allow troublemakers, rebels, and unhappiness in his eternal family.
- The loving way to handle ones who can't fit into God's blessed kingdom is simply to remove them.

- The "iron rule", "little season", destroying Satan – these and others are examples of God's agape.
- In fact, we suggest that there is not one aspect of God's plan that fails to manifest his agape.

5.1.3. Another quality of God's agape that we want to highlight is the spirit of forgiveness.

- Much of what we've said thus far about the qualities of agape have implied forgiveness.
- But we want to take a few moments to simply mention forgiveness specifically.
- God foreknew man would choose to sin. And he knew the temporary allowance of sin was essential
- He knew the temporary allowance of sin was essential to finishing the work of the 7 creative days.

- God's ultimate objective was to have a unified, healthy, happy family. That meant no sin.

- God knew that to finish his creative work, he had to allow sin. But then he had to remove it legally.
- So, we can see that God's spirit of forgiveness played a pivotal role in his ultimate objective.

5.1.4 God's agape is self-actuating. God does not wait for some precipitating cause from others.

- It is not actuated in response to some act of loyalty or kindness first taken by others.
- Rather, God's agape is always ready to spring into action. It's always ready to manifest itself. R4809:3
- As one example, God did not wait for us to love him before he loved us. Quite the contrary.
- Solely because of his inherent agape, God initiated an act of blessing. 1 Jo.4:10.

- While we were yet sinners, God manifested his agape toward us by giving us his son. Rom.5:8
- We did absolutely nothing to deserve or merit such a loving response from God.
- Also, God gave his only son so that those who choose to accept his sacrifice will live forever. Jo.3:16
- Giving a bunch of sinners who deserved death a way of back to life was purely self-actuated.
- There was no external force or constraint pressuring God to provide a way of salvation for sinners.
- God's sole motivation came from within himself. His motivation sprang from his own agape.

5.2 We suggested earlier that the love of God has two harmonious dimensions – agape & philos.

- Before discussing philos, we echo an earlier comment about phileo and philos.
- Phileo is Str.#5368. It's a verb, an action word. Philos is Str. #5384. It's a noun, a subject or object.
- Most of us are used to speaking of "agape and phileo". But that compares a noun with a verb.
- The grammatically correct comparison between the two kinds of love is agape and philos.
- The verb form of the two kinds of love is agapao and phileo. Both verb forms end in "o".
- Philos is a warm, personal affection. It's the love that exists among family members. R4183:6
- It's the love between husband & wife; parents & children, and close friends. It involves emotion.
- In Matt.10:37, Jesus said those who phileo natural parents more than Jesus were not worthy of him.
- From this example, Jesus teaches us that philos is affection love among family members.
- In distinct contrast to agape which is not an emotional love, philos is an emotional love. //Jo.15:19
- Philos denotes a personal attachment, a personal affection, a personal relationship. Ro.12:10; Titus 3:15
- We might label philos as "personal affection love". It's manifested when there is personal attachment
- Jesus provides us with a wonderful example that philos is personal affection and...
- ...and that philos is exercised when there is a personal relationship or personal attachment.
- When Lazarus died, what did Jesus do? He went to Lazarus and to Lazarus' mourning family.
- As Jesus looked upon Lazarus' lifeless body, he quietly expressed sympathy. How?
- Jo.11:35 "Jesus wept." A quiet tear of pity and sympathy for the death of his dear friend.
- When the family and friends who were there saw Jesus weeping, they make a key observation
- Jo.11:36 "Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! The verb "loved" here is phileo.
- This incident shows us that philos and phileo is a deep personal tender affectionate love.
- Lazarus was a very dear and close friend of Jesus. Jesus had deep personal fondness for him.
- Jesus' tears helps us to see that philos encompasses such qualities as sympathy and compassion.

5.2.1 We rarely refer to God exercising philos perhaps because of texts like 1 Jo.4:8 "God is agape".

- Does God exercise phileo - affection - to anyone? If so, to whom and under what circumstances?
- The apostle John gives us a portion of the answer of how and where God exercises philos.
- Jesus said in Jo.5:20 "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel."

- Again, the verb “loveth” here is phileo. How did God exercise his phileo toward his son Jesus?
- God took his son into his personal confidence. God revealed his plans to Jesus.
- God manifested his personal trust in Jesus. Placing your personal trust in someone is philos.
- Again, we find that philos is exercised when the parties have established a personal relationship.
- Jo. 16:27 adds another dimension. There Jesus says, “The Father himself phileo you....”
- God has certainly manifested his philos to you and to me. He has taken us into his confidence.
- Psalms 25:14 “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.
- God has chosen to reveal to you and to me the wonders and breath of the Abrahamic covenant.
- How many other people in the world know anything about the Abrahamic covenant or its breadth?
- The Abrahamic covenant means the fullness of blessing to the church, great co., Israel, the world.
- God’s entrusts you and me with that information. That’s God’s philos manifested to you and to me.
- That’s because God has begotten us and we are embryo members of his spiritual family.

5.2.2 However, there are temporary limits on where God manifests his philos at the present time.

- God exercises agape toward the world. But he does not exercise philos toward the world presently.
- God has no affection for the present evil world. The world is at enmity with God. Rom.8:7; Jas.4:4
- God has no affection whatsoever for evil, or sin, or pride, or injustice, or for Satan. Prov.6:16
- But God will have personal affection for the world and everyone in it once all is back at one with him.
- And once God’s family is fully at one with him on every plane, everyone will phileo everyone else.
- In the future, philos will be prominent with everyone, everywhere. God will be all in all. 1 Cor 15:28

5.2.3. The question may come to mind, what is the relationship between agape and philos?

- Is agape superior to philos? Is agape somehow better than philos? Is philos an immature love?
- Is philos a defective love? Is it incomplete? Is it substandard? We don’t believe so.
- As we saw, God exercises phileo toward Jesus. God exercises phileo toward us.
- Jesus exercised phileo toward Lazarus. Jesus exercises phileo toward us – his prospective bride.
- God cannot do or exercise any quality which is inferior, substandard, imperfect, or incomplete.
- Neither can Jesus. Both God and Jesus are perfect. So, they can’t do something imperfect.
- The fact that both God and Jesus exercise phileo proves that it is a perfect and complete love.
- Each of the two dimensions of God’s love are beautiful & perfect and complete in their own right.
- We prefer to think of these two dimensions as simply different, and not as superior or inferior.
- It is true that agape temporarily has a broader application than philos because....
- Agape is exercised toward saint and sinner, toward friend and foe, toward everyone, always.
- Phileo is exercised only toward those with whom there is a personal relationship.
- Once all are back into at-one-ment with God, that will be everyone. But for now, it’s limited.
- But its limitation does not make philos imperfect, substandard, or incomplete. Philos is Godly love!

6.0 In summary, the love of God is comprised of agape as well as philos.

- Agape is “best interest always for everyone love” and philos is “personal affection love”.
- They are both part of God’s character. And he wants them to be part of our character.
- In fact, he requires them to be part of the character of every intelligent member of his entire family.
- God exercises agape toward all now and always. He exercises philos only to those in his family.
- We end with 1 Cor 15:28: And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.