

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Last week's Sabbath Thought discussed the influence of ancient Greek philosophy upon faith, grace, hope, peace, righteousness, and soundmindedness. Instead of reflecting an active life under covenant with God, they have become emotional states of mind. But what about agape love? How does the Bible define it and, most importantly, what does it mean for those in covenant with God?

The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God<sup>1</sup> but it also says that faith without works is dead<sup>2</sup>. Obviously, there are works required by people in covenant with God. But quite often, salvation is associated only with works of God. This seeming conflict is the result of confusing the works of God that produce salvation with the works of people that are REQUIRED for salvation.

Scripture indeed says that salvation is not by our works but by works of God<sup>3</sup>; however, without reciprocal works of repentance and overcoming sin, the works of God have no effect. The works of people fall far short of God's perfection required for eternal life but when they are in harmony and commensurate with God's works then perfection is possible.

Agape love also seemingly has two main but different meanings—perfect Law-keeping<sup>4</sup> and heartfelt emotions<sup>5</sup>. This is because agape love develops over time so the differences reflect different stages of growth. In reality, agape love is both.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of agape love is that it involves works. True love for someone is always shown by works. At least in times past, a young man who was attracted to a woman would court her. He would initially show his interest by, perhaps, sending flowers. Likewise with God because He loved us first:

1 JOHN 4:19 We love Him [*God the Father*] because **He first loved us**.

He demonstrated His desire to enter into a relationship with us through a very special and personal act of love. Sacrificing His Son to redeem us was an act or work that reflected the immeasurable depth<sup>6</sup> of His love and desire for a relationship with people:

ROMANS 5:8 But **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**.

JOHN 3:16 “For **God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 11:6.

<sup>2</sup> Jas. 2:17, 20, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 119:138, 172.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 12:30.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. 3:17-19.

After sending flowers, a young man might then ask the woman to go on a date—dinner, movies, walks, etc. These, too, are works; unmistakable *actions* that reveal his interest in the woman. In the case with God, He calls<sup>7</sup> those He is seeking. If they are truly interested, He does something very special—He begins to reveal His Law influenced by a Helper—the Holy Spirit—to understand and start keeping it.

Everyone in a relationship communicate their love by doing things for each other (works). The same is true with God and His children; both must do works to reveal their hearts. But agape love is unique—it only comes from God. It is not a natural affection of flesh and blood. People are born with the ability to love spouses, family, and friends but agape love is greater than any human love. Agape love is the only form that can love an enemy<sup>8</sup>. For people to have agape love, it must come from God. This is why He reveals His Law because the whole purpose for obeying it is to produce hearts of pure agape love<sup>9</sup>. In other words, the Law teaches agape love and keeping God's Law is called righteousness. The problem is that righteous works of people unto the Law fall far short of God's righteousness so only He can perfect someone. As people obey His Law, they also grow in agape love.

God is eternal and a relationship with Him must also be eternal eventually. After a person fully commits to a relationship, God begins the real work to transform a mortal being to an eternal one. This is called the process of salvation and it requires being perfected like God.<sup>10</sup> But that is only possible with His works that produce agape love and righteousness:<sup>11</sup>

**ROMANS 5:21** so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign **through righteousness to eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If there is to be a relationship between a young man and woman, at some point she must respond to him with works of her own; otherwise, how does he know if she is interested? Similarly, those who want a relationship with God must respond with their own works. God initially showed His love by sacrificing His Son and giving His Holy Spirit to reveal His Law and righteousness. But the works of God require reciprocal WORKS from those who desire a relationship with Him. These works are commonly called repentance and overcoming of sin<sup>12</sup>:

**ACTS 26:20** “but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that **they should repent**, turn to God, and **do works befitting repentance**.

At some point in the beginning relationship between a young man and woman, she transitions from being attracted to his wonderful qualities to a deeper commitment of sharing the joys of her life with him. Responding to God's works with repentance and overcoming of sin shows a commitment to a relationship with Him in an eternal life of joy and peace possible only by the terms of His righteousness.

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<sup>7</sup> John 6:44.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Sabbath Thoughts [2022-07-02 – Agape Love Of God](#) and [2022-12-31 – What is Agape Love?](#)

<sup>9</sup> Ps. 51:10; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2; 1 Tim. 1:5; Jas. 2:8.

<sup>10</sup> Col. 3:14; Heb. 5:9; John 2:5; 4:12, 17, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to the Bible Study “[The Law of Death & the Law of Life.](#)”

<sup>12</sup> 2 Cor. 7:10—The word *produces* (G2716) means *to WORK fully*.

But there are other works required by people. These are not for the purpose of righteous Law-keeping; instead, they are motivated by agape love. If the relationship between a young man and woman reaches the stage of marital commitment, not only have they communicated their love to each other by their works but they also want share that love with children. Likewise, agape love motivates people to share the joys of a relationship with God through acts that serve others called Good Works<sup>13</sup>. Paul calls them the Administrative Service of Giving and Receiving<sup>14</sup>. God IS agape love<sup>15</sup> and God also does Good Works<sup>16</sup>:

MATTHEW 7:11 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how **much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

Good Works are also required for salvation because they are the basis for God’s JUDGMENT. This is clear in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats and the Revelation letters to the *ekklesia* in the seven townships.<sup>17</sup> What is God judging? Whether or not a person is growing in His agape love and righteousness. In other words, the works of God and the reciprocal works of repentance and overcoming by people produce pure hearts of agape love but Good Works are the evidence for it. Everyone in an eternal relationship with God will be judged<sup>18</sup> by their Good Works, the evidence that the works of God are producing FRUITS of Righteousness:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10 Now may He [*God the Father*] who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and **increase the fruits of your righteousness,**

HEBREWS 12:11 Now no chastening [*discipline, correction (for righteousness)*] seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward **it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it.

There is a clear and unmistakable connection between growing in agape love and producing Fruits of Righteousness:

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11 And this I [*Paul*] pray, that **your love may abound still more and more** in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve [*choose*] the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 **being filled with the fruits of righteousness** which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The Fruits of Righteousness and the Fruits of the Spirit are the same; as Paul says, “**the fruit of the Spirit is in all** goodness, **righteousness,** and truth.”<sup>19</sup> But Fruits are not something to possess, they are meant to be Good Works that benefit others:<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eph. 2:10; 2 Thess. 2:17; 1 Tim. 5:10, 25; 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:17; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8; Heb. 10:24; 13:21; et al.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Cor. 9:6-13.

<sup>15</sup> 1 John 4:8, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 7:11; 19:17; Jas. 1:17.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 25:31-46 and Rev. 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10.

<sup>19</sup> Eph. 5:9.

COLOSSIANS 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being **fruitful in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Fruits benefit others. They are Good Works motivated by agape love. This is why they are the basis for judgment of an eternal relationship with God!

Agape love is the special love that comes only from God. It is a heartfelt emotion but it develops by righteously keeping God's Law, which is a Way of Life BASED upon agape love that serves others by *acts* (works) of kindness. A relationship begins when an act of kindness is received with appreciation and gratitude. It grows through the reciprocation of works—acts of love—to each other. That is why a covenant relationship with God is mirrored by a family with parents and children:

EPHESIANS 5:31-32 “For this reason **a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.**” 32 This is a great mystery, but **I [Paul] speak concerning Christ and the *ekklesia* [“the assembly of the redeemed”].**

God first loved us and demonstrated His desire to have a relationship through the act of sacrificing His Son. To those who respond to His love call He offers a Way of Life filled with joy and peace that is mirrored by keeping His Law. To have an eternal relationship with God requires becoming like His is—perfect in righteousness and agape love. This involves turning to God for forgiveness through works of repentance and overcoming of sin. This is when He attributes His righteousness to the person and it is the beginning of the relationship. God continues His works of teaching, inspiring, strengthening, and helping each person by another work of love—the gift of His Holy Spirit. In response, a person does even greater works of keeping His Law and overcoming sin. As these works continue, they produce Fruits of Righteousness, also called Fruits of the Spirit, which are Good Works that benefit others. They are evidence of agape love and the basis for determining the final consummation of a relationship with God—the judgment for eternal life.

The Bible is a love story that started before time existed. It is the account of a Creator who had such a desire to share His love<sup>21</sup> that He created people whom He can transform<sup>22</sup> into agape love by His works along with theirs. But these children are not the final chapter. After them, God will continue His works alongside His Firstfruit children to spread His agape love to the rest of the world. Only when the whole of Creation is perfected forevermore in agape love, joy, and peace does the story end ... but it also is the perfect beginning!

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to the Sabbath Thought [2025-11-08 – Giving Fruits of the Spirit](#).

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor. 15:28.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 12:1-2.