

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier

Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

I suppose nothing helps the cause of Arminian heresy more than the ignorance of genuine believers about God's love. Arminians* have successfully bludgeoned true biblical sensibilities by continually bleating wrongly about John 3:16.

Rather than enter into what they perceive to be a sword-fight, Christians back off and accept that the text is about God loving 'everyone', and so the text must 'mean' salvation is also open to everyone. What error! Before reading this article, can you define what God's 'love' is?

(* For present purposes, 'Arminian' means a person who deliberately and consistently applies a systematic free-will argument to the Gospel, claiming that we may choose to be saved. It does not refer to those who are merely 'Arminianish').

In this paper we will look briefly at what is meant by God's 'love'. As always we will base it on what scripture says, rather than the false theology of cultists and deceivers, so please do not 'shoot the messenger'! We will find that God does not love 'everybody': it is not a matter of my personal beliefs, but of direct statements made by the Lord in His own word. (Examination of texts is given in the second section of the paper). We begin with the 'technical' bits.

The 'Love of God'

We find the same word for 'love' in the phrase 'love of God', in Luke 11:42, John 5:42, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:39, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 2 Thessalonians 4:5, 1 John 2:5, 1 John 3:16,17, 1 John 4:9, 1 John 5:3 and Jude 1:21. The word is the feminine noun, *agapē*.

This word is thrown about with great abandon by most Christians, who think it twee to use a Greek word. One other word is used of God's love in Titus 3:4: *philanthrōpía*, also a feminine noun. This is the sum total of the exact phrase, "love of God". (Many other terms are used for 'love', but not in the exact phrase).

As I have shown elsewhere, almost every Greek or Hebrew word used in scripture can have several if not many possible meanings, dependent on several factors. Most Christians are unaware that there are a fairly large number of words for 'love', or that each word can often have a choice of several meanings. So, they use the meaning chosen for them by a pastor or

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

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Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

preacher, not examining whether or not it is the correct one.

In other words, one man will give his personal (as against scriptural) 'interpretation' and everyone else will follow like sheep, following not the Chief Shepherd, but an errant under-shepherd. In every single case of genuine interpretation, it must be capable of biblically-logical, proper explanation.

The Love of Christ

As the "love of Christ" cannot and never differs from the "love of God" we will look at the three instances in scripture: Romans 8:35, 2 Corinthians 5:14, and Ephesians 3:19. In each case the word feminine noun, agapē is used.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35)

In this text we see the unequivocal proof that our salvation is forever... once saved, always saved! The meaning of 'love' in this verse refers to the sacrifice of the Lord for the elect.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:" (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Here we see yet another meaning for 'love' – the proper knowledge given to each person who is genuinely saved, that each of us was dead until made alive by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

To know the love of Christ means to acknowledge and experience His love. Note that it is beyond our understanding. The meaning of 'love' in all three verses is slightly different, but each meaning is found in the Greek word, agapē.

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

The Love of the Spirit

There is only one use of this exact phrase in scripture – Romans 15:30, and it, too, must and does correspond to the same phrases concerning Christ and God. The word used is *agapē*.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in [your] prayers to God for me;"

For the sake of Jesus Christ and the "love of the Spirit" Christians are asked to pray for the well-being of Paul. That is, for spiritual benevolence to be shown.

The Love of the Father

This exact phrase only occurs once in scripture: 1 John 2:15, where the word 'love' is used three times. However, the first two instances use the verb *agapaō*, whilst the third instance, referring to the Father, uses the more familiar noun, *agapē*. Inexact phrases, however, are several (such as John 15:9).

"Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

In this text the interpretation is not to look fondly upon what the world offers, or to listen to worldly men; do not even entertain these things, for they will worm their way into the soul.

The Love of the Lord

Used only once in the Old Testament; Hosea 3:1 (* see below). The word is the feminine noun, '*ahabah*

. Though I am placing emphasis on the exact phrases (to avoid complexity), the actual situation is far more complex than throwing around the word

'*agapē*'

like confetti at a wedding!

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

For example, we find many words used that do not correspond to the exact phrase, but which, nevertheless, refer to the love of God. An example, is, say, Deuteronomy 7:7, which says "The LORD did not set his love upon you..." In this text the word for love is the verb, *chashaq*. And note the very telling phrase:

*"The LORD did
not set his love
upon you..."*

! (Emphasis my own). He did not love them!

We also have the word 'love' used of the LORD, but in a disconnected way: *"The LORD (said) I have loved thee with an everlasting love..."*

, Jeremiah 31:3, where "loved" is the verb
'*ahab*

, and "love" is the feminine noun, '
ahabah

With these in mind, and (necessarily) not referring to other inexact uses of the words 'love' connected to the Persons listed above, let us see if God actually does love everybody in all circumstances. The aim is not to argue or to put forth my own personalised ideas, but to accurately portray what God says in His own word.

(* Hosea 3:1: *"Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of [her] friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine."* This verse is a warning that we should not play the harlot spiritually, as this woman played the harlot sexually. It is also a promise, that though they did not deserve it, God showed love for Israel even when it went off on a tangent and worshipped false gods.

In the first instance of 'love' ('*ahab*) in this verse, it refers to love of a man towards a woman, as physical lovers. A similar worldly meaning applies to those who get drunk. The middle instance is '*ahabah*, which refers to the love of God towards His people, though they err and do not obey. This shows how careful we should be when dealing with scripture words... they might look the same in English, but they can have very different meanings in Hebrew/Greek.)

Agapē

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

Most Christians use this word not because they know its meaning, but because they think it ought to be used. They get this idea from liberal unbelievers and from Arminians, mostly from preachers or from books. Others, thinking it is fashionable, or that it is rather grand to use Hebrew or Greek, use it much as others use the word '*shallowm*'... for its shallow effect, with no regard for its actual meanings.

Agapē has several possible meanings: affection, good will, love, benevolence, brotherly love, or, to describe 'love feasts' (the true setting for communion). Immediately, we see that the interpretation of 'brotherly love' *cannot* apply to God, for obvious reasons! And the final interpretation can differ in every text. Added to this are the extended meanings, that arise from the actual meanings given.

Correct interpretation of any word requires a proper regard for the word itself, the possible meanings given by the original language, the context, the wider pan-Bible meanings, and extended meanings (theological). The majority have no idea about this process, and use words without thinking or examination. In a very simple example – how many constantly insert the capital 'W' in the word 'Word', even when it is far from appropriate? (See article on this very common error, even amongst theologians and preachers).

The root of *agapē* is *agapaō*, and the root can sometimes have a direct effect on the interpretation (in this instance the noun follows the verb)... but how many know this? (Generally, the root may, or may not, have a direct or indirect effect on the prime word; it depends on the text. Unfortunately, many Christians find roots in, say, a Strong's, and conclude that they always apply as a meaning, equal to the prime word. This can be a costly error). All of this is straightforward interpretive procedure.

Both *agapē* and *agapaō* can be used to describe the love of God towards His Son, or towards the human race generally, or of the love of the saved towards God/Christ, or of the attitude of each saved person towards the other. Not understanding these facts can lead to many errors of judgment and interpretation.

Agapaō

This word, the verb form of *agapē*, can apply to both people and to things. Referring to people, it can range from a kind of peripheral social regard to a full-on endearment: to welcome, to entertain (e.g. meals), to be fond of, and even to love dearly. Or, concerning the inanimate, to be well pleased with something, or to be contented with it. Both the noun and the verb can be

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

used to express the essential nature of God.

Further Notes on Agapē and Agapaō

As Vine emphasises: *"Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son. But, obviously, this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself."*

In other words, there is nothing in Man to attract God's love. God's love is given as He sees fit, and this love is not like the emotion experienced by creatures, but is above emotion, being perfect. Do not ever suggest that God's 'love' is equivalent to human 'love', or is 'emotional' because humans are emotional.

Furthermore, Vine adds that *"Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian"* (Galatians 5:22). Christian love is only found in *"implicit obedience to His commandments... self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God"*.

"Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, Rom 15:2, and works no ill to any, 13:8-10; love seeks opportunity to do good to 'all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith,' Gal 6:10. See further 1 Cor. 13 and Col 3:12-14." [* From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, p. 105].

So, for Christians to say they 'love' everyone is invariably a lie, given the way some despise certain of their fellow saved, and their own sinful lability of emotions. Scripturally, then, God's 'love', is something far greater than, and different from, human love, and there is a limit to this love, defined by God Himself, in His word.

The Limits of God's Love to Man

We can examine texts all day to find instances of loving others, but we need only one example

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

of God *not* loving, to find that love is not a response that applies in every instance. If God Himself says He does not love certain people or situations, then that is proof positive that love is not universally applied, but is just an inappropriate human desire when referring to the same kind of situations. We have already seen one example (above), so we have our proof text. Let us look at more...

In Exodus 20:5 we find that God hates certain people and even punishes their descendants:

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me;"

God is talking here about Israel bowing to idols of false gods. God tells them He is a jealous God Who will punish not just those who do it, but the generations that follow, because they hate Him. However, God will show mercy to those who 'love' Him – defined here as those who obey His commandments. Jesus repeated the very same demand as a proof of 'love'. In this we see a very clear statement: God does not love those who hate Him. It is important enough to repeat in Deuteronomy 5:9.

The hatred for the Lord is the same as the hatred shown towards His people and is treated as the same. Thus, in Deuteronomy 30:7, we have:

"And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee."

Is cursing an enemy a reflection of 'love' towards them? I do not think so, unless we invert and subvert biblical logic. Many examples exist in scripture to show that God does NOT love everybody, no matter how much men twist scripture. Thus:

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he [is] God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers:

And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. "

(Deuteronomy 7:9-13)

God keeps His promises to those who obey and love Him! But, He punishes those who hate Him, and destroys them - hardly a show of love! Thus, people are required to obey God's commandments, or suffer the consequences, which can be both earthly and eternal.

In verse 12 we see this in action: if people obey and love Him, "he will love thee". Obviously, this is set as a comparison: those who do *not* obey and love Him will *not* be loved. Those who hate Him will know all the plagues of Egypt (verse 15). He will render vengeance on His enemies (32:41). He will put His enemies to death (33:11). Again I ask – is this the language of 'love' of God towards all men? Of course it is not. (*Do not confuse this with the demand of Christ, that we love our enemies).

We come to a definitive text in the Old Testament that stands for all time:

"And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore [is] wrath upon thee from before the LORD." (2 Chronicles 19:2)

It is proof that we may not help those who hate God and are ungodly, and if we do, we incur God's wrath upon us. Nor may we *love ('ahab) them. In this text 'love' is similar to the Greek *agapē*, meaning love for each other or for God, or God's love towards mankind. We cannot offer either human *love or godly love to those who hate us or God! Indeed, in Galatians 1:8,9 we are told, unequivocally:

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

How does this command fit in with the ungodly human desire to 'love everybody'? It cannot fit at all! To be 'accursed' is to be *anathema*. This neuter noun means to be "devoted to God without hope of being redeemed". The person is "devoted to the direst of woes" and incurs the "disfavour of Jehovah". This is as far from 'love' as anyone can get. The meaning is that the person who is like this curses himself out of the very possibility of redemption. This can only be because he has not been elected to salvation (see other articles on predestination and election).

We are all in the Potter's hand, and He makes one to be of use and the other to be destroyed (Jeremiah 18 et al). Also read Romans 9:21, where 'dishonour' means to be in disgrace and ignominy, a shame, from *atimos*, to be base, less esteemed, without honour, despised by God.

Conclusion

The love of God results in salvation and eternal bliss. If the love is not present in a man or woman, then their lot is to be despised by the Potter and sent to eternal hell. To call this 'love' is to scorn God and to abuse words! Clearly, even in this short paper, we see that God despises those who hate Him and His chosen people. Such haters of God may NOT be shown any kind of help or love, for God says Himself they are anathema – beyond redemption. Do not argue with me... argue with the Lord, if you dare. (See separate paper on Christ's command to love our enemies).

Examination of several texts listed above

Always remember that each verse stands alone in terms of interpretation. The meaning in one verse may, or may not, be the same as in other verses.

Luke 11:42

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Jesus warns the Pharisees that they concentrate so much on rites and ceremonies, that they completely "pass over" proper decisions and the "love of God". So, what does the word 'love' (agapē) mean here? It means God's benevolence, and not 'brotherly love', or 'affection'. It might refer to 'good will'. These appear to be correct interpretations because Jesus is referring to their lack of affection towards others, as the context suggests. Thus, 'love' in this text has nothing to do with the emotion called 'love' by human beings, but is to do with God's perfect will.

John 5:42

"But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."

Jesus can see into the darkest depths of our very souls. How awful that He was talking directly to those whose souls He discerned! He bluntly told them 'The love of God is not in you!' Though it is the same word as in the verse before, this time it means that men had no regard for God's honour, for they showed no such regard in their lives, because they did not receive the Saviour Who could save them. Thus, they dishonoured God (verse 44). That is, their characters did not align with what God referred to as 'love'. (re Vine).

Romans 5:5

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

In this text the word agapē is used in a very different context. The text demands the basic interpretation of 'love', but you are reminded that godly love is NOT emotional love, but is pure and undefiled, for it comes from God. It does not well up from imprecise emotions, but is given to us by God, through the Holy Spirit.

It is, then, a gift (as Paul reveals). This love does not disappoint us (re 'ashamed'); it cannot, because it is pure. In this text it refers to the benevolence of God. The conjunction hoti

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

(because) shows us that we will experience the gifts in verse 4 'because', or by the way of, love from God... His benevolence.

Romans 8:39

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We cannot be separated from God's love. That is, His salvic care and gift, which are mirrors of His affection for us, and His good-will as revealed in His Son. This is an example of the relevance of the root - in this text, agapaō, because it speaks of God loving us dearly (because of His Son).

Already, I hope you can see just how careful we must be in interpreting the words of scripture. 'Love' is far more complex than the over-simplified, emotional 'love' insisted on by Christians who have no idea how to interpret. Whereas Christians express love in terms of their own labile emotions (which change rapidly and depend on their feelings), God expresses 'love' very differently.

He is unhampered by emotions, and so His 'love' is pure and undefiled, always with a definite purpose and shown perfectly. At all times this love reflects His will, which is expressed differently in so many ways, unlike the imperfect thing we call love and which is a reflection of our emotional lability and confusion.

2 Corinthians 13:14

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, [be] with you all. Amen."

In this text agapē refers to God's benevolence towards saved mankind, for the gifts shown by the two other Persons encompass all else. In the text, God's love is to do with His gift of salvation to those whom He loves dearly (has strong affection for, as in agapaō). Again, bear in mind that this is no shadow of real love, an human form tainted by emotional lability, but is pure and perfect, from His will, not from emotion.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

The verses leading up to this point explain the meaning of agapē in verse 5... being established in faith, and obeying the commands sent out by the apostles, under God. Therefore, agapē here interprets as affection for the Lord and the brethren, and a keeping of the love-feasts.

1 John 2:5

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

This verse supports what is said for the previous text. The love of God is made evident, and made perfect, by the person keeping His commandments. And, as Jesus said, it is proof that we are what we claim to be – saved. In this verse, then, agapē means to keep all the interpretations and to grow in them. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John 15:10). It is not possible to believe heretically and to claim to be loved by God!

1 John 3:16,17

"Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

The meaning of agapē here is definitely to do with compassion for the brethren – benevolence and brotherly care.

1 John 4:9

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

This text explains itself: 'love' of God is shown by His sending the Son to save us. It does not explain the full nature of 'love' but only one expression of it. But, it helps to build-up the whole picture.

1 John 5:3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

Even this text does not fully describe what God's love is, but is indicative of the condition God sets on us all if we claim to believe – He gave us His commandments, not to give us an undue burden, but to cause us to love Him back. Note that the 'love' found in the previous verse (2) is not *agapē*, but *agapaō*. Never assume that the same word in English implies the same word in Greek or Hebrew.

Jude 1:21

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

We must remain in the love of God. This is because we are God's "beloved". This is another word for 'love', the adjective, *agapētos*. It is what God calls those who He loves and who love Him... esteemed, dear, favourite, worthy of love (because of Jesus and His sacrifice). This is the description of the saved, based on the verb, *agapaō*. We attain to being loved by God, by building ourselves up in faith and praying true spiritual prayers through the Holy Spirit. Again, this description tells us that God's love is conditional upon obedience.

Titus 3:4

This is an exception, using the word *philanthrōpia*, a feminine noun.

"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,"

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

The word 'love' here means love of mankind or benevolence. That is, God showing His kindness towards man by sending the Saviour to save the elect. The word is not confined to use by God, but can be used of mankind towards each other, as in, say, Acts 28:2.

"And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."

This verse warns readers of scripture that 'love' is not always transliterated into the English as 'love'! In this verse the word *philanthrōpia* is translated as 'kindness'. This is why "kindness and love" are written into Titus 3:4. On the other hand, while the word for 'kindness' in Acts is *philant hrōpia*,

in Titus the very same word in English is from the Greek feminine noun, *chrēstotēs*.

Strictly, the meaning is moral goodness and integrity, as well as kindness and gentleness; from the root adjective, *chrēstos*.

Many words are used to translate 'love' from the Hebrew and Greek into English. It is essential that the proper interpretation is made, and that the 'twee' use of Greek words such as *agapē* do not cloud thinking.

Other Notes on God's Love

So, we now have an outline explanation for the phrase 'the love of God' (and allied phrases). What we need now is something to 'round-off' these technical, biblical factors. That is, comments based on the texts. They are given randomly.

I remember once swimming in the sea. I swam out for only about 100 yards, and then, bobbing up and down as waves hit me, I looked back to the shore – it seemed to be a long way away. Then I turned to look outwards and the sheer vastness caused me to swim swiftly back to shore again! I did not trust my own ability, but I knew how powerful the sea was!

Many of us only paddle on the beach, letting water splash up to our ankles. Others swim very close to the shore in a depth hardly deeper than one's body. It gives a taste of swimming! God's love, on the other hand, is like a boundless sea of immense depth and breadth, in which we are urged to be fully immersed. It is likened to the sea because it is all-enveloping, and when we

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

stop worrying and relax, God keeps us afloat, free from harm.

My wife has had a fear of water covering her head ever since, as a small girl at the seaside, one of her cousins pushed her under the water and sat on her! She struggled but ran out of air. It was not until her father saw what was happening and rescued her, that she at last found safety.

Needless to say, he gave the boy a sound verbal thrashing, but the effects have stayed for life with my wife. There was nothing wrong with the sea – it was the abuse of it that led to my wife's fear. It is not the love of God that is deficient, nor His provisions and helps. What spoils it all is the way many people abuse His provision.

How often do some busybodies say hurtful things to the brethren under the guise of 'telling the truth in love'? Too many! For several decades I avoided the brethren because of several distasteful events done to me 'in love' by pastors and members alike. In reality, what they said and did was hateful, not loving.

Many who believe in predestination and election are said to be 'hateful', by those who do not understand these truths. But, is it hatred to speak truth? It is my way to speak to people as I find them. Some need gentle persuasion, some need rebuke or instruction; others may need something tougher. In between, there can be many levels of speaking. To me, this is the effect of the Spirit on our minds and hearts. I hope never to abuse others, even playfully, as happened to my wife. Yet, I also pray that what I say is what God wants me to say – and if that is sometimes hard (but never harsh), then so be it.

What exactly is the 'love of God'? Those who loathe predestination and election come up with typical arguments that are not based on scripture itself. For example, using (or, rather, misusing) John 3:16 they conclude, wrongly, that God loves everyone and so Christ died for everyone. The feeble argument is that 'God is love' and so He would not ever judge them to be irredeemable.

As we have already seen, what is called the 'love' of God/Father/Christ/Spirit, etc., is described in a variety of ways. All the descriptions are of God's love, but not fully. I do not know of any theologian or Bible scholar who can define fully what the love of God is! This is because God's love is beyond our human understanding and perception. We can only take in parts of that love.

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

Look at more examples below.

1 John 4:8

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

It is a fact that those who hate what they see as 'Calvinism' also hate what Calvin said about salvation – even though what he said was absolutely correct biblically. (No – I am not a 'Calvinist'). So, they begin their 'love' of the brethren by hating them! Yet, here we are told that if we do not love, then we do not know God.

Many think that any declaring of biblical truths is 'hatred'... notably when the one who thinks it is 'hatred' is not adhering to truth. A most odd thing to say, and very worldly. It is another way of demanding that we shut up and leave declarations to those who do not know truth.

In the previous verse (7) we are commanded to "love one another", because it is a sign we are saved. The 'one another' refers NOT to everyone in the world but to fellow believers, as the context affirms! In verse 7 the first use of 'love' is *agapaō*; the second use is *agape*; the third use (loveth) is again

agapaō

. This is repeated in the beginning of verse 8, and reverts again to *agapē* at the end.

The meaning, then, is that if we do not love the brethren, we are not saved, because God is love and we must reflect the same love. Remember that the noun, *agapē*, is based on the adjective, *agapaō*. The first is what we are, the second is descriptive of what we should do. But – what do they actually mean? There is no point in simply saying 'love', because, as we have seen, the word can mean one of many things, depending on context.

We are told to love the brethren; that is, to welcome them, to entertain them (as good hosts) and to be fond of them. We should also love them dearly. This is because it is what God expects of us – after all, He is love. That is, He is the epitome of affection, good will and benevolence. This is what is meant by 'God is love', but it is only a part of that love... He has many more loving facets. So, we must 'pass on' the love of God for us as individuals, to all other brethren.

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

Written by K B Napier
Saturday, 21 April 2012 22:25

Very clearly, this is love for the brethren. What if people are *not* brethren? We must still love them, but not in the same way... because this is how God sees it and because it is not possible to share the love we have for brethren, which is based on Christ's sacrifice.

It is important to note that the 'love of God' is not like human love at all. Human love can be shown by one person to another, even if the second person does not respond in the same way. But, even so, the love we have will not be like the love of God. Rather, God gives us love even though we do not deserve it and as a gift, based on His predetermined will. The love He shows us in salvation is one-way, for we do not love God until He regenerates and saves us.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

The majority of people think of God's love in terms of human love. But, we may only apply such meaning in a very loose and general sense, for God's love is the love of the Creator, not of the creature. His love is greater, more profound, and almost unknowable. We can only know what He has revealed in scripture... the rest is not grasped by human frailty.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I would remind readers that Arminianism is the spawn of Roman Catholicism, and is not biblical. To say that God loves 'everyone' and, therefore, 'everyone' has the 'opportunity' to be saved, is gross error. The biggest error is to see 'world' as 'everyone', when it does not mean that at all. There are eight possible interpretations for the word, but only one applies – and it is **not** 'everyone', but 'any aggregate of particulars of any sort', i.e. the elect. Therefore, in terms of salvation, the 'world' God loved (agapaō) consists only of the elect.

Consistently in the context we see that this love *only* applies to the elect. The section begins with Jesus saying that *except* a man is born again, he "cannot see the kingdom of God". Being 'born again', or regenerated, is the point at

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

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which the Holy Spirit makes the spirit alive and thus able to respond to God's prompting.

Without that, the person remains dead and he

cannot

respond. Then, the Holy Spirit convinces the soul/spirit of the truth of the Gospel, and the man/woman is saved forever. Now

that

is the 'love of God'! Not the weak and depraved notion that we can be wondrously saved at one moment and lost at the next!

The whole section, then, is about the stark difference between the elect and the non-elect.

Nicodemus asks Jesus how these things are possible. Jesus continues: "*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*"

In the same way I ask all Arminians the same question – you claim to belong to God, so why do you not know the truth about election?

The text goes on to say that whoever believes in the ascended Jesus will have eternal life. Very importantly, note that each verse: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 begins with a conjunction. It is important because conjunctions show that each verse is joined by content meaning to the one before it and the one following, if it also has a conjunction. Therefore, the meanings found in the verses before verse 16 all refer to the same persons! These are "*whosoever believeth*", and these are defined already as those who are made spiritually alive and are saved.

The 'world', then, means an aggregate of persons – the elect. In fact, this meaning continues after verse 16. In verse 17 we thus read that God did not wish His elect to be condemned, so He sent His Son to save them on this earth. This is further underlined by verse 18: "*He that believeth on him is not condemned*"

. Those who do not believe are "condemned already (at this time)". They are already condemned! The same words echo to verse 21.

In Deuteronomy 7:9 we see the promise of His love is *only* given to "*them that love him and keep his commandments*"

Of course, if they are truly saved, they

will

love Him and keep His commandments! This repeats what we find in 1 John 4:16, that the person who

"dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in Him"

. God does not reside in the unsaved, and so they do not know His love, nor do they give it.

The Love of God - A Brief Examination

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Do not, then, underestimate or overestimate the 'love of God'! God loves His creation because it belongs to Him, but it is not the same love He has for the saved. If He loved both equally, where is the need for Christ's sacrifice? Or, why should we bother to race towards the goal? Why do we repent? The 'love of God', then, is best seen in election.

[Note: Understand that this paper is not the final word, but a short introduction to the love of God. Much remains unsaid or unexplored, so do not read into it what is not there.]