

Agape Versus Phileo in Scripture

*i A third type of "nugget" is one which does not exist except in totally false statements made by a Bible critic.

The greatest example of this is found in the analogy of the two Greek words "agape" and "phileo". Both of which are translated "love" in John 21:15-17.

John 21:15-17 (KJB) "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

We have all heard this passage expounded by a pseudo-scholar. (Sometimes in complete sincerity due to acceptance of bad teaching.) The presentation is made that "agape" in Greek speaks of a deep, intimate, selfless love. "Phileo" on the other hand is little more than a casual "friendly" type of love. Our scholar then laments, almost tearfully, the constraints of the English language. He points out that the Lord actually says, "Peter ... lovest ("agape") thou me. (With a deep, intimate, selfless love) more than these?"

Peter responds, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love ("phileo") thee." (With a casual, friendly type of love.)

Our Bible critic points out that the Lord, not receiving the answer that He desires, asks again.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest ("agape") thou me?"

Peter, it is then pointed out, is unwilling to commit himself to such a deep relationship so he responds again.

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love ("phileo") thee."

At this point our Bible corrector points out that a saddened Saviour gives in to Peter's lack of commitment and changes His own choice of Greek words to "phileo".

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest ("phileo") thou me?"

This sudden change supposedly shocks Peter into seeing his own spiritual infidelity to the Lord. Thus, saddened he answers.

"... thou knowest that I love ("phileo") thee."

Our false teacher then points out to his audience that there is no way to attain such depth of meaning from this passage using only the feeble English. Once more the trusty "Greek" has enlightened us as English can never do!

This presentation is tremendously effective and has only ONE flaw. The definitions given for "agape" and "phileo" are **TOTALLY UNTRUE!**

I am about to make a statement concerning "agape" and "phileo" which is not based on prejudice or opinion. It is based on careful honest study of the way in which "agape" and "phileo" were used in the Bible ("Our final authority in all matters of faith and practice) by Jesus Christ Himself and the New Testament writers.

The statement is this: There was absolutely **NO DIFFERENCE** in New Testament times between "agape" and "phileo" and that **BOTH** are used interchangeably by Jesus Christ and the writers of the New Testament. **REGARDLESS** of what Greek grammars, Greek teachers and Greek preachers may say!

If you have been steeped in the false teaching of "agape" and "phileo" by your college professor or pastor, you will immediately (and with much prejudice) reject my supposition. ("How could such godly men be wrong?" Right?)

Yet, I will not attempt to prove it is true. The proof will come from Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter and John, and any other New Testament writer that I could have chosen for the comparison. But wait! They are not my final witnesses. The final and most weighty argument will be waged by **YOU!**

ⁱ Taken from *The Answer Book* by Samuel C. Gipp, ©1989, pgs .87-88