

## AGAPETOI

### I. 1 John 4:11-21

A. Chuck Reedy and I were roommates our freshman year in college. We both had 8 am classes. Breakfast was Otterbein's best meal of the day so Chuck and I went nearly every morning. We'd stuff fruit in our coat pockets to snack on later and then we'd chow down on eggs, waffles, pancakes, and fresh made donuts. It was great cuisine (*except for the bacon which we were convinced came from road kill*). After that it was off to class and for two quarters mine was NT Greek.

B. As I mentioned last Sunday, John uses the word *love* 43 times in this five-chapter epistle; (32 times from 1 Jn 4:7 to 1 Jn 5:3.) Those words in Greek for love are *Agape*, *Agapao*, and *Agapetoi*. (*Agape* is the noun, *Agapao* is the verb, and *Agapetoi* (*Beloved*) refers to the recipients of God's love--You! *Agape* is not the syrupy gooey stuff. *Agape* is characterized by selflessness, actions over emotions, and a commitment to the highest good of another. Though undeserved, God has heaped His *Agape* Love upon us in the giving of His Son, Jesus Christ.

C. If you weren't sure if John meant all those exhortations about loving one another, perhaps today's text will settle the issue for you. When Jesus commands something it should never be taken as mere grain-of-salt advice. The Great Commandment is not the Great Suggestion. First John posits this truth: Actual regeneration, genuine conversion, true salvation, leads to the manifestation of love. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence within, the fruit thereof will be love!

D. 1 John 4:11-21 (ESV) is to written believers who may've been singed by false teachers who induced fear about the life to come. John seeks to impart assurance, quelling their fears with truth. Let's see if those assurances can minister to us as well.

1) V11-12: *11 Beloved, (Agapetoi: You objects of God's love! You recipients of God's grace. You adopted children of the Most High God!) if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (Do you love your fellow adoptees?) 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. (If God is in you and His love is abiding in you and flowing through you, someone's gonna see it and they're gonna touch the very heart of God. They will see Christ in you!)*

2) V13: *13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. (When you're born of God, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within you. Scriptures don't teach that some are reborn with the Spirit and some are not. None were dead in their trespasses and sins and then made only partially alive. We were made totally alive by the power of the Holy Spirit who awakened us in Christ. There's not two classes of believers. Romans 8:9-11 (NIV) drives it home: You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. (Justification: His righteousness is imputed and the Holy Spirit entered in.) 11 And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you.*

3) V14-15: *14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. (i.e. Savior to people from every nation, tribe, and tongue.) 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (Question: Does the confession cause God the Spirit to abide in us or does His abiding in us spark the confession? Question: Does your repentance and faith produce regeneration or does regeneration cause you to repent and believe?)*

4) V16: *16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (Question: Did we happen upon knowing and believing in the love God had for us (or) did God so vividly manifest His love towards us that we came to know and believe in it? Do dead men will themselves to life? Do babies choose their adoptive parents? Did we first love God or did He first love us? And if God first loved us, did we find out randomly by chance or was it more sovereignly ordained? Oh Agapetoi!)*

5) V17-21: *17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. (What kind of fear? Not fear of the Lord. Not things God wants us to have a healthy fear for. But fear of judgment.) For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because He first loved us. (And what is the horizontal impact of this vertical love-reality?) 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God (OV "is incapable of loving God") whom he has not*

seen. **21** And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (Once again: do you love your fellow adoptees?)

**E.** We're four chapters in with one more to go. A few weeks back I encouraged you to listen to these words carefully. To hold them up like a mirror. To let them act like a thermometer. To allow them to function like a spiritual MRI or CT scan. To let John's words serve as a geiger counter or dosimeter to detect if there was any spiritual radiation poison in your system. Have you been doing that?

**F.** Perhaps these words have also made you wonder about your dearest loved ones--your Agapetoi. Are they truly in the faith? Do they exhibit the evidences listed by John? Are you sure? Have these words prompted more earnest prayer for them or deeper conversations about eternal things? In the quiet of your own private moments, have these words stirred you--on your behalf--but also theirs?

**G.** Billy Graham's funeral was a week ago Friday. Franklin Graham quoted his father who once said, "Some day you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive then than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God." **Dear Church, Agapetoi, I want you to be able to say that with the same conviction. I want that for our children & grandchildren, our parents & siblings, your dearest of friends. And I want that for this community and every soul within her. Let's ask God to make that happen. The best way to love our Agapetoi is with the Gospel--the Good News of Jesus Christ...**

\* Close with Prayer...

### [Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

#### [1 John 4:11-21 \(ESV\)](#)

**11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. **13** By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. **14** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. **16** So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **17** By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so also are we in this world. **18** There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. **19** We love because He first loved us. **20** If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. **21** And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

#### [Romans 8:9-11 \(NIV\)](#)

**9** You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. **10** But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. **11** And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you.

### [Film Clips & Other Links](#)

Jesus Commands Christians to Love One Another - John Piper

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ji4Z\\_kJiCYA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ji4Z_kJiCYA)

"Love Each Other" - Graham Kendrick

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MblrWZDpPQ>

"Get Together" - The Youngbloods

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cw2ze1lw9d0>

Millersport Covenant Church Sermon Podcasts (MP3s on iTunes)

<http://millersportcc.com/feed/podcast>

## **Bonus Stuff**

### **John 14:16-18 (AMP)**

**16** And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby), to be with you forever-- **17** the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive [and take to its heart] because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He (the Holy Spirit) remains with you continually and will be in you.

### **John 16:5-15 (AMP)**

**5** But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ **6** But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts [and taken complete possession of them]. **7** But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor--Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]. **8** And He, when He comes, will convict the world about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Savior], and about righteousness, and about judgment: **9** about sin [and the true nature of it], because they do not believe in Me [and My message]; **10** about righteousness [personal integrity and godly character], because I am going to My Father and you will no longer see Me; **11** about judgment [the certainty of it], because the ruler of this world (Satan) has been judged and condemned. **12** I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear [to hear] them now. **13** But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth [full and complete truth]. For He will not speak on His own initiative, but He will speak whatever He hears [from the Father--the message regarding the Son], and He will disclose to you what is to come [in the future]. **14** He will glorify and honor Me, because He (the Holy Spirit) will take from what is Mine and will disclose it to you. **15** All things that the Father has are Mine. Because of this I said that He [the Spirit] will take from what is Mine and will reveal it to you.

### **John 15:9-17 (ESV)**

**9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. **10** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. **12** This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. **17** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

### **Romans 12:9-13 (NLT)**

**9** Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. **10** Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. **11** Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. **12** Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. **13** When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

### **Article Excerpt by R.C. Sproul**

"Other attributes that fall within the scope of God's goodness are benevolence, love, and mercy. Benevolence refers to the kindness our Creator shows to all people, even though they are undeserving. God gives rain to both the just and the unjust ([Matt. 5:45b](#)), though He has a special love that moves Him to work in all things for the good of His children ([Rom. 8:28](#)). Love is a favorite, if often misunderstood, attribute of God. True, "God is love" ([1 John 4:8](#)), but this love is not independent of His holiness; therefore, His wrath does not deny this love (1:5). The same holy love that moves Him to condemn the impenitent also moves Him to discipline His people for their well-being ([Heb. 12:5-11](#)). Mercy is an overflow of our Father's goodness and love. Mercy is His kindness to withhold the fullness of His wrath to His people in order that He might save them. God can be good to His creation without being merciful, and in fact He does not show mercy to all ([Rom. 9:14-24](#)). Nevertheless, His mercy enriches His goodness.

- R.C. Sproul, article titled, "God is Good," Ligonier Ministries. To read the full article, go to: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/god-is-good/>

### **Quote by Augustine**

"Without the Spirit we can neither love God nor keep His commandments."

### **Quote by John Wesley**

"It is the Spirit that sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts, and the love of all mankind; thereby purifying their hearts from the love of the world, from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is by Him they are delivered from anger and pride, from all vile and inordinate affections."

### **Quote by Jerry Bridges**

"We are 100 percent responsible for the pursuit of holiness, but at the same time we are 100 percent dependent upon the Holy Spirit to enable us in that pursuit. The pursuit of holiness is not a pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps approach to the Christian life."

### **Quote by John Owen**

"There is no good communicated to us from God but it is bestowed on us or wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. No gift, no grace, no mercy, no privilege, no consolation, do we receive, possess, or use, but it is wrought in us or manifested to us, by Him alone nor is there any good in us towards God, any faith, love duty, obedience, but what is effectually wrought in us by Him, by Him alone."

- John Owen, *"Discourse on the Holy Spirit."*

### **Quote by C.S. Lewis on the Holy Spirit**

"You know that among human beings, when they get together in a family, or a club or a trades union, people talk about the "spirit" of that family, club or trades union. They talk about its spirit because the individual members, when they're together, do really develop particular ways of talking and behaving which they wouldn't have if they were apart. It is as if a sort of communal personality came into existence. Of course it isn't a real person: it is only rather like a person. But that's just one of the differences between God and us. What grows out of the joint life of the Father and Son is a real Person, is in fact the Third of the three Persons who are God."

- C.S. Lewis, *Beyond Personality*, Macmillan, 1948, p. 21f.

### **Quote by Paul Washer**

"I used to tell young preachers, in order to preach you've got to have the power of God on your life. Now I tell them, in order to tie your shoes you've got to have the power of God on your life."

### **Quote by Francis Chan**

"The church becomes irrelevant when it becomes purely a human creation. We are not all we were made to be when everything in our lives and churches can be explained apart from the work and presence of the Spirit of God."

## **An introduction to the Holy Spirit**

By Wayne Grudem

<https://www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/doctrine-of-god/starting-out/an-introduction-to-the-holy-spirit.htm>

### ***The Holy Spirit As A Person***

#### **The Holy Spirit is fully God**

Several passages of Scripture speak of the Holy Spirit in a way that assumes that he has the same divine status as the Father and the Son. One example is "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Since a person's "name" in Scripture represents the character of the person, and since "the name" in this verse is singular, it implies that the Holy Spirit has the same character or attributes as the Father and the Son. Other "Trinitarian passages" in the New Testament carry a similar implication (see 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21). And when Peter confronts Ananias with the fact that he has told a lie "to the Holy Spirit," he then says, "You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4). Other passages show divine attributes for the Holy Spirit, such as omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-8; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16) or omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10-11). And the second verse in the Bible indicates that the Holy Spirit ("the Spirit of God") was present at the beginning of creation (Gen. 1:2).

#### **A distinct person**

The Holy Spirit should not be thought of as merely the power of God or the presence of God, but is, like the Father and the Son, a distinct person within the eternal Trinity. This is the implication of verses that speak of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the Father and the Son (such as Matt. 28:19 and the other Trinitarian passages mentioned above). It is seen quite clearly at the baptism of Jesus, where God the Father speaks from heaven and says, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17), God the Son, who has become man, is being baptized (v. 16), and the Holy Spirit descends from heaven on him, for Jesus "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him" (v. 16). Each person of the Trinity is doing something different at exactly the same time.

In addition, the Bible ascribes many personal activities to the Holy Spirit. He teaches (John 14:26), bears witness to people (John 15:26; Rom. 8:16), prays to the Father on our behalf (Rom. 8:26-27), knows the thoughts of God (1 Cor. 2:11), and makes personal decisions about which spiritual gifts to distribute to which people (1 Cor. 12:11). The Holy Spirit personally guides Christians (Rom 8:14; Gal. 5:18; cf. Acts 16:6-7). Something can seem good to the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28), and the Holy Spirit can be “grieved” by our sin (Eph. 5:30). These are all activities of persons.

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit***

#### **Inspiring the Word of God**

The Holy Spirit guided all of the authors of Scripture so that what they wrote was not only their own words but also the words of God himself. “No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21; cf. 1 Pet. 1:11; also Acts 1:16; 4:25; 28:25).

#### **Empowering the Gospel message**

Jesus promises his disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:8). Later, when the disciples are “filled with the Holy Spirit” they “speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31; cf. Acts 4:8; 6:10; 7:51; 1 Pet. 1:12). And Paul’s preaching to the Thessalonians resulted in many conversions when his preaching came to them “not only in word, but also with power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5).

The power of the Holy Spirit was also evident in giving miracles that attested to the truthfulness of the Gospel message and its divine origin. After Jesus’ baptism and temptation in the wilderness, he “returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” (Luke 4:14), and immediately he not only “taught in their synagogues” (Luke 4:15) where his word possessed “authority” (v. 32), but he also began performing many miracles such as casting out demons (Luke 4:33-36) and healing “any who were sick with various diseases” (Luke 4:40). By placing these narratives immediately after the introductory statement about the Spirit in verse 14, Luke indicates showing that these great miracles are the result of the power of the Spirit working through Jesus, empowering him for his unique ministry. Similarly, Jesus says, “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28).

When Jesus promised his disciples, “You will receive power when the Spirit has come upon you,” the disciples would have understood this to refer not only to power that would accompany their words as they preached but also to power to work miracles to give confirmation to what they were saying (for the word *dynamis*, “power,” very frequently refers to miraculous power not only in Luke’s gospel but also in the subsequent chapters in Acts – see Acts 2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 8:13; 10:38; 19:11). Paul also said that the entirety of his gospel preaching throughout the world had been carried out “by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God” (Rom 15:19). Both the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of his early disciples was carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian interpreters today differ over the question of whether it is right to ask for or to expect that the Holy Spirit will similarly work miracles in connection with the proclamation of the Gospel today, but all agree that the Holy Spirit’s power is necessary for any effective ministry of any kind today. This is indicated in the UCCF doctrinal basis when it says that the Holy Spirit “gives them power for their witness in the world.”]

Since it is the Holy Spirit who initially inspired Scripture, it is not surprising that the Bible can speak in the present tense about the Holy Spirit speaking directly through ancient Scriptures to readers who were alive many centuries later (see Heb. 3:7; 10:15), and so it is that the Holy Spirit speaking through Scripture to Christians today will make Bible teaching effective in peoples’ lives.

#### **Regenerating the sinner**

No human person has the power to impart new spiritual life to another person, nor can we who are spiritually “dead in our trespasses” (Eph. 2:5) make ourselves spiritually alive to God. This new spiritual birth can only come about by the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit . . . You must be born again” (John. 3:5-7). He also said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all” (John 6:63). The UCCF statement speaks of this regenerating work when it says, “The Holy Spirit alone makes the work of Christ effective to individual sinners, enabling them to turn to God from their sin and to trust in Jesus Christ.”

#### **Sanctifying the believer**

The Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers to enable them to grow in personal obedience to God, for Paul says, “If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13; cf. v. 4; here “deeds of the body” refers to sinful actions carried out in opposition to God’s law). It is the Holy Spirit who produces Christlike character qualities in the lives of believers, for “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit also convicts people of their sin (see John 16:8-11). This purifying work of the Holy Spirit is called “sanctification” in the New Testament (see 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). The UCCF statement affirms this when it says, “The Holy Spirit lives in all those he has regenerated. He makes them increasingly Christlike in character and behaviour.”

### **Guiding the believer**

Paul says, “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14), and he speaks of Christian believers as those who are “led by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18). In both verses the present tense form of the Greek verb for “lead” implies an ongoing, regular pattern of activity in the lives of believers, and in both verses such leading is connected to living in obedience to God’s moral standards (see Rom. 8:4, 12-13; Gal. 5:16-26). Believers in the New Testament regularly had quite specific guidance from the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 4:1; Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6-7; 20:22-23). Other instances of this same verb for “lead” (Greek *agō*) suggest that it indicates guidance that is individual, personal, and quite specific (cf. the verb *agō* in Luke 4:1, 9, 40; John 1:42; Acts 11:26; 17:19; 20:12). The help of the Holy Spirit in our prayers might also be considered a different form of guidance (see Rom. 8:26-27).

### **Empowering gifts for ministry**

Just as Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit before he began his earthly ministry, and then ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit (see Luke 4:1, 14, 36, 40-41, and section 2 above), and just as the early disciples waited for the power of the Holy Spirit before they began preaching the Gospel (Acts 1:8), so in the ordinary life of the church, it is the Holy Spirit who imparts spiritual gifts to every believer: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7), and it is the Holy Spirit who gives different gifts to different people, for he “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11).

### **Unifying Believers**

The New Testament speaks of “the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3), implying that the Holy Spirit imparts unity of mind and heart to those in whom he lives. Therefore Paul can speak of “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:14; cf. Phil. 2:1). And he emphasizes that differing spiritual gifts are intended to draw us together in the body of Christ, for they are given “for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7), and the church is like a body that has many different parts with different functions, but it remains “one body” and the differing parts of the body need each other (see 1 Cor. 12:12-31).

These seven activities summarize the primary work of the Holy Spirit, a distinct person in the Trinity who is fully God.

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