

# THE SABBATH SCOOP

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## How High Is Our Love?

Love has many different levels, both with romantic love and with agape.

### Part 5

By Gregory Dullum

In 1977 the Bee Gees recorded a hit song, “How Deep Is Your Love,” that became part of the album, “Saturday Night Fever.” Although they sang specifically about *romantic love*, the title asks a question that opens a door to a deeper understanding of love in general. Can there be different depths, or levels, to love?

I’m sure we all recognize that there are different levels to *romantic* love. First, there is a feeling of attraction. Then we develop friendship. After awhile, we go steady, deepening our bond of friendship with one person. This leads to the formal engagement period that eventually leads to marriage. Throughout these stages, our love grows deeper and stronger. We all may know couples whom we describe as not just “in love” but “deeply in love.”

This same principle applies to *agape*. Remember, *agape* is exercising a choice; it’s a mind-set of desiring the best for others, no matter who they are. Let’s look at the various levels of *agape*. Rather than thinking of *agape* as growing “deeper” let’s use the image of starting at the lowest level and growing to new heights. As we grow in *agape* we become more like our Father in heaven.

### Live and Let Live

At the lowest level, there is an attitude of “live and let live,” “if you don’t bother me, I won’t bother you,” or “if you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.” A lot of people in the world have this kind of love. It is the foundation of our civil society. When a stranger smiles at us, we smile back. We treat our business customers with respect. We put on our “happy voice” when answering the phone. At social gatherings, we avoid conversation that can make people un-



NAPS photo

Restaurant workers who pleasantly greet customers with a smile are expressing a form of *agape*—they wish the best for their customers, no matter who their customers are.

comfortable, such as politics and religion.

Jesus Christ mentioned this lowest level when He said, “But if you love (*agapao*) those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them” (Luke 6:32). In Matthew’s Gospel, it says “Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” Although tax collectors were despised by the Jews because they collected tax for the Romans, these men were pleasant toward those who came to them to pay their taxes. They expressed this lowest form of *agape*.

### When a Brother Offends

A higher form of *agape* comes into play when someone accidentally offends us. This is not an ENEMY wishing us *harm*, but a relative, friend or colleague who says something without thinking, does something *accidentally* that hurts us, or fails to do something and we’re hurt by their inaction.

Christ promised offenses would occur: “Then He said to His disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come,

but woe to him through whom they do come!’ ” (Luke 17:1).

When we are offended by someone, we are not to stop loving (*agapao*) them. Instead, our love for them should stir us to the following actions: “If your brother sins against you, rebuke him [let him know]; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (vv. 3-4).

Peter asked Christ, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus told him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (Mat. 18:21-22).

Our *agape* toward our brothers requires that we forgive them every time they offend us. We do this because we have set our minds to love them even if they hurt us. We can *see beyond our hurt* to REALIZE that our brothers *did not intend* to hurt us but they probably were acting in their own best interest at the time and did not consider how their actions affected us.

When we *forgive* our brothers, we also FORGET their sin against us; we don’t hold their sins against them. The apostle Peter tells us, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). When sins are “covered” they are out of view—and, as the old saying goes, “out of sight, out of mind!”

### When an Enemy Harms Us

An even higher level of *agape* is required to love our ENEMIES who *intend* to harm us. This is NOT a brother who *accidentally* steps on our toes; this is a “sworn enemy” who purposely sets out

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## Love

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to harm or destroy us. Christ says we are to love this person too!

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Mat. 5:42-44).

How can we love people who hate us and want to harm or kill us? Obviously we can't *phileo* them! We can't be fond of such enemies, loving them for who they are and what they stand for. But we can *agapao* them. It is possible to set our minds to FORGIVE them and WISH THEM NO HARM; to wish THE BEST for them.

Jesus Christ gave us the ultimate example of this level of *agape*. Having been scourged, spat upon, slapped and beaten, and having his hands and feet nailed to a wooden stake, and then left hanging to die, he uttered those famous words, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

How could Jesus ask God to forgive the very people who were crucifying Him? Because those people were deceived. They did not comprehend what they were doing. In their minds, they thought they were doing the right thing: crucifying a criminal. Christ, full of *agape*, could set his mind to love those who scourged and crucified Him, “because they do not know what they do.”

Jesus instructs his followers to have this same level of *agape*. We can do this if we, too, realize our enemies are deceived. They don't know what they are doing! They think they are doing right to persecute us. Jesus warned, “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think he offers God service” (John 16:1-2).

*Agape* requires action. What action will we take toward our enemies if we have this level of *agape*? Specific actions are listed in Mat. 5:44.

We will BLESS them and not curse them. Instead of calling down fire upon them or asking God to destroy our enemies, we will follow Christ's example on the stake and *ask God to forgive them*.

We will DO GOOD to them. If they need our help, we'll help them. If they are hungry, we'll feed them. If they are thirsty, we'll give them drink (Rom. 12:20). In the process of time, our enemies may begin to wonder why they hate us so much when we treat them so well. This conflict will be like heaping hot coals upon their heads (Rom.

12:20). It will *burn their conscience*. By rendering good for evil, we will not be overcome by evil but we will overcome evil with good (v. 21).

We also are to PRAY for our enemies. We should NOT pray that they be successful in their endeavors to harm us. Our prayers should be:

1. That God forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34);
2. That they leave us alone (1 Tim. 2:2); and
3. That God opens their eyes to see the error of their ways and that they come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

### Love God

Certainly, loving our enemies who hate us requires a VERY HIGH level of *agape*!

But there is yet a HIGHER level we must attain. We must *agapao* God! We must set our minds to love the Father and Jesus Christ. We in the Church of God are *called* to LOVE HIM; it is our duty: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love [*agapao*] God, to those who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Loving God is a step above loving our fellow humans. “If someone says, ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21).

Again, this love is NOT having a *tender affection* toward everyone. It is having a mind-set that desires the best for everyone. This is a difficult task among humans. It appears to be *even more difficult* as we move into the SPIRIT REALM!

*Agape* requires action. How do we show our *agape* of God? What action can we take that shows God we love Him?

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Aha! Now we see why *agape* toward God is so difficult! We must keep the commandments of God! This starts with the 10 commandments and expands to all the commandments from God in the Bible. And we are not to obey grudgingly; we are to love God's law (Ps. 119:165). *Agape* is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10).

To truly love God and his law requires that we have the spirit of God working in us. Our fleshly, human minds do not naturally want God telling us what to do. “Because the carnal [fleshly] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

God's law is spiritual (Rom. 7:14). With-

out God's spirit in us, we can't fully grasp the importance of obeying the law of God. When we have God's spirit, we understand why we must obey God's laws. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11).

*Agape* is one of the fruits of God's holy spirit (Gal. 5:22). We receive God's spirit by having hands laid upon us after baptism (Acts 2:38). With God's holy spirit in us, we can comprehend spiritual things, and we can attain this highest level of *agape*: loving God and his law.

Once we are led by God's spirit, we find ourselves *living* by God's laws and *loving it!* We grow in our understanding of how *God's laws define a way of love*. God's laws tell us how to love both Him and our fellow humans.

The more we OBEY God's laws, the more we *become like God*. Obeying God's laws transforms us into loving beings like God! The apostle John wrote to the church (calling her the “elect lady” in 2 John 1): “And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have heard from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it” (vv. 5-6). The more that we

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walk according to God's commandments, the more *agape* we have.

And it's not only the 10 commandments that we must obey, but we must follow all of God's instructions in the Bible, which is God's written Word.

Jesus prayed to his Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). We are to *agapao* that entire Word (not just the New Testament and not just the scriptures with which we agree)! We are to set our minds to OBEY all of the *truth* in the entire Bible. We are to love truth. If we don't, we will perish and not be saved. Paul wrote that there will be "those who perish, because they did not receive the love (*agape*) of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thes. 2:10).

## God Is Love

The more we live by God's laws and instructions, the more we become like God Himself! God's laws define his character. Therefore, it can be summarized that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). *Agape* defines God's character and personality. Everything He does is done out of love—love is what motivates Him. It is at the core of his being.

*Agape* is a mind-set of desiring the best for others, no matter who they are and no matter if they love us back.

God is the greatest example of *agape*! The Father sacrificed his only Son for people in this world who, for the most part, ignore and reject Him (John 3:16). Jesus Christ gave up his eternal life with the Father to become flesh and blood, and to die an ignominious death, so we can have eternal life (Philip. 2:5-8). "Greater *agape* has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

*Agape* is more than warm, fuzzy feelings. It is more than tender affection. It is a commitment! God is committed to our well-being! Notice how God's commitment toward us is described:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is



photo by Gregory Dullum

One of mankind's greatest fears is a fear of death. When we have perfect *agape*, we have no fear of death. We also do not fear what people can do to us in this life. Perfect love casts out fear!

longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). He "desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Coming to to the knowledge of the truth and repenting are just the *beginning* of the process of our conversion. God's *agape* is a LONG-TERM COMMITMENT that will see us through to the end of the process—our successful birth as glorified, spirit-composed children of God (Rom 8:16-17) when Christ returns: "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philip. 1:6).

## Perfect Love

God began a good work INSIDE OF US and He will complete it. How? How does God work *within us*? He does it by *LIVING in us* through the power of his holy spirit. It is crucial that we develop this highest form of *agape* so that God and Christ can live in us!

"No one has seen God at any time. If we *agape* one another, God abides in us, and His *agape* has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit. ... And we have known and believed the *agape* that God has for us. God is *agape*, and he who abides in *agape* abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:12-13, 16).

This highest level of *agape* is called "perfect love." The word "perfect" is the Greek word *telios* and means "complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.) ... of full age" (Strong's Greek Dictionary, included in his *Exhaustive Concordance*, p. 71). This is a mature, fully developed

*agape*—the highest level we can attain.

How do we know when we have attained the highest form of *agape*? John tells us how we can know:

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). *We behave like God does!* We keep the same laws God does! Led by the holy spirit, our thoughts become one with God! *We think like Him!* There is a close family resemblance between God the Father and we, his children!

And because we have become so much like God, we no longer fear the judgment! "There is no fear in *agape*; but perfect *agape* casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in *agape*" (1 John 4:18).

When we have a committed lifestyle of obedience to God and his instructions, and we commit our minds to seeking the best for others no matter who they are, we no longer have any fears! We know God is living in us and is for us, so we don't fear for our future—we have confidence in the fact that we will be born as children of God! If anything should happen to us in this life, we can be confident that we will be in the resurrection. Eternal life awaits us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Nothing can separate us from the *agape* of God! "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the *agape* of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 38-39).

What an AWESOME love to achieve—*perfect love*! When we have perfect love, we have no fears! We don't fear death because we are confident of our resurrection to eternal life in the God family. We don't fear what people can do to us because we are confident God is for us and they cannot separate us from God's love. We're not plagued by guilt because we are living God's way (avoiding sin and the things which cause us to feel guilty) and we know He is quick to forgive our sins when we slip up. We don't carry around the heavy burdens of hate and resentment toward others because we have forgiven them for their trespasses against us. There can be no greater FREEDOM in this life than to achieve PERFECT LOVE.

This concludes our discussion of love as mentioned in the New Testament. Next month we will begin to see that the Old Testament has a lot to teach us about love as well!

(To be continued!)

## Know Your Bible

By Charles Nenninger

1. Who bought Joseph when he got to Egypt?
2. What word in the Bible is used to mean a government?
3. How many kinds of angels are mentioned in the Bible?
4. What kind of angel is Michael?
5. What kind of angel was Lucifer?

(Answers on page 5)

# DEACONS: HELPERS IN THE CHURCH

Throughout the history of God's church, deacons have served as helpers

By Gregory Dullum

When studying church history, we most often focus upon the LEADERS of various movements—the original apostles, Paul, Papius, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Melito, Polycrates, Arius, Patrick, Simeon, Sergius, Berengarius, Peter de Bruys, Henry, Peter Waldo, Walter the Lollard, Francis David, Andreas Eössi, Edward Stennett, Stephen Mumford and Herbert W. Armstrong.

In order to be *leaders*, these men needed *followers*. And when the followers became numerous, these men needed *helpers*.

The office of deacon in the church was established as an office of *service*. Deacons were *helpers*; they helped church leaders do their job. Some deacons became powerful preachers, and some were martyred for what they preached!

Let's examine this often-overlooked class of people who have served God's people throughout the past 2,000 years of God's church.

## Meaning of 'Deacon'

"[The] term 'deacon' comes from the Greek noun *diakonos*, which occurs 29 times in the NT and is commonly translated 'servant' or 'minister.' The noun is derived from the verb 'to serve' and is used to signify various types of service. ... Less frequently it is found as a designation for an officeholder in the local church" ("Deacon," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 2003, p. 398).

## Office of Deacon Established

Very early in church history it was discovered that church leaders needed helpers, so the office of deacon was created.

When the church began, its members were all Jews, but they fell into two categories: the Hellenists and the Hebrews.

"The Hellenists were those of Jewish descent who grew up outside the land of Israel. They spoke Greek and used the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint. The Hebrews were Palestinian Jews who spoke Aramaic and used the Hebrew Old Testament. There may have been an animosity between the groups, even among the new believers, which gave rise to distrust and tension over care of the widows who were neglected" (*Compact Bible Commentary* by Earl Radmacher, Ron Allen

and H. Wayne House, 2004, p. 769).

"The number of followers was growing. But during this same time, the Greek-speaking followers had an argument with the other followers. The Greek-speaking widows were not getting their share of food that was given out every day. The twelve apostles called the whole group of followers together and said, 'It is not right for us to stop our work of teaching God's word in order to serve tables. So brothers and sisters, choose seven of your own men who are good, full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. We will put them in charge of this work. Then we can continue to pray and teach the word of God.'

"The whole group liked the idea, so they chose these seven men: Stephen (a man with great faith and full of the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (a man from Antioch who had become a follower of the Jewish religion). Then they put these men before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:1-6 *New Century Version*).

These seven men were probably selected because they were already leaders among the Hellenists. "The seven may be judged by their names to have been Hellenists; one of them, indeed (Nicolaus), was a proselyte from Syrian Antioch. But they appear to have been much more than almoners [those who distribute alms]; they may well have been the elected leaders of the Hellenistic group" (*New Testament History* by F.F. Bruce, 1972, p. 219).

These men had *already* shown leadership capabilities BEFORE they were anointed as deacons. Later, the apostle Paul would instruct Timothy regarding the ordination of deacons: "But let these also *first be proved*; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless" (1 Tim 3:10, emphasis added). Deacons don't start their duties the day they're ordained; they usually are ordained because they are already doing the work of a deacon.

What happened as result of these ordinations? "And the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (v. 7). The fruit borne shows that it was a wise decision to create this new office.

Of the seven first deacons mentioned, we have detailed knowledge only of Stephen and Philip.

Procorus, Nicanor, Timon and Parmenas seem to have dutifully served the

church in obscurity, not receiving any additional recognition in the Bible. Nicolas may be another story, which we will get to next month.

## Stephen

As the Book of Acts continues, it follows the life of Stephen, the first deacon named. "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8).

"Stephen belonged to the Hellenistic synagogue in Jerusalem called the Synagogue of the Freedmen; its membership embraced Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Proconsular Asia" (Bruce, p. 220).

Members of the synagogue began disputing with Stephen (Acts 6:9). What did they argue about? "It was in the synagogue that he (Stephen) first publicly voiced his criticism of the Temple order and his conviction that that order had now been decisively superseded by the coming of Jesus. This led to a regular debate in the synagogue in which Stephen's arguments proved irrefutable" (Bruce, p. 220).

Stephen taught that Jesus was the new high priest and the old order of the priesthood was done away! His fellow Jews could not disprove his arguments. What did they do instead?

"So they paid some men to say, 'We heard him speaking against Moses and against God'" (Acts 6:11).

"Stephen was charged with two-fold blasphemy—against God, because he affirmed that Jesus had come to abolish the Temple and all it stood for, and against Moses, because he affirmed similarly that Jesus had come to abrogate the customs laid down for Israel to keep in Moses' law" (Bruce, p. 220).

The Jews seized Stephen and took him before the Council where they formally accused him (vv. 12-15).

Stephen was given a chance to answer his accusers. His answer is recorded in Acts 7. He told the story of the Old Testament and showed how the Scriptures did not stop with Moses as the end-all, but the entire Old Testament pointed to the coming of Jesus Christ. Stephen accused the Council of being in the same position as the rebellious Israelites who wished to return to Egypt and who worshiped the golden calf (Acts 7:39-41).

After this recount of the Scriptures, Stephen boldly made his point: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy

Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, and who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (vv. 51-53).

## Stephen Is Martyred

"Stephen's reply concludes with the denunciation of his judges, whose recent rejection of the 'Righteous One' is completely keeping with their fathers' rejection of the prophets who foretold the advent. Such language could not fail to provoke their anger, and Stephen, seeing their hostility and realizing the certainty of an unfavourable verdict, appealed from their judgement to that of the heavenly court, where Jesus stood as witness or counsel for the defense..." (Bruce, p. 224).

This explains Acts 7:55-56, which reads: "But he [Stephen], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'"

The Council was already furious from Stephen's cutting personal remarks. They cried out at his latest statements about Jesus in heaven. This went against them so strongly that "they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes (cloaks) at the feet of a young man named Saul" (vv. 57-58).

"They kept on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' He knelt down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord! Do not remember this sin against them!' He said this and died. And Saul approved of his murder" (vv. 59-60; 8:1 *Good News Bible*).

Stephen, one of the very first deacons, was more than a waiter serving widows. He was a fiery speaker who argued with Jews in their synagogue, successfully defending the Christian faith. He, like John the Baptist (Mat. 3:7-9) and Christ Himself (Mat. 23:13-35), strongly criticized the Jewish religious leaders of his day. Like Christ (Luke 23:34), he forgave those who were killing him. He suffered as the first recorded martyr of the church.

## Philip

Persecution followed the martyrdom of Stephen and the church members scattered, preaching the Word everywhere they went (Acts 8:3-4).

Philip took up where his fellow deacon, Stephen, had left off. Philip, too, was an

effective preacher, and he performed miracles. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city" (vv. 5-8).

There was a magician named Simon Magus in that city. (Magus means "priest.") This Simon had collected quite a following because he had practiced his magic for a long time. When he and his followers heard Philip, they all believed and were baptized.

"Now when the apostles who were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them" (v. 14). The holy spirit had not been given right away to the newly baptized (vv. 15-16). The converts received the spirit only when Peter and John laid hands on them (v. 17). Philip had baptized the new converts, but he did not have the authority to lay hands upon them so they could receive the holy spirit.

When Simon Magus saw that the holy spirit was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money for that ability.

Peter replied with the stinging words: "May you and your money go to hell, for thinking you can buy God's gift with money! You have no part or share in our work, because your heart is not right in God's sight. Repent then, from this evil plan of yours, and pray to the Lord that He will forgive you for thinking such a thing as this. For I see that you are full of bitter envy, and are a prisoner of sin" (vv. 20-23, *GNB*).

Simon Magus then said to Peter and John, "Please pray to the Lord for me, so that none of the things you said might happen to me" (v. 24, *GNB*). He did not repent. He merely asked for forgiveness.

Some believe he left to start his own counterfeit Christian religion, the Roman Catholic Church. Philip was there when this historic confrontation took place.

What happened to Philip after this meeting with Simon Magus? He was told

## DEACONS

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## Know Your Bible Answers

1) Potiphar. 2) Mountain. 3) Four—regular angels, seraphim, cherubim and archangels—although archangels may be a type of cherubim. 4) Archangel. 5) A cherub.

## Fun Fact

of creation, history, holidays & the Bible



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS  
Butterflies need sunlight to regulate their body temperature.

## Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

*Being George Washington* by Glenn Beck, Threshold Editions, 2011, pp. 145-146.

## Cockiness

"Hearing that the French fleet under Admiral de Grasse had left the French Indies, British rear admiral Sir Thomas Graves set sail from New York with nineteen warships to meet them. With the confidence of a man who had rarely been challenged, Graves fully expected to easily handle whatever French forces he might encounter. That cockiness—a disposition that [George] Washington never displayed—might have led directly to Graves's downfall.

"When Graves arrived at the mouth of the Chesapeake, he was surprised to see de Grasse's fleet already anchored at bay. He was also surprised to see that it was much larger than he was told to expect. But if his cockiness waned at the site of the French fleet, he certainly didn't show it. ...

"For Graves, it wasn't pretty. While the two fleets had been almost evenly matched, the British suffered far more damage to their ships than the French."

**Prov. 11:2, 16:18, 29:23; 1 Cor. 10:12**

## Quotable Quotes

"One man with courage makes a majority." — Andrew Jackson

## Memory Scripture

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

—1 Cor. 10:12

## Deacons

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by an angel of God to go south to the road which went from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26).

Here Philip found an Ethiopian eunuch, a high official in the court of Queen Candace. He was in charge of the national treasury. This eunuch was a Gentile convert to Judaism. He was on his way home from Jerusalem and was reading the Scriptures. But he was having trouble understanding a passage in Isaiah. Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (v. 30).

The eunuch answered Philip the way a true Christian would. "How can I understand," the eunuch replied, "unless someone explains them to me?" (v. 31, *GNB*).

So Philip explained the scriptures in question, showing how they referred to Jesus Christ.

The eunuch became convinced in the Christian belief. When his chariot passed some water, he asked Philip, "Here is some water. What is to keep me from being baptized?" Philip replied, "You may be baptized if you believe with all your heart." The eunuch then said to Philip, "I do. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (vv. 32-37, *GNB*).

This was sufficient to convince Philip that the Ethiopian official was indeed ready for baptism. The Ethiopian commanded that the chariot be stopped and Philip baptized him, not by sprinkling, but by immersing him under the water (vv. 38-39), signifying a complete burial of the old self (Romans 6).

The Ethiopian was not the first Gentile convert into the Church of God. He was of Gentile nationality but he was of Jewish religion. Nothing else is mentioned of him in the book of Acts. God did not open the door for Gentile converts until some time later.

"From Gaza Philip then made his way north along the Palestinian seaboard, evangelizing the cities on the way until he reached Caesarea. There he appears to have settled down, no doubt making Caesarea his base for further evangelistic activities; at any rate, it is there we meet him twenty years later, known to his fellow Christians as 'Philip the Evangelist'; known also as the father of four daughters with the gift of prophecy" (Bruce, p. 230).

Stephen and Philip were shining examples of men who were ordained as physical helpers in the distribution of food to widows but grew to be used by God for a great spiritual work as well. Nicholas is another story, and we'll discuss him next month.

(To be continued!)



## Neo-Fascists Are Re-emerging in Europe

"Once in the shadows, Europe's neo-fascists are stepping back out, more than three-quarters of a century after Nazi boots stormed through Central Europe, and two decades since a neo-Nazi resurgence of skinheads and white supremacists unsettled the transition to democracy. In Slovakia, neo-fascists are winning regional offices and taking seats in the multiparty Parliament they hope to replace with strongman rule. ...

" 'Something very dark and very troubling from the past is coming back,' [TV talk show host and political commentator] Mr. [Michael] Havran said. 'They feel they are fighting for something very pure, something very old and sacred.'

"Stanislav Micev, the museum director, characterized [neo-fascist leader] Mr. [Marian] Kotleba's message a 'fascism with elements of Nazism,' mixing Mussolini's strongman rule with Hitler's demonization of minorities.

" 'They are against Americans, Hungarians, Jews, black people and yellow people,' Mr. Micev said. 'His current positions are right on the edge of what is legal' " ("Once in the Shadows, Europe's Neo-Fascists Are Re-emerging" by Rick Lyman, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, March 19, 2017, pp. 1, 3-4).

A union of 10 kings will rise in Europe at the end time (Dan. 2:41-44, Rev. 17:12-14). This union will be led by a strongman called "the beast" (Rev. 17:12, 13:1-10). The rise of neo-fascism could help the beast rise to power, just as the popularity of the Nazi party in Germany after World War I brought Adolph Hitler to power.

## Famine Threatens

"Now on a hot, flat, stony plateau outside Baidoa, [Somalia], thousands of people pack into destitute camps, many clutching their stomachs, some defecating in the open, others already dead from a cholera epidemic.

"Another famine is about to tighten its grip on Somalia. And it's not the only crisis that aid agencies are scrambling to address.

For the first time since anyone can remember, there is a very real possibility of four famines—in Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen—breaking out at once, endangering more than 20 million lives.

"International aid officials say they are facing one of the biggest humanitarian disasters since World War II. ...

"Once again, a lack of clean water and proper hygiene is setting off an outbreak of killer diseases in displaced persons camps. ...

"The famines are coming as a drought sweeps across Africa and several different wars seal off extremely needy areas" ("Drought and War Heighten Threat of Not Just 1 Famine, but 4" by Jeffrey Gettleman, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, March 27, 2017, pp. 1-2).

Wars, famine and pestilence are prophesied to happen as "the beginning of sorrows" leading up to Christ's return (Mat. 24:3, 6-8).

## Britain Officially Begins Process of Leaving E.U.

"Britain filed for divorce from the European Union Wednesday [March 29], with fond words and promises of friendship that could not disguise the historic nature of the schism. ...

"Prime Minister Theresa May triggered the two-year divorce process in a six-page letter to EU Council president Donald Tusk .... Britain becomes the first major nation to leave the union—as Big Ben bongs midnight March 29, 2019" ("UK files for a divorce from EU after 44 years" by Jill Lawless and Raf Casert (Associated Press), *Southeast Missourian*, March 30, p. 9A).

Bible Prophecy indicates that the sinful descendants of Joseph (U.S. and British Commonwealth nations) will be punished with national captivity by modern-day Assyria (Germany), which will lead a 10-king European union (the final revival of the Holy Roman Empire)—Lev. 26:23-25, 31-33, Isa. 10:5-7, Dan. 2:40-44, Rev. 17:10-14. If Britain is to be taken captive by Germany, it seems logical that it will not be part of a European Union led by Germany.