

## THE AGAPE FEAST

We have celebrated the Agape Feast every year since our beginning as a church in 1974. It is an annual reminder of the reason of our existence as a church in the Birmingham area.

The reason for our becoming a local church in 1974 was to establish a unique teaching church in Birmingham. By unique I mean that, as a local church:

- (1) We teach the Scriptures under I.C.E principles, i.e. Isagogic, Category and Exegesis. (Isa.28: 9-13).
- (2) We teach the Scriptures for the spiritual growth of both the baby (milk doctrines) and mature believer (meat doctrines) (Heb.5:13-14; 1 Pet.2:2)
- (3) We train and support outreach ministries (Acts 1:8; 11:22-26; 13:1-3; 14:26-27).

Over the past 31 years, we have grown in these three areas as Doctrinal Studies Bible Church of Birmingham, Alabama and presently have 57 outreach ministries operating out of this church.

The Agape Feast gives us an opportunity to reflect on God's amazing grace and to tell our story to new members who have joined us in this spiritual journey.

This was true also of Paul and the Corinthian church. In I Corinthians 11, Paul began in his typical Pauline leadership by first praising them (11:2) and then addressing a problem (11:17-19) and finally recommending spiritual performance changes (11:20-22, 33-34).

The Agape Feast falls in the problem section of 1 Corinthians 11 (11:17-22).

**This lesson will study 5 aspects of the Agape Feast of the Church of Corinth. There are several passages on the Agape Feast (Acts 2:42; 20:11; 1 Cor.11: 17-22; Jude 12).**

- 1. Paul states that he is giving instruction on the Agape feast (11:17). The Greek verb for instruction is (paraggello / p.a.ptc nsm).**

Paraggello refers to sending a message or directive down ranks. Paul is speaking from his apostolic authority on the Agape Feast. Paul called it the **Lord's Supper** (kuriakos deipnon)(11:20, 26).

This directive was send down to correct a church fellowship problem that was effecting the Eucharist (11:23-34).

- 2. There were some in the congregation who were excluding others from fellowship within their clique.**

For Paul, this amounted to worldliness thinking in the church. It was coming together for the worst and not the better (11:17).

The Greek word for coming together is (sunerchomai / assembly / Heb.10:25). This word dominates the subject of our passage (11:17,18,20,33). Members of this church didn't forsake the assembly but did for the Worst (to hesson) rather than for the better (kreisson).

The church of Jesus Christ is the one place in the community of the world that all barriers are broken down for fellowship in love (Gal.3: 28) inclusive; (John 13:34-35). Remember it is the Lord's Supper!

**3. This worldliness thinking (OMCD) was causing division and factions in this doctrinal local church (11:18-19). This is carnality sin (Gal.5: 9, 16-21; 1 Cor.11: 21; Jude 12-16).**

The Greek word for division is (schisma / division based on prejudices / mental attitude sin / self-centered and self-importance).

The Greek word for faction is (hairesis / heresy / false viewpoint of treating other believers).

James addressed a similar problem in James 2:1-13 [sin of partiality and exclusiveness] (Titus 3:9-11).

**4. Paul explained that such behavior tests others in the church with positive volition toward truth of God's word and ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

“For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved (dokimos) [testing for approval] may have become evident among you.” (11:19)

Paul challenged the spiritual advancing believers by asking them; “Do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing?” (11:22)

**5. The Lord's Supper consisted of two grace fellowships during the assembly (Eating and Eucharist).**

The Agape Feast preceded the Eucharist. A problem in the eating part of fellowship carried over into the Eucharist fellowship resulting in divine discipline.

Paul recommended changes in thinking for changes in behavior (put off the Old Man) and (put on the New Man).

- Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? (11:22, 34) dealing with hunger issue - privacy
- Wait for one another. (11:33) - public
- So that you may not come together for judgment. (11:34, 27-32) Divine discipline distinguishes us from condemnation of the world (11:32; Rom.8:1)

**Therefore personal preparation must precede participation in the Eucharist (1 John 1:9)**

**These two grace fellowships are communal participation not carnal participation.** “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.” (Acts 4:32)