

Yeshua

MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"—our Jesus.

Dear Friends,

There are some new terms to be discussed in this letter. I believe you will find them quite interesting and the distinctions beneficial to your walk with Jesus.

Orthodoxy—Right Behavior vs.

Orthopraxy—Right Heart

Orthodoxy is concerned with *being right*. It emphasizes establishing right laws and doctrine. A certain degree of orthodoxy is necessary, but generally what happens in the Church as it did with the Pharisees, people get caught up more with *knowing about* their faith or judging people based upon standards of 'correct behavior'.

Certain biblical doctrines are critical tenets of the faith. As we mention in *Restoring the Early Church*, the Greek philosophers who entered the Church brought with them systematic thought patterns that led to the development of so-called 'doctrines' which now divide God's church. The multiplicity of doctrines beyond those for which the earliest believers were willing to die are the source of much dissension in the church.

Consider the biblical emphasis of "orthopraxy." Orthopraxy

may be defined as the way our love for Jesus is expressed in the enactment of our lives. Orthopraxy causes us to see life and people more and more from God's loving kindness and moves us to *act* in accordance with His love.

Two Jewish Farmers

For example, suppose you were living in 200 BC and you met a Jewish farmer who viewed his life from *orthodoxy*. You noticed his fields and saw him upholding Lev. 23:22, "*When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God.*" If you asked him, he would tell you that he obeys the above verse "because God commands it."

Suppose you went a little farther down the road and met an *orthopractic* farmer who hadn't completely gleaned his fields either. In answer to your question he would reply, "My God loves the poor and unfortunate and I love them too."

Can you see the difference?
Same behavior...entirely different motive.

We are told in the Book of James, "*Religion that God our*

Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (1:27); and, "*Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do"* (2:15-18). Do you think James is emphasizing orthodoxy or orthopraxy?

Because the Greek philosophical approach has such tremendous influence in so many faith communities today, orthodoxy of the Gospel is overstated at the cost of orthopraxy: "Believe these truths and you will be saved." This counterfeit gospel only requires cognitive assent.

The Orthopraxy of the Gospel

When John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter in his Pentecost message call for *repentance* as a prerequisite to entering the kingdom of God,

were they calling for *action* as² will (see Eph. 2:8,9).

an element of salvation or for cognitive agreement? Biblical repentance calls for an active turning *from sin to God*.

[Remember, Hebrew emphasizes the verb or action. English emphasizes the noun or subject. Because of this emphasis, English lends itself more to orthodoxy than to orthopraxy.]

Consider the orthopraxy which Jesus tells us will be the criteria for the final judgment: *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'... 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'"*(Matt. 24:40).

Will we be judged by our orthodox assertions or by the actions our love for Jesus produces?

Do you know that Paul believed in the same Gospel that Jesus did?

Paul asserts the importance of orthopraxy in our salvation: *"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"*(Phil. 2:12,13).

Of course, it is only by God's grace that we can work out His

Note in Eph. 2:10 a *purpose* for so great a salvation: *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* Sue and I encourage you to seek His purposes with all the power in Him that you have!

If I have not love...I am nothing

Within the current US church the issue of biblical love has its orthodoxy and orthopraxy adherents. The orthodox conceive it, the orthoprax live it. In the Hebrew Bible God desired a love relationship with His people: *"Love [ahav] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"* (Deut. 6:5).

The word for love, *ahav* [pro: ah-hahv'] is a love filled with desire, a passionate love. *Ahav* is often used to describe the unfathomable love and tender mercies of God. Appearing 250 times in the Hebrew Bible, *ahav* denotes powerful devotion, a desire to possess or be in the presence of the one who is loved. This is the love that God wanted from His chosen people.

Jesus calls for this same depth of love when He reiterates Deut. 6:5 :*"Love [agape] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"*(Matt. 22:37).

The word *agape* (pron. ah-gah'-pay) in the above verse is the N. T. equivalent of *ahav*. It is the grace of God seen in Jesus' followers as they display sacrificial love. This type of love is completely unselfish, and is used of God's love toward man

and vice versa. Often translated as "charity" or benevolent love, *agape* expresses deep compassion and concern for the one so loved.

Why do we agape God? Because He first agape(d) us.

If you belong to Jesus, then there is only one vital thing: *"For in Christ Jesus....the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love [agape]"* (Gal. 5:6).

Consider the reassuring verse, Romans 8:28: *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love [agape] him, who have been called according to his purpose."* The promise of this verse is for those who *agape* God and are actively living out His purposes.

Agape does not mean doing what the loved one might desire or even deserve. It is meeting the *true need* of that person. The ultimate test of *agape* love is found when we face persecution or mistreatment: *"But I tell you: Love [agape] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"* (Matt. 5:44).

To show our love for God, we must first appropriate His *agape*, for only God has such an unselfish love. We must seek Him for the grace to fulfill His command to love. His love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and the presence of this love is the visible evidence of His grace in us. It is *agape* love that compels and empowers us to obey Him: *"If you love [agape] me, you will obey what I command"* (John 14:15); and, *"This is how we know what love*

[agape] is: Jesus Christ laid³ down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers”(1 John 3:16).

Apape love is God’s requirement for husbands toward their wives: “However, each one of you also must love [agape] his wife as he loves himself” (Eph. 5:33). Our Lord knows the humility it takes a husband to ask Him for this sacrificial, servant love to be manifested toward his wife.

The word “love” appears often in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. In each instance it is *agape* love. Since this passage is so often read at weddings, think about what is demanded in the relationship of the new husband and wife as they grow in their pilgrimage together. Who will help them to live this out?

The Agape of Salvation

Jesus speaks of a certain type of forceful man: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it”(Mat. 11:12). Those who emphasize an orthodox Gospel often struggle with the meaning of this

verse. Let me share with you an orthopractic interpretation that would have been understood by the Hebraic early Church.

Around a military fortification there is established what is termed a ‘fire zone.’ This is where the weapons are concentrated for maximum killing effectiveness. Those seeking to attack the fort have to courageously fight their way through the fire zone first. Because of the strong likelihood that they might be killed in the attack, they have to ‘die to everything’ before the attack in order to fully focus on the objective.

Such forceful determination is exemplified by those who would follow Jesus. This conviction and determination is captured in Matt. 13:44-46: “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*”

Give Yourself an Agape Test

At the end of his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul asks them to “examine yourselves to see whether you are living a life of loving trust; test yourselves. Do you not realize that the agape love of Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Jesus warned that in the last days, “*the love of most will grow cold*”(Matt. 24:12). I want to encourage each of us to examine ourselves, to *judge ourselves* so that we will *not come under judgment* (see 1Cor. 11:31). Is your loving trust in Jesus producing a life of increasing *agape* love? Ask your spouse or others close to you if they see the sacrificial love of Jesus growing in you. We pray that each person reading this letter will hear their name spoken before the hosts of heaven and rejoice as they hear the Lord say, “*You are welcomed, because you acted in love toward the least of these...*”

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