

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Fearlessness of Love

by Dan Trygg

“In this the love has been matured with us, in order that we might have confidence in the day of the judgment, because according as He is also we are in this world system. Fear is not in the love, rather the fully-grown love throws the fear outside, because the fear holds to punishment. But the one fearing has not been fully matured in the love.” I John 4:17,18

“the focal point of the instruction is love out from a clean heart, and a good conscience, and 'unphony' faith.” I Tim. 1:5

“Fear is not in the agapē...” What a statement! This sets straight all the misunderstandings and distorted teachings regarding the heart of God towards us. **If we can internalize this truth, we will find great freedom and health in our relationship to Him, to others, and even with regard to our own selves. Fear and agapē are incompatible.** When true agapē is expressed toward someone, that person cannot fully grasp it and remain in fear at the same time. Fear is like darkness, agapē like the light. When agapē comes on the scene, the darkness of fear must flee away. It dissipates before its brightness like a morning fog evaporates before the advancing sunlight. As the heart is warmed by that fresh sunlight, even the pockets of mist and dew that remain in the shadows of the heart begin to warm and slip away into nothingness.

The analogy is imperfect, because **our perception of agapē limits its advance of liberation in our souls.** It is often like we have a veil in front of our eyes, ...or like we live in a cave, ...or in a house with all the shades pulled down against the brightness of the day. **We are comfortable in what we are familiar with,** and stay behind the shutters in the dankness of our basement, living in the customary paths of our own artificial design, eking out our day-to-day existence with minimal excursions from our bunker, and these only under the cover of the darkness of our “stinking thinking”, so that **we often avoid unnecessary exposure to others, ...because exposure equals risk,** which has meant *hurt* in the past, ...and we do not want to experience the hurt of abuse, rejection, ridicule, or inadequacy ever again. These injuries were caused by other darkness-dwellers as we met in crooked hallways, or as we lived in the squalor of some back room, barricaded against the day.

Some of us found that it was better to be unnoticed than to be hurt, so we continue to live in relatively unused tunnels and hallways, avoiding being seen by those we feel might hurt us.

Some of us discovered that we could control the level of hurt, ...or have some measure of acceptance..., if we complied with the demands of those around us. If we were pleasant, and satisfied their wishes, they would leave us alone. If we failed to comply, they would make our lives miserable by their complaining, or by their tantrums of rage, or by their incessant, needling, disapproval. We continue to live our lives to keep others happy, not out of a fullness of heart, but out of a never-ending attempt to escape disapproval and to find acceptance.

Others of us have found that if we get “big”, ...if we get loud, scary, rage-full, and threatening..., that others will leave us alone, even clearing out the tunnels and hallways before us, and that some of those near us will even serve us, or at least back away from the exposure of confrontation. We continue to be bellicose, angry, threatening, controlling and manipulative, ...because it has worked for us, at least in part.

In any case, no matter what measures we take, **we are not truly happy or fulfilled, because what we really want is to be loved and accepted for who we really are,** ...to be appreciated and affirmed without having to perform. In all these strategies of our defenses, **we create a persona that is not the real “me”, in order to survive,** and get part of what we want, **not realizing that by doing so we also exclude the possibility of being loved for who we truly are,** ...of being appreciated and served out of a genuine evaluation of worth and an honest desire to help the real “me”, ...because we never live out the “real me”. Furthermore, if ever we might chance a look outside, the brightness out there hurts our eyes, nothing looks familiar, and we would be so exposed out there, we quickly shut ourselves up again in our fear.

What has happened **when Christ came into our lives is that He has become like a flashlight we carry around with us wherever we go, helping to see more clearly what was distorted by the darkness,** and He has opened the front door, even if it is only ajar, and fixed it so that it cannot be closed off against the daylight anymore. Now, we cannot go through that front room without seeing the daylight, and the smell of that fresh air is spreading throughout the house. Sometimes we are curious to know what is going on out there, and we even will snatch furtive glimpses from the front door. Some of us have ventured out into the sunlight, at times.

Though initially it is painful, we do become accustomed to the light, and we begin to experience the health of daylight. We discover that there is a whole new world of delights to be discovered. At first, we felt *exposed* and

vulnerable out in the openness of the day. Now, we are beginning to see that there is *safety* being out in the open. **There is power and freedom in being “real”, ...in *being ourselves* and *sharing what we really think and feel*.** Others, who are people of the light, accept us as we are, and are willing to answer questions, are patient with our immaturity, and are willing to teach us how to live life in the daylight. As *we* are honest, *they* meet us right where we are, and accept and affirm us for who we really are.

Agapē is attractive. Agapē smells fresh and sweet.

Agapē is affirming and nurturing of what is genuine and healthy.

Agapē is safe, because it truly wants what is best for the person. How *can* we fear, when someone truly wants what is best for us, and is willing to find out what that is? In this sense, **when we begin to really perceive and believe the nature of agapē, we find that it *does* throw our fears out of our lives.**

***In relation to God, we no longer have to be afraid of Him.* Our fears were based upon a false understanding of His character.** Having seen that He wants what is best for us, we need not fear Him. We can trust Him to treat us well, and do what is in our best interest. Does that mean we can take Him for granted, or disregard Him? No, that is a misunderstanding of what this whole thing is all about. We were designed to express God’s character and nature, and, in that way, to bring glory and honor to Him. He will settle for nothing less than that from us. **Instead of condemning and punishing us, however, as has been our experience in the past with other relationships, He will challenge, encourage, equip us and train us in how to do what He wants us to do. He is “for us”, no matter what.** He is on our side, and will help us to accomplish what we have been made to do, because He knows that it is in our own best interest. Because it is what we have been designed to do, it is also where we will find the most fulfillment and reward. **Punishment is simply giving us the painful consequences of our actions. *God is not content to do that.* As our heavenly Father, He will help us to learn how to do what it is that we have been created to do.** He is *with us* through the entire process. He instructs, He cheers us on and encourages, He picks us up when we stumble, and He patiently helps us to try again. **He is into developing skills, not slapping us when we fail.** He knows we are going to make mistakes. That is part of the learning process. He wants us to recognize and learn from our failures, but to move on from there.

***In relation to others, we no longer need fear their rejection.* Our self-esteem should no longer be based upon *their* response to us, but rooted in God’s unfailing love and affirmation.** Consequently, we can be honest and loving to others out of the security and fullness of what our relationship with God can bring us. We can choose to live in such a way as is beneficial and honestly helpful to others, without fear or manipulation, because we are not dependent on them for life. We can afford to speak the truth in love, and run the risk of being temporarily rejected, because it will be better, and healthier, in the end. We are to be “as He is in this world”. We can *expect* that we will be treated as Jesus was. Some will hear and respond. Others will misunderstand and reject. Still others will be angry that we dare to confront them with truth that they do not want to face, and will oppose or even attack us. We need not fear. **God will give us what we need to be true to Him, and ourselves, no matter what we face.**

***In relation to ourselves, we can stand up for ourselves unapologetically,* where truth and health demand it.** We do not need to be bullied or manipulated into codependent behavior. We can choose to live out what is good, healthy, and beneficial for us, as designated by God. **If agapē for oneself is choosing what is for my benefit (i.e., according to God’s intent for us), then I can begin to *freely choose* to do what I need to do for me, in light of God’s purposes for me.** Furthermore, we need not fear what others think if we begin to make choices which they do not understand. We need not defend ourselves to them, or convince them. We are answerable to God, and our conscience, not to the opinions of others.

The other truth that jumps off the page when considering I John 4:17,18 is that ***the impact of agapē is presented as a process.*** John is highlighting what would be the case if love is “fully-grown”, “matured”, or “brought to completion”. **When agapē has done its full work, *then* we will be without fear.** This is a possibility now, though most of us are not there, yet. It is important to see that **freedom from fear is *the result of knowing and trusting in God’s agapē.*** We don’t just force ourselves not to fear. We need to know we are safe in the bosom of God’s agapē. ***As our understanding of His agapē grows in us, so will our fearlessness.*** Note that vs. 17 says that God’s love has become fully-grown with us “*in order that* we might have confidence in the day of judgment”. The Greek word, translated “confidence”, literally means “**freedom of speech**”. It means we will not be intimidated, nor ashamed to speak freely and openly. This is to be true not only before the Father, but also on any other “day of judgment” we might face in the here and now. ***Agapē-love produces freedom, ...freedom to be ourselves, and to speak openly what is on our hearts.***