

Acting Against Myself

By Bob Mumford

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If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also]. For whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here] shall lose it; and whoever loses his life [his comfort and security here] for My sake shall find it [life everlasting] (Matthew

16:24–25 AMP).

Every night before bed my wife would get out a calcium pill for each of us. She did this faithfully for many years. One night I was going to bed early, so I got my calcium pill out and took it. She came in the bedroom a little while later and asked, “Where’s my calcium pill?” Though I was lying in bed, it felt like I had been shot. For so many years she had given herself to me, loving, serving, and caring for me. When I wanted to go to bed early, who did I think of? Me. Now. She was not even in the periphery of my thinking. I laid there and grieved. Judith said, “I’m sorry you feel so bad about this.” I responded, “You don’t need to take the bullet out; I’m already dead. I just haven’t stopped bleeding yet.”

Acting against myself (what I’ve termed AAM) is the proper way to live our Christian life. It has to do with distinguishing between light and dark, *Agape* and *Eros*, so that we can leave the old way of life and live differently. We need to die so that we can be married to another (see Rom. 7:4). The law doesn’t die; it remains in effect and we die. It is in resurrection that we are given a new bridegroom who loved us and gave Himself for us (see Gal. 2:20).

Agape is behavioral. It isn’t legal or methodical; it needs to be brought out of the court room into the family room. It isn’t a new doctrine or

a new understanding. It is about learning to live in *Agape*, which is eternal while living in a time/space world.

For me, this started with the calcium pill. It was one of the ugliest encounters I had with my own selfishness, and when I saw it, I burst into tears. This was when I saw that *Eros* was behavioral, not doctrinal. I was so turned in on myself that it never entered my mind to get Judith a calcium pill, something she had done for me for decades. I'm glad I understood the Scripture about no condemnation, or I would have gone down further. Some degree of maturity allowed me to work my way through it.

Our son, Eric, and his wife, Suzanne, have adopted a number of children from refugee camps in Uganda. If there is anything these children know how to do, it is *act for themselves*. One of the first things Eric and Suzanne explain to them is what they call "Me, Now" and its antidote, the freedom and skill of AAM. Eric said nothing stops those kids in their tracks like asking them, "Are you insisting on me, now?" We have the two pieces of the essence of the Kingdom:

1. Identify the problem: Me, Now.
2. The answer: acting against ourselves.

There is a big difference between law and grace. Christ did not hold the disciples accountable; He imparted His life to them, which created both accountability and a hunger.

Father's goal is that the whole creation will come to this freedom to act against itself (see Rom. 8:21). AAM is just the beginning of God setting creation free. Freedom of choice is not a "deny yourself" slogan. Each of us has the freedom of choice to *act against ourselves*. Too much acting against ourselves becomes asceticism and too little becomes hedonistic and abusive or what we refer to as "greasy grace." AAM is softer than saying you screwed up, sinned, or lied. The term AAM is a significant way for us to identify when we are not displaying *Agape*.

Life Through AAM

Acting against ourselves involves recognizing that our desires are often ungoverned. Paul stated that "the love of Christ controls and urges and impels us" (2 Cor. 5:14 AMP). Only *Agape* has the capacity and strength to enable us to govern our strong and unruly desires.¹

Christ gave us life by acting against Himself. He left His Father's throne, put aside His resident splendor, took on human form, suffered, and died on our behalf. *Father acted against Himself* when He sent His Son knowing that we would resist, reject, abuse, and mistreat Him. *God acted*

¹ For more on the subject of governing our desires, read the *Plumblines* entitled *Surrendering Our Desires*.

against Himself so that He could reveal His love for us. Paul, writing like a papa in Ephesians, is encouraging us to love as Christ loved by teaching us *how to act against ourselves*. Christ disciplined the 12, incrementally teaching them what it meant to *act against themselves*. He taught them and us both by example and by biblical precept.

Consider the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 as AAM. The Levite and priest walked right past the man who was beaten and lying in the road, but the Samaritan acted against himself, gave the man first aid, put him on his donkey, took him to an inn to recover, and paid the man's bill. After telling this story, Jesus asked, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" (Luke 10:36). When we see the parable in light of AAM, we have taken hold of something very significant.

I am appealing for an *Agape* reformation that begins by learning to *act against ourselves*. *Agape* alone expects and requires us to do so, maturing to the point of being able to give ourselves away. In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus states this as "forgetting himself and his own interests" and "whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here] shall lose it; and whoever loses his life [his comfort and security here] for My sake shall find it [life everlasting]" (AMP). In spite of all the people coming to Christ these days, it is

entirely possible that apart from a resurgence of a reformational release and impartation of *Agape* in the larger church, we could possibly enter a new Dark Ages. Another 80 million believers just like the first 80 million will not make much difference if we are not cognizant of how to *act against ourselves*.

In order to AAM, we must make a preferential choice. We have to choose to go through the cross in order to continue to do what God asks of us. When we are ignorant of, misled, or refuse God's rule in our lives, His Kingdom suffers. This is described as coming short of God's glory. We must abandon our competitive franchise mentality and learn how to act against ourselves so that we cultivate the capacity to love, accept, and receive one another. This is termed living for another. Remember, *Agape* is behavioral. Like an eternal rain cycle that waters the Mysterious Seed, we love because He first loved us. We cultivate and learn to walk in *Agape* esteeming and delighting in one another. When we learn to act against ourselves, we walk out of the darkness that has controlled and dominated us into the freedom of Light.

The phrase *acting against myself* has several synonyms: Life, *Agape* insemination, God's DNA, do you good, sons/daughters unto glory, and givers. All of these require us to be spontaneous, risky, and lose a bit of control. *Acting against ourselves* is a radical, yet normal, biblical way to live the Christian life. It involves dying (see Romans

6-8) to selfishness and intentionally choosing the welfare of others in everyday situations.

Death Through AFM

Acting for ourselves (AFM) results in death. After teaching for a number of years at the Chapel in San Quentin State Prison where some 40% of the inmates who attended the sessions confessed to being believers, I learned that prisoners, like all captives, are totally predictable: They all seek their own. They simply do not have the freedom to act against themselves because they have never been introduced nor taught how to do so.

The divorce rate for believers is the same as non-believers. The reason could be that the church is nursed on the consummate idea that God wants you to be happy, and if you are not happy, you should do something about it. When disciplined in *Eros*, we are simply unable and incapable of coming out of darkness. A teenager who decides to go their own way does so because in willfulness, they do not have the capacity to *act against themselves*.

A man said, “We’ve been talking about me for about 20 minutes. Now, let’s talk about you. How do you like my new book?” The man was so totally wrapped up in himself that even when he *intended* to step out of it, he could not. This is

what Paul meant when he said, “for they all seek after their own interests...” (Phil. 2:21). We begin to use other people, the Bible, God, and even His anointing for our own purposes! Many ministries are eager to build things for Christ and expect others to be impressed by the project even though there are dead bodies everywhere. Persons crushed in the process are merely the spoils of war.

If you have ever attended or been part of a dead church you will have noticed that in the absence of *Agape*, the congregation has a severe tendency to turn in upon themselves. *Eros* prevails and everything about the people and the service becomes predictable: Each person acts in their own interest. Are there *predators* in the church? Are their *parasites* in the church? Is there such a thing as a saved parasite? Yes, yes, and yes. A taker is defined by “I want it, now,” which describes America as well as the Church in general.

There are several synonyms for the phrase *acting for myself*: death; absence of *Agape*; predictable behavior of acting for myself; possess, acquire, control; predator/parasite; taker/me, now. Predictability consists of anticipating what someone is going to do or how they are going to react.

Measuring AAM

I have personally learned to measure how much I'm walking in *Agape* or *Eros* (life or death) by the way I respond to other drivers when they cut me off, pass me, or wait too long at a stop sign. If I'm talking to other drivers saying, "Where'd you get your driver's license, Pep Boys?" I am not AAM.

God blesses us or instructs us with relationships. Every church is assigned one special individual to teach us how to love. Years ago I had a woman in my church who, to say the least, was quite complicated. Just as I was about to preach or at some major transition in the service, she would find reason to interrupt and break the flow of the gathering with the same prophetic word. This happened every Sunday, almost without fail and always at the most inappropriate times.

One day my two daughters, ages 3 and 4, were playing upstairs with their dolls. Because they frequently saw people being delivered of demons during church services, their normal play time involved casting demons out of their dolls and speaking words over them. As if that weren't extreme enough, they then started speaking the very words of this woman over their dolls—they had memorized her exact words. It was then that I thought, "I've got to do something about this!" I rebuked her, instructed her, tried to find an occasion to have her delivered from demonic activity, threatened her, and even considered

going to her house early Sunday mornings to let the air out of her tires. Nothing worked. The Lord simply said, “Just love her.” I had to learn to act against myself a number of times as I learned this lesson. It is in relationships that we learn to act against ourselves.

Governmental Transfer

The freedom to act against ourselves comes from the preferential choice of the new birth (*Agape* insemination) and from water baptism. We leave the past and step into a new government. Scripture is very clear that *acting against ourselves* is a means to life and death: “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:12-13). Jesus delivered us by transferring us to a different government—one with the authority of *Agape* that gives us the freedom to AAM. It is a governmental transfer that many of us miss or fail to utilize.

This transfer has nothing to do with heaven; it happens in this present age because Father has given us a destiny to be ambassadors or representatives of His life and love to a hurting world. Placing all this in heaven or the millennium

is almost irrelevant. However real heaven may be, the issue and transfer from one government to another happens here and now on earth.

We are in a continual struggle to act for or against ourselves. It is clear that Old Testament circumcision was *an act against themselves*. Can you imagine using a stone to cut off your foreskin? In a similar manner, the call to water baptism is an act against ourselves because it is a circumcision of the heart.

When we are baptized in water Christ says, “My life will be your life...do what I’m doing.” Unfortunately, there is little difference in behavior between Christians and non-Christians. *Agape* alone expects and requires us to learn to *act against ourselves*, maturing to the point of being able to give ourselves away. We are buried in water for the purpose of being dead to the world and the world system; we incrementally discover that we are not our own and that we are not the center of the universe.

Water Baptism: An Act Against Myself

*Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified and made us fit to share the portion which is the inheritance of the saints (God’s holy people) in the Light. [The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself **out of the***

control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:12-13 AMP).

When I was a kid and trying to find my way in God, I was baptized in water three or four times just to make sure I didn't miss anything. I didn't know it at the time, but I desired God to bury the internal contradictions that were going on inside me. *Jesus sets us free from acting in our own interest.*

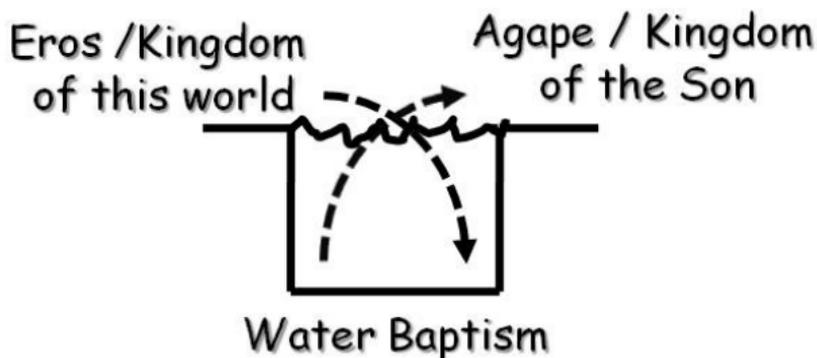
Since the day we were born we've been centered on ourselves: "I'm hungry!" "That is my toy!" "I wish somebody would buy me some stuff." Choosing to be baptized in water is an *intentional act against myself*, and for some, it may be the first conscious one they ever made.

Water baptism is an act of changing governments. It is an *act against ourselves* because we are asking Christ to bury us, including all of our innate darkness and raise us up into a new place of Light. We are transferred from the kingdom or domain of darkness into the Kingdom of God. We give evidence that we want to be free by choosing to be baptized. In this act we are literally asking to be taken out of *Eros* and brought into what the Greek text identifies as the Kingdom of His *Agape* or the Kingdom of the Son of His Love.

Jesus is *Agape*, and He knows how to act against Himself; by example He showed us how to do the same. Christ was the consummate person whose only desire was to do the will of God even over personal desires. He appeared as *Agape* Incarnate for the specific purpose of being the One Who could and did *act against Himself*. This He did for the single purpose of bringing in a new creation, one that is capable of AAM. That purpose is stated in Hebrews 10:9, “I come to do Thy will, O God.” He restated it in the encounter at Gethsemane: “Not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). This is the manner in which Father intends for His will to be accomplished on the earth.

When we come up out of water baptism we are saying “I come to do Your will, O God!” We are free men or women who are able to *choose* to AAM. In the *Eros* kingdom we are taught how to obtain our inheritance and claim God’s promises. In the *Agape* Kingdom we are taught how to give, minister, love, share, and be there for others. Which one is Light? Which one is darkness? They are two different kingdoms and two different forms of authority. This distinction of light and dark was what Matthew stated in 6:23, “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

The way I cured my selfish darkness with Judith was to buy 25 bottles of calcium. I'm just kidding, but I wish it were that easy! Even these many years later I can hardly get a calcium pill out without thinking about how selfish I was. Changing from darkness to light requires an inner



change; it is behavioral. Father knew exactly how to show me the depth of it. A selfish Christian is a paradox and an oxymoron, but, alarmingly, it includes most people in the church.

If we lose our inheritance in the Kingdom, we have lost the Light. Darkness is not necessarily cults or moral confusion in the world; it is our love for ourselves that spins us into darkness. By means of water baptism, we are taken out of the kingdom authority of darkness into the Kingdom or governmental sphere of *Agape* and Light. Father, Who is Light, draws us to Himself. If we really see this, salvation takes on a whole new dimension because its essence is darkness and light. Father,

by means of Christ, intends to give us Light, and Light is what gives us the freedom to act against ourselves. If the Kingdom was presented from the beginning as governmental and behavioral, it would be embraced as Christ's gift of Life or His having imparted to us His Own *Agape*, the result of which is our having been given His own ability to *act against Himself*.

The act of baptism, as we know, does not in itself *impart* the New Birth. It is the implications of the governmental intervention and my personal and intentional reception of that Kingdom that is the issue. Christ gave me His *Agape* in the New Birth. That freedom comes with the gift to AAM. The government of God has come and set me free. Galatians 5:13 says we were "called to freedom" and that includes the freedom to AAM.

The Kingdom was born in water baptism in the Person of Christ. Jesus' identification with us in that baptism takes on such aspects of *Agape* and care that it makes one humbled by the thought. Our proper response to Christ, who through water baptism set us free from the captivity of always acting in our own behalf, is the Kingdom proclamation: *I choose to act against myself*.

Baptism is more than a symbol or church ordinance; it should be seen as a weapon of spiritual warfare. Water baptism does not, in some magical manner break the powerful and innate strength of

acting for ourselves. However, because it is a public declaration and an intentional, conscious issue before heaven and hell, it is a direct contribution to our desire to be *regened*. Just as there may be a point when we would renew our wedding vows, there may be a time to get re-baptized.

After understanding more clearly the significance of baptism as a weapon of warfare, the words now used in the baptism would be a little different; it would include the transfer from the domain of darkness to the domain of light in the Kingdom of God and the ability to AAM. Doing this allows us to walk in a greater degree of confidence because we are consciously and intentionally choosing to change governments.

Christ's Baptism

¹³Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

¹⁵But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. ¹⁶After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on

Him, ¹⁷and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” (Matthew 3:13–17).

Christ gave evidence of His own freedom by requesting John to baptize Him. Going into water baptism to fulfill all righteousness He identified with us in some mysterious and total manner. When He was brought up from the water, the Holy Spirit fell on Him. The government of darkness that controlled us was broken when Christ gave us His very own freedom.

The Kingdom began its transformational purpose with Christ's water baptism. As we know, the word *Kingdom* carries governmental connotations, suggesting behavioral response; a similar response presented and demonstrated in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. What is now expected is expressed like this:

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the good news (the Gospel) of the kingdom of God, and saying, the [appointed period of] time is fulfilled (completed), and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent (have a change of mind which issues in regret for past sins and in change of conduct for the better) and believe (trust in, rely on, and adhere to) the good news (the Gospel) (Mark 1:14–15 AMP).

This Kingdom begins and is implemented in Christ's own water baptism. We are not dealing with the resurrected and glorified Christ, but a human being who stepped out of the circumstances and said, "I am the representation of what God wants." We read back into it resurrection and the glorified Christ, but that is not who He was at that moment of baptism—He was a normal person, Joseph and Mary's Son. This moment was a proclamation primarily to Israel that a radical change had occurred and would demand a personal behavioral response. This proclamation is concluded by these words, "He that believes and is baptized will be saved." That is a complex verse because most people insist on interpreting the word "saved" as going to heaven. Christ, Himself, entered the Kingdom dimension by means of water baptism when He came up out of the water and "saw the heavens opening and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him" (Mark 1:10). In this event He picked up the messianic burden of the Kingdom. Our water baptism is picking up a Kingdom dimension as well. We all enter the Kingdom dimension by means of water and spirit (see John 3:6). He who believes and intentionally receives Christ is given *authority* to become God's Own family and His family are those whose primary and central goal is to do Father's will. This, we have repeatedly identified as becoming Father-pleasers.

Galatians 1:4 says Jesus “gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age.” Eternal salvation, in biblical terms, is serendipity; the central issue is our being of use to our Heavenly Father in this time/space generation. If we are conformed to this world, then we discover ourselves incapable of doing His will. Rooting us out of this evil generation makes us a people who are eager do His will. Therefore, the first act of the new believer is to be baptized in water. I could also suggest that the believer who has lost his or her way and discovers themselves on a false path may use water baptism as a powerful form of repentance to find their way home.

Freedom & Baptism

Nicodemus came to Jesus wanting to understand the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ response was that “unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Something has to set us free so that we *want* to be baptized. The moment we are free, we have this internal desire to be baptized. Water baptism is the first act which demonstrates that we understand the implications of the Kingdom that we have chosen and embraced. It is our first declaration that we have been given the freedom to *act against ourselves*. We need to be free in order

to choose water baptism because baptism in its essence is an *act against ourselves*. We are taking all that we are and hope to be and burying it with the understanding that we will be resurrected into an entirely new government.

Early in our ministry, Judith and I worked on an Indian reservation. After explaining Jesus to these American Nationals, they would eagerly yield their lives to Christ but then refuse to be baptized in water because, in their mind, it signified leaving the culture of their tribe. This was very real to them. They understood that water baptism represented a change of governments, but it was years later before I was able to understand what was actually happening.

Acts tells of a court official from Ethiopia who was reading from the prophet Isaiah on his return from Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit told Philip to join his chariot. When Philip heard the Ethiopian reading from Isaiah, he asked if he understood what he was reading. “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?’” (Acts 8:35-36). Whatever Phillip explained to him about Jesus the Kingdom, it made him immediately *want* to be water baptized. Each of us has the freedom to make a choice to *act against ourselves* so that we are able to enter

the Kingdom dimension that has been presented to us.

When our son, Eric, was four years old, I asked him what he wanted for his birthday. I thought he was going to say a bicycle or the latest toy. He looked at me and quite strongly said, "I want to be baptized in water with all my church there." So, we invited our little home group over, and for his fourth birthday present, I baptized him in water. He came up from the water worshipping the Lord in a language he had never spoken before. I know many others on whom the Holy Spirit fell when they came up out of the water. The government of God comes when we receive Christ and *Agape* begins to break our *Eros* prison. We start to have a sense of freedom and choose to bury in water all that is the old man. When we come up from the water we are free and able to *act against ourselves*.

Theology of AAM

And you [He made alive], when you were dead (slain) by [your] trespasses and sins in which at one time you walked [habitually]. You were following the course and fashion of this world [were under the sway of the tendency of this present age], following the prince of the power of the air. [You were obedient to and under the control of] the [demon] spirit

that still constantly works in the sons of disobedience [the careless, the rebellious, and the unbelieving, who go against the purposes of God] (Ephesians 2:1–2 AMP).

Man in himself is *dead*. The significance of this is that he is not free to AAM. Paul's statement to this fact in Ephesians 2:1-2 is clear. Dead, in this instance, signifies the absence of the *Agape* of God by reason of the intentional act of surrender in Eve and consequently in Adam. Paul also says that "she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is *dead* even while she lives" (1 Tim. 5:6). In other words, we are captured and held prisoner by our own *Eros* agenda. The entrance of death, when identified as the absence of *Agape*, would disallow our being able to *act against ourselves* because we will always do the thing that promotes me and mine. We become predictable. In other words, we can be confident that everyone who is *dead* will act in his own best interest. Obedience, which is not self-promotional, can be very difficult if not impossible, diminishing or distorting our ability to properly respond to life.

The new birth has little to do with the issue of heaven and hell. Nicodemus, as a converted Israelite, was not in danger of losing his soul nor was he in fear of going to hell. He was trapped in religion but saw life in Jesus. If we place the new birth into the realm of Father's incarnational

insemination of the person who receives and embraces Christ (see John 1:12), it would communicate the essence of the new creation (see 2 Cor. 5:17) by restoring him or her to *eternal Life* by means of the insemination of *Agape*. This insemination includes going to heaven, but the emphasis is on accomplishing Father's will here on the earth (see Matt 6:10). This is what was taken from us in the transgression of Adam and is now being restored to us in the last Adam—Jesus. His Life, given to us enables us to AAM. Eve was simply unable to act against herself. She took that which was forbidden and experienced a form of death.

It is only possible to *act against oneself* when and if the *Agape* of Christ has been inseminated in us through the new birth. The more freely *Agape* is functioning, the more freely we can AAM. This could be an increasingly clear exegetical understanding of John 5:42, “but I know you, that you do not have the love (*Agape*) of God in yourselves.” Jesus was speaking to Israel, and they could not do what He was asking of them because they didn't have the freedom He was offering them. This, of course, is a direct result of their having refused Christ Jesus as their promised Messiah.

It is upon this thesis that we can determine the manner in which every spiritual visitation soon loses its freedom and momentum, increasingly

revealing itself as dead and dying, calling for another revival, which soon allows us to qualify for the biblical portrayal of being twice dead. I have been through five visitations. A spiritual visitation can be recognized as people being set free so that they are willing to *act against themselves* in every way: giving of time, helping others, financial liberality, personal joy and acceptance, etc.

In the early days of the Charismatic movement and discipleship, we would stay up late into the night talking about the Lord and freely give of our money to meet specific needs because there was freedom in the presence of *Agape*. As the visitation began to wither and we began to lose our first love, the innate and *Eros*-driven desire to possess, acquire, and control returned, and we discovered ourselves unable and/or unwilling to *act against ourselves*.

Agape, given as Father's gift, is the only thing that can restore us to that life enjoyed by Adam and Eve prior to the transgression. John 17:3 says, "This is eternal life, that they may know You." It is the coming of the incarnational *Agape* that is described as eternal life—Father's communicable attributes: compassion, gracious, slow to anger, mercy, truth, faithfulness, and forgiveness. These seven communicable attributes become the *source* and motivation for the Kingdom appeal for us to *act against ourselves*. Eternal life is not an unending duration of time, but the ability or increased

capacity to know God. To know God requires an act against ourselves and results in eternity, but that is not its primary purpose.

The loss of the motivation, freedom, and capacity to AAM determines the inexorable emergence of religion, the presence of which gives evidence that it has lost its Kingdom essence, i.e., the freedom and capacity to *act against itself*. Stated categorically, *religion confuses everything!* It is simply not possible to produce any measure of authentic Kingdom fruit as set forth in Galatians 5:22-23 apart from the new birth and the insertion of the Eternal Seed of *Agape*. *Agape* must be cultivated and nourished until we are motivated and encouraged to say: “Here am I, send me.” In that surrender we are *acting against ourselves*, declaring that the Kingdom has invaded our own sovereign domain. Christ being sinless meant He never acted in His own interest. In the New Birth, He imparted to us His own ability to *act against Himself*.

The Kingdom or AAM

Each of the Ten Words of Moses requires us to act against ourselves:

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol.... You

shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.... Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy.... Honor your father and your mother.... You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Deuteronomy 5:7–21).

Jesus fulfilled all of these commands as His gift to us. Instead of ten commands, Father now asks for only two—both of which require us to act against ourselves: “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31). So, when the Father requires us to *act against ourselves*, we are proceeding upon the gospel of the Kingdom because Christ imparted His Own ability and freedom to us, giving us the capacity and preparation to fulfill Father’s desire both in spirit and intent. Christ came as *Agape* Incarnate for the single purpose of fulfilling the law and the prophets, accomplishing Father’ purpose and fulfilling Father’s heart desire: a people of His own DNA who can and will *act against themselves*. This is the fulfillment of John

10:30, “I and the Father are one.”

When we embrace the Kingdom dimension of knowing that we are equipped and expected to *act against ourselves*, there enters a time of vulnerability that Jesus described as “sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Religion is wolfish and serpentine. It seeks to use anything and anyone for its own utilitarian purpose or to accomplish its own agenda.

An infant, due to the fall, soon assumes that he or she is the center of the universe. It is innate behavior that must be unlearned. Those who have raised children have experienced this fallen nature first hand. Not training a child to act against him or herself is more than failure to disciple; it is relational betrayal. It seems increasingly clear that the essence of the Kingdom proclamation is imparting to others the life of Christ in the form of *Agape*. To do this, we must be given the ability to *act against ourselves* by the very act of God giving Himself to us in the form of His Son.

My deepest sense is that Father is increasingly serious about the restoration of the Kingdom philosophy of life. This philosophy can be effectively stated like this: *Agape* imparts both the life and the freedom necessary for the restoration of my Christ-given ability to *act against myself*. Consider the following symptoms of our inability or incapacity to AAM in light of this categorical

statement. This list includes both believers and non-believers.

- Anarchy resulting in predators and parasites
- Hedonism or life, the essence of which is doing what pleases me
- Addiction leading to dissipation and personal injury
- Obsessive-compulsive behavior
- Complex forms of anger, resentment, and works of the flesh (see Gal. 5:19-21)
- Narcissism in its multifarious and myriad of manifestations
- Sexual, physical, and verbal abuse

All of these may be attributed to the absence or increasing loss of the capacity to AAM.

Kingdom repentance involves moving with serious intention toward embracing the gift and freedom of AAM. Paul said we were called to freedom; that freedom allows God's life to flow through us. A minimum or at best a mixture of God's seven DNA can flow through us without the ability to AAM.

The results of AAM include the following:

- Obedience, the implications of which is how we hear.

- Compassion, which is a demonstration of all seven DNA of God.
- Faithfulness in relational commitment, marriage, and business. We cannot be faithful if we don't know how to AAM.
- Proper response to any given circumstance. If we know how to AAM, we would know how to be gracious and merciful in any crisis.
- Disciplines of mind, money, and manners. This involves keeping crazy stuff out of our minds, spending our money right, and treating others with respect.
- Character in our everyday life revealing that we are created in His likeness and image.
- Physical well-being. The fruit of being free to AAM means we have to get up and walk, go to the gym, and cease killing ourselves with a fork.
- Sexuality that is balanced and healthy.

The Kingdom is the coming of the government of God, the end result of which is Father's will done on earth as it is in Heaven (see Matt. 6:10). Jesus came to make this possible. Our having embraced and walked in His Kingdom can be measured by AAM. It would then be possible to measure all spiritual obedience by the manner in which we

have embraced and yielded to the Eternal Seed. Kingdom obedience is measured by 30-60-100-fold fruit, but the *Kingdom proclamation* has been neglected or ignored. The degree or measure of our freedom to act against ourselves is vital.

Give Him Your Boots

Years ago, I was a pastor in upstate New York and was poor as a church mouse. I had saved my money for almost a year to buy a pair of insulated hunting boots from L.L. Bean. I was more than thrilled when they finally came in the mail and was so looking forward to hunting with warm feet.

Before I even got to hunt, I was making one of my pastoral visitations to one of my parishioners who happened to be a chicken farmer. It was about 10 degrees outside and he was taking care of his chickens wearing “all terrain foot wear” called canvass sneakers. What do you think the Holy Spirit said to me? I hadn’t even worn the boots yet; they were still in the box! When I tried to reason with the Holy Spirit on why I shouldn’t give away my boots, all He said was, “Now!”

Father was teaching me how to act against myself. It is not complicated, but it can be intense and demanding. As I drove home to get the boots, I was angry. Returning, I pulled up in the guy’s

driveway, handed them to him and said, “Here!” He had no idea what was going on in me. Once I responded, my freedom immediately increased. We must learn to become intentional about acting against ourselves.

Perhaps the Lord has asked you to put your last \$5 in the missions offering or to fast tomorrow. We often refuse to fast because we have not gained the freedom to AAM, so we are unable to do without something. Perhaps He has asked you something like this: Do not talk as much tomorrow as you did today. In the Herodian temple, Jesus never opened His mouth because He had the consummate freedom to *act against Himself*. I have experienced Father asking me to give, fast, and keep my mouth shut and can now understand them in the light of AAM. Each area of my life needed its own manifestation of *Agape*. Kingdom reality increases in direct proportion and can be measured by AAM! When He says, “keep your mouth shut” and we don’t, there is no condemnation, but there may be a consequence because we didn’t have the capacity to AAM. Failure to AAM has a cost but no condemnation because Jesus carried everything that seeks to condemn us.

Too much AAM results in legalism and asceticism or what I call, “Oh, no you don’t!” Too little AAM results in hedonism and anarchy or “Anything goes.” Only keeping ourselves in

Agape and learning to AAM results in freedom to *act against ourselves when Father so desires or the situation so demands*. This is the essence of being a Father-pleaser. When the Father told me to give the man my boots, He didn't tell me to give him my bank account.

Difficult Questions

Is it possible that the institutional Church has effectively high-jacked the Kingdom and the *governmental* aspects of the Gospel of the Kingdom? Has religion so totally captured the evangelical mind and purpose that it seeks to use, in a utilitarian manner, the Kingdom that seeks no other authority but its own? Are we correct in asking this question: How do we see the Kingdom authority and priority in light of the diminishing authority of the present church? The church is increasingly turning into a psychological "Me, Now" club. That is not an accusation, just an observation. The results of that observation have long and lasting implications.

Freedom then, when seen as AAM, becomes a Kingdom phenomenon that essentially transcends all religion. This insight becomes a gift that affects socio-economic and political dimensions. It is Father's gift to all mankind in the Person of His

Son, taking on the definition of Good News. AAM may be part of the treasure and the pearl that needs to be guarded and implemented in every sphere of life and thinking. When we discover that AAM is a route to the Kingdom, we are willing to sell our treasures and trade our pearls for the freedom and joy that comes as a result.

Progressive Loss of AAM

If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:15).

This verse allows us to grasp the fact that failure to AAM is not the loss of eternal life in the sense of our going to hell but the loss of the life of God's intention, which is intimacy with Him and the fruitfulness and freedom of that which He purchased in our behalf (see Psalm 16; Acts 2:25-27). It is important to understand the historical progression of the loss of the freedom to *act against ourselves*. The following has occurred in approximately 200 years:

From bondage to spiritual faith
From faith to personal freedom
From personal freedom to abundance

From abundance to selfishness (an *Eros* shift)
From selfishness to complacency
From complacency to apathy
From apathy to new forms of bondage

Can you identify in this sequence the time when we are most incapacitated to *act against ourselves*? It is during abundance. When we are in abundance, we don't need to act against ourselves. Sodom and Gomorrah were totally bereft of the ability to act themselves; they turned in on themselves and were sucked into the black hole of *Eros*. Entire civilizations, nations, and denominations as well as individuals can all go this way.

This pattern of moving from bondage to bondage is cyclical. The first step out of this cyclical pattern is faith, which is a form of AAM. Faith works through *Agape* (see Gal. 5:6). Faith *must* eventuate into *Agape*. It is *Agape* that makes faith become sight. We're not going to see it; we must believe it.

Freedom from AAM

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another

(Galatians 5:13).

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God (1 Peter 2:16).

AAM is the biblical description of the proper use of the freedom Christ purchased in our behalf. Christ set us free. Failure to use that freedom properly as stated in Galatians 5:13 and 2 Peter 2:16 becomes increasingly serious. Both of these writers tell us that we can and do use our freedom in an *Eros* manner. However, we can't use freedom to cover our *Eros* behavior.

The phrase in James 1:5, "the perfect law of liberty" has to do with freedom. In the light of AAM, it is biblically possible to understand what James was saying: Faith does not function apart from learning to *act against myself*. James uses *Agape* sparingly but carefully; this understanding of James can only break open by means of the *Agape* paradigm. The perfect law of liberty is: *the gift of Christ set me free to act against myself*. James says that if we have *Agape*, we will do what Abraham did. We will respond properly and others will be able to see *Agape* in us by the way we deny ourselves and act against ourselves. This is James' central theme.

James set out how we know in some empirical

manner that we have the “real” faith:

- James 1:12, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Can you see that James is asking for evidence of AAM?
- James 2:5, “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” James is appealing for AAM in this question.
- James 2:8, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well.” This epistemological evidence can be seen in AAM.
- James 2:21–23, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God.”

We cannot AAM until we have the impartation of Christ's *Agape*, and then we are able to do what Christ did. That is what salvation is all about. How I wish we could have known that when I was pastoring. The reason there are so many divorces, sexual promiscuity, and crazies going on in our nation is because we have lost the most basic of all human behavior, which is how to *act against ourselves*. Imagine what the freedom from AAM would do in marriages. Think what marriage counseling would be like if you could say to the husband, "You're not acting against yourself." It could change foundational issues in many relationships. *Agape* in its mature state is the uninterrupted freedom to AAM because there is no anxiety, control, or fear of judgment. As Christ takes us to the Father, we become more capable and free to *act against ourselves in a manner presented and gifted to us in His redemptive act*. This is *Agape* in maturity or perfection as stated in Matthew 5:48. AAM is a full-fledged philosophy!

Agape, then, takes on mystery and more than you can ask or think. It is more than knowing in an intellectual sense. Father came and imparted Himself through the DNA of His communicable attributes for nothing else could possibly accomplish His determined purpose. Only God can love God and respond to Him. Christ could fully love God because He is *Agape* Incarnate. He

never sinned because He didn't have any desire to act contrary to Father's will and purpose. No one can be covenantally faithful who does not have *Agape* because that gives us the freedom and capacity to AAM. *Agape* brought to maturity is a clear synonym for the statement conformed to the image of Christ!

AAM in Action

And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on (Luke 21:2–4).

It is increasingly clear to me that Father measures and evaluates His pleasure and approbation on an entirely different basis than visible and/or numerical success. It is the Father-pleaser who can say, "*My hope is not in the visible outcome.*" In the church, almost everything is numerical or visibly oriented. Jesus, however, praised the widow for putting her whole future in the offering. Her love for Christ was so compelling that she absolutely *acted against herself*. Similarly, Mary gave all she had to anoint Christ with expensive oil. On the other hand, the rich, young ruler in Matthew 19

who had always kept the law could not *act against himself* regarding his possessions in spite of his desire to follow Jesus.

It should be clear to all of us who think we have arrived at some degree of maturity that Jesus could at any time ask us to *act against ourselves* in a way that we could not do because it would seem impossible, undesirable, or too expensive. His very request could be designed to break or reveal religious triumphalism in us.

When I was professor of New Testament and Missions at Elim Bible College I remember saying to the Lord, “I understand the Kingdom now and what You are doing—I think I’m ready for any test You want to give me.” Father sees that like child’s talk. When He asks us to AAM, His request effectively breaks all pride in that moment of time.

The satanic approach to Eve was to first inflame her desires in such a manner that she wanted the forbidden fruit more than she wanted anything else. In the midst of inflamed desire, *acting against ourselves* seems almost impossible. This is what James was saying when he wrote, “The temptation to give in to evil comes from us and only us. We have no one to blame but the leering, seducing flare-up of our own lust” (James 1:14 TM). Why do they want you to come down and drive the new Mercedes? It inflames your

desire and causes you to want to buy a new car even if you don't have the money. Our inability to AAM isn't going to send us to hell, but it will effectively reveal inflamed desire.

Missing the mark, then, takes on a very different complexion. It is inevitable that we will miss the mark and not act against ourselves on many occasions. But we can handle that like mature, godly people without all the crazies, guilt, and verbalized religious garbage. We can just say, "You know, the Lord told me to keep my mouth shut in this situation and I didn't do it. I apologize." Now we're dealing with the Father, not heaven and hell. Under the inflamed desire of *Eros*, all creation transgressed and became dead, unable to *act against itself*. Under Christ's *Agape* government, the entire creation will be set free. *Restoration to the freedom of Christ to AAM is the New Creation.*

AAM in Romans

If we would exegete the entire Letter of Paul to the Romans on the basis of AAM, my sense is that the governmental aspects of the Kingdom would come into the foreground. For instance:

- Romans 1: Since the creation of the world, man could not act against himself

- Romans 2: Neither the Gentiles nor the Jews could AAM
- Romans 3: All have sinned; incapable of acting against themselves
- Romans 4: Abraham acted against himself
- Romans 5: God poured His *Agape* into us allowing us to AAM in suffering
- Romans 6: Baptism into Jesus' death releases all that prevents me from AAM
- Romans 7: The law doesn't die; our death gives us a new bridegroom who can AAM
- Romans 8: No condemnation; freedom rooted in *Agape*

The message of the Kingdom to a hurting world would look something like this: Christ has, without your help, restored God's government in you by the impartation of His *Agape* resulting in the freedom and capacity to *act against yourself*. The whole concept of Romans 6, 7, and 8 doesn't make sense if this isn't accurate. It is very possible, even exegetically probable, that the essence of the Kingdom being proclaimed means that Christ gave us as His gift the freedom to *act against ourselves* (See Rom. 8:17-21). Romans 8:22-36 would, then, take on the exegetical weight of *Agape* as the power, stability, and force that gives us the freedom of the Kingdom. It is God's Own *Agape*, given to us in the Person of Christ that enables us to AAM. Nothing or no one can separate us from that Love (*Agape*) of God (see Rom. 8:39).

Called to Freedom

To be separated from *Agape* would cause us to revert to human means to righteousness and would result in the loss of the Kingdom freedom Christ gave. This is the most accurate explanation of “you have been severed from Christ” (Gal. 5:4) that I have ever encountered. The Galatians reverted to works of the flesh in a religious context and started doing their own thing. They lost the *Agape* that allowed them the freedom to *act against themselves*.

All of this Paul saw in the face of Christ as he testified in 2 Corinthians 4:6. As he attempts to enlarge upon the place of *Agape*, he seems to be saying something like this: *Agape is that which preserves our ability to act against ourselves*. When we see conflict and warfare start, we learn to run into the *Agape* of God not away from it; it is dependable and eternal.

Loss of our confidence and response to *Agape* will disallow us to continue to walk in the Kingdom dimension. As we know, the ability to *act against ourselves* is incrementally and progressively lost. This is the definition of backsliding. Hence, we are looking into the demise of entire civilizations,

nations, cities, denominations, and, of course, individuals. Another writer gives us his urgent and critical advice as to how to survive and prosper in the dark and cloudy day, “Keep yourselves in the exact center of the *Agape* of God” (Jude 21).

Personal Prayer

God, my Father, it is in my heart to do Your will on this earth. The capacity and the will to accomplish that to any measurable degree often seems to eluded me. My sense is that the idea of acting against myself effectively addresses why I discover myself avoiding and hiding from You. Could you take these words and make them live in this life that I have given you? Instruct, disciple, and make clear to me that which will give me the freedom to be a joy and pleasure to You as my Father. Amen.

