

Sermon Series: *The Fruit of the Spirit*

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The first word in verse 22 is “but,” which, is a conjunction and indicates a contrast. Paul is contrasting the “works of the flesh” in verses 19-21 with the “fruit of the Spirit” in verse 22-23. Paul offers a representative list of the works of the flesh in verses 19-21. More could be added.

Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV)

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,
20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,
21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

He then contrasts these “works” (which is plural) with the “fruit” (singular) of the Spirit. In verses 22 and 23 Paul lists nine virtues that he names “the fruit of the Spirit.” Evidently Paul thinks of all nine virtues as a single unified result of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the person who has faith in Jesus. All nine of these characteristics are in Paul’s mind one “fruit.” *The implication is that the Holy Spirit produces all of these virtues in the life of every believer.*

The singular form stresses that these qualities are a unity, like a bunch of grapes instead of separate pieces of fruit, and also that they are all to be found in all Christians.¹

Fruit of the Spirit Different From Gifts of the Spirit

This “fruit of the Spirit” is different from the “gifts of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit does not give all spiritual gifts to every believer (1 Cor 12:29-31). He gives at least one gift to each believer. However, He does produce each of this fruit in every individual believer. He does not give to one the fruit of love and to another the fruit of patience. No. **He produces all nine of these virtues in the individual lives of each and every believer.** This list should also be thought of as a representative list and not an exhaustive list. Paul could have, as we could, list more “fruit.”

The works of the flesh are the result of the presence of sin, while the fruit of the Spirit is a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The produce of the Spirit is righteousness which leads to eternal life, while the produce of sin is condemnation which leads to eternal death.

¹ Frank E. Gaebelin, Everett F. Harrison, W. Harold Mare et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10: Romans Through Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 498.

Why This Sermon Series?

We have just completed thirteen weeks studying and, hopefully, drawing nearer to God through a study on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. Well, if we have indeed drawn nearer to God then we ought to look more like Him. In our study we learned that part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to transform believers into the image of Jesus (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29). This sermon series can serve us as a sort of self test.

So if the Holy Spirit is at work within us (and in fact He is at work in every true believer), then how are we see the evidence of His work? What are the evidences that I do have God's Holy Spirit dwelling within me? ***If God's Holy Spirit is within our hearts, then we ought to see a consistent demonstration of His character within our lives.***

We ought to see the evidence of the **fruit** of His labor in our lives. If the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives then we can expect to see our lives marked by these nine virtues "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control." *This sermon series then can also serve as a confirmation to us that God is at work within us.*

Perhaps if we *set our hearts to embrace these qualities*, then the Lord may be pleased to be gracious to us and **grant us further growth in these virtues**. We must remember that the kind of faith that most glorifies Jesus is an observable faith. Jesus has said that we, His disciples, have been called to be light in this dark world (Mt 5:14). Light that is not seen is not helpful to anyone. A light that is seen is beneficial to all who see it. "A city set upon a hill cannot be hidden."

A changed heart and a transformed life is not intended to go unnoticed. Light comes into the world in order to shine and be seen so that people can avoid stumbling. When the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of His people, He intends for His work to be seen by the people of the world so they may be drawn into it and also changed by it.

This is one of the reasons for us deciding to make room in our service for a time of testimonies each week. God is at work in many of your lives and He is doing great things. These things need to be made known so that we all will be encouraged and so that we as a family can give glory to God. God is at work in our lives through the living presence of His Holy Spirit.

One of the goals of this series is to make us aware of the work of the Holy Spirit so that our hearts will be encouraged and strengthened by His work and thus have increased boldness to display His glorious work. These Sunday mornings together are intended to strengthen us to live holy lives on Monday mornings and Saturday nights.

The choice to worship Jesus on Sunday morning should be consistent with the same choice to worship Him every other day of the week. The truth we proclaim on Sunday morning ought to be the same truth we embrace in our actions at home with our families, or when we are alone—when no one is watching—and when we are on the job and anyplace else that we may find ourselves. ***If our faith is not a consistent faith, it will not be a compelling faith.*** Oh may the Lord Jesus grant that our lives and our faith would be greatly compelling for the sake of His name.

Love Is Fruit of the Spirit

Paul writes, "the fruit of the Spirit is love." By calling love a "fruit of the Spirit," Paul means that the love that is produced in the life of the believer (the one who has faith in Jesus and has received the

Holy Spirit) is a result of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and not a result of one's own self-determined human effort.

This love is a fruit, or a natural result of the work of the Holy Spirit of God. He is producing this fruit, not the believer. We are not passive in cultivating this fruit, but neither are our actions decisive. The Spirit's work is decisive and our work is dependent. We can plant, water, weed, and till, but we cannot make something grow. Growth comes only from the Lord (1 Cor 3:6-7; Col 2:19). *Love is the fruit of the Spirit.*

Does Love Exist Apart from the Holy Spirit?

Why does Paul say that love is the fruit of the Spirit? Isn't it possible to love apart from the Holy Spirit? It almost sounds like Paul thinks if you do not have the Spirit of God that it is impossible to love. So, what does Paul mean by the word love?

The Greek word Paul uses is *agapē* (ἀγάπη). It means "to have love for someone or something, based on sincere appreciation and high regard—"to love, to regard with affection, loving concern."²

However, the Bible gives us a definition of love in John, the Beloved Disciple's first epistle. First, we are told that God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16). Then we are told how His love is expressed.

1 John 4:8-10 (ESV)

8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God Is Love

John tells us God is love. The very fabric of God's essential nature is interwoven with the cords of love. Love is among the constituent components of God's very being. Just as we might say, "Todd is human," so we can say, "God is love." Just as I am defined by my humanity, so God is defined by love. God is love.

In fact, *love is part of God's very name*. In the Bible a person's name was related to the essence of who they were and sometimes even defined their life. For example, Jacob, which means "trickster," often tricked others and later he himself was tricked. His name gives understanding into who he was and how he lived. Recall when Moses asked God to show Him all of His glory.

Exodus 33:18-19 (ESV)

18 Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' (YHWH)

Exodus 34:5-6 (ESV)

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996).

5 *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

6 *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ...*

Yahweh, the proper name of God (represented in translations by the word ‘LORD,’ in all capital letters), means mercy, grace, patience (i.e. ‘slow to anger’), and overflowing, constant love, then faithfulness and so on. But ‘love’ (steadfast love) is among the defining characteristics of God’s nature. God is love.

Any true understanding of love must begin with God Himself. Excluding God from understanding the meaning of love removes the very foundation of love itself. Attempting to applaud love apart from its roots in God Himself is like attempting to applaud an architectural masterpiece that has been constructed without a foundation.

God is love and since God is today just as He has been for all of eternity past, He is the eternal fountain from which all true love flows. God was love before love in this world ever existed. Love only entered this world because God created this world (and everything in it) and created man and woman in His image. *Love cannot be rightly understood apart from God.*

Today we are quite content to sing the praises of love apart from any notion of God attached to it at all. But what this world today praises as love is *not* the true and deepest meaning of love. That which this world praises as love is a bent and broken reflection of true love. The truest understanding of love can only come from God Himself since He Himself is the source of all true love expressed in its fullest and deepest meaning.

The True Meaning of Love

So if God is love, then what does that love look like? What does it mean that God is love? How does God demonstrate His love? What does love according to God look like? To answer this question we return to 1 John 4.

1 John 4:8-10 (ESV)

8 *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

9 *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

10 *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Love finds its deepest meaning in the coming of Christ into this world. The love of God is manifest (i.e. is shown) in the fact that God sent His only Son into this world in order that those who were spiritually dead because of sin, which is everyone, might have life through faith in Jesus. The love of God is manifestly evident in the fact that God sent His only Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Jesus Himself became the payment for our sins. He atoned for our sins. He bore God’s wrath so that those who trusted in Him could escape from God’s wrath against sinners. *This is love. This is the deepest meaning of love.* Paul said it this way,

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

8 *... God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Love is the Son obeying the command of the Father by laying down His righteous life so that those who had been laid low (i.e. sentenced to death) because of sin might take up life and live. Love is the giving of life to another who does not currently possess it.

Love is *giving up that which is supremely valuable in order that another might discover that supreme value and thereby joyfully embrace it* (i.e. that which is of supreme value). In Jesus' case, He gave up the great glory and unbroken love that He enjoyed with God the Father in order that He might come to earth and cause us to discover the great glory and unbroken love of God the Father so that we might joyfully embrace Him. That is love. Consider Jesus' final prayer.

John 17:24-26 (ESV)

24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Before the world ever existed, there existed between God the Father and God the Son and great and glorious relationship of pure and perfect love. Jesus so enjoyed and loved God the Father that He prayed to God that "those whom God had given" to Him would also be able to experience that "love with which the Father loved the Son." Jesus was so blessed by the relationship of love that He had with His Father that He earnestly desire others to be brought into that relationship.

Experiencing that great and glorious love (which is found in the name of God) only happens as a result of Jesus "making it known" to us, or revealing it to us. How does He do this? Through whom does He accomplish this revelatory work? He accomplishes this through the work of His Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18; 4:4). *Enjoying the experience of the love that exists between Father and Son is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 5:5b (ESV)

... God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

It is the Spirit of God who communicates to us the love of God. Because God is love and God is one with His own Holy Spirit, we can say that His Holy Spirit is love. God's Spirit is a Spirit of love. So when God's Holy Spirit enters into our hearts, divine love therefore also enters our hearts. Jonathan Edwards said,

*"He who has God dwelling in him by His Spirit will have love dwelling in him. The nature of the Holy Spirit is love; and it is by communicating himself, or his own nature, that the hearts of the saints are filled with love. Hence the saints are said to be 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4)."*³

Love In Two Directions

The entrance of the Holy Spirit into the soul of man fills the heart with love and He then produces fruit in two directions—love toward God and love toward man, both of which are impossible without

³ Jonathan Edwards in the sermon entitled "Love the Sum of All Virtue" available at <http://truthinheart.com/EarlyOberlinCD/CD/Edwards/Sermons/Cor13book/1.htm> accessed 9 July 2011.

the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to love God as He deserves without the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to love our fellow man in the way that God expects without His Holy Spirit. All that God expects from us can be summed up in two commands—to love God first and above all, and then to love our fellow man, second.

Matthew 22:34-40 (ESV)

34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

37 And he said to him, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

38 *This is the great and first commandment.*

39 *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

40 *On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Love Toward God

When we receive God’s Holy Spirit by putting our faith and trust in Jesus, He then causes our old, dead, cold, and stoney hearts to be transformed into a new, living, warm and tender hearts in love with God the Father. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, for just as no dead man can make himself alive so no person spiritually dead toward God (because of sin) can make himself alive with a warm love toward God.

We do not naturally love God. Our default disposition toward God is one of hostility. The natural person in his fallen, sinful condition is hostile toward God (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 2:14). We are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3) and enemies of God (Rom 5:10) because we love darkness more than light (Jn 3:19-21) because our deeds are sinful. We’d simply rather keep our wickedness hidden than have it exposed and brought out in the light. *It takes a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to love God truly from the heart*, because our love for darkness has to be overcome. We have to love light more than darkness in order to love God. This love of light is the fruit of the Spirit.

Love Toward Man

Likewise, we cannot love our fellow man in the way that God commands without the enablement of the Holy Spirit. We know that God wants us to love our neighbor, but Jesus made clear to us that much more than that is required. The kind of love that God requires is a kind of love that even extends to our enemies. Jesus said,

Matthew 5:43-48 (ESV)

43 “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’* **44** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* **45** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* **46** *For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?* **47** *And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?* **48** *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

It is possible to demonstrate a partial expression of love. We see this when we love those who love us. However, the kind of love that God expects of His children is a love that is extended to those who would be classified as ‘enemies.’ Why does God expect His children to love those who are enemies? Because this is what He does. We see this in verse 45.

God sends His sun on both the evil and the good. God sends His rain on the just and the unjust. God is kind toward both those who are good and those who are evil. Therefore, He expects His children to act like just like Him.

Who can do this? Who can truly love those who are your enemies? It is hard enough for me to love those who love me, not to mention those who hate me? God wants me to show love to those who, in my address book fall under the column of “enemy?” And He wants me to pray for those who persecute me? I assume that we are being instructed to pray kind and good prayers of blessing and not condemning and damning prayers of judgment. Who can do this? Who can truly love their enemies?

There will be no reward awaiting us if we love only those who love us in return. We do nothing notable when we are only cheerful to those who are cheerful to us. God the Father expects us to act just like Him. God expects His children to love those who are unloving to us because *He* is loving to those who are unloving toward Him.

God wants us to actively seek the good of those who persecute us because *He* is actively seeks the good of those who persecute Him. Who can do this? No one in their own power can love enemies in this way. ***We can only do this through the presence of his Holy Spirit.*** This kind of ability can only be produced by the inner working of God’s Holy Spirit within our hearts. This kind of fruit can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

Summary

What passes for love in popular culture today is not love. Fleeting emotional fancy that is here today and gone tomorrow is not love. Selfish indulgence of the lust of the flesh is not love. *Love is an affectionate disposition of the heart that causes one to enjoy laboring for the eternal good of another.*

Love originates in God Himself. The truest understanding of love is impossible without God. “God is love” and He was love before this world ever existed. So love is simply the word that we attach to that dim and foggy expression of those particular characteristics of God which we occasionally see in this world which causes men to give and to protect and to save and to cherish.

True love is a lasting love. True love is a steadfast love, it is constant and consistent. Experiencing the love that exists between God the Father and God the Son only happens by receiving the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who communicates the love of God to our souls.

If we were left to ourselves we would never experience God’s love. Our dead and sinful hearts are simply too content with playing and hiding in the dark that we cannot even imagine the great glory and beautiful mysteries that are revealed in the light of the glory of the face of Christ. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to embrace these wonders of His glory.

Two commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your might, and love your neighbor as yourself. These are two commands we cannot do apart from the Holy Spirit.

BUT, (a small conjunction and a great contrast)... But **WITH** the Holy Spirit it is possible. With God all things are possible. Loving God with all of one's being is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Loving your enemies is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Today, may the Holy Spirit grant you to advance in your love of God the Father and your honoring of the Son. May the Holy Spirit this week give you are renewed love for your spouse. May the Holy Spirit this week cause you to show your love to your teenager in a new way. This week may the Holy Spirit allow you to love your boss in God-honoring ways that will catch his attention. This week may your love for the truth cause you to speak in ways that will draw people to the Lord. May the Holy Spirit this week transform our stubborn hearts into warm and tender hearts. May the Holy Spirit this week cause all of our words, whether written or spoken, to be Christ-exalting words.

May the love of the Lord Jesus be with you all.