

Chapter 21

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:22-26)

Before His crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* He said this after saying, *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* Our Lord's words have evoked all kinds of responses by those who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ. Yet the manifestation of this love by genuine believers does not require a conscious effort. It is rather an innate proposition which finds its expression in different ways with different people and circumstances.

Similarly, our Lord said, *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.* This means it does not come with outward show. Likewise the love with which the believer is to love other believers within the kingdom of God is also without outward show. In this regard, then, it is a

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fact that the love the Lord Jesus spoke of is not an expression of the gushy sentimentality of this world, but is a spiritual love that is much deeper than any love that can be expressed by the world. It is a fact that there are visible evidences of this love, but they are a by-product and not the reason for its manifestation. It is a fact that the love Christ spoke of will often be responded to negatively, as many in Israel responded to our Lord. Thus led of the Spirit of God and motivated with thanksgiving because of the grace of God, the believer functions in the plan and purpose of God within the body of Christ, to its edification, as well as providing a testimony of the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

In ancient Greece there were four different words, which in the New Testament and other works of antiquity have variously been translated with the single English word *love*. The Greeks had a word for family love, a word for friendship (or brotherly love), a word for erotic (or sexual) love and a word for the highest expression of love. Our Lord used this last word, *agape*, to describe the love the believer is to manifest towards other believers and also towards the world. The Scriptures have provided a definition for *agape*. It is this meaning of the word which we will use in our studies and not any definition the Greeks might have ascribed to it:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (I John 4:7-11, emphasis mine)

Thus the manifestation of *agape*, the love of God as used by the apostle John in this text, is seen in the vicarious sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of sinners. This is the love with which we are to love one another, as John so clearly informs us in this text, and this is the love

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we are to express to a lost world. It is this expression of *agape* that identifies those who are born of God. It is this expression of love that identifies those who know God, and it is the lack of this love that identifies those who do not know God. This love is expressed in the gospel, which the apostle Paul defined in his letter to the Corinthians:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (I Corinthians 15:1-4)

In the sixth chapter of the gospel of John, John described an occasion when the Jews came to the Lord Jesus and said, *What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* Our Lord answered them, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent.* When we put these statements about the love of God and the work of God together, we begin to have an understanding of what our Lord meant when He said, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* The love of God and the work of God are bound together. They are inseparable, so that the work of God is merely the outworking of the Love of God, both in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the work of the redeemed in this world through the ministry of the gospel.

The apostle John wrote, *God is love.* Thus God does not merely express love, but the very essence of God is Love. It is fundamental to His nature. We have also learned God is Omniscient. When we put these two truths together, we know God knew from all eternity that man would sin against Him. This meant God's Holiness, Justice and Righteousness would demand the judgment of man's sin. Since the very essence of God is Love, God's Love, Mercy and Grace

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also had to be expressed, but not at the expense of His Holiness, Righteousness and Justice. Thus God's Sovereignty, which has manifested itself in all of the attributes of God, has made it impossible for the evil purpose of the Devil to have defeated the creative purpose of God in Adam and Eve.

Since the Bible is an unfolding drama of the redemption of man, it is an unfolding drama of the Love of God. This is evident in the life and ministry of Noah and his family. They were preserved from an onslaught of the Devil and his angels to corrupt the federal headship of Adam and thus of Christ, in an attempt to prevent the redemption of man. God's judgment of this evil scheme preserved in the ark a direct lineage from Adam to Christ. After this, the love of God continued to be manifested in subsequent generations. In due time Abraham came on the scene and the promise that had been confirmed to Adam of the *seed of the woman* and that had been preserved in Noah was then confirmed to Abraham when God promised, *of his seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed*. Thus in subsequent generations God's Love was manifested in the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) and the kingly tribe of Judah. Then, *when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Galatians 4:4-5).

Thus God became a man through the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ so that He could be related to man without the sin nature of man; so that He could be the One Mediator between God and Man; so that in His life He could fulfill all Righteousness and every jot and tittle of the law; so that the blessings associated with the law were His rightful inheritance; so that He

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could willingly offer Himself as a ransom for sin, being made sin for us, Who knew no sin, *that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him*; so that He could willingly bear the suffering and shame of the cross; so that He could *make one sacrifice for sin forever*; so that He could bear the judgment of our sins to satisfy the Holiness, Righteousness and Justice of God; so that He could die, be buried, and rise again the third day according to the Scriptures; so that in His High Priestly office He could ascend to heaven with His blood to sprinkle it on the mercy seat in the true tabernacle that God pitched and not man; so that He could ever live to make intercession for us; so that He could establish the truth: *since God is for us*, no sin, or charge, can ever be leveled against us; so that through His completed work He has redeemed unto Himself a *peculiar people*; so that He will return again to this earth to establish His everlasting kingdom, where He will reign upon the earth for a thousand years and then will create a new heaven and a new earth in which to rule and reign with His saints forever, thus providing them with an eternal inheritance, purchased with His blood. This, indeed, is a wonderful glimpse of the marvelous Love of God contained in the Scriptures.

After His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection and before His ascension into Heaven, the Lord spoke unto His church (His called-out assembly) and gave them, as it were, their marching orders to perform the work of God, through the proclamation of the gospel, to show forth the love of God to this world. Thus He said: *All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Matthew 28:18-20).

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Thus preaching the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to a lost world is a manifestation of the love of Christ for that lost world. Baptizing those who have received Christ as their Savior through the preaching of the Word of God is also a manifestation of the love of Christ, for it provides the first steps in the new believer's life of faith. Teaching those who have trusted Christ as their Savior, that they might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, is a further manifestation of the love of Christ, for it will bring the believer to maturity and the expression of his own spiritual gifts within the body of Christ. The nurture and care of believers within the body of Christ through comfort, prayer, ministry and other gifts of the Spirit is a further manifestation of the love of Christ. These are but a few of the ways that we show the love of Christ to a lost world and to one another within the body of Christ, by operating in *the work of God* (which manifests the love of God) to bring the lost to salvation by faith and to build up the believer in the faith.

At this juncture in my ministry, I will soon be seventy-three years old. Shortly after my seventy-third birthday, I will celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of my ordination to the gospel ministry. During those years I have never been privileged to pastor a large congregation (though I have taught some large classes in large churches), but I have been privileged to minister to a relatively small church in the Pacific Northwest. As I have ministered to my congregation I have taped my messages and made them available to believers and unbelievers throughout the world. As a consequence of this tape ministry (which, incidentally, we provide free of charge to those who desire it), we have amassed friends (believers in Jesus Christ) all over the world. I have never been privileged to meet most of them. Nevertheless because of the ministry of the gospel

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there is a bond that transcends most human relationships. We are brethren and have a bond in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this lifetime we may never meet, but one day there will be a *complete gathering* of the redeemed, when our Lord will say, *Come up hither*. Then we will meet. Undoubtedly there will be tears of joy when we finally meet the Lord and our brethren from all over this world. Some will have white skin, others yellow, red, or black skin, but that will make no difference, the Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood to make each of us members of the family and household of God. This is not an expression of the pseudo-love of an integration movement, with all kinds of hypocrisy, outward show and political innuendo, it is the fruit of the love of God, of which our Lord said, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, because ye have love one to another*.

Our text states *The fruit of the Spirit is love*. The word *love* is followed by a sequence of other objects of the verb, each separated by commas. However the verb is singular, which makes for a difficult translation into English, because it appears that there are nine objects to the singular verb *is*. In English the subject, the verb and the object of the verb must agree in number. The subject *fruit* is singular; the verb *is*, is singular; and the object of the verb *love*, is singular. Therefore I believe the sentence should read like the title to this chapter, *The Fruit of the Spirit is Love*. If we punctuate with a colon after *love*, I believe we would have the true sense of Paul's statement to the Galatians. Thus it would read, *The fruit of the Spirit is love: joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law*. Punctuated this way, each of the words that follow the word *love* provide us with a different

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condition produced by *the love of Christ*. For example: The love of Christ, which is the fruit of the Spirit, produces *joy*, but *joy* requires an occasion, so that *joy* is not something that is the perpetual experience of the believer, but comes at various times and for various reasons when there is cause for *joy*.

Someone is bound to protest that this punctuation does not fit the grammar of the Greek text, because each of the words, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc., are in the objective case and are, therefore, direct objects of the verb *is*. This is true, but as in our chapter on *The Promise*, we found plural conditions to the singular promise of Christ and all were fulfilled, or will be fulfilled, by the singular promise of the Person and work of Christ. So it is here with the word *love*. All of these various conditions of joy, peace, etc., are fulfilled in the singular fruit of the Spirit, which is love. For example, when a sinner is confronted with the love of Christ, manifested in the preaching of the gospel, and the Spirit of God quickens the truth of the gospel to his heart and mind through His regenerating power, the sinner is saved and his sins are forgiven. The realization of this produces joy for the new child of God. It produces joy for God, His angels and the redeemed in heaven, because the Scriptures declare that there is joy in heaven over the repentance of sinners. It also produces joy for those who ministered *the love of Christ* to the sinner. Thus the preaching of the love of Christ in the gospel has produced *the fruit of the Spirit*. In this case it has manifested itself in overflowing *joy*, in heaven and on earth.

A consideration of the manifestation of the love of Christ, both in the preaching of the gospel to a lost world and in building up the believer in the faith, reveals that the singular fruit of the Spirit is always love, no matter what else may accompany this fruit. In this regard we have

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observed that, at the moment of salvation, the fruit of the Spirit can produce *joy*. Under these circumstances is there anything produced besides *joy*? Once again using our example, we find that besides *joy*, the love of Christ also produces *peace*, because the Scriptures teach us that with our salvation we have peace with God. As we examine the other traits in our list, we find that there are some, like *joy and peace* that are instantaneously produced by the love of Christ, manifested in the gospel. There are some which require growth in the believer's understanding of the love of God, so that *faith and meekness* (i.e., humility) could be instantly produced with salvation to some degree, but that *longsuffering* (i.e., patience), *gentleness*, *goodness*, and *temperance* (i.e., self-control), most likely, would require some maturity in the things of the Lord. Thus from the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, we see the love of Christ producing these other seven virtues at various times and in various ways as the believer grows in the grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

After establishing the truth of the fruit of the Spirit as being love, with seven different consequences of love, Paul continued to instruct the Galatians about the differences between law and grace and showed them that in the realm of the Spirit, no law could be written by the Spirit of God against the fruit of the Spirit and its seven virtuous sisters. So that, the individuals that belong to Christ have crucified, or put to death, the flesh with its affections and lusts, realizing there is nothing in the realm of the flesh that can be used of the Spirit. Paul continued, by effectively saying, Since our life has been produced by the Holy Spirit of God, through the truth of the Word of God, with the manifestation of the love of God, then this is where we should walk: in the Spirit, by faith. Paul instructed the Galatians, as he continued, let us not be desirous of the

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vain glory sought by the flesh, through the works of the flesh, which can only produce provocation, envy, condemnation and death; but, rather, let us walk in the Spirit! And we should all respond, Amen!