

## Good Fruit

Galatians 5:22

In one sense, this is a very easy and happy sermon to preach because, after all, the last two weeks we have been focused upon the difficult subject of the desires of the flesh. We have focused on the war that rages with our souls, even as Christians.

v.17

And last week, we look at those desires of the flesh with some specific detail. So today, as a contrast, is so easy, for we come to the fruit of the spirit, a passage probably familiar to most of you.

But this is always one of those sermons that is incredibly difficult to preach, because, after all, what can I say about love. How can I explain anything of insight or to you that you don't already know? And how can I focus such a broad topic into an understandable and edifying sermon. I find that to be quite a challenge. But let's start here, with a reminder that all of these things identified in verses 22 and 23 are,

### I. FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

So, again, the contrast. In the heart of a believer, there is a battle. No, a war. And if you are feeling the presence of that war, that is actually a good thing. Because it means that there are two sides fighting. Not just your inherited fallen nature that you received from Adam. But also, the nature that is formed in the new creation by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Ezek. 36:26 "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your

fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God."

So if you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit is at work in you.

2 Cor. 1:21 "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."

Eph. 1:13 "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit..."

So the phrase "spirit-filled Christian" is redundant. There is no other kind of Christian! There is no so-called second blessing. There is no subsequent experience, after you are saved, that you receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. They are one and the same promise. If you are a believer, you have received the Holy Spirit. If you are a Christian, you are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And Paul's gets so explicit they even become a little bit uncomfortable. With reference to the dangers of sexual immorality, he writes,

1 Cor. 6:19 "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

My starting point this morning is this,

### A. The work of the Holy Spirit becomes obvious and evident in the life of a Christian.

In other words, the good tree will bear good fruit. Often we think of fruit in terms of a warning, such as,

Mat. 3:10 "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and

thrown into the fire.”

But the opposite is also true, the positive. Good fruit is the evidence of a good tree! Good fruit is the evidence of the work of God.

Mat. 7:17 “So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.”

Again, let me emphasize the positive statements there. “Every healthy tree bears good fruit.” “A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit.” If you are a Christian, then the Spirit is in you, you are a healthy tree. And you will bear good fruit.

And here is how that fruit is described. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self- control.”

These fruit are very different from the so-called gifts of the Spirit, for the gifts are distributed unequally. Some have more, some have less. And in a real sense, everyone is different. God’s distribution of the gifts of the Spirit varies from person to person, but not the fruit. Everyone of these fruit is to characteristic of everyone of God’s people. Indeed, the presence of these fruit are the measure and the definition of what it means to “walk by the Spirit,” from verse 16. That’s not some sort of ecstatic emotional experience. To walk by the Spirit means to love. It means to exhibit joy. To experience peace. To exercise patience and to practice kindness. And the point is that it is God the Holy Spirit who works those things in us. They are not the product of the natural man, the old man. They are the work of the Holy Spirit, and the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work.

So the Christian is the person who is “led by the Spirit,” according to verse 18. The Christian who “lives by the Spirit” is

the person who keeps “in step with the Spirit,” according to verse 25. So love, with all of these fruit, is the fruit of the Spirit. They are the obvious and evident work of the Holy Spirit, not the work of your own flesh.

But notice something. Those descriptions I read were actually imperatives. In other words, commands. Exhortations.

v.16 “But I say, walk by the Spirit...”

v.25 “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

That’s an exhortation. A call to duty and responsibility. Paul’s language is clear,

### **B. The individual Christian is responsible to cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**

You are responsible to cultivate the fruit. You don’t sit back and wait, wait for God to make you patient. Wait for God to motivate you to show love. Or to to be gentle. You don’t look at your own shortcomings and simply dismiss them with the thought, “that’s just the way I am.”

No, this list of the fruit of the Spirit is a call to life, an application for life. And by the grace of God at work in you, this list of fruit is and ought to be your goal. And please let me present it to you in that context. By the power of the Holy Spirit at work in you, you are called to love. To joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That list of character traits defines the way in which the Holy Spirit works in the lives of God’s people. So let’s begin with the fruit of love. The fruit of the spirit is love.

Now, what do we do with that statement? Perhaps I could then put it the duty of love. The responsibility of love.

## II. THE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE.

Indeed, this particular fruit is the very definition of the law. You know the verses.

Mat. 22:36 “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.”

So it is that,

### A. As Christians, we are called to love God.

And love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in your life as a Christian. The Greek word is the word familiar to many, the word agape. Ultimately, it is a word of commitment, a word of reverence and honor. Love is a choice, a determination that you make, a commitment that you keep. And you do with all your heart, with all your energy.

Ultimately, therefore, love is an action. Love is something you live out, not so much something you feel. It is something you exercise, something you practice.

For a fuller explanation, please turn with me to,

Deut. 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

The emphasis is upon intensity, isn't it? The emphasis is upon the extent of love, the fullness of love.

Look down a few verses to get more of a definition of love.

Deut. 6:13 “It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. 14 You shall not go

after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— 15 for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God— lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. 16 You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. 17 You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you.”

That's love. So directly connected with the first three of the ten commandments. So directly connected with the fullness of the word “fear.” The reverent honor of fear. The recognition of his jealousy to protect and preserve his own glory. Love means to serve, with honor. Love means to worship, to exalt, to promote and proclaim his glory and not your own. To love God is to fear God. To fear God is to serve God. And serve God is lay down your life as a living sacrifice to him. Love is the live out your commitment of a bondservant of God in response to his marvelous grace that is shown to you in the person of Jesus Christ.

So this is love,

Rom. 12:1 “...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

This is love,

Heb. 12:28 “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.”

Dear friends, you are called to love God. And to do so with all your heart and with all your soul. With all your strength. You are called to live out life as his bondservant, a living sacrifice

acceptable to him. You are called to honor him with reverence and awe, to fear him with a holy fear.

John writes this way to elect lady of 2 John,  
2 John 5 “And now I ask you, dear lady— not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning— that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.”

All of that is possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in your soul, for this love is only possible as a fruit of that Holy Spirit. And so, beloved, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Keep in step with the Spirit, the Spirit whose work in you is the enabling power to love. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

But it is not just love for God.

### **B. As Christians, we are called to love one another.**

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

And what does that mean? Perhaps that is never more fully defined than when we read this description in,

Phil. 2:3 “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by

becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

So what is love with reference to one another? “Taking the form of a servant.” “In humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

John 15:12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Lay down your life for one another. When a husband is given that responsibility with regard to his wife, the emphasis is not upon the obvious, outward illustration. There is much more than physical defense, fighting to protect the life of your wife even at the cost of your own. As when the Titanic sank, “women and children first” was the priority for the limited lifeboats.

But there is so much more. As any married man will have discovered if he is happily married, that means a daily commitment. A daily dying to yourself and to your own interests. A daily dying to your own priorities and your own agenda. A husband, as he leads his wife, is to lay down his life for her in all the daily details of everyday living. She is more important than he himself! That’s love.

As Christians, we are called to love one another. You are called to love your neighbor as yourself. And you are called to love God with all your heart. Such love is the work of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work within the you as a

Christian.

In order to be practical, let me briefly give you something more of a definition of love, a biblical definition, from 1 Corinthians 13.

### **III. LOVE DEFINED.**

So what is love? Let me read this words, and please, don't listen to them carelessly as simply the familiar words we hear at wedding services. Let the obvious, practical definitions here convict and challenge your own heart, convicting you where you yet fall short and challenging you with the motivation to love all the more. Let me challenge you to cultivate this previous fruit of the Holy Spirit in your own life experiences. So listen. And listen to the Holy Spirit as he would prompt you within your own heart to repent love that has grown cold. Keep in step with the Spirit, by loving in this way.

1 Cor. 13:4 "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends."

That is,

#### **A. The character of love.**

But one final note. One necessary emphasis regarding,

#### **B. The origin of love.**

You see, the origin of love is not in you. Remember, the desires of the flesh are what you contribute, that list we studied last week. The origin of love, however, is in God himself. Never forget, love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of a Christian. So this is not a moralistic encouragement to conjure up

as much love as you can within yourself, for ultimately, within yourself and yourself alone, there is none of his love. So as you "walk by the Spirit," as you "keep in step with the Spirit," never forget that the origin of love is with God.

1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 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. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."

Let me end by reading verse 11 again, for here is where all of this is so well tied together. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Where that love has run cold, repent and confess your sins. Where you have grown careless and negligent in cultivating this fruit of love, repent and confess your sins. And where you have so mistakenly thought that the power and ability to love rests in your own strength, then repent and confess your sins as well.

And then turn around, and love. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. And love your neighbor as yourself. With this motive deeply embedded in your soul, that you know that he has first loved you. The fruit of the Spirit is love.