

# **Fruit of the Spirit**

## **Part One**

***Galatians 5:16-26***

### **Three groups of sins:**

- **Of the body**
- **Of the spirit**
- **Of the soul**
  - *Isaiah 64:6; 1 John 4:8; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:10*

### **Greek words for love:**

- **Eros**
- **Phileo**
- **Storge**
- **Agape**
  - *Romans 12:10; Matthew 5:43-48*

### **1. Completely Undeserved.**

- *Romans 5:8*

### **2. Productive and Transforming.**

- *Romans 5:3-5, 12:2; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:19*

### **3. Inseparable Love.**

- *Romans 8:35-38*
- ***Agape gives depth to eros***
- ***Agape gives length and strength to phileo***
- ***Agape gives breadth to storge***

love.learn.live.  
westvalleychurch.com



West Valley Church  
October 12, 2025  
Michael W. O'Neill

## The Fruit of the Spirit: Love

We're beginning a new series today looking at a list of the attributes or characteristics of the Christian life when the Spirit of God fills it. The Bible calls these characteristics "fruit." Fruit is the natural product of a healthy fruit tree. Fruit of the Spirit is the natural result of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. We find it in Galatians 5:16-26. This "fruit" is the great qualities that we can have in our lives. Would you stand with me as I read this passage to us?

"So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the Law of Moses.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another." (Galatians 5:16-26, nlt)

Thank you – please be seated. This describes the fruit – the natural result – of every spiritually healthy Christian life. It is the Christlike life.

But in order to understand the divine nature that can be in us, we first have to look at what *keeps us* from it, and that's our human nature. This passage starts out talking about the *sinful nature*. There's quite a list of sins there at the beginning of this passage, and as we read it, we might assume that list of sins is describing people who are not Christians, but you'd be wrong. The Apostle Paul wrote this letter *to the Christians* in the church at Galatia—he's talking to *believers*. So listen to me, Church:

don't think this list of sins doesn't apply to you. Paul is saying that, *as believers*, we can't ignore that there is still a sin nature in us that needs to be dealt with. We have a decision to make. We either live according to the sinful nature – what Paul calls “the flesh” – or we live by the Spirit of God. You can't live both ways at the same time, if you are a Christian. So in order to live by the Spirit we need to first recognize and confess and repent of any acts of the flesh, or sin.

What's interesting about the list of sins in that passage is that there are actually three categories of sin. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the Bible says that we as people are made up of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. Spirit is obviously the spiritual side of us. Soul is the emotional and mental side of us, and the body is the physical part of who we are. Not surprisingly, this list of sins can be separated into three categories: sins of the body, sins of the soul, and sins of the spirit. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list – it is a general list, so don't go looking for a loophole!

Let's unpack these, and as we do, please be in an attitude of prayer: be honest with yourself and God and consider your own life.

Paul lists the...

- **sins of the *body*.**

There are two words that the Apostle Paul uses when he refers to the body. One is the Greek word “soma” which is the physical body—that's your skin, bones, etc. “Soma” is not good or bad – it just all depends on what you do with it. That's not the word Paul uses here though. The word that Paul uses here is “sarx” and it means “the flesh” – and by that he's referring to the sinful sensual desires. Not sensual as in “sexual” but as in the senses—selfishly sinning for the pleasure of the senses. There are five categories of sins of sarx that Paul lists:

“Sexual Immorality”. You need to know that sexual purity was a virtue that Christianity brought into the world. Outside of the Bible, sexual immorality was considered essential to ordinary life. It was encouraged. Much like today. It was the Bible that brought the idea sexual purity is monogamy between man and woman in marriage. The word that Paul uses here for sexual immorality is “pornea” – guess what word comes from that? Pretty descriptive of this sin and the damage it causes.

The next is “impurity.” The original language is a word that described pus in a wound. It's an ugly word on purpose because sin is ugly and poisonous.

“Lustful Pleasures” is the next and it means no restraint; an eagerness to do anything for pleasure.

Then Paul says “drunkenness”. Wine was commonplace; the Greeks and their children drank more wine than we drink milk. But the Bible refers to more than the moment you lose control of your drinking – it's the moment you're being influenced. In our society, legally drunk might be .08%, but the Bible implies *long* before that – it's the path of drinking that takes you there.

Next Paul lists “Wild Parties.” It means unrestrained partying to satisfy pleasure.

Those are categories of sins of the body.

Consider these sins in your own life: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, and drunkenness.

The next category is...

- **sins of the *spirit*.**

These are religious sins, and the first listed is “idolatry.” This really means the sin of putting *anything* in our lives before God. Check out our summer sermon series if you really want to dig into the issue of idols. But it doesn’t have to be a bronze idol; it could be money, a relationship, an ambition, sports—*anything* at all that we put before God in our lives is idolatry.

Next is “Sorcery” or “Witchcraft” – This means messing around with the spirit world, including horoscopes, séances, Ouija boards, psychics – that kind of thing. But it’s also more than that. The word used here is “pharmakea” – so it also means any type of drug or substance that is used for gaining “power” or “visions.” You didn’t know the Bible talked about drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, did you?

Consider your life in light of this list: idolatry, spiritism and drug use.

Finally are...

- **sins of the *soul*.**

These are emotional and relational sins. The Greek word for “soul” is “psuche” – what we get “psyche” from. The soul involves your attitudes, thoughts, moods, emotions. Sins in this area damage not only your own soul but also the souls of others; these are relational sins, too.

In this category Paul talks first about “hostility” or “hatred,” meaning an extreme dislike, being hostile toward others.

“Quarrelling” is next and it is rivalry against each other that leads to discord. So if you are quarrelling with someone in this church, you’d better be careful; you are sinning.

Then Paul lists “outbursts of anger.” Does your anger suddenly appear? Can’t control your anger? There you go.

“Jealousy,” and “selfish ambition” is wanting what someone else has regardless of what it does to others.

“Envy” is worse than jealousy—it’s not just wanting what someone else has, it’s also hating them because they have it.

“Dissensions” is literally “standing apart.” This is being a sniper—standing from a distance taking shots at pastors or others in the church. This is badmouthing, complaining, griping and sniping. Do you see why we stress unity in the church so much? Be careful when you complain to others and have a critical, complaining spirit—you are guilty of the sin of dissension in the church, which leads to “divisions” or “factions.” Factions are organized dissension. It is taking all those who have the same critical attitude you do and grouping yourselves together to get your way. Let me tell you: if you are guilty of this, we love you and this church too much to let you continue doing it—we will lovingly talk to you.

Consider your own life and any sins of the soul.

As you hear those, are you guilty of any? Any and all of these sins of the body, soul, and spirit condemn you. If you are practicing any of these things, you won’t be able to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit – the character and nature of Christ in your life. In fact, this passage says that you won’t even enter heaven. Remember, this wasn’t written to non-Christians, it was written to the believers in Galatia.

Let’s take a minute to pray about this.

*Pray (1 John 1:9—if we confess...)*

Now we want to look at the fruit of the Spirit. When you compare our own nature with the character of Christ (the Holy Spirit), you might’ve noticed that Paul wrote about the *acts* (of the sinful nature) and the *fruit* (of the Spirit). That’s important. I want you to see is that our sinful nature is described by “acts,” which is plural, and the Holy Spirit is described by “fruit,” which is singular. The original language does not say “fruits” it says “fruit.”

There are several reasons why that’s important: one, on our own we are, at best, fragmented and incomplete—our lives are made up of several attempts or acts. But God is complete and whole – fruit – so in him we can be whole and complete, too.

Second, ours are *works*—efforts, acts, actions.

God’s is his *nature*—it’s a natural result or fruit of his character. That’s important, because without Him, our only hope is a fragmented life, at best— to do works—to get better by our own effort or acts. But the Bible is very clear that we can never be better enough:

“We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.” (Isaiah 64:6, nlt)

But, in HIM it can be our nature to be better, in fact to be best and always do our best.

There’s something else you need to see: since “fruit” is singular, if you have the Holy Spirit—God’s presence in your life—you have *all* of it. So you can’t say, “Today I’ll work on getting love, and next week I’ll work on joy....” You get it all and you grow in all of them. But listen: you get all these great character traits not by pursuing the fruit, but from the tree! You must seek the source. In other words, go for the

source: the Holy Spirit—not the product, which is the fruit. When Christ saved you, you were grafted into the tree.

So get the source The Holy Spirit—and *then* you get it the fruit.

Now, with all that in mind, let's look at the first, and that's *love*.

Harlequin Publishing House has been in the business of romance for over seventy-five years. Maybe you are familiar with their books—Harlequin Romances. According to Harlequin, they've published and sold almost 7 billion romance novels. More than 130 million romance novels are purchased each year. Harlequin itself sells on average five and a half books per second! That's a lot of paintings of Fabio!

If you don't know what that is, think about so called reality shows like *Love is Blind*, *Love Island*, *Love at First Sight*, *Temptation Island*, *90 Day Fiancé*, *Big Brother*, *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *The Golden Bachelor*, *the Golden Bachelorette*...I wouldn't be surprised if we soon see "Sultry Seniors" or something.

These show our hunger for love, but those shows also show our confusion. Today we are going to get a better understanding of what the Bible says about love and how the kind of love we can have is so different than what our culture thinks it is. Our culture's view is pretty shallow compared to the depth of love we can actually have through Jesus Christ.

It's inevitable that love should stand at the top of the list because God IS love:

"But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love."  
(1 John 4:8, nlt)

and

"Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13, nlt)

In fact, love is in itself the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament, according to Jesus:

"'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."  
(Matthew 22:37-40, nlt)

And so said the Apostle Paul:

"Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law."  
(Romans 13:10, nlt)

So let's define our terms when we talk about love. In our language we have only one word to describe love, and that's it— "love." We use that word for all kinds of things: I love my wife. I love you. I love being with my family. I love sports and when the Mariners win, even if they keep me up late. I love the coast. I love my friends. I love a good book. I love a good laugh. I love a good nap. I *love* Mothers brand pink and white frosted circus animal cookies. I love to worship with you. I

love God. Have I made my point? Love means a lot of things to us, but there's only *one* word in our language for all of it.

In the Greek language of New Testament times there were actually *four* words for love:

One word is...

- ***Eros***

...which is love between sexes. In the Greek, Eros *always* has to do with sexual love. It is really lust in action. It was the lowest form of love in Greek culture – the most shallow. And in our culture, *this* is what is most often the primary idea of love. But it's shallow, it is the least reliable, because when the eros is gone, people move on. We confuse eros for the *real* love that we need. Calvin Miller, a pastor, author, and poet, wrote about this in a line from his allegorical poetry on the life of Christ called *The Singer*. He said this: "Love is substance, lust; illusion. Only in the surge of passion do they mingle in confusion."

Listen: the word "eros" is never used in the Bible for love. Never.

The next word the Greeks had for love was...

- ***Phileo***

This was the highest type of love in Greek culture. It was used to describe the intimate, tender love in relationships, but it was even deeper than that. It was deep-friendship love. For example, Phila-delphia is called "the city of brotherly love" because it uses this word. The Bible uses this word in Romans 12:10 saying:

"Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other." (Romans 12:10, nlt)

This is something many of you who have been in the military understand, because it also describes someone who goes into battle with you, covers your back, and will take a bullet or jump on a grenade for you. This was the love that David and Jonathon in the Old Testament had for each other. But even this kind of love, as powerful as it is, is not the word this passage in Galatians uses.

The third Greek word for love is...

- ***storge***.

This Greek word described the love of parents for their children—deeper than phileo because blood is thicker than water. It's a love that will do anything for another and puts that person ahead of others. I would do anything for Shelly and the boys and our grandbabies before I'd do anything for you if I had to choose. It is

love between family (when it's healthy anyway – not the dysfunctional family love that so many of us have experienced).

But even this word is not as deep as the word that is used in the Bible to describe love as the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. There is another love that is deeper than all these—deeper than physical love, friendship love, and even family love. That word is...

- ***Agape.***

*Agape* was hardly ever used in Greek culture – they didn't understand it. They only had the first three. *Agape* is a Bible-exclusive word, and *agape* is a God-kind of love. It is unconditional love. It is the love that Jesus spoke of:

“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”  
(Matthew 5:43-48, nlt)

This love is unconquerable kindness; it is undefeatable good will for someone else. It will never seek anything other than the highest good for someone else – it doesn't matter who it is or how they treat you. Our acts of love have conditions attached. But God's *agape* love pursues the highest and best for someone else without condition, with nothing expected in return, no expectations, no strings attached, just the way you are. This is how God loves YOU—right now, just the way you are, not the way you think you should be. Not the way someone else says you should be. He loves you just the way you are. For God so *agape*-loves you he sent his one and only Son to die for you so that you wouldn't die but could have life abundant and eternal. That is what John 3:16 says! This love God has for you is...

## **1. Completely Undeserved.**

Not only do we *not* deserve it, God gives it even while we are hostile towards him. The Bible says:

“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” (Romans 5:8, nlt)

You and I don't deserve his love, but if we've accepted his love through Christ and have his Spirit, we can love others this way, too.

Russell Stendal was raised in the mission field in Columbia. He became a missionary jungle pilot at the age of 19. In August 1983, Russell Stendal was taken hostage into

the jungles of Columbia, South America by a band of Marxist guerilla soldiers, all because he was a Christian missionary. For nearly 5 months he learned what it really means to love one's enemies. He wrote a letter home saying, "I am in danger only of losing my life; they are in danger of losing their souls." Through kindness and love, Russell befriended his guards. One day the commander told him, "We can't kill you face to face; we like you. So we will have to kill you in your sleep." God enabled Russell to forgive, but for the next ten days and nights he couldn't sleep. A submachine gun was repeatedly thrust in his face under his mosquito net, but the guards couldn't bring themselves to pull the trigger. On January 3, 1984, Russell was released. When he said goodbye, tears filled the eyes of his captors.

How does a man love like that, with a completely undeserved love for his captors? It's *the fruit of the Spirit*. Are there people you hate or maybe even just dislike? Those are the people you are called and commanded to love. We've all got those people. God loves us. He loves them. We love them.

This love of God is also...

## 2. Productive and Transforming.

In other words, it doesn't just *feel* good—it isn't just nice to *know* about it. It produces a profound transformation in your life, giving you Christ's own character, and then to *act* on that love. According to Romans 5:3-5, he gives you his nature by the Holy Spirit:

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. *For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*"  
(Romans 5:3-5, nlt)

And then in Romans 12 we are told that he, by that love, transforms you:

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but *let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think*. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."  
(Romans 12:2, nlt)

This doesn't describe a slight change of attitude, nor is it about choosing a different ideology. This is an inside-out, total restructuring and change in your nature and behavior and attitude.

I remember before I had become a Christian at 17 years of age, I had friends that I did all kinds of bad stuff with, and after my conversion, first they didn't even *physically* recognize me, so drastic was the transformation. Then, when they learned how my lifestyle and behavior had changed, they couldn't believe it. I won't go into details, but I'm telling you I was a different person—night and day different

from what my reputation was. Not because I changed my mind but because Jesus changed my nature. And He's *still* working on me.

Then, when we love others with Jesus' character of love, it creates in *others* a desire for that same kind of love in their own lives. That's what Jesus said would be the recognizable characteristic of those who are his followers.

"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35, nlt)

It's because of his love that we can love each other:

"We love (agape) each other because he loved (agape) us first." (1 John 4:19, nlt)

What do others see in you? Do you dare even ask them? If you don't, well, maybe there's your answer.

This love is completely undeserved, it is productive and transforming, and it is an...

### **3. Inseparable love.**

There is nothing in time or eternity that can stop God from loving you. The Bible says:

"Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-38, nlt)

This inseparable love is incredible. But not only is it *to* you and *for* you, it can be *in* you and flow *through* you to others. If you have the Holy Spirit in you, you have this love to give to others. Remember we quoted the Bible earlier when it says "we love others because he loved us first" – so you can actually love others the way God has loved you. It is impossible on your own—but with the Spirit within you, you can. Here's how it makes a difference...

- ***Agape gives depth to eros.***

Because the sexual relationship with your husband or wife will have unconditional giving, acceptance and commitment, so eros will become an expression of agape in a solid, loving healthy marriage and family.

- ***Agape gives length to phileo***

...because no matter what happens or what your friend does you will always love them and seek the best for them. Even if your friends abandon you or turn their back on you, you will keep loving them.

- ***Agape gives breadth to storge***

...because not only do you love, respect, and accept your family but you love all of God's children, whether they know Jesus yet or not. All people are now your family. Agape widens your family!

There are two questions that we are left with today, and we are going to pray about them both.

The first is this: *do you experience this kind of love from God?* God loves you. He has loved you from the time he hand-made you in your mother's womb. But unless you accept what Jesus has done for you on the cross, His love is only one way – it's to you but not in you. You have not experienced his love *in* your life. But if you will accept God's forgiveness for you through Christ, God's love will shift from being something *to* you to something *in* you. There is nothing to keep you from experiencing God's agape love for you. Here's what you must do in prayer: tell him you are sorry for not letting him love you, ask him to forgive you, and accept his forgiveness that only comes through Jesus.

The second question is this: Jesus said that agape love is how all people will know you are his—by how you love others. So, *do others know Jesus because you love them like God does?*

They can: you need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with God's love for others. It will result in a change in your character, your mindset, your outlook on life and people. But you must ask for it, and you must give him free reign in your heart and mind.

Come forward if you must. We are going to pray. I'll give you a moment to decide what you will do.

*Prayer*

*Benediction:*

“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.” “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (1 Thessalonians 3:12, 2 Corinthians 13:14, niv)