

The Fruit of the Spirit – Love (Galatians 5:22-23)

Let this MIND be in you! - Philippians 2:5-11

INTRODUCTION

1. Having considered the manifold works of the flesh, we now focus our attention to "the fruit of the Spirit"
2. Have you noticed that the word "fruit" is singular, while "works" is plural?
 - a. This suggests that the individual works of the flesh are varied and not necessarily related
 - b. But the fruit of the Spirit, though possessing various characteristics, is in reality ONE, made possible by the combination of all nine characteristics in these verses
 - c. A person may be guilty of the works of the flesh when only committing one of the works
 - d. But a person cannot be said to be producing the fruit of the Spirit unless all nine qualities are demonstrated together in his or her life
 - 1) Similar to the graces as listed in 2 Pe 1:5-8
 - 2) Where the expression "add to your..." implies the graces are intricately connected to each other and are all necessary to growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ
3. So while a person may possess one or more of these graces listed in Ga 5:22-23, that alone does not constitute the fruit of the Spirit; one who is led by the Spirit will produce them all!
5. In discussing "the fruit of the Spirit", the nine graces listed in Ga 5:22-23 are often divided into three groups:
 - a. The first group contains those graces which turns one's thought toward God...
 - 1) Love
 - 2) Joy
 - 3) Peace
 - b. The second group contains those graces that direct our attention to our fellow man...
 - 4) Longsuffering
 - 5) Kindness
 - 6) Goodness
 - c. The third group of graces refers more directly to oneself...
 - 7) Faithfulness
 - 8) Gentleness (meekness)
 - 9) Self-control
6. As we begin our examination of the fruit of the Spirit, it is only natural that the virtue of "love" should head the list...
 - a. For God is love - 1 Jn 4:8
 - b. Love is the greatest virtue of all - 1 Co 13:13

[But what is love? What place does it have in the life of the Christian? How can we best demonstrate our love toward God and man?

These are some of the questions we shall seek to answer in this lesson as we begin with...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF "LOVE"

A. THE GREEKS HAD FOUR WORDS WHICH WE TRANSLATE "LOVE"...

1. EROS - carnal, sexual love
2. PHILIA - the love of close friendship
3. STORGE - the love of family relationships
4. AGAPE - that love which seeks only the highest good of others
 - a. It is this love that is Paul mentions in our text, and defines in 1 Co 13:4-8a
 - b. Jesus uses the same word in Mt 5:43-48

B. TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT "AGAPE"...

1. "Agape has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live. Agape has supremely to do with the will." (Barclay)
2. It is not an uncontrolled reaction of the heart, but a concentrated exercise of the will
3. It is a caring love one which becomes involved with the need of others
4. It does not depend upon the one being loved having to earn such love
5. It is not an exclusive love...
 - a. Expressed only to select few
 - b. But an all-embracing benevolence, shown toward all

C. THE PERFECT ILLUSTRATION OF "AGAPE"...

1. It begins with the God of love - cf. 2 Co 13:11
 - a. His love is a completely undeserved love - Ro 5:8
 - b. His love is an inseparable love - Ro 8:35-39
 - c. Indeed, His love is a great love willing to save sinners! - Ep 2:4-7
2. It finds its complete fulfillment in Christ
 - a. God's love reaches its peak in His Son Jesus Christ - cf. Ro 8:39
 - b. Jesus has fully demonstrated such love - Jn 15:13
 - c. Therefore we come to know what love really is when we look at Jesus Christ - cf. 1 Jn 3:16

II. LOVE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

A. THE PLACE OF LOVE...

1. It is to be the "atmosphere" in which the Christian walks - Ep 5:1-2
2. It is to be the "tie that binds" the "garment" the Christian is to put on - Co 3:12-14
3. It is to be the "universal motive" for all that we do - 1 Co 16:14

4. It is to prevent our Christian liberty from turning into destructive selfishness - Ga 5:13
5. It is to characterize our preaching and teaching of the truth - Ep 4:15

B. THE DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE...

1. Demonstrating our love toward God
 - a. Improper demonstrations:
 - 1) Some think we prove our love by shouting from the roof top
 - 2) Others, by putting it on a bumper sticker and honking if they love Jesus
 - 3) And others, think that whatever they do "in the name of the Lord" will be pleasing to Him -- Yet consider Jesus' words in Mt 7:21-23
 - b. Proper demonstration of love toward God:
 - 1) Keeping His commandments - Jn 14:15,21,23-24; 15:10,14
 - 2) Loving our brethren - 1 Jn 4:20-21-- Do we really love God? What is our attitude toward keeping His commandments and loving the brethren?
2. Demonstrating our love toward man
 - a. Showing love toward those who are brethren in Christ
 - 1) Love for one another is fundamental to the doctrine of Christ - 1 Jn 3:11; Jn 13:34-35
 - 2) We best demonstrate our love toward our brethren by...
 - a) Helping them when they are in physical need - 1 Jn 3:16-18
 - b) Helping them when they are in spiritual need - 1 Pe 4:8; Ja 5:19-20
 - c) Loving God and keeping His commandments - 1 Jn 5:2
 - b. Showing love toward those who are not Christians
 - 1) Love for others must go beyond loving those who love us - cf. Lk 6:27-36
 - 2) We demonstrate that we are truly the children of God (and led by the Spirit) when out of love we:
 - a) Do good to them that hate us
 - b) Bless those that curse us
 - c) Pray for those that spitefully misuse us
 - d) Don't resist them when they do evil to us
 - e) Do unto them as we would have them do unto us
 - f) Treat them as our Father in heaven treated us!

CONCLUSION

1. It should not surprise us to learn that one who produces the fruit of the Spirit demonstrates the virtue of love in his or her life
 - a. The Father demonstrated love in offering His Son as a sacrifice for sin
 - b. The Son personified love in the way He lived and died for us
 - c. The Spirit of God revealed what love is through the Word -- Shall not the one born of God and walking by the Spirit manifest love in both his attitude and actions?
2. Even if we already excel in the matter of love...
 - a. There is always room for growth - cf. 1 Th 4:9-10

b. There is always the need for prayers such as this one:

"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you" (1 Th 3:12)

We have spoken of God's wonderful love for us; have you yet responded to that love? -
cf. Ro 2:4-5