

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE--ITS PROOF
Gal. 5:22, 23

Intro: Gal. 5:22 describes the plan of the Christian life as "fruit." Many of the things which apply to the raising of fruit, apply to the Christian life, as we have seen.

The power of the Christian life is "the Spirit." Only the Holy Spirit can produce this life. It is a supernatural life, utterly impossible if a Christian is going to attempt to produce it by himself.

This power becomes ours as we "walk in the Spirit" (5:16). Because of the close relationship between the Spirit of God and the Word of God, to walk in the Spirit must mean to walk according to the Word. If we are under His authority and direction, it is inconceivable that He would lead us in any other way.

Tonight I want to talk to you about the proof of the Christian life.

Note the language which the Apostle uses. Instead of using a plural in v. 22 as he did in v. 19 ("the works"), we find a singular. What is his reason for doing this?

The most obvious answer seems to be that there is a unity in the work of the Spirit which is not to be found in the works of the flesh. The flesh is capable of doing any of the things which are mentioned in vv. 19-21--and much more! BUT THE PLURAL, WORKS, WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT NOT EVERY PERSON ACTUALLY IS GUILTY OF COMMITTING ALL OF THESE SINS. He is capable, but not necessarily guilty. We can be thankful for this.

But in the case of the Spirit, you have the singular, fruit. THIS WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT, IF YOU HAVE A PART, YOU HAVE ALL. There is no such thing as having love without joy, or as having peace without meekness. This is a fruit which grows, and it grows together.

So while there is disharmony and heartache to be found in "the works of the flesh," there is a wonderful unity and blessing to be found in "the fruit of the Spirit."

The proof that you are a Christian is not to be seen in your service alone, not in your soul-winning, not in your knowledge of the Word, not even in your answers to prayer. The proof that you are a Christian is to be seen in YOU--whether or not you possess those qualities of character which are here described as "the fruit of the Spirit."

This certainly clears the air, doesn't it? We might wish it could be otherwise, but here is the solemn evidence that the Spirit of God is primarily concerned about what I am.

But, after all, is this not the whole purpose of salvation?

Before we go farther I want you to see another possibility.

G. Campbell Morgan suggests that the singular, "the fruit," may be an indication that Paul was thinking primarily of one thing, and that everything else mentioned in verses 22 and 23 are merely descriptions of that one thing.

What would that one thing be? Obviously, it would have to be love. He suggests that "the fruit of the Spirit is love," and that the characteristics of the love he has in mind are "joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

In this way, one of the characteristics of love is joy, another is peace, and so on through the list.

Is this possible?

- I. IT FITS INTO THE CONTEXT. Cf. Gal. 5:13-15, and all the way down to 6:10. See also Gal. 4:15, 16.
- II. IT IS IN AGREEMENT WITH OTHER NEW TESTAMENT ~~SCRIPTURE~~ PASSAGES WHERE SALVATION IS THE THEME.
 - A. Cf. Rom. 5:5.
 - B. Cf. John 4:40, 42, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. . . But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."
 - C. Cf. 1 John 4:7, 8, "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."

All of these deal with the subject of salvation.

- III. IT WAS THE EMPHASIS WHICH OUR LORD MADE IN HIS TEACHING.
 - A. Cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31.
 - B. Cf. John 13:34, 35.
 - C. Cf. John 17:26.
 - D. Cf. John 21:15-17.

IV. IT IS THE ONE THING WHICH IS GIVEN PREEMINENT EMPHASIS
IN THE EPISTLES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MINISTRY.

Cf. Paul in 1 Cor. 13.

- B. Cf. Paul also in Col. 3:14, "And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness."
- C. Cf. Peter in 1 Pet. 4:8, "And above all things have fervent charity (love) among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."
- D. To the legalists Paul would respond, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. 5:14).

Concl: Even in the Scriptures there are basically two kinds of love.

There is that kind which is unreasoned, spontaneous, highly emotional--that kind of love at first sight. There is nothing wrong with this, but this is not what these Scriptures are talking about.

The other kind of love, the love that these passages deal with, without exception, is a love that I can express for someone, a love which has been based on knowledge, a love which is a deliberate, reasoned choice, a love which, knowing all about a person, yet sees that within that person which is worthy of our love.

Would I surprise you tonight that this is the kind of a love which God had for you and for me--the love talked about in John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4? It is not a sudden love of ignorance, but it is a love full of knowledge--a love which is ours in spite of what we are.

This is the way that He asks us to love each other.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 Jn. 4:11).

This is evidence of the Spirit's work. Nothing else can take its place. It will become our greatest witness to the world.