

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE

Galatians 5:22-23

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Intro: It can never be said too often that no verse of Scripture should be lifted out of its context and explained. Every word of Scripture is a part of the verse in which it occurs. Every verse is a part of the chapter in which it is found. Every chapter is a part of the book or epistle in which it is used. Every book of the Bible is a part of the Bible, and must not be removed from it.

So with reference to Galatians 5:22 and 23, they are a part of Galatians 5. Galatians 5 is one of the six chapters of Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. The Galatian letter is a part of all of the epistles which were written by Paul. Paul's epistle form a major part of the New Testament. And the New Testament combined with the Old Testament, gives us the complete revelation of God.

False doctrine occurs when we lift any part of the Bible, set it off by itself, and fail to relate it to the whole Bible. That is why we can say, as I have reminded you before, that "a text without its context, is a pretext." I don't know who originated that saying, but it has been around a long, long time, and is the expression of an important truth which is supported by the Word of God. We know what a text is. It can be a group of verses, or a single verse, or even a phrase within a verse. The context has to do with the verses which are around it, or it can be the book of the Bible in which it is found. *But what is a pretext?*

It is that which is assumed to be the meaning of a verse or chapter for the sake of getting a point across which really has nothing to do with the text. People will do this when they have an idea that they want to get across, and so they go to the Bible looking for a verse which seems to say what they want to say, when in reality it doesn't say that at all. That is not the way to study the Bible, nor is it the way to teach the Bible. We must always start with the Bible and let it speak for itself.

Now this morning I am directing your attention to Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23. The immediate context of these verses is chapter 5 – the verses which lead up to them, and also the verses which follow. So it is very important to read the whole chapter as we seek to understand these two verses. But what is even better is to read the whole epistle. That is

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the only way we can really understand why the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to write this letter in the first place. Oh, we can read what others have learned from their reading, but it is so much more impressive upon us if we read it for ourselves, and then, to make sure that we are on the right track, to check what we have learned with what other godly people have written as the result of their own reading. Don't disregard good commentaries, but don't start with them. Start with the Bible, and then go to the commentaries. You will be in no position to know if the commentaries are sticking to the text if you don't know what the text says.

I went through a discouraging time in my own life this past week. I had started to read 1 Peter in our Bible reading schedule, and I knew that I needed more help than usual, so I read the whole epistle instead of taking a chapter a day. I am not speaking against reading a chapter at a time. I have done that most of my life. But I think that there are times when we need more than a chapter. And 1 Peter was just the epistle that I needed.

Then, as you know, we have been studying the miracles of our Lord that are recorded in the Gospel of John, and I had gotten to John 11 where we are now, that chapter which recorded the Lord raising Lazarus from the dead.. Well, I decided to read all of the first eleven chapters to John. It didn't take very. I wasn't speed reading because I wanted to get all that I could out of those eleven chapters. What a blessing that was to me! I don't think that we read the Bible the way the Lord's people read it in past days, and we are missing a lot of blessing as a result.

Well, back to our verses in Galatians 5, what was Paul writing about when he got to verses 22 and 23? We don't have time to read all of Galatians, but we can certainly apply what I have been saying about all of Scripture to Galatians 5 by itself. Just go back to verse 16 where he wrote, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Now this should make me curious to know what Paul had been saying about the Holy Spirit before he got to Galatians 5:16. If you read the epistle you will see that Paul had been saying a lot about the Holy Spirit. The Galatians had practically forgotten about the Holy Spirit, and were seeking to please the Lord by putting themselves under the law. And Paul had shown them why that wouldn't work. They needed to "walk in the Spirit" so that they would not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

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And then Paul explained in verse 17 why we need the Holy Spirit. It is because when we were saved the Holy Spirit came to dwell in our hearts to make it possible for us to live to please and glorify God.

You know, or I hope you do, that the Christian life is a warfare, a spiritual warfare. We, all of us, have three enemies. The Devil is one of our enemies. The world in which we live is another enemy that we have, always setting temptation in our way. But the flesh, our old nature, is our third enemy. Spurgeon, that great English pastor of the nineteenth century said this about our enemies. He said, “The worst enemy we have is the flesh” (Vol. 30, p. 289). And he quoted Augustine who used to pray, “Lord, deliver me from that evil man, myself.” And when you get down in Galatians 5 to verse 17 Paul tells us what the works of the flesh are, and it is not at all a pretty picture of the human heart without Christ. In fact, when Paul spoke later, in our text, about “the fruit of the Spirit,” he mentioned *nine* characteristics that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives. But if you will count “the works of the flesh,” you will see that he mentioned *seventeen* works of the flesh – almost twice as many works of the flesh as make up “the fruit of the Spirit.” These are sins of which we all are capable. Paul does not say that we are all guilty of these, but he is saying that we are capable of them, and if there are some that we have not committed, it is only by the grace of God even in our unsaved state we haven’t committed them. These are sins against God, against other people, and sins against ourselves. Do you wonder why our world is the way it is when we human beings are like we are? And sin is such a problem even for those of us who know the Lord, that God has sent His Holy Spirit to live in us, and to change us, so that we can live holy lives, growing more and more each day to be like our precious Savior.

Now the wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit is that He is God, and He has sufficient power to change us so that we can live victoriously over sin. We are never going to be perfect in this life, but neither do we have to live as slaves to sin. By these nine characteristics which make up the fruit of the Spirit, we have our only hope of becoming like our Lord Jesus Christ. The command and promise to all of us is, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

The Message

Where does the Spirit begin? He begins with “love,” and the effect of “love” is to be seen in all of the other eight characteristics that we read

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about in Galatians 5:22 and 23. “God is love.” God is the definition of love. This glorious truth is taught in 1 John 4:8-20:

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 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.

10 Herein is love, not that we 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 ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

The reason that I asked Frank Parks to read Romans 5:1-11 as our Scripture reading this morning is because I was going to speak on love as the first and basic part of the fruit of the Spirit. And Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit said this about the love that the Spirit puts in us, all of us. This is true of every child of God. Listen as I re-read to you verse 5 of Romans 5:

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us (Rom. 5:5).

Isn't this an amazing truth? Do you really believe it? When we talk about the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is love, it is not our love for God (although that is included in the gift), but *it is God's love for us and in us that is going to be displayed through us*. Back in 1John 4:19 I read to you a moment ago, We love Him, because He first loved us. The ‘Him’ has

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been added by the translators. The original text simply says, “We love, because He first loved us.” It is not wrong to say that “we love Him, because He first loved us,” but the added fact is that you and I did not know real love, the love of God, until the Lord Jesus Christ saved us from our sins. The world has no idea of what true love is. And we do not fully comprehend it. Referring to Romans 5 again, where Paul was speaking of God’s love for us. Beginning with Romans 5:6 and reading down through verse 8, this is what the Word tells us:

- 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
- 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.
- 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

A fault we all have is that we focus our love on people who display traits that we love. If that had been true of God, He never would have loved any of us. He didn’t wait for us to change before He loved us. He loved us, and is changing us, so that He can delight in us more and more.

So the love with which we are to love God, and the love with which we are to love each other in the family of God, is the love of God which has been poured out by the Holy Spirit in us and upon us and for us and through us, a love which finds its clearest manifestation in the Lord Jesus Himself.

In 1 Corinthians 13 we are told how essential love is, and what it is, and that it is surpassing in greatness above faith and hope. We are thinking in these verses of the Greek word *ἀγάπη*. The verb is *ἀγαπάω*. It is translated in the KJV as “charity.” And their probably is some of that idea in these words. But I want to read the verses in the NKJV:

- 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
- 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;
- 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
- 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- 8 Love never fails (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

This is all descriptive of the love of God which never varies, never

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changes, and never ends. And it is only by walking in the Spirit that any of us can manifest such love. This is not human love raised to its highest degree, but divine love which is seen perfectly in Christ, and displayed in us by the power of the Spirit who have been saved to become like Christ.

Concl: One time when Spurgeon was preaching on these verses, he exhorted his people with these words:

Next time you begin to boil over with wrath, think you feel a hand touching you and causing you to hear a gentle voice whispering, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love." Next time you say, "I will never speak to that man again, I cannot endure him," think you feel a fresh wind fanning your fevered brow, and hear the angel of mercy say, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love. Next time you are inclined to find fault with everybody, and set your brethren by the ears, and create a general scuffle, I pray you let the chimes ring out, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love." If you wish to find fault, it is easy to do so; you may begin with me and go down to the last young member that was admitted into the church, and you will not have to look long before you can spy out something that needs improvement; but to what end will you pick holes in our coats? Whenever you are bent on the growling business, pause awhile and hear the Scripture admonish you, "The fruit of the Spirit is love." "Ah," you say, "it was shameful!" Of course it was: and therefore do not imitate it; do not render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love" (Vol. 30, p. 294).

With all of the hatred and other sin that is in the world today, and because sometimes even those who profess to believe in Christ act more like the world than they do like the Lord Jesus, may our prayer be that we may walk in the Spirit so that we will not walk in the lusts of the flesh, and that our lives will manifest that we are seeking to show the love of Christ to all who have any dealings with us, in our homes, in the church, and in the world.