

Works of the Flesh / Fruit of the Spirit

Part 24

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

INTRO:

Love... it can be such a strange thing to observe, such a difficult thing to try and explain, so diverse in actions and display, so complex, that what one person may call an act of love, another person would consider that very same act to be something totally and completely unloving. And we all stumble around trying to figure out what is love. For example, one person says they discipline their children out of love, while another would say that such an act is unloving and a form of abuse, and somewhere in the middle we get a blurred view of what love is. Or we as Christians may separate ourselves from other Christians who live in outright sin, and we says we do it out of love, and yet other Christians would say that is unloving and we should rather love such wayward ones back to the Lord, and somewhere in the middle we get a blurred view of what love is.

So many things in this world, in differing opinions, and different views, and preferences that can all blur our view of what love really is.

Well we have now come to the third message in looking at love, and have been looking at it as the fruit of the Spirit as with Paul's list of Galatians chapter 5.

And just to remind us, from that first message, I showed you the love of God as we see it in the bible, that the love of God is a love that points the lost to God, points to eternity and conforms His children to His Son. For what greater love could there be from God in showing us and pointing us and providing for us the way of salvation unto eternal life. As Jesus says in John 3:16;

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For if God had not provided that love to the world, the whole world, man would have no salvation or eternal hope, he would be eternally lost. But we have hope, there is salvation, a salvation that is for everyone, right down to each individual person just as Jesus told the rich man who asked about inheriting eternal life, and said to him;

Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

God's wonderful love always points man to that eternal life in Christ. In conversion, in comfort and in correction and it always has this eternal purpose behind it.

Then in the second message I showed you the love that is in the world. That the world has and knows about love, that we are created to love, and that man, even in his lost and fallen state knows much about love. How he feels love and how he shows love and how men even give their lives for the ones they love, for the family they love, for friends and country and values they love.

Because even from scripture Jesus said;

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

And

"...if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them."

And the point I tried to convey to you from that message was that there is no eternal value in the world's love.

Yes, there can be much comfort or gain for personal good, social good, economic, and national gains which can include peace and unity and all kinds of good things in the world. But I noted to you that even if you could make this world a perfect utopia of good people, law abiding people, peace loving people, and people loving people with all the earthly and worldly love available, but not give them the love of God in pointing them to salvation. Then there would be no eternal reward, there would be no everlasting credit you would be creating in the people.

And as I said, the one thing that is lacking from the world's love is that it lacks the love that points man to God and his eternal future.

Even when we looked at those who preach the gospel from selfish ambitions and noted that this kind of preaching is not out of love, it does not come from the fruit of the Spirit, but rather it is a selfish work of the flesh that will take them to hell in the end. And we know that there are many such preachers in our world who do so.

This was a difficult point to bring across, but the understanding we must take from it is that if a preacher is preaching the gospel simply for selfish gain, a work of the flesh that manipulates the good news for personal advantage such a one is really going to hell.

And very possibly the others as well, because of the high potential of it being a false doctrine or some corrupted gospel. Just as Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 2 verses 1 and 2;

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

We looked at why John also tells us in 1 John chapter 2 verses 15 to 17, not to love the world, or the things in the world, because if we love the world the love of the Father is not in us. He says all that is in the world... is not of the Father but is of the world and the world is passing away.

And even though he is talking about the things in the world, I think it could include the love that comes from the world, that the love that is in the world will also pass away.

That is the difference between worldly love and the love of the Spirit, in that, one points only to the earthly pleasures and earthly comforts, and the other, always points to eternity with God and conforms the person to the image of Christ.

And it is this second aspect that we want to look at today, the love that is to be in the new man in having this fruit of the Spirit called love.

3. The Love in the New Man

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17;

...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;

And being born again we are no longer of this world; we are no longer part of the world. We are still in the world but we are no longer of the world. Because Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 2:12;

...we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God,

And if we are a new creation in Christ and we have received the Holy Spirit who comes from God, then we also have this new love within us. A love that is not of this world or of ourselves, but a love that comes from the Spirit who lives inside of us. And as Christians, we should begin to bring forth this love, this fruit, again not of ourselves, but of God as a fruit of the Spirit.

This is why Paul also says in Romans 5:5 that;

...hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

If we have been filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of God has been poured out into our hearts, then we have that eternal hope that does not disappoint, and it doesn't disappoint because it is a love and hope that has eternity in mind. No longer is our love and hope found in the things of this world but in the things of God.

This is why Paul says in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20;

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And just as Paul says, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and He dwells inside of us, He changes us, conforms us to God's Son and one of the first things we may begin to see is the bible in a new light, we see it not as just another book with pages and ink but as a living word that is able to change the hearts of men, as Psalm 19 verse 7 says;

The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul...

And as it converts us, we begin to see God and His love in a whole new way, we see love His way, a fruit of the Spirit way, and we begin to see that the bible is not just a book of rules that tells us what not to do. But we see it as Gods book of love, a book that commands us out of love, whet to do and what we are to become.

Listen to John in 1 John 5:3 in how he describes how this love changes our view of the scriptures, he says;

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

And as Paul says in Romans chapter 7 verse 22;

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

You see if we are truly born again by the love of God, it will change us on the inside. No longer do we look at the world with the love that comes from the world, but we look at the world with the love of God that is now in us. And it moves us and directs us to what God wants His love to do in us, and in the world, and that is to point the lost to Himself.

It is a love no longer looks only at the physical needs, or the felt needs, or the feelings of people, but more so at the spiritual needs, the eternal needs of the person. That is what this fruit of the Spirit is to do in the Christian.

Remember, the unsaved world cannot produce this kind of love, this kind of fruit of the Spirit, because it only has the love of the world, a love that only seeks the physical welfare and felt needs of one another.

But this love of the Spirit that is in the new man is so different than the love of the world, that not only does it seek the earthly needs of the people but their heavenly needs, in the form of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is a love where even the smallest act of this love has eternity behind it, listen to what Jesus says in Mark 9:41;

"For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

And also in Matthew 10:42;

"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

This is what the fruit of the Spirit of love begins to look like, that even if ‘you give a cup of water to someone to drink, in the name of Jesus, who is the savior of the world, it is a love, a fruit of the Spirit and brings rewards. This is why Colossians 3:17 says;

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

So that this love, as the fruit of the Spirit may flourish from within you. A love that always points others to eternity, a love that says whatever it needs to say and does whatever it needs to do to point others to Christ, to that eternal life in the kingdom that is coming.

As Oswald Chambers in his book ‘Our Brilliant Heritage’ says;

...no man on earth has the love which Jesus demands, unless it has been imparted to him. We may admire Jesus Christ, we may respect Him and reverence Him; but apart from the Holy Ghost we do not love Him. The only Lover of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Holy Ghost.

It is absurd to look for the love of God in our natural hearts: the love of God is only there when it has been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost.

EOQ

Listen he says only when we are filled with the Holy Spirit that can we love God and only then can we have Him produce these fruits of the Spirit within us.

And this is why I said we have to be careful not to confuse the love of the world with the love of God. Because if this love of the Spirit is not in you or seen in you by others then that could be evidence of there not being any love of the Spirit in the first place, just as Jesus says in John 15:2;

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;...

Listen He is talking to Christians, unbelievers are not branches in Christ, Christians are, and those who do not bear fruit He takes away. But I would encourage you with the same words that Paul told the Thessalonians in his second letter, reading from chapter 2 starting in verse 1 he says;

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,

2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

May the Lord direct your heart into the love of God, a love that directs your love in that same direction as His love, to have His love come forth in all the thing you do for God, and come forth in all the things you do as you share it with others in the world.

John says in 1 John 5:2;

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

When we love God and keep His commandments it is only done through obedience, by obedience we have His love flowing through us and unto others, and obedience is one of the greatest evidence of this fruit of the Spirit of love in us.

Like the famous words of Samuel from the Old Testament when he was speaking to the disobedient king Saul saying;

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

Listen, the love for God that comes from you as a Christian is obedience, obedience to His word, every word. One part of that obedience is not doing the works of the flesh as we looked at in the first half of Paul's list. And the other part of obedience is doing all the good things the word shows us in the second half of Paul's list. And one of them is to love.

It pertains to every aspect of our lives when interacting with others in the world, and in the church, as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:8 through 11 where he says;

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

10 For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.

11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.

And that we would be as Hebrews 10:24 says;

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

Not the warm fuzzy feelings of loving one another but the love that does what is right according to the commandments of God. And as I said not only in the physical sense of helping others but also in the spiritual sense in pointing them to Christ.

As John again tells us in 1 John chapter 4 starting in verse 7 telling us about the love of God pointing us and others to salvation and eternity, he says;

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

10 In this 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 also ought to love one another.

12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

And it is this love that points man to God and to the eternal life with God, This fruit of the Spirit Paul calls love is not only the love that does what is right to our brothers or sisters or even the strangers among us in the physical sense, but is a love of God that points everyone to salvation and to the conformity of Christ.

Everything we do, we do because of our eternal reward that is in God, everything we say is because of the eternal reward that is in Jesus Christ.

As Christians, why do we live the way we do, because of our eternity with God, why do we teach our children the way we do, so that they will seek that same eternity with God, why do we share the gospel with total strangers, because of their eternal destiny that hangs in the balance of hell if they do not get saved. This fruit of the Spirit called love does everything it can to point others and ourselves to eternal life and it is by obedience to his word that it is done. Oswald Chambers again from his book 'Our Brilliant Heritage' writes;

Love means deliberate self-limitation; we deliberately identify ourselves with the interests of our Lord in everything. 'Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'

The revelation comes home to me that God has loved me to the end of all my meanness and my sin, my self-seeking and my wrong motives; and now this is the corresponding revelation - that I have to love others as God has loved me. God will bring around us any number of people we cannot respect and we have to exhibit the love of God to them as He has exhibited it to us.

The greatest love of a man is his love for his friends; the greatest love of God is His love for His enemies.

EOQ

I think Paul said it best in his first letter to the Corinthians in what is often called the love chapter, and I want you to turn there, 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

And as I read the first 3 verses I want you to think of the love he is talking about as the love as the fruit of the Spirit that points to eternity. An eternal love and not worldly love, or the love of the world but love that comes from the Holy Spirit and points to life.

Verse 1;

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

These first three verses could very well be speaking about evangelism and spreading the gospel. And Paul says even if I do all these things; speak with the tongues of men and angels, imparting all understanding of mysteries and faith that moves mountains, and gives all that he has to the poor, including his life, listen if it is not done in love, the love that points to eternity, there is no profit to the one who receives nor reward for the one who gives.

Listen if you had the ability to feed and provide for every poor person in the entire world but you do that without doing it with the love that points them to eternal life in Christ, it profits you nothing, it profits them nothing. Because you do not show them the true way back to God. It is Jesus who said;

*For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in **My name**, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.*

Listen, if you could feed the entire starving world with food to last them a hundred lifetimes and not give them the word of God that points them to heaven, what does Paul say... it profits you nothing.

But if you give only a cup of water, in the name of Jesus, you will not lose your reward. Listen, giving a cup of water in Jesus name is worth more than feeding the whole world without love.

Because if your love does not have eternity in mind, listen, it is simply the love of the world that profits nothing and has no reward.

The love of the Spirit that is to be in the Christian, in the new man, in the believer of Christ, is a love that not only looks at the immediate or physical needs, but a love that always has the eternity of God behind it, either for your reward or the direction the receiver is to be pointed to.

Even when you read the next 4 verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 you will read of the things this love does not do, why, because those things do not point to eternity.

For example, in verse 4 Paul says that ‘love does not envy’ why... because we know where people with envy go to, we looked at that in the previous half of this series. Envy does not point or lead one to life. Where does envy lead one too according to what we learned in the first half of this series... hell.

This is why love does not envy, the fruits of the Spirit point to life. All the things of God’s love point to eternal life. Even verse 8 begins with the words ‘love never fails’

And why does it never fail? Because God’s love points to eternity, the love we have in us from the Holy Spirit continually points us to eternity, and this love never fails because this love will never cease.

It will always point us to eternity and not only that but for all eternity we will be enjoying that eternal love of God.

God never fails and if we have the love inside of us that comes from God, that love will never fail.

You see earthly love can fail, all earthly love will fail in the end, be it in the end of the relationship, end of the person’s life, end of this world when this passing world comes to an end, worldly love will fail with it.

This is why Jesus commands us in John chapter 15 verse 12;

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

How did Jesus love us, He pointed us to the love of God, somewhere in my past, your past, someone witnessed to us, showed us, taught us, the way; maybe a parent, a friend, or a pastor and we were pointed to the love of God, and what was that love of God? that...

...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And this is why John says in 1 John 4:11;

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Do we love one another with this love, with this focus, with this eternal view in mind? With this hope of a future in heaven with other believers? Do you love others with the love that has eternity in mind?

Because if you are not filled with the Holy Spirit then you cannot love as the Holy Spirit loves and if you are not filled with the Holy Spirit and born again you are not going to heaven either. Listen turn to

Matthew chapter 7, Jesus own words talking about this fruit and the absence of it, Matthew chapter 7 starting in verse 13, Jesus says;

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

And now note verses 21 to 23;

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

And what is that will... to love, not willing that any should perish, verse 22;

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

And yet Jesus says in Mark 9:41;

"For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

It's not about service, it's not about meeting the felt needs of the needy, it's not about great works we do, or about casting out demons and performing great wonders, it's about being believers and being filled with the Holy Spirit and pointing the people to God, with eternity in mind, that is the love of the Spirit. That is what the fruit of love by the Holy Spirit looks like.

Its about evangelism, about witnessing to the lost, about keeping each other accountable to the word of God.

You have often heard that love, Agape love is the love that does what is right, well, what is the right thing to do, simply feed the poor physically and not give them the gospel and not feed them spiritually? No the right thing to do with the fruit of the Spirit is both.

As John asks us in 1 John 3:17;

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

It is both, the love of God wants to meet the physical needs but mor importantly the spiritual, in spreading the gospel and in keeping each other accountable. You see the right thing to do when seeing a brother or sister in need, real physical need is to provide for them.

The right thing to do when seeing a brother or sister living in a sin that keeps them from heaven, is not to just continue in fellowship as if nothing is wrong, no, that does not point the erring one to repentance or heaven, but rather it will lead them to the pit of hell.

The right thing to do is to rebuke them, admonish them in that loving way and get them to see their sin and to turn them from their direction of hell and turn to life.

James says;

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

And even when we are hated by our enemies, what did Jesus tell His disciples in Matthew 5 verses 43 and 44;

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

And why did He say this... well verse 45 says;

"that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;

And if we are sons of our Father in heaven, then we should have the fruit of the Spirit of love in us and point... not just our fellow Christians back to Christ but even point our enemies to Christ, to that eternal life found in God.

Because in the very next verses of 46 and 47, Jesus says;

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

47 "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?"

But then He says in verse 48;

48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

And if He is talking about being perfect as He is perfect, then is not that same perfect love that is in GOD also be in us... pointing this lost world the love of God bring this world to the knowledge and salvation in Jesus Christ, buy His word? That we would, as Paul says in Colossians chapter 3 verse 14;

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Because if we do not have this love in us, abundantly in us, coming out of us, then we may very well come under Jesus words which He spoke to the Pharisees in John chapter 5 verse 42 where He says;

42 "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.

And also His rebuke from Luke 11:42;

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God.

And remember this love is not the feeling, it is not the love that the world has either, it is the love of the Spirit, of GOD, that always points man to eternity. And when we keep that love in the forefront of our mind, it is then we can begin to see how this fruit of the Spirit differs from the love that is in the world. And how that line between the love of the world no matter how dedicated or passionate it may be, it can never be the love of the Holy Spirit in what seeks to achieve in the giver and receiver, which is that eternal life in Christ and the rewards that come with it.

Just like when the rich man came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus looking at him loved him and told him what he must do and pointed him in that direction.

As Jesus said;

'The son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost'

And He shows man the way to eternal life. And not only shows man the way but that He has provided the way as well.

And as I conclude this section on love, I hope that all of this has made sense to you, in showing you the love that is in God and the love that is in the world, and the differences between the worlds love and the love as the fruit of the Spirit that is to be in the Christian.

That even though they can come very close together in appearance and action, they are and will always be different. That fine line between the two is that one points to eternal life with God, the other points to the things of the world. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 10 through 14 saying

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

May we as Christians would discern between the love of the Spirit and the love of the world, and look to the love of God points all of us to that glorious eternal state with God. So that we would no longer be caught up or solely focused on this earthly form of love that the world has, but that as born again believers we would be filled with the Holy Spirit and the love He produces in us.

A love that not only changes us but also fills us with the desire for it to change others, in spreading the gospel, and point others to that eternal life we have in Christ and conforming us all to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

Well may the Lord bless us as we have wrestled with only one small aspect of this fruit of the Spirit Paul calls love.