

only holy love, hearty, helpful love, but also happy love. There is no law against this fruit of the Spirit, says Paul, because, you see, it is so good and beautiful and satisfying and fulfilling and wonderful that no one will speak against it, and all will see it is so full of benefits and so praiseworthy before God and so wholesome towards others. Again, I say, compare the fruit of the Spirit with the ways of sin and the works of the flesh and of Satan and this world, and there just is no comparison. God's ways are delightful and good, but sin's path is miserable and destructive. The way of Christian love is the way of fullness of blessings for self and so much blessing to others. If you would be led in happy love, seek for this fruit of the Spirit, love, which comes from God. For sure, as the psalmist says in Psalm 146:5, "*Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord His God.*" The Spirit-filled person is the spiritually blessed person whereas the sin-possessed man is the wretched miserable person.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, and so much more... As this summer you see fruit developing on the trees and you go to stores for one or several of the many fruits you might buy, remember the fruit of the Spirit, "love" and pray and work that it be there in your life, this holy, hearty, helpful, happy love which comes from God above. Will you always remember too the words of Jesus in John 15? "*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me, ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples*"? You see this fellowship with Christ and abiding in His Word is the gracious secret for the demonstration and increase also of this fruit of the Spirit, love. Will you take care that this fruit of the Spirit, love, be growing in the garden of your life, and that others may benefit from that too? May God bless this Word leaving you not only hearers of it, but also doers of it, to His praise and glory. Amen.

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE

In this message I want to think with you about what Paul says in Galatians 5:22 concerning the fruit of the Spirit. What fruit are you bringing forth at this time in your life? When the Holy Spirit is in us and guiding us and blessing us in the Christian faith and life, then there will be Christian fruit. Paul says in Galatians 5:22-23, after speaking of following after Satan and the way of sin, "*But [in stark contrast to the rotten fruits of sin] the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [faithfulness], meekness, temperance [self control]: against such there is no law.*"

Today we will focus on the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned, the fruit of love. The word 'love' today is an overused word while at the same time a word so little understood. What is this fruit of the Spirit, 'love'? Well, the love spoken of here refers to God-like love. The fruit of the Spirit being love refers not just to love as this sinful world understands it, nor even to family love, but to divine-like love. The fruit of the Spirit is love like that described in I Corinthians 13:4-8, speaking of the highest, most pure, and beautiful kind of love there ever can be. I will narrow it down to four characteristics about this love that is the fruit of the Spirit and as you hear it, ask yourself, 'Is this the kind of love I'm looking for and wanting to bear fruit of in my life, and to help spread too?'

Let us notice first of all that here we are speaking of a holy love. There is a lot of so called love today that is most unholy, and that is in defiance of God's summary of the way of true love as given in the Ten Commandments. If a man and woman live together in intimate union but are not married, their expressions of love together is not the fruit of holy love, but more sinful lust. True love for anyone always has God in the picture and always seeks God's blessing and approval. Any expression of love before God or other people that discounts God and His Word is a false expression, and not holy love, not true love. Having the fruit of the Spirit, love, means being filled with God's love and wanting to show God-like love towards others, especially also those closest to you in your home and family.

The fruit of the Spirit is all about growing in living and wanting to live in total obedience to all God's Ten Commandments. Jesus says in John 14:15, "*If ye love Me, keep My commandments.*" Any and all talk of being filled with the Spirit which does not at the same time show itself in humble submission to all of God's law is a contradiction. The fruit of the Spirit is love, love to God and love to our fellowman as summarized in the Ten Commandments. The

life of true Christianity is living by God's law which is the way of true love, holy love before God and man. Is that also how you will live, not just some of the time but all the time, not only with certain people but with all people, not simply on certain days, but every day? The fruit of the Spirit is love, holy love. Is this what you seek to reflect in your life, and more and more as life goes on?

The fruit of the Spirit is not only about holy love but let us notice next surely the fruit of the Spirit, love, is also about hearty love to God and towards others. By hearty I mean especially genuine true love, and not dishonest double-heartedness. The love that God works in us and from us through the gospel is a sincere love, a love that is for real, and that wants not at all in any way not to be real and true. Is this what is characteristic about you, that above all things especially also in your Christian confession and walk and talk you want to be true, transparent, honest, genuine, sincere, hearty, that is, loving God and others from the heart. The Holy Spirit shows us the offensiveness of living with sin and deceit in our life. The true child of God knows something of the prayer, "Gracious God, my heart renew, make my spirit right and true". The love the Spirit works is all about holy and hearty love before God and man. Is this the love you care about and pray about too and seek to model in your life at home, at church, at work, and everywhere else as well? Whatever people say about you and me, do they see obviously you and I are genuine, and you and I are living in pursuit of holiness in praise and thanksgiving to God for all His mercies to us in and through Christ Jesus? Isn't this what marks the true Christian, even among the youngest and newest of believers?

Another mark of the fruit of the Spirit, love, is that it is a helpful love. True love has legs and arms, hands and feet, and shows itself in word and deed. True love to God expresses itself in faithful regular worship of God and devotion and service to Him as God gives us opportunity. True love to others shows itself in reaching out to them in loving care and support and encouragement in their situations, again as God gives us opportunity. True love shows itself in being tender and kind, and in looking out for the needs of others, seeking how you might help in carrying the burdens or easing the trials of others. There are countless ministries God's people are involved in, and different people do different things without others knowing about it even, but the point now is when you have the fruit of the Spirit, love, that also shows in service to others in Jesus' Name, and wanting to give yourselves for others as God gives you the opportunity. No true Christian can be in a healthy state not involved in any service of love and care in Jesus' Name.

Dear friend, is this what you desire and aim to promote and in different ways also actively demonstrate? In the parable of the Good Samaritan, with that man helping the robbed and wounded person beside the road, Jesus teaches us that man truly loved his neighbour and did not,

like the two religious men, the Levite and the priest, just pass by that poor man. Is your life characterized with being helpful to others? What a beautiful God-given trait this is, especially also when we focus on helping others not only materially and physically but especially spiritually and socially too. The fruit of the Spirit is love, helpful love. Can you think of those who impacted your life in the way of helpful love?

The privilege of Christians is that we have a God Who is full of almighty gracious help for us in all our needs, and with Whom is found endless help for all who come to Him, in regards to all matters for this life and the next. "*Our help is in the Name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth.*" [Psalm 124:8] And our help is in and through Jesus Christ the Saviour Who as Sin-bearer was left without help in His great needs that we, undeserving sinners in ourselves, might, by grace through faith in Him, be recipients of everlasting help for body and soul, in life and death, and for now and forever! Life here on this sinful earth is full of trials and challenges, also with ourselves being sinners by nature, but what a comfort to know the God of love and the love of God in Christ Jesus in life's journey and to reflect that fruit of Christian love also to others. The love of God for us in and through Christ Jesus is so tremendous and the Spirit ministers with that fruit "love" to have us know and enjoy God's infinite love and care for us and to have us show it in all our relationships with others likewise. Is this something you want too and desire to grow in? Isn't it so with every true child of God?

Here it should be stressed, especially in our times, that knowing and showing this fruit of the Spirit "love" cannot be without living in the way of faith and repentance before the Lord, entrusting yourself to Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and Lord. God is not a God still full of love for those who refuse and reject Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners and as the one Mediator between God and men. It is a lie of the devil told too many times in too many churches that God is love for whoever, no matter what, for the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, "*without faith it is impossible to please God*". Outside of conversion to Christ, people remain in a relationship of enmity before God and under His just and eternal condemnation. You can't know God's love for yourself nor truly show it to anyone else except you come to Christ and believe on Him and follow Him and His Word. The Holy Spirit teaches this so plainly in all the Scriptures. For those who are still unconverted and not yet saved, I call you, in Jesus' Name, to come to the Saviour, to repent and believe, to no longer delay and don't give excuses for remaining unsaved a single day longer. The Spirit of Christ and His love calls you now through this word at this time. Will you hear and obey, today, yes or no?

Consider this last point about the fruit of the Spirit "love", how that this love that the Spirit gives and promotes and has us know and show is not