

Lesson 9--The Fruit of the Spirit (Part 3)

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love

The Characteristics of Love as Seen in 1 Corinthians 13

"The fruit of the Spirit is L_____ " (Galatians 5:22). When the Spirit of God controls the believer's life, the fruit which is produced is love. May the Lord help us to understand what this means.

The word "love" is the Greek word "agápe." The best definition of love is found not by looking in the dictionary, but by looking at the cross (Galatians 2:20--"who _____ me and gave Himself for me"). As we think about the love of Christ shown on the cross, we come up with this Biblical definition:

Love is the giving of myself for the sake of another. It is seeking to meet this person's real need, regardless of the personal cost or sacrifice that may be involved, desiring only God's highest and best for that person.

This is Calvary love!

Another way to learn the meaning of the word "love" is to study the characteristics of love found in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. As we look at these characteristics of love, we should each examine our own lives. Let us ask ourselves the question: "Is God producing this fruit in my life? Am I a Spirit-filled believer?" If I am, then these characteristics ought to be evident. This is the fruit that only God can produce.

What should I do if I discover that this fruit is lacking in my life? Should I roll up my sleeves and say, "From now on I am going to make every effort to start loving! I'm going to force myself to be loving, longsuffering, kind, etc." No, this will never work. If this fruit is lacking, then I need to realize that something is wrong with my relationship with God. Am I really saved? Do I really have the Holy Spirit? And if I am saved, am I somehow hindering or quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit? In some way I must be getting in the way, not allowing Christ to live out His life in me. If something is wrong with the fruit, then something must be wrong with the root. The fruit is love; the root is my relationship with the living God. In other words, I must not worry about love because God will take care of that. Rather, I need to be concerned about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In our next lesson (Lesson 10) we will learn how we can be filled with the Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit will be manifested in our lives.

In this lesson we will be studying the characteristics of love found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. In the KJV the word "charity" is used repeatedly in this passage. Today the word "charity" has been narrowed down and it most commonly means giving money to

the poor or to other needy causes. We speak of "giving to charities." The Greek word used in this passage is the word **agápe**, and the word "love" translates this Greek word accurately.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 love is personified. It is described as if it were a person. Instead of "love is longsuffering," it could be said "the person who is controlled by the Holy Spirit is longsuffering..." or "the person who is in a right relationship with Christ is longsuffering..." or "Christ in me is longsuffering."

Love is Longsuffering.

Longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The word means "slow to anger, long before losing one's temper, not quick tempered, patient (especially with people), patient with those people who offend and injure and provoke by their actions or by their words." The believer must be slow to lose his temper, slow when it comes to avenging or retaliating. Examine yourself: If someone fires at you, are you quick to fire back? Are you quick to lose your patience when provoked by others? Are you quick tempered?

Read 2 Samuel 16:5-10, 13. How did David show longsuffering?

How does God show His longsuffering (2 Peter 3:9; Psalm 103:8)?

Love is Kind.

Not getting angry at someone who provokes us (longsuffering) is one thing; showing kindness to that person who does not deserve any kindness at all is quite another thing! The word signifies "gracious kindness," that is, kindness that is not deserved. In Luke 6:35, what kind of people did the Lord tell us to be kind to?

_____ In Ephesians 4:32 we are commanded to be kind even towards those who have wronged us and who need to be forgiven by us.

In Ephesians 2:7 we learn of God's amazing kindness towards us who do not deserve any kindness at all. Why don't we deserve kindness? It's because we were dead in sins, children of wrath and children of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-3). Yet, in spite of all this, God was kind to us and provided salvation for us in Christ. Actually, Ephesians 2:7 provides a wonderful definition of God's grace: His undeserved kindness toward us through Christ Jesus! In Titus 3:4 says, "after that, the _____ and love of God our Saviour, toward man appeared." How could God be so kind to the ones described in Titus 3:3? Truly this is a kindness that is not deserved at all! Read 1 Peter 2:3 (and compare Psalm 34:8). Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious and kind to you? Have you personally experienced His kindness? We deserve God's wrath, not His kindness.

If God can be that kind to a sinner like me, then He can certainly work in my life and produce the fruit of kindness in me!

Love Does Not Envy.

The term "envy" means to be filled with jealousy, to boil with envy, to want what someone else has and to resent that person because of what he has. We see others prospering, succeeding, being promoted and we do not like it. In Acts 7:9 we are told that the patriarchs (Joseph's brothers) were "moved with _____." They hated Joseph because of his coat of many colors (a symbol of their father's favoritism), and their envy led to hatred. They threw him into a pit and would have left him to die, but ended up selling him as a slave to a group of traders. They had no concern for Joseph's welfare whatsoever. **Envy and love do not go together!**

Lesson from church history: During the great 18th century revival, there were two leading figures, John Wesley and George Whitefield. Both were great open air preachers and both had a large following. There could have been a rivalry between these two men and with Wesley's followers on the one side and Whitefield's followers on the other. Whitefield refused to let this happen, and in fact, he surrendered the leadership of the movement to Wesley. Whitefield refused to head up a denomination. He once said, "May the name of Whitefield perish, but may Christ be glorified." He chose instead to be a servant of all, and he devoted himself to helping John Wesley in every way he could. This is remarkable in light of the fact that earlier, while Whitefield was preaching in America, Wesley had tried to supplant him and take over his work. In light of this, and in light of some of Wesley's unusual doctrines, some of Whitefield's friends began to wonder if Wesley was really converted. One of them once asked Whitefield if he expected to see Wesley in heaven, to which he replied, "I fear not, for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance, we shall hardly get a glimpse of him!" Whitefield consistently displayed that love for Wesley and that complete freedom from envy and jealousy which could have easily overcome him.

Love Does Not Vaunt Itself.

"Vaunt" means to make a vain display of one's own worth or attainments, to boast, brag, behave as a windbag. It suggests trying to impress others, and seeking the recognition and applause of others, showing off and sounding one's own praises. The Bible says, "Let another man praise thee, and _____ thine own _____" (Prov. 27:2). When someone sings his own praises, he always gets the tune too high!

In 3 John 9-10 we have an example of a man who vaunted himself. Diotrephes was a windbag, talking foolishly and excessively ("prating"). He had no love for the brethren. His only desire was to have first place, to exalt himself.

May the Lord help us to boast in a wonderful Saviour, constantly lifting Him up by our words and our deeds!

Love is not Puffed Up.

The word "puffed up" means "to inflate, cause to blow up, cause to swell up, to be puffed up or inflated with pride." Thus it means to be conceited. Paul often used this word with the Corinthians because they had a pride problem: see 1 Corinthians 4:6-7; 4:18-19; 5:2; 8:1-2. Love does not puff up, but love builds up (1 Cor. 8:1). May God deflate us and pop our pride bubble. When something is inflated it gets bigger and bigger. God wants us to become smaller and smaller. "He must _____, but I must _____" (John 3:30).

Love Does Not Behave Unseemly.

"Unseemly" means "not in according with established standards of good form and taste." The one who behaves unseemly is the one who acts unbecomingly, inappropriately, disgracefully, dishonorably and indecently. It is the conduct of one who is rude, lacking proper manners, doing something that he should be ashamed of. It is behavior that is lacking good taste, courtesy and proper manners.

If anyone should be a gentleman, the believer should. If anyone ought to have good taste and courtesy and appropriate behavior, it should be the child of God. Have you ever noticed the refining and cleansing influence of the Lord Jesus Christ? When a man is saved by grace he comes out of the sewer of sin, and the Spirit of God is able to quiet him, change him, clean up his mouth, refine him until his whole character becomes different.

The man who is filled with the Holy Spirit of God does not behave unseemly. Instead he is able to adorn the doctrine of our great and gracious God (Titus 2:10).

Love Does Not Seek His or Her Own.

Love is not selfish. The selfish person seeks his own; he looks out for Number One (himself). He is seeking his own interests and his own advantages. The Spirit of God enables us to come out of ourselves, and to seek to bring glory to God and benefit to our neighbor, regardless of personal cost and sacrifice.

"Let no man seek his _____, but every man _____ wealth (good)" (1 Corinthians 10:24). Did Paul seek his own profit (1 Corinthians 10:33)? _____ Did he seek to benefit others so that they might be saved (1 Corinthians 10:33)? _____

What should a man not look on or seek after (Phil. 2:4)?

Instead, what should he care about (Phil. 2:4)?

What do most men seek (Phil. 2:21)?

What does God want us to seek (Phil. 2:21)?

May God enable us to be concerned for God's will and for the welfare of others.

Love is Not Provoked.

"Provoked" means to be irritated, provoked to wrath, roused to anger. The Spirit-filled person says, "I refuse to let others arouse me and provoke me to anger. I refuse to let them get me to lose my calm and my cool." As the Spirit of God controls the believer, he can stay calm, cool and collected.

In light of Hebrews 10:24 the believer can say, "There is only one way I'll let myself get provoked. I will gladly let a fellow believer provoke me (stimulate me, arouse me) to love and good works. But I refuse to allow people to provoke me in the wrong way."

Love Thinks No Evil.

The word "thinketh" (KJV) means "reckon, impute, calculate." It is a counting term and means to calculate, to count, to take into account. The Spirit filled person does not reckon up the evil. He does not calculate the evil done to him. He does not take account of the evil done to him. In other words, love keeps no record of wrongs.

Imagine a person with a ledger or a notebook saying, "That's the fifth time this month you spoke an unkind word to me. I'm making a note of it." Love does not enter evil as a debt in its account book. Love does not say, "I'm going to pay you back for that! I've marked it down and made a note of it. I won't forget it and I won't forgive it!"

Have you been keeping a notebook or making mental notes of the evil done against you?

Where would we be if God were to keep a notebook of the wrongs we have done and then count them against us? "If thou, LORD, shouldst _____ iniquities, who shall _____?" (Psalm 130:3) If God were to note all of our sins and hold them against us, then we would all be doomed! What good news to we find in Psalm 130:4?

Are you willing to throw away your notebook and forgive others, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you?

Love Does Not Rejoice in Iniquity.

"Iniquity" is unrighteousness, that which is wrong, that which is contrary to what is right, anything that does not conform to the standard of right.

What is your attitude when another person does what is wrong? How do you react to the wrong done by others or even the wrong that is in your own life? Do you rejoice over it? Are you happy about it?

The Spirit-filled person does not find cause for joy in the acts of wrong doing that he sees in others and in his own life.

If we are not to rejoice in unrighteousness, then what are we to do? The opposite of "rejoice" is to mourn, grieve, lament, weep, be sorrowful. How concerned are we about wrong doing? When was the last time we wept over sin and wrong, being grieved to the heart?

In 1 Corinthians 5:1 we learn of a great wrong or iniquity that was done. What should the reaction of the Corinthians have been (verse 2)?

See James 5:8-9 for the believer's proper reaction to sin.

Love Rejoices With the Truth.

Although the believer should certainly rejoice **in** the truth, 1 Corinthians 13:6 should be translated, "[love] rejoices **with** the truth." The person in a right relationship with Christ rejoices with the truth.

What does this mean? If I rejoice with you, this means that we are both rejoicing. You are rejoicing and I am rejoicing. I am rejoicing with you.

In this verse "the truth" is personified. The truth is described as if it were a person who rejoices. The truth wants me to rejoice with him, to join with him in rejoicing. Does the truth rejoice in iniquity? Obviously not. The truth rejoices in what is right.

I will rejoice in whatever the truth rejoices in and I will not rejoice in anything that the truth condemns.

Suppose someone were to tell a story or a joke that is in poor taste and contrary to principles of decency. Ask yourself, "Would the truth rejoice in this?"

A fellow believer falls into deep sin. Would the truth rejoice in this? Suppose this same believer repents of his sin and mourns over it and is grieved by it and confesses it to God. Would the truth rejoice in this?

If you personify truth, what Person do you have? If you make a Person out of the truth, Who do you have (see John 14:6)?

_____ The truth is personified in no one less than Jesus Christ Himself. The Spirit-filled person rejoices with Christ. He says, "I am

going to rejoice in whatever Christ rejoices in. When Christ rejoices, I will rejoice. When Christ is grieved, then I will grieve also."

The believer who loves sees things through the eyes of Christ!

See our paper, [The Importance of Doctrine and the True Biblical Concept of Love.](#)

Love Bears All Things.

The word "bear" means to bear up against, to endure, to tolerate certain things and certain conditions. This is not a common word; it is only used four times in the New Testament.

In 1 Corinthians 9:12 Paul used this word. He said, "[we] suffer [bear] all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. To understand what Paul was saying, we need to first understand the principle found in 1 Corinthians 9:14: "They who preach the _____ should _____ of the gospel." This means that true gospel preachers are worthy of being supported by God's people. Consider the three questions found in 1 Corinthians 9:7. Soldiers get paid for their services. The person who plants a vineyard enjoys eating its fruit. The person who takes care of a flock, drinks of the milk of the flock. A Pastor likewise has a flock. If a preacher provides for the spiritual needs of his flock, should not the flock provide for his material and financial needs?

In 1 Corinthians 9:12 Paul was making this point: "We have a right to receive support from believers. We have a right to get paid. But we have not used this right." Instead Paul supported himself with his own hands, making tents. He did not have to support himself; the believers should have helped him, but Paul did not want anyone to get the wrong idea and think that he was ministering merely to make money. Thus Paul was willing to suffer all things and bear all things (v. 12). He was willing to forgo his rights and privileges if it would advance the cause of Christ. It was not easy for Paul to make tents when he would have loved to use that time preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, but he was willing to bear the toil.

What about us? Are we willing to forgo some of our rights and freedoms for the sake of the brethren? Are we willing to give up certain things if necessary, lest we be a stumbling block to others? Are we willing to endure pain and privations (doing without) for the benefit of others?

The one filled with the Spirit has this attitude: "I'm willing to do without. I'm willing to give up my rights. I'm willing to change my lifestyle. I'm willing to do whatever is necessary to remove any cause of stumbling from the path of my brother." The unloving person is unwilling to bear much of anything for the sake of someone else.

The word "bears" may also have the meaning of "to cover." Love does not needlessly publicize the failure of others. "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

Love Believeth All Things.

Obviously the meaning of this phrase is not that we should be gullible. We should not be easily duped. We should not believe every words spoken to us. We should not trust in the often unreliable words and statements of men. It is easy to be deceived.

Another option is to think that this phrase means that the Spirit-filled person believes all things that God says. It is true that we should believe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God because God's Word is absolute truth (John 17:17), but that is not the meaning here. Believing God's Word would be a characteristic of faith, but here we are given a characteristic of love.

The true meaning is that the Spirit filled person believes all things, that is, he is not suspicious. The suspicious person says, "I suspect something about you. I suspect you are guilty about something." The believer should refuse to lend an ear to gossip: "I refuse to listen to your gossip. I refuse to believe these bad things you are telling me about this person because you do not have the facts and evidence to back it up." The person who manifests the love of Christ is willing to believe that a person is innocent until proven guilty, and he is willing to believe and accept what men say in their own defense unless there is solid evidence to the contrary. Love believes all things, that is, it tries to put the best possible construction on actions and events.

Love Hopeth All Things.

The believer, as he looks to the future, is to have an optimistic expectation. Our God is in control of the future and He works all things together for our good and for His glory. As we walk through this sin-cursed world which is headed for destruction, we can be optimistic, knowing that God is working out His plan and program, and that His coming is drawing near. We can expect God's highest and best! We have read the Bible and we know that the Lord Jesus is going to win! We are on the side of victory, not defeat. We are more than conquerors [super overcomers!] through Him that loved us (Rom. 8:37).

Love Endureth All Things.

As we are filled with the Spirit, God enable us to bear up under the adverse circumstances of life, to bravely endure the difficulties of life, to stay in there and persevere through the greatest of trials. Believers can even endure great persecutions with joy. The early Christians were "R_____ that they were counted worthy to _____ for His Name" (Acts 5:41). Love bravely faces difficulties and persecutions.

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How will all men know that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:35)?

May God enable us to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, which is L_____ (Gal. 5:22).