

The Fruit of the Spirit – Love

Galatians Chapter 5:22-23

Introduction:

What is interesting about Paul's letter to the Church in Galatia is in Chapter 5, Paul speaks of our freedom in Christ and counsels us to stand firm in this freedom and not to revert to our old ways (the works of flesh) which we were once slaves. Galatians Chapter 5 explains the war that is taking place between the works of the flesh and the freedom that comes through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in v16 we read Paul's exaltation: *So, I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

As we begin this study on the Fruit of the Spirit, this is not multiple choice and we are not at a spiritual buffet where we pick and choose, we need to manifest all nine of the fruits. We need to understand that Acts 2 was the birth of the Christian Church and Pentecost was when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all flesh. Many Christians today advocate respectability and shudder every time the Holy Spirit is mentioned. Please, never ever deny the work or person of the Holy Spirit who is the third person in the trinity. We need all of the fruit of the Spirit. Note: I believe it is singular (and not plural) because it is a collective pronoun. The fruit is all inclusive and all nine mentioned in Galatians 5 should be evident in our lives.

By way of an example, I was a 3rd party auditor for 9 years where everything pivoted on objective evidence. No evidence, it never happened. If we are to be effective witnesses for the Lord, there should be clear evidence of fruit in our lives. John 15:8-10 speaks of bearing good fruit: *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love".*

In the Greek language, there are seven words that describe love in all its forms: Eros (*erotic, passionate love*), Philia (*love of friends and equals*), Ludus (*playful, flirtatious love*), Storge (*love of parents for children*), Philautia (*self-love*), Pragma (*committed, companionate love*), and Agape (*love of mankind, sacrificial love, God's love*). However, in the Bible, only four of the Greek words are used: Eros, Storge, Philia, and Agape. They can best be described as follows:

- Eros: Erotic, passionate love.
- Philia: Love of friends and equals, tender affection, caring type of love.
- Storge: Love of parents for their children.
- Agape: Love of mankind, sacrificial love, God's love which demonstrates pure motives and is poured out liberally.

The love mentioned in Galatians 5 as a fruit, is 'Agape'. If you recall the portion of Scripture when Jesus reinstates Peter in John 21:15-17, two types of love are mentioned: *"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love [Agape] me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love [philia] you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

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16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love [Agape] me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love [Philia] you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

17 The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love [Philia] me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love [Philia] me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love [Philia] you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep”.

There are several distinguishing features about Agape Love:

- And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). This is a principal attribute that should be evident in every born-again Christian.
- It cannot be expressed by non-Christians, but only those who are born again (read John 14:21). It cannot be imitated because it is manifested by what a person **is** and not by what a person **does**.
- It expresses the essential nature of God (read 1 John 4:8)
- It expresses God’s attitude towards His Son (read John 17:26) and mankind (read John 3:16 and Romans 5:8).
- The manifestation of real Christian love to the world (read John 13:34-35).
- The demonstration of what should be our attitude to all people (read 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 16:14; 2 Peter 1:7).
- A fruit of God’s love in us is described in 1 Peter 1:3-4: “³ *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.* ⁴ *Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight*”. Do people see Christ in us the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27)?

Questions:

- Do we manifest agape love that is evident to our spouse, family (saved and unsaved), friends, neighbors and all we interact with on a daily basis?
- Do we as a church exhibit agape love that when new people continue to join us, that it will be the love of Christ that will be the drawing-force?
- Do people see Christ in us as new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) or is that old carnal nature evident. Note: More people I believe are hurt and damaged in churches than in secular clubs.
- As we position ourselves for growth, may the hallmark of NLF be agape love.