

# The Fruit of Love



Fruit of the Spirit (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you concerning one of the most beautiful themes of all Scripture, "The Fruit of the Holy Spirit," which is listed in Galatians 5:22–23:

> "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."

In my introductory talk yesterday, I explained the difference between gifts and fruit. Essentially, I said gifts are given and received in a single brief transaction; they cannot be earned or worked for. On the other hand, fruit comes by a process of gradual growth and needs to be cultivated. It takes hard work. Essentially, gifts represent ability; fruit represents character.

In my talk today, I'm going to deal with the first form of fruit which is love. I need to say, first of all, that love is primary in the Christian faith. It occupies a place of importance which it shares with nothing else.

Listen to what Jesus says in John 13:34–35:

> "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another."

There are certain things we need to see about those words of Jesus. First of all, love is a commandment, it's not an option. If we do not love one another, we are disobeying the Lord.

Secondly, it's the new commandment. In a certain sense, it supersedes, and sums up, and includes all the previous commandments. It's interesting to note that Moses gave Israel Ten Commandments and, in Judaism, they have 613 commandments; but the Lord Jesus left behind one new commandment: that we love one another. Then, also, we need to acknowledge that this is the real test of discipleship.

Francis Schaeffer has summed this up in the statement, "The Lord has given the world the right to judge the church." If the people of this world see us as Christians not loving one

another, then they have a perfect right, on the authority of the words of Jesus, to say that we are not His disciples.

Let's look on also at what Paul has to say about love in Romans 13:8–10,

> "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."

Notice that last sweeping statement. "Love is the fulfillment of the law."

And then, two statements in Galatians 5:6:

> "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

The only thing that really matters in the Christian life ultimately, Paul says, is faith expressing itself through love. External ordinances and rituals are of secondary importance. The center of our whole faith is expressed through love.

And then, in Galatians 5:14, Paul goes on to say:

> "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, [What's the word?] in the statement, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

The word, of course, is love.

Especially for those of us who are in Christian ministry, whether as teachers or pastors or whatever it may be, it's important that we take heed to this preeminence of love over all other aspects of the Christian life; because it makes a difference to our ministry.

In Timothy 1:5 & 6, Paul says this:

> "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion."

What is Paul saying? The only legitimate and ultimate goal of all Christian ministry is to produce love. Any ministry that does not produce love is swerving aside from God's purpose and ends up in fruitless discussion, empty words and wasted time. We need to test our own ministry by that standard. Are we producing people who love one another?

It's not difficult in some places to get people to go to church, and sit in pews and sing hymns, and even give their tithe; but if those people are not loving one another, all that religious effort is really wasted. I've often examined my own ministry by this standard, and at times I've had to acknowledge to myself that I wasn't producing what I ought to produce. But it's my determination today to produce people who really love one another.

All right, what is the nature of love as we understand it in the New Testament? Let me say briefly that, in the Greek of the New Testament of the New Testament period, there are four main words, all of which refer to some kind of love. The first is eros which, as you doubtless know, refers to sexual love or sexual desire. The second is a word, storge, which probably could be best translated, "affection," especially about family affection. The third is philia, which is friendship. The fourth is agape, which denotes pure and enduring love, primarily as manifested by God Himself; though there are places in the New Testament where it is used of love other than the love of God, but normally agape refers to love that originates from God Himself.

All right, how does love come? How is it produced? I've said that all fruit has to be cultivated. How do we cultivate love? I want to suggest to you four simple principles about the cultivation of love—agape love—the kind of love the New Testament deals with.

First of all, love of this kind is born from the seed of God's Word, received into a believer's heart. This is brought out by words of Peter in 1 Peter 1:22–23:

> "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God."

Notice the central part of what Peter says: "fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again of the seed of the Word of God." In other words, it's being born again of the seed of God's Word that makes it possible for us to love with this king of love. Initially, it's the product of the

seed of the Word of God.

Again, in 1 John 4:7 & 8, John says this:

> "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and every one who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

You see, there's a kind of love which can only come through being born of God. Everyone who is born of God should be manifesting that kind of love, and a person who does not manifest that kind of love has really no scriptural basis for claiming to be born of God.

The second principle is that love is poured out by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5 says this: "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." The heart of the born-again believer becomes a vessel for God's love. A person who has not been born again has no vessel suitable to contain God's love. But when we are born again, our hearts become vessels for God's love, and then the Holy Spirit can pour out the love of God into our hearts. So, that's the contribution of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, cultivating this kind of love requires the cooperation of our will. We're so used today to love which is emotional or physical, that some people hardly recognize there's a different kind of love which is not centered in the emotions; it's not centered in the physical body; but it's centered in the will. Agape love centers in the will. It comes primarily from the decision and the set of our will. It does not depend on our emotions or our physical sensations.

Fourthly, this kind of love is expressed in action by laying down our lives. In John 15:12 & 13, Jesus says:

> "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus says that this is a commandment. I pointed out that it's not an option that you love one another. How? "Just as I have loved you." How was Jesus' love for us expressed? By laying down His life for us. If we love one another, then we are obligated to lay down our lives for one another. This is brought out again in 1 John 3:16, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." You see, that's the essence of agape love; it's laying down our life. Not necessarily as a martyr, for physical death, but by making ourselves, and what we possess, and our abilities and talents available to our brothers in Christ. That's laying down our lives for our brothers—the expression of agape love.

All right, let me just recapitulate those four principles about how love is to be cultivated. First of all, it is the product of being born again of God's Word. A person who is not born again, cannot produce that kind of love.

Secondly, the born-again heart becomes a vessel for the Holy Spirit to fill up with God's love.

Thirdly, love of this kind centers in the will, not in the emotions or in the physical body.

And fourthly, this kind of love is expressed in the way that Jesus Himself expressed it for us. It's expressed by laying down our lives. If we are not willing to lay down our lives for our fellow believers, we have no right to claim that we have this kind of love.

All right, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll be speaking then about the second form of the fruit of the Spirit, "The Fruit of Joy."

## Radio Program

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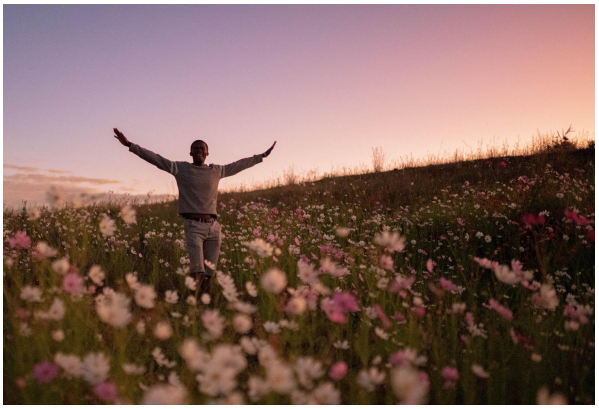

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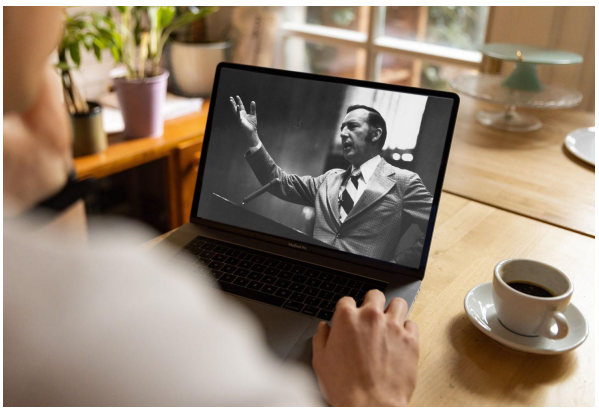

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