Transformed by Fire Series

The Fruit of the Spirit – Love

6/13/21

***Galatians 5:22-23: 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!***

Today we continue our series “Transformed by Fire” with looking at the 1st fruit that needs to be growing, & producing in our hearts and lives for the Glory, and betterment of His Work & Kingdom…

Galatians 5:22-23 is one of the most beloved passages in the Bible. Part of me loves these passages Galatians 5 and part of me dislikes them. I love them because they paint a beautiful picture of life lived in Christ. I dislike them because it’s easy for me to look at a list of characteristics like this and start grading myself; upon which I would see that I have a lot work to do. I don’t think I’m alone.

It is easy for us to see a list like this and feel like we need to work on being more of each one of these things – or at least the ones we aren’t so good at. After a lot of effort, self-help books, and maybe even some prayer we realize that we still aren’t as loving or joyful or gentle as we think we should be and are at a loss of what to do.

This portion of the series is not about telling you all the ways you should be more of something, because that isn’t how Paul presents the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians.

Before listing the fruit of the Spirit, Paul lists the acts of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). The comparison he is trying to make is not just between the lists themselves, but between the driving force behind the lists*.*

The negative characteristics are listed as “acts of flesh.” The Greek word translated “acts” also means “works.” Living by the flesh is a life characterized by constantly striving and straining to protect yourself. Consequently, this life is also one of dominating others. Think about it, everything listed as being contrary to the Spirit is self-centered.

* sexual sin turns other human beings into objects to meet my desire.
* idolatry places myself or something else in the place of God
* hatred usually comes when I feel threatened
* jealousy is desiring something that someone else has, simply because they have it and I don’t

All these things are framed as a striving or straining toward self. In other words, the life lived according to the flesh is a constant worry about self. Compare that to the fruit of the Spirit. Paul doesn’t talk about these characteristics as “works” or “acts” of righteousness. Instead, he calls them fruit. Love, joy, peace, gentleness, etc. aren’t things we strive for, they are things that blossom in us through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Maybe you have always seen the fruit of the Spirit as an intimidating list of the qualities you have to achieve (work for) to be considered righteous, but the key to understanding these qualities is in the name.

* **"Fruit"** is the natural result of growth.
* "**Of the Spirit**" explains exactly who causes that growth

Here is the good news: The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus Christ made manifest in the believer! It’s not our striving or straining or by our doing, but by power of the Holy Spirit that these produce and grow. No amount of human toil or gritty determination can produce spiritual fruit, but the Spirit’s influence in a yielded and surrendered heart can work miracles. Just like physical fruit needs time to grow, the fruit of the Spirit will not ripen in our lives overnight. As we mature in our faith, all the characteristics of our spiritual fruits will grow as well. As the Spirit of Christ lives in you, the character of Christ shines through you! This means you can put away any guilt for not “being more joyful” or “possessing more gentleness” and simply pursue Christ and allow his character to shine through you by the power of His Spirit & these fruits!

That is the goal, right? To be Christlike? And for us to be Christlike, these “FRUITS” must be produced in us! So, let’s look at these fruits, that if allowed to grow by the Spirit, will produce in us and cause us to be transformed into more like Christ.

**The Fruit of LOVE**

The very first fruit that Paul mentions is love. He begins here, not simply because this is the most important, but because all the other characteristics are experienced inside the sphere of love. Love is the glue that holds all the rest together. Love is probably the most well-known fruit of the Spirit, but it also may be the most misunderstood.

In society, we have overused the word ‘love’ in ways that minimize the depth of what real love is. We say we “loved the movie” or we “loved that meal” or we “love” a Facebook post. In the world we live in, love often fails. We see it in marriages, families, relationships. Even as imperfect Christians, we often fail at love.

One of the most important traits & character a Christians should have is love, a fruit indicating the presence of the Holy Spirit. Christian-based love always seeks to do the right thing. But as stated, our human efforts alone can never produce these fruits, but even more so we can’t produce godly love. But the good news is this: People can have the divine-type love toward God and toward other people if—we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us & transform us

* *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

The apostle Paul referred to it as “the love that comes from the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:30). He said God’s Spirit is the Spirit “of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

The key scripture on how to attain God’s Spirit is Acts 2:38, which says, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

* For those of us who have received God’s Spirit; we begin with a little love, but God helps us to keep growing until we have a lot of love.
* Roman 5:5 “And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

***We cannot produce the type of love God desires without the leading and strength of the Holy Spirit.***

By His Spirit, God offers us a continual supply of His limitless love. He continually fills our wells so that we have plenty to give to other needy people. Christ says is that His love is like a river that comes and will flow through us (John 7:38).

God will keep His love flowing into us as long as it keeps flowing out from us. It must flow back to God—a grateful & responsive love for God—and it must flow out in love and service to other people. The more you give it away, the more you will have.

Love is translated from the Greek word ‘agape.’ Agape is a perfect love from God. The Greek language has multiple words for love, including ‘eros,’ which is sexual love, and ‘philos,’ which is brotherly love.

* The love which the Holy Spirit manifests in believers is agape.
* This love is not a feeling, but a choice. It is the choice to be kind; to sacrifice, to consider another's needs greater than one's own (Philippians 2:3).
* Agape is used in all the “hard” love verses in the New Testament
	+ "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).
	+ "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11).
	+ “Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back” (Luke 6:35).
	+ "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3)

Love is the greatest gift God can give. 1 Corinthians 13 says that Agape love is…

* *4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

Love is not supposed to be conditional, but we are to love unconditional, as God has loved us unconditional. Love is based on being loved, to which each one of us are today. If love was based on condition, we’d all be in trouble.

* It is because of this agape, unconditional love that God carried out His plan to save the world and more specifically...you & I.
	+ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
	+ It is only by love that we can keep the greatest commandments: “Love the Lord your God” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31).

God desires to show His perfect, selfless, agape love to a world that is routinely confused about what true love is. That’s where we come in... we are to be the conduits of His love.

As we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, producing with in us this Agape Love to the world, we have the chance to show people that love is not found in money, sexual relationships, or anything this world has to offer...They are looking in the wrong place to find true love...It’s in Christ and the love that we should be exemplifying is what they are seeking.

As a child of God, we need to strive to show others God’s love through us. Whether it be reaching out to a friend in need, volunteering in a mission, giving our time to a cause—reach out in love, and let the fruit of love ripen inside your spirit.John 13:35 tells us, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Closing:

Possessing love is a choice. We choose whether to value God's presence, promises, and work in our lives or not. When we yield to the Spirit, He opens our eyes to God's grace around us and fills us

* *Romans 15:13 - I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**What type of love do you POSSESS in your heart today?**

Do you love conditionally, or do you exemplify unconditional love?

Starting today, we need to look with in our hearts and see if we are producing this fruit of love.

* Maybe today you need to receive the Agape Love from the Father today, so when filled, we’ll be able to overflow that love out to those in our circles who are hurting and seeking for the only thing that can heal and give hope!
* Who can you show this type of love to starting today?

**Will you allow the Holy Spirit began to change you today and began producing the fruit of True Love/Agape Love?**

*\*This week’s challenge: Show love to someone “outside” your circle.*