

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, PART 2 (LOVE, JOY)
Galatians 5:22-23

Now as always, we need to remember the context that we are in. False teachers, called Judaizers, have worked their way into the church and have started preaching faith in Christ **plus** works of the Law. Their message was that if you really want to be saved and really want to progress in your spiritual walk, then you'd better follow the Law. We know that these believers were already or on the brink of practicing works of the Law like circumcision and following the calendrical feasts and festivals, basically trying to earn a justification that they had already attained in Christ. They have been deceived and Paul is like a mother in labor over these believers, trying to win back their hearts to Christ alone and to see Christ formed in them. Their lives under this legalistic teaching were no doubt creating opportunities for the flesh to work. Legalism does that. It comes with a competitive spirit and rivalry and it cannot restrain the flesh. That's what the Law could not do according to Romans 8:3. In chapter five so far Paul has made it clear: we are not under Law so keep standing firm and do not be subject to a yoke of slavery. **Do not renounce your freedom.** And on the other hand, don't be a slave to the flesh either. **Do not use abuse your freedom** by using it as an opportunity for the flesh. And then **Paul's positive direction is to walk(!) by the Spirit.** That is a command. We are commanded to habitually walk by the Spirit! In Romans terms, to live by the law of the Spirit of life.

In studying the fruit of the Spirit so far, we've seen how the fruit of the Spirit is **available** to us – Paul can command us to walk by the Spirit because of the spiritual realities regarding who we are in Christ and our union with Christ. We who have believed have been born again and given the divine nature of God's Spirit so we can now choose to yield to the divine nature rather than the sin nature. We've seen how **victory** is also available. If we walk by the Spirit we absolutely, positively will not according to the flesh. We've seen how the fruit of the Spirit is the Spirit's fruit, not ours. It is a **supernatural fruit produced by Him** when we walk dependently with Him, surrendering ourselves to Him, waving that white flag and saying, "Have your way in me, Lord." The fruit of the Spirit is also a **package-deal**. If you get one, you get all. It's a flight with a rental car and hotel. A horse with all the tack; a tractor with every attachment; a kitchen with every appliance; a cluster of grapes on the vine; a colorful bowl full of harvested fruit from the garden. The word fruit can even be translated harvest. The harvest of the Spirit is like a cornucopia, this all in one basket harvest. And lastly, we've seen how it is all to be **desired**. There's no law against any of these virtues. Men and women desire these virtues in their lives and they relentlessly and tirelessly strive day after day, moment after moment, trying to find these things like love and peace and joy. We have it made! We have available to us in Christ, what the world is after! And it's what God wants us to produce in our lives. People should notice something different about us because of being with Christ. Many people have come to faith in Christ, like John Wesley that we looked at last week, because they see genuine Christians who are born again and yielding to the Spirit of God, especially in difficult times. It was Moravian believers walking by the Spirit on stormy seas that drew Wesley out of his religion and to faith in Christ. People desire these virtues. And **God desires that we bear much fruit as well**– that we be productive fruit bearers – and that these virtues **ripen** in our life, becoming sweeter and richer through every experience.

And where I want to go now is to begin studying each virtue individually and in depth. We'll only get through the first couple today but what I want to start to do is to **define** each "fruit" produced by the Spirit and to help us understand it even more, talk a little bit about what it should replace and compare it with the "false fruit" that it is sometimes confused with. For every "fruit" mentioned, I think there is also a "wax fruit" version that we can get them confused with. You guys know what I mean by wax fruit – sometimes it's not wax but made out of Styrofoam and used to sit in a nice bowl at your grandma's house. It's that really disappointing stuff you used to take bites out of as a child just to see what it tasted like. There's even

a wax fruit tree over there on Pine Street I noticed. It is a deceitful little tree! From a distance it looks like it has some sort of red fruit on it in cluster like crabapples but then you get up close and it's just random clusters of red leaves. That would be an awful little tree to encounter when you're starving. Fake fruit won't feed people. They need the real stuff, something genuine. We'll also let each fruit virtue point us to Christ because by the Spirit, Christ can be seen in us. He is called the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). Paul said through the Spirit it is Christ who lives in Me (2:20). We want others to see Christ in us.

The first Christlike virtue mentioned that will be manifested in our life if we're yielding to the Spirit is love.

I. WALKING BY THE SPIRIT PRODUCES LOVE. (agape)

This is your Greek word "agape" which is *most often* associated with divine, self-sacrificial love in the Scriptures.

❖ **Agape is most often associated with divine, self-sacrificial love.**

A Christ-like love that gives itself up for others. All you have to do to understand this love is to look at the cross and think of John 3:16 or Romans 5:8. It's an active and unconditional love based on a choice and not just emotions – a "in sickness and in health" covenantal love. This is the kind of love that gives of oneself in service for the benefit of others. This word was rarely used by the pagan authors of the day (they had four words for love) – they would rather use the words for love like *phileo*(brotherly) or *eros*(emotional) or *storge*(family) – But the word *agape* became the dominant word for love in early Christian culture¹ and today is still the prominent virtue. It's right there at the top of the list, as it should be, because without love, can any of the other qualities be manifested? Some of the other virtues are even said to be by-products of love: "Love is patient, love is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4). The apostle John even said, "God is love." It is clearly a dominant way to describe who God is – but it can't be separated from His other attributes, like His holiness and justice. But He is love. He loves the whole world. If you don't love, John says, you don't know God (1 Jn. 4:8). Love for God and love for people is evidence of salvation. Christ even went so far as to say, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." That's what the old hymn quoted: "And they'll know we are Christians by our love." Love was the quality that Jesus stressed as the greatest commandments and said the whole Law depended upon: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself (Mt. 22:36-40). It's not self-centered but others-centered. In order to have unity, Paul said, you have to have love: "Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col. 3:14). One of Paul's main goals that he kept in mind in all his instruction is "love from a pure heart" (1 Tim. 1:5). "Let us consider how to stimulate one another toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24). "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love." Time and time again, love is right there near the top of any virtue list given and should be there at all times, no matter what we're doing.

And I think during this first virtue is great time for this sub-point:

❖ **Walking by the Spirit is not synonymous with exercising spiritual gifts.**

If you remember, Paul, right in the middle of a spiritual gifts discourse in chapter 12-14 of 1 Corinthians, had to bring up love because they were exercising their gifts, they had a zeal for spiritual gifts, but weren't walking by the Spirit while doing it. You can exercise a gift like preaching without love – and you become a noisy gong or clanging symbol. The word fruit is very broad term in the NT and certainly exercising gifts is part of what it means to be fruitful but they have to be exercised by walking in the Spirit or they'll likely be wood, hay and stubble. It was 1 Corinthians where Paul brought that up too. The Corinthians were guilty of exercising spiritual gifts in the flesh – spiritual gifts without the Spirit! And so Paul really had to admonish them sternly. "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink and not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still

fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:1-3). They had the gifts but they didn't have what mattered most – the fruit of the Spirit. Who cares what gift you're exercising if you're not a loving person? Who cares if you go to the stake to be burned for Christ if you don't have love? It profits you nothing. Who cares if you're zealous for God but don't have love in your heart? Paul says, make sure that all that you do is done in love (1 Cor. 16:14). If you don't do it in love, don't bother.

- 1. The Opposite:** In regards to the opposite of love, I think of fear and not just hate. Certainly hate is the opposite of love and is a reason for many works of the flesh but perfect love casts out fear. This is probably getting a little too deep for me, but when you're fearful, you can really abuse other people out of self-protection – everything's about you – number one. Someone living for themselves might not claim that the reason they do what they do is out of fear, but ultimately it can boil down to that. I won't step out and serve for fear of myself not getting what I need or what I want. I won't serve because then maybe my needs won't be met for a time; I fear that I'll have to give of my precious time, my weekend. I won't give to the Lord's work for fear that I won't have all the money I need to enjoy life or I'm afraid that the Lord won't supply all my needs. You see what I mean? The opposite of love is self-centered living motivated by fear – fear of self not being satisfied – which is like a dog chasing its tail anyway because it's never fully satisfied when we aim to please self.
- 2. The Wax Fruit:** The wax fruit or false fruit of love could be thinking that because you have affections for someone, you love them. That's the world's love that's often sung about and portrayed, but it's only some emotional "love" and not the love we're talking about. This is love based on choice and promise. A love that will love someone even when there isn't something attractive about them to you. Christ went to the cross for us knowing our deepest sinful moments and when we weren't saved or all cleaned up - while we were still His enemies. Agape love gives without expecting to receive back and gives without having the other person having to meet some condition first. It moves first because it's unconditional.
- 3. Was love seen in Christ?** We've already answered that. He loved us so much He died for us. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The cross is the greatest demonstration of love. But even when He was on the earth, the Bible says He loved people. When Lazarus died, Jesus wept, and people said, "See how much He loved him!" Matthew 9:36 says that when Jesus saw, "the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd." The word love isn't used there but I refer back to this because His heart of compassion came from His love of people. And it's a deep, guttural word used there. He loved lost people so much it pained Him internally to see them so lost and dispirited.

The next virtue that will be evident in our lives if we are yielding to the Spirit of God is joy.

II. **WALKING BY THE SPIRIT PRODUCES JOY.** (chara)

If I could sum up joy, I would say that joy is this deep, abiding sense of well-being that is not based on circumstances. **Happiness is more circumstantial and is the wax fruit of joy.** It comes and goes. But joy comes from really knowing God and His ways. It is rooted in the unchangeableness of God and the spiritual realities promised to us like salvation and future glorification. And if that's true, that means that joy, true joy, is not going to be found outside of the Him and that nothing can take away our joy. Because it's rooted in God, it's also something that doesn't wither easily with the fluctuating and circumstantial seasons of life. It's kind of like the comparing the hard red winter wheat around here with a squash plant. If you don't water a squash plant for just one day, and you put a little 95 degree

heat on it, it wilts. If it gets a bit of hail, its toast. It doesn't take a lot to take out a squash plant. But winter wheat has a hardness to it and vigorous roots that can put up with the freezing cold months of winter and even the driest and hottest dog days of summer. It can definitely take a greater beating. Joy is like that wheat. Because it's rooted in God and His great and magnificent promises to us like the fact that there's no condemnation in Christ, it doesn't wither easily and even on the worst years can produce a good harvest. Habakkuk 3:17-18 says, "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fall and the fields yield no food, [though] the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." In other words, when everything falls apart, when the bottom falls out, we have joy in God and can rejoice in our salvation. In fact, I would say that joy and the other virtues of the Spirit ripen the fastest and are most attractive in trial-some seasons of life.

❖ **The fruit of the Spirit ripens the fastest and is most attractive in difficult seasons.**

James 1:2-4 says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Count it all joy! It doesn't mean you have to enjoy your trial but you can rejoice in it because God is working on us! Both the hardest and most depressing times in life should become in one sense the most cherished because it made us more like Christ – more patient, more kind, more loving, more trusting in God's sovereignty. Paul said, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Rom. 5:3-4). Joy isn't the result of an absence of trials, but God has given it to us to have *while going through them*. When your roots have sunk into a Romans 8:28 God whom you can trust to work all things for the good of those who love Him, and a Romans 8:1 God who says you're saved in Christ and that there's no condemnation in Christ, you can get through the dry season with internal joy that doesn't totally wither because you know He is bringing about a character-building process, a perfecting and completing task in your life, conforming you to the image of His Son. If you're in a trial-some time, be encouraged! God is at work in your life and growing you in areas you may not even recognize yet.

From here I want to dedicate the rest of the sermon to those who are in hard times, who maybe feel like the light of joy is flickering in their life. The Bible says rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. And you can listen to a sermon on the fruit of the Spirit like this and if you are in a season of rejoicing, you are rejoicing! And just loving it. God has transformed your life and you are praising the Lord for these supernatural fruits you get to experience! What a privilege of being saved! But I'm aware some of you here may be more in a sensitive season right now, one of weeping, maybe even **depression or despair. It is a real thing. It's the opposite of joy and believers can go through it too.** And we want to weep with those who weep too. If that's you, you might be thinking in a message like this right now, I know the fruit of the Spirit, but I'm just not experiencing it like I want to and a command like "walk by the Spirit" seems overly-simplistic. I get that. There are moments when life's like that. You may be in one of those moments right now because of something that's happened or a series of events, and when you don't even feel like opening your Bible or praying or maybe even coming to church. I know what it's like to be so down that you can't even read your Bible without condemning yourself through it – thinking you're Saul and the Spirit has left you and moved on to some other David. But you must always remember that if you have Christ, you always have the Spirit, no matter how you feel. You must trust God's Word over your feelings. God's Word says you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He is still there. If you doubt His love because of some circumstance, look at the cross. It says no matter what, I still love you. And the only way for you to get through this dry season is to keep on continually and habitually walking by the Spirit, despite

your emotions. Its not an easy quick fix solution. I don't want it to come off as easy. It's a day after day, moment after moment trust in God and His Word.

If we're in a season where we're maybe not experiencing this joy like we want too, first, we need to make sure it's not some self-inflicted dry season from refusing to walk by the Spirit: make sure there's not a sin we are holding onto and refusing to let go or that there's no unforgiveness that we're letting rot in our hearts and make us angry and bitter. Forgive God and forgive others. We can make sure there's not a sin of omission either – something the Lord has told us to do that we're not doing – like David was miserable for a time because he refused to admit his sin with Bathsheba and it left him feeling old and weary and he even dissolved his couch with tears right (Ps. 6:6)? Has to buy new furniture as a result! Then there's Jonah – the storm that overtook the ship Jonah was on was certainly self-imposedⁱⁱⁱ storm because of a sin of omission, refusing to go to Nineveh and do what God told him to do. But just because your life is in a dry season doesn't always mean it's some sin issue. Job and his "friends" had to learn that. They thought that sickness and hard times were always the result of sin and it's just not. God made that clear in Job that the answer to suffering just isn't that simple. There's not always an easy answer. Many good people suffer while the wicked prosper and that's life in a fallen world. But we've also got to make sure we aren't putting our roots of joy into temporal things that fade like material possessions, financial statuses, some position or career or ministry, or even somebody who's not God. Do you remember what Jesus said to the disciples? Don't rejoice that the spirits are subject to you but rejoice in that your names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20)! Don't root your joy in what you do, root it in God's promises and your relationship with God.

Depression's a sensitive subject and so I want to say this very sensitively but 9 times out of 10 or more, and this might sting a little, and if you're in a depression you might not admit it right away (and I have my own experience on my side and a man named Tim Lahaye who has counseled thousands out of depression), but generally it is usually rooted in self-pity, which is a sin, usually spurred on by some dramatic shift in life, a loss of vision in life, unmet expectations. Tim Lahaye, by the way, has a good book or two on this subject: one called How to Win over Depression and the other Spirit-Controlled Temperament, but the answer he ultimately points back to in his book on how to win over depression is to walk by the Spirit. It all comes back to this, persevering in continually and habitually walking by the Spirit. If you're in a dry season, I want to give you a few biblical helps.

1. **Do what God says** – Sin steals our joy so make sure it's not self-inflicted by some sinew refuse to let go of. Admit the sin of self-pity if it's there and aim do what He says by walking by the Spirit. Keep short accounts with God.
2. **Remember the Lord is your portion.** Just knowing God personally and experiencing Him and His presence is always going to be the greatest blessing we have. We all need to be like Levites who didn't inherit any land in Israel because the Lord was their portion. If we don't have anything else or anyone else, we need to learn that He is all we need. If we lose it all like Job or if our heart and flesh fail – we still have God. He is the strength of our heart and our portion forever and in Him alone, our cups should run over (Ps. 23:5; 73:26)
3. **Remember His precious and magnificent promises to you.** Over and over one of the greatest reasons for rejoicing in the Bible is that of salvation. We rejoice that we're saved. Peter even calls it **inexpressible joy** that is **filled with glory!** We have a new identity in Christ and position in Christ. Remember the joy of your salvation (Hab. 3:17-19; Lk. 10:20; 1 Peter 1:6-8; Acts 16:34).

4. **Read the Word of God tenaciously** – Jeremiah says God’s Word is the joy and delight of his heart (Jer. 15:16) It becomes to us sweeter than honey and brings joy when we need it, speaking directly to our situations.
5. **Worship! Give thanks!** Rejoicing and worship go together. It changes us!
6. **Pray.** Keep casting your cares on Him through prayer (1 Pet. 5:7) and pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5).
7. **Serve God** – find a practical area in which you can serve. Stay away from idleness.
8. **Serve others** – we weren’t created to be so self-centered so when we are, we become frustrated. Many Christians are down and out because they aren’t living out their faith. A good witnessing opportunity will go a long ways in cheering a Christian up.

Did you guys know that when you glue two pieces of wood together, the joint where it’s glued back together is stronger than the wood itself? If you went to break it again, it would break where the wood is and not the joint if it was glued properly? Well, sometimes God has to break us in half and glue us back together to make us stronger. It’s through the trials that we become stronger in Christlikeness. We become more certain of God’s love for us, the fruit of the Spirit ripens and becomes sweeter. We love others better. We’re more gentle with them. We also learn where our joy really comes from and where to place all of our hope and trust. This hymn writer knew that (Isaac Watt’s “How Firm a Foundation”):

“In every condition, in sickness, in health;
 In poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth;
 At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
 As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.
 Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
 For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
 I’ll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand
 Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.
 When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
 The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
 For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
 And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.
 When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
 My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
 The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
 Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.
 Even down to old age all My people shall prove
 My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
 And when grey hairs shall their temples adorn,
 Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.
 The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
 I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
 That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
 I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

Most of us have someone or maybe a few people in our lives who became great examples to us by their manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in difficult times. Personally, I think of one of my Bible school teachers who, knowing he wasn’t going to recover from the cancer this time, perseveringly and

peacefully and joyfully continued to preach and teach God's Word until he literally couldn't anymore. The guy's standing there, wasting away from cancer, and he's up there teaching God's Word and praising God. He was my Pastoral Theology teacher during my final year at Frontier School of the Bible, but the greatest lesson we received those days wasn't about Pastoral Theology – it was about how to persevere, to be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (Jas. 1:12).

Was joy seen in Christ? The answer is yes. He found joy doing His Father's will and serving others, even when it wasn't easy. Hebrews says that for the joy set before Him He endured the cross and shame (Heb. 12:2) – the joy of redeeming sinners and doing the Father's will.

In closing I just want to remind us of the apostle, sitting in prison, who commands us, “Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I say rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4).

ⁱ David A. DeSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 292.466.

ⁱⁱ Glenn Johnson, *When Storms Come* sermon from 22 April 2018, accessed 9 July 2019, www.allianceberean.com