

Fruits of the Spirit-part one

What is Love?

Love is not just some abstract, ethereal, feel-good feeling. The foundation of the Kingdom of God is love, for “...**God is love**; and he that dwells [3306, *not to depart, not to leave, to continue to be present*] in love dwells in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). On the other hand, “He that loves not knows not God; for God is love” (v. 8).

Many “Christians” claim to “love Jesus,” but Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep [5083, *to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard*] My commandments [1785, *an order, command, charge, precept*]” (John 14:15). Which commandments is Jesus referring to? These same “Christians” say that Jesus did away with the law, but Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill [4137, *render full, to complete, to fill up to the top, so that nothing shall be lacking*]. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled [1096, *to come into being, to happen, to become, to be accomplished*]” (Matthew 5:17, 18).

Heaven and earth have not passed away, and God’s plan of redemption has not been fully accomplished. Therefore the law remains. Jesus came to, “...magnify [1431, *make great, to grow*] the law, and make *it* honorable [142, *glorious, to expand*]” (Isaiah 42:21). Jesus perfected the law by removing the physical form of worship that involved various carnal ordinances, and replaced it with spiritual worship. For “God is a Spirit: and they who worship Him **must worship Him in spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24).

We are going to show that love is defined by the Law of God. Therefore if you love Jesus you will keep the Law of God.

What is Love?

Webster’s defines love as “**unselfish** loyal and benevolent concern for others.” Love is contrasted with selfishness, which is defined as being “concerned with one’s own welfare excessively or without regard for others.” Therefore it is most difficult for love to be manifested by a selfish, self-centered individual because, in his mind, everything revolves around him. It is his desires that must have priority over all, without regard for others.

The apostle John wrote, “Beloved, let us love [25, *feel or manifest generous concern for, be faithful towards*] one another: for love [26, *affection, good-will, benevolence*] **is of God; and every one that loves** [25] **is born of God, and knows God. He that does not love** [25] **does not know God; for God is love** [26]” (1 John 4:7, 8).

Strong's #26 is the Greek word *agape*, and it is the love that comes from God. It is a benevolent love that does not necessarily give the person who is loved what he desires, but rather what he truly needs. It is often manifested through correction that is done for the good of the individual.

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to children, My son, despise not you the chastening [3809, *training, discipline*] of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked [1651, *expose, convict, reprove*] of Him: For whom the Lord loves he chastens [3811, *to train, correct*], and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:5, 6). Correction is not what we want, but it is what we need. Correction is not intended to be enjoyable. “Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised [1128, *trained*] thereby” (v. 11).

The Psalmist wrote, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word. You are good, and You do what is good; teach me Your statutes” (Psalm 119:67, 68). Again we read, “Blessed is the man whom You chasten [3256, *discipline, admonish*], O LORD, **and teach him out of Thy law...**” (Psalm 94:12). It is God’s law that reveals the boundaries of behavior that are acceptable to God.

God’s Law Defines Love

Jesus said, “He that has My commandments [1785, *an order, command, charge, precept*], and keeps [5083, *maintain (preserve), guard (watch), keep intact*] them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21). If you love Jesus, then you will seek to obey His instruction.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep [5083, *to watch over, to guard*] His commandments [1785, *an order, command, charge, precept*]: and His commandments are not grievous [926, *heavy, weighty, burdensome, violent, oppressive*]” (1 John 5:3). Contrary to “Christian” teachings the law of God is not a burden, but is a blessing. “**Blessed** [835, *happy*] is the man whom you chasten, O LORD, and teach him out of Your **law**” (Psalm 94:12).

Love is defined by God’s law. “Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another hath fulfilled the law. For this, You shalt not commit adultery, You shalt not murder, You shalt not steal, You shalt not bear false witness, You shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shalt love your neighbor as yourself. **Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law**” (Roman’s 13:8-10).

Love does not do away with God’s law, but on the contrary God’s law defines what love is; therefore obeying God’s law is fulfilling love. Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is [1510, *essence, substance*]

of] the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Love is not only about not doing harm to your neighbor, but it also involves doing good for your neighbor, even if your neighbor is not doing good to you.

Jesus was asked, “Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, You shalt love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, You shalt love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40). The two Great Commandments are a summation of the Ten Commandments, from which all of God’s law emanates.

Without Love We Just Make a lot of Noise

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Without love, the above acts are just meaningless noise. Many things that may appear to be good acts on the surface are done from a wrong motivation. The carnal mind often seeks the approval and/or the attention of men because it is selfish and self-seeking, which is the opposite of love. Seeking the praise of men is vanity, and it only results in temporal satisfaction.

“Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **that they may have glory of men.** Verily I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does: that your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret Himself shall reward you openly” (Matthew 6:1-4).

The Characteristics of Love

The 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians gives us a detailed look at what love is and isn’t. The first characteristic of love is patience. “Love suffers long [3114, *to persevere, to be patient*]...” (1 Corinthians 13:4). *Webster’s* defines patience as follows: “bearing pain or trials without complaint; showing self-control, calm; steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity, persevering.”

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering [3115, *patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance*]; forbearing [430, *endure, bear with, have patience with*] one

another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* you” (Colossians 3:12, 13).

Love “is kind [5541, *to show oneself mild, to be kind, use kindness*]...” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Some synonyms of kind are beneficent, benevolent, compassionate, sympathetic, considerate, and thoughtful. “And be you kind [5543, *fit for use, useful; virtuous, good*] one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32). *Strong's* #5543 is from #5530, useful, serviceable, productive, well-fitted, beneficial, and benevolent. Kindness makes us useful and productive, without which we cannot be in the Kingdom of God.

Love “envies [2206, *jealous, spiteful*] not” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Envy is defined as painful or resentful awareness of another's advantages. Some synonyms are covetousness, jealousy, and resentment. Envy and jealousies are emotions that are destructive to the character. “He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls” (Proverbs 25:25). A person who does not rule his emotions is like a city that cannot defend itself, and is taken captive by the enemy, i.e. by his own selfish carnal nature.

“Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show by his good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying [2205, *an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy*] and strife [2052, *ambition, rivalry, self-seeking*] in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envying [2205] and strife [2052] *is*, there *is* confusion [181, *instability, a state of disorder, disturbance*] and every evil [5337, *worthless*] work” (James 3:13-16).

Jealousy, envying, self-seeking, etc., result in confusion and disorder, which is the opposite of peace. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated [2138, *easy to come to terms with, accommodating*], full of mercy and **good fruits**, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (vv. 17, 18).

Producing “good fruits,” such as peace, requires work. It doesn't just magically happen. “And the work [4639, *labor, act, deed*] of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect [5656, *labor, service, work*] of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isaiah 32:17).

Love “vaunts [4068, *to act as a braggart, an attention seeker*] not itself, is not puffed up [5448, *puffed up, arrogant, proud*]...” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Those who seek attention for themselves are not practicing love, or using wisdom. Pride leads to contentious behavior and strife. “Only by pride comes contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom” (Proverbs 13:10).

Love “does not behave itself unseemly [807, *rude, to act unbecomingly, improperly*], seeks not her own...” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Love is not self-seeking. “*Let nothing be done through strife* [2052, *ambition, rivalry places self-interest ahead of what is good for others*] or vainglory [2754, *groundless self-esteem, empty pride*]; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:3, 4). Love must be without selfish motives. “*Let love be without dissimulation* [505, *sincere behavior free from selfish motives, without hypocrisy, unfeigned*]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. *Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honor outdoing one another*” (Romans 12:9, 10).

Love “is not easily provoked [3947, *become emotionally provoked, upset, roused to anger*]...” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Anger is an emotion that must be controlled. “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath [3709, *anger, impulse*]: For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God” (James 1:19, 20). “*He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalts folly*” (Proverbs 14:29). Impulsive anger is foolishness. “*He that is soon angry deals foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated*” (Proverbs 14:17).

Love “keeps no record of wrongs...” (1 Corinthians 13:5). If we do not forgive we will not be forgiven. “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do you*” (Colossians 3:13). Overlooking “wrongs” is a blessing. “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, **and it is his glory to overlook a transgression**” (Proverbs 19:11). We “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Romans 12:17).

Love “rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6). “*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*” (Romans 12:9).

Love “bears [4722, *cover, conceal, ward off, bear with, endure patiently*] all things, believes [4100, *have faith in, trust in*] all things, hopes [1679, *hope for, expect, trust*] all things, endures [5278, *bear up against, persevere*] all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love is a powerful force that can withstand and overcome all things.

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear:** because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment we have from him, That he who loves God love his brother also” (1 John 4:16-21).

“Love never fails: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Corinthians 8-10).

There is coming a time when everything that is physical will cease to exist, and only that which is spiritual will remain. “...[T]he heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up....Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10). Love is the foundation upon which the eternal Kingdom of God is established.

Childish Behavior

“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). Childish behavior stems from the carnal mind, which is naturally selfish, self-centered, and focuses on earthly things. The childish mind is focused more on what it can get rather than what it can give.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abides faith, hope, love, these three; **but the greatest of these is love**” (1 Corinthians 13:12, 13). Godly love is not found in childish behavior, but only in those who are becoming spiritually mature.

Love Requires Work

An athlete who wants to compete at a high level subjects himself to vigorous training. He will practice over and over to perfect himself. Likewise positive traits have to be practiced throughout our lives. “But everyone who uses milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to those that are of full age [5046, *mature, by going through the necessary stages to reach the end-goal*], even those who by reason of of use [1838, *a power acquired by custom, practice, use, practice*] have their senses exercised [1128, *train by physical exercise*] to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:13, 14).

The Apostle Paul wrote of training the self. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain. And every man that strives [75, *to contend, struggle*] for the mastery is temperate [1467, *to exercise self-control*] in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. Therefore I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight like I am beating the air. No, I discipline [5299, *treat severely, discipline by hardship, harass, exhaust*] my body and make it my slave [1396, *to lead as a captive; bring into subjection, fully compliant to the will of a master*] ...” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Anything worth acquiring requires constant effort to overcome the flesh, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Galatians 5:17, 18). (The Spirit of God will not lead you into sin; hence, if you follow the lead of the Spirit you will not be under the penalty of the law.)

The conclusion of the matter is that “...Anyone who does not **practice** righteousness is not of God, nor is anyone who does not **love** his brother” (1 John 3:10). Love is defined by God’s law.