

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—LOVE (PART 1)

By Keith Greer

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5: 22-23)

In writing to the churches in Galatia, the apostle Paul lists the fruit that we are to bear as Christians. It is appropriate that **LOVE** leads the list.

In one of the multiple times that the Pharisees tried to tempt Jesus, He was asked "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:34-40)

LOVE is a word that is tossed around, not only in our society as a whole, but also among Christians. "I LOVE YOU" can mean anything from lust to just having a warm feeling for someone. If we, as Christians, understand the proper definition of "FRUIT", however, it is much easier to understand the kind of "LOVE" that we are to have as Christians. The word "fruit", as is used metaphorically, "refers to works and deeds, the fruit being the visible expression of the power working inwardly and invisibly. The character of the fruit is evidence of the power that is producing it." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words, page 133)

Paul went on to tell the Galatians that "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25) If we are living according to God's will, we will be bearing fruit that will help us resist the "works of the flesh". These are not options in our lives, however. It is just as much our responsibility to "put on" the fruit of the Spirit as it is to "resist" the works of the flesh.

LOVE, that we are to have as Christians, is not just a warm feeling in our hearts, but will be manifest in our lives. Others will be able to see it in the way we are trying to serve the Lord. They will be able to see it in the concern we have for the souls of others. And last, but by no means least, others will be able to see it in the concern and care that we have for one another. The apostle Paul began his great chapter on "love" by telling the Corinthians that "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." (1 Corinthians 13:1) Without love, we are "nothing!"

How does the Christian express love for his brother or sister? What things can I do that will clearly demonstrate that I love them and only want the best for them? Let me offer a few suggestions for each of us to consider in our own lives.

Actions speaks louder than words. Gospel preachers have always said they would rather see a good lesson than preach one. Brethren who have real love for one another will show us by the "little things" we do without giving any thought to it. Words of encouragement given in a difficult time in our lives. A hug and warm handshake when we see one another – not

for show but because we are truly glad to be with one another. Calling those who cannot meet with us on a regular basis to see if we can be of any help in their lives. Just to let them know we love them and are thinking about them can go a long way in helping brighten their dreary days.

Many times brethren worry about things in which we have absolutely no control over. Do we worry more about our own lives not once considering those who have to struggle day to day to just live a normal life? Love may be a simple word to say and spell, but it takes much more to be able to freely express it to those who need it so badly. Give the effort – it will be worth it! ***