



LESSON 2: "The Fruit of Love, Joy, and Peace" **Date:** _____

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-23

INTRODUCTION

Few things are as delectable as sweet, ripe, juicy fruit. Our family was recently given some Honeybell oranges that burst with flavor in your mouth. I grew up enjoying soft, sweet South Carolina peaches (with ice cream, of course). Fruit is the natural byproduct of a healthy tree. If the fruit is bad or missing that means there is an internal or root problem with the tree. We have seen in this passage that we all have an internal and root problem as human beings. We were born with the flesh in charge of our desires which inevitably lead to sinful deeds (Gal. 5:19-21). At the moment of salvation a new resident, the Holy Spirit, enters and the spiritual struggle over who will rule begins. The wonderful truth that we are considering is that when we submit ourselves to the Spirit's control the tree of our life produces beautiful fruit for the glory of God (Gal. 5:22-23).

Paul has placed the dark backdrop of the works of the flesh (vices) to bring forth the beauty of the fruit of the Spirit (virtues). Fleshly, sinful works are what we naturally produce. Heavenly, spiritual fruit is what He supernaturally produces in us. Within this text there are nine characteristics identified to this singular fruit. It is not a string of individual pearls, but one, multi-faceted diamond we are examining. Or in botanical language, this is a singular orange that we are dissecting segment by segment. We will be studying these nine graces in three sets of three over the next few weeks. These triads have been noted to deal first with our upward relationship to God, second with our outward relationship with others, and finally with our inward relationship with self. Today we concentrate on the first three in the list that aid our relationship toward God. We will see that walking in the Spirit yields the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, and peace.

BACKGROUND

Remember the key to spiritual fruit-bearing is Galatians 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit." John MacArthur states, "The spiritual behavior of walking by the Spirit has the negative effect of causing the believer to put away the habitual, ongoing evil deeds of the flesh and positively causes him to bear the good fruit produced by the Spirit. Rather paradoxically, all of the nine manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit are also *commanded* of believers in the New Testament. Also in every case, Jesus can be seen to be the supreme example and the Holy Spirit to be the source."

Puritan Richard Baxter has observed, "There are nine virtues enumerated; and at a first glance they seem to be written without any reference to order; but when they are more carefully examined they reveal a most significant progress. These nine go in three groups of three each. These three trios cover all the relationships of life. They tell us that a life under the control of the Holy Spirit is one of full-orbed beauty. They indicate, also, that the true beauty of the Christian life consists in qualities of the heart rather than in outward doings. They stress the fact that what we *are* determines the value of what we *do*. Only the Holy Spirit can produce these qualities in the heart and life. There are close imitations; but in reality this love-life can only be the product of the indwelling and sanctifying Spirit. Would we know in experience this 'fruit of the Spirit'? Then the secret is *utter monopoly of the heart* by the Spirit."

THE FRUIT OF LOVE (v.22)

It has been said that love is the soil from which all the other virtues of spiritual fruit grow. "Love is not one virtue among a list of virtues, but the sum and substance of what it means to be a Christian" (Ryken). The love that Paul refers to here is the *agape* love of the NT. "It is the kind of selfless, sacrificial attention that enables us to serve one another" (Ryken). This love gives expecting nothing in return. *Agape* love is the highest of all virtues and the foundation for all godliness. Only the Spirit of God can produce love in the heart of the believer. Lehman Strauss writes, "When we became regenerated the seed of divine love is planted in our hearts." Therefore, love is the first virtue that the Holy Spirit yields after salvation (Rom. 5:5), and as such is also the first in Paul's list of virtues. For love is the antithesis to the works of the flesh.

These first three evidences of the Spirit's control seem to be linked together. In fact, Lehman Strauss would say, "Love is the foundation of our Christian faith, and where there is love in the heart, joy is sure to follow, and thus will bring peace." Love is the overall grace from which all the others grow. Love binds all the other virtues together in perfect unity (Col. 3:14).

It is interesting to note that while we cannot produce this kind of love without yielding to the Spirit's control, we are also commanded to practice *agape* love for God and others (Matt. 22:36-40). This truth speaks again to the reality of a joint effort in our sanctification process. The Spirit's empowering us to do as we are required by God. As we submit to God's work in us, He cultivates and demonstrates this love in and through us.

A. The Definition of Love

The world is obsessed with love, yet few people have a proper concept of what true love is. Many think of it only in terms of nice feelings, warm affection, romance, and desire. The oceans of emotions that overwhelm and overpower a person! Many today believe in falling in and out of love. Yet the love of which Paul is referencing is very different from the type of "love" that our society promotes. The reciprocal, brotherly love (*phileo*) may be common, but often does not last under pressure. Familial love (*storge*) is only natural for parents, children, and siblings. Much of the so called "love" that the world celebrates is nothing more than sexual attraction (*eros*). What distinguishes this biblical love (*agape*) from all others is its sacrificial nature. It is a love that gives and gives expecting nothing in return. It is sacrifice of self for the sake of others, even for others who may care nothing at all for us and who may even hate us. It is not primarily a feeling but a determined act of the will, which results in determined acts of self-giving. You do not fall in and out of *agape* love, you make a choice to practice it. True love is the willing, joyful desire to put the welfare of others above our own. This is not at all natural, but the supernatural work of the Spirit within that produces this fruit without.

Love is the supreme virtue of Christian living (I Cor. 13:13), and therefore, Paul places it first in this list to highlight its primacy and foundation.

B. The Demonstration of Love (I Cor. 13)

Now that we have defined what biblical love is, we want to know what this *agape* love looks like. How does it manifest itself in our lives? First Corinthians 13 is often called "the love chapter." In it we discover the most comprehensive biblical description of the fullness of love. It is as though Paul shines love through a prism and upon the pages of Scripture we see the spectrum of love with all its colors and hues. And each ray gives a facet and property of the demonstration of love. These descriptors do not focus on what love is so much as on what love does and does not do.

Teaching Note: It is intriguing to parallel these with the other virtues listed in Galatians 5:22-23. There are many similarities pointing again to love as the sum and source of the rest:

- *Suffers long* – patient, self-restrained, does not retaliate (Long-suffering)
- *Kind* – sensitive to the needs of others, actively looking for ways to help (Gentleness)
- *Envieth not* – does not get jealous or envious of others (Peace)
- *Vaunteth not itself* – does not brag and boast of oneself (Meekness)
- *Not puffed up* – not arrogant, proud, conceited (Meekness)
- *Does not behave unseemly* – rude, wild behavior, poor manners (Temperance)
- *Seeketh not her own* – selfish, no regard for others, only looks out for self (Goodness)
- *Not easily provoked* – not easily angered or irritated (Long-suffering)
- *Thinketh no evil* – does not keep record of wrongs (Goodness)
- *Rejoiceth not in iniquity* – is not glad at the misfortune of others (Goodness)
- *Rejoices in the truth* – glad when truth prevails (Joy)
- *Beareth all things* – to cover, put a roof over, conceal (Faith; Faithfulness)
- *Believeth all things* – believes the best about people, gives the benefit of the doubt (Faith)
- *Endureth all things* – remains under the load (Temperance)

C. The Development of Love (Rom. 5:5)

This *agape* love is cultivated through the progressive sanctification process by the Spirit. Maybe you are thinking, “I don’t know if I can love in that way.” You would be correct in thinking that. In and of yourself you cannot. But remember “love” is a fruit of the Spirit! It is not a work of the flesh (something you produce); it is the fruit of the Spirit (what God produces in you). We must allow the Spirit of God to have control so that self-love dies and sacrificial love thrives. We need to allow God to love others through us.

Now, let's suppose there is a person at work, school, or even church that you just can't seem to love. You have tried to “force” yourself to love them, but to no avail. You have attempted to be kind and considerate, but it seems so disingenuous and plastic. Instead of trying to work up love through self-effort, the next time you know you will see that individual don't say, “Lord, help me to love so and so.” Rather simply say, “Lord, I can't love so and so, it is totally contrary to my flesh, but I know you love them perfectly. So, Lord, you love him/her through me.” Pray as Paul did, that “your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phil. 1:9).

True, *agape* love is not just loving the lovable, but choosing to allow God to love the unlovable through us. The next time you meet a particularly repulsive individual, and you are tempted to be unloving, pause and meditate on our Father’s love for us demonstrated through Christ. By following Christ’s example, we can experience the fruit of the Spirit – love.

THE FRUIT OF JOY (v.22)

The word “joy” occurs more than 250 times in the Bible. The word “rejoice” is used some 200 times. So over 450 times we are told to be joyful and rejoice. So let’s practice...Everyone look up here and give me your biggest, cheesiest smile. How long do you think you could hold that smile on your face? Did you know the Guinness Book of World Records is 10 hours and 5 minutes? A little girl named Lisa broke the old record of 7 hours and 32 minutes by smiling non-stop for over 10 hours. A smile may ordain the face for a period of time, but joy is much more than a temporary smile. A smile is outward, joy is inward. A smile can only last for a few hours, but joy is eternal.

Let’s have a quick Bible trivia question. What is the shortest verse in the Bible? You say it is those two words in John 11:35, “Jesus wept.” Good guess, but you would be mistaken. “Jesus wept” is the shortest verse in English but not in Greek. In Greek, the shortest verse in the Bible is actually First Thessalonians 5:16, “Rejoice evermore.” If anyone has a reason to be joyful it is the Christian! The fact is, only Christians have a reason to be joyful, and every Christian should be joyful. Romans 14:17 says, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

A. The Counterfeit to Joy – Happiness

A counterfeit is something that appears genuine but is actually fake and phony. If someone doles out a counterfeit \$100 bill, it may look like the real thing, but it is has no genuine cash value. Our society works to manufacture, advertise, and sell a counterfeit to biblical joy – it is called “happiness.” They believe that it is our constitutional right to have “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. And while the world seeks happiness in possessions, prosperity, popularity, and pleasures they will ultimately discover that true and abiding happiness is a mirage. For happiness is based on what happens to me, it is hopelessly circumstantial. If I make the ball team, I’ll be happy. If I get that raise, I’ll be happy. If I owned a new car, I’d be happy. Because it is all circumstantial, it can easily be taken away. I didn’t make the ball team, now I am unhappy. I didn’t get the raise, so I am depressed. I’m still driving this bucket of bolts, I am discontent. The world may seek happiness, but the Christian must seek joy! What is the difference? Happiness is external; joy is internal. Happiness is cosmetic; joy is a character. Happiness is based on chance; joy is based on choice. Happiness is a thermometer that registers the temperature; Joy is the thermostat that regulates the temperature. Someone has said, “Joy is to be glad even when your circumstances are bad.” As a believer, we can have joy at all times when we live in the reality that God is always in control and consciously choose to trust Him. Joy is the spiritual response of pleasure knowing God loves me, and I, therefore, find greatest delight in my relationship and position in Christ. Why settle for a counterfeit when real joy is available to us?

B. The Command for Joy

We recall that joy is that spiritual fruit that can only be produced in us through yielding control to the Spirit of God. At the same time the Bible commands us to be joyful. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.” Paul was in prison when he wrote those words. He understood that to rejoice is a choice. Each of us, by the power of the Spirit, must make the choice to rejoice! He says, “Rejoice in the Lord” – Christ is the basis of our joy. We are not to rejoice in possessions (what you have); in prosperity (where you work or live); in popularity (how you are viewed); in some other person (who your with); in pleasures (what you do); in the absence of problems (what happens to you). We are to rejoice in the Lord! Joy is only found in Jesus! We can rejoice in his sovereignty over our circumstances, his sufficiency to provide contentedness, and in his salvation that makes us children of God.

Happiness fluctuates based on circumstances, but joy does not change because Jesus does not change (Heb. 13:8)! There is only one thing that can rob you of genuine joy – not sorrow (friend or relative has died); not suffering (ridicule for being Christian); not sickness (disease or cancer); only sin can rob you of the joy of the Lord! Biblical Example: After living in sin for over a year, David repents and begs God to “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation” (Psalm 51:12). His unconfessed sin had robbed him of the joyous fellowship with God.

C. The Cultivation of Joy

We must be continually reminded that this is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not something that is natural, but supernatural. It is not something we work up, but something God works in and through us. To cultivate the fruit of the Spirit which is joy, you must make the choice to rejoice. As a Christian, we have much to rejoice in.

1. Rejoice in Salvation

No matter what happens to us here on earth, we can rejoice in the hope of our salvation. The Prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Is. 12:3). Christ’s disciples returned from a successful preaching campaign rejoicing that “even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Jesus reveals what their true joy should be. He says, “Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:20). Peter puts it this way, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (I Pet. 1:8-9). Philip Ryken writes, “Joy is not so much happiness as contentment. Joy is the ability to take good cheer from the gospel. It does not depend on circumstance at all. It is based rather on rejoicing in one’s eternal identity in Jesus Christ.” As a believer we look back at Christ’s cross as our cause of joy. We look up to the Christ’s throne as our confirmation of joy. And we look forward to Christ’s coming as our crown of joy. For here on earth joy begins to enter into us, but there in heaven we will enter into joy. Rejoice in your salvation!

Illustration: The great composer, Haydn, was once asked why his sacred compositions had such a glad ring to them. He answered, “I cannot compose anything without it, for I translate into music the state of my heart. When I think of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, my heart is so full of joy that the notes fairly dance and leap from my pen.”

2. Rejoice in Suffering

This may seem unusual to you, but because we know that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” and because we are confident that our Father is in control of all things, we can rejoice even in times of suffering. Jesus reminds us, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you

falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12). The apostles had been beaten and threatened by the religious leaders for preaching the gospel. Acts 5:41 records, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” We may never experience the kind of persecution that those men endured, but we will all face trials in life. James encourages us, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations” (James 1:2). It is the supernatural work of the Spirit that allows us to make the choice to rejoice even in the midst of fiery trials.

3. ***Rejoice in Serving***

Someone has written the acrostic to J-O-Y as Jesus, others, and you. That’s pretty good. One of the ways to cultivate joy in your heart and life is to serve someone else. The most miserable people you will ever meet are likely the most selfish people. You find a person who is truly joyful, and you’ll find someone who is joyfully serving. Too many people devote all their attention and energy to serving themselves, and wonder why they are not joyful. Ask God to give you the joy of the Lord as your strength (Neh. 8:10) and look for ways to serve Jesus first, others second, and lastly you. There is joy in serving Jesus!

THE FRUIT OF PEACE (v.22)

Peace seems to be one of the most desired and yet most difficult things to find in the world. Governments constantly have “peace talks” with one another. NATO has a “Partnership for Peace.” Police officers are enlisted to “keep the peace,” and you can get arrested for “disturbing the peace.” During the days of the cowboys and Indians they would smoke the peace pipe together. Young parents anticipate the peace and quiet that fills the house after the kids are asleep in bed.

The world will never have true peace until the Prince of Peace returns to rule and reign, but believers can know personal peace as the Spirit has control. This word *peace* is parallel to the Hebrew word shalom

meaning “well being, or wholeness.” Peace, then, is the tranquility of the soul that we are rightly related to God and others. Scripture speaks of three types of peace that a believer can experience.

A. ***Eternal Peace with God (Rom. 5:1)***

In the first several chapters of Romans, Paul details our natural, lost state. He explains that we were born in sin as the enemy of God. Because of our treasonous sin, we are deserving of God’s just wrath. And yet God has provided a substitute for our sin, Jesus Christ the righteous. By faith in Him we are justified before God and granted eternal peace (Rom. 5:1). This restored relationship with God is foundational to experiencing true peace. You can never have peace within or peace with others until you have peace with God. Are you at peace with God? No Jesus, no peace, but know Jesus and know peace!

B. ***External Peace with Others (Rom. 12:18)***

Jesus taught his disciples, “Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). As children of God, we ought to be the peacemakers in our human relationships. Romans 12:18 declares, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” “If it be possible” – this phrase tells us that it is not always possible. There are times where as much as we desire peace and tranquility, it is unattainable. He goes on to say, “as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men” – you should not be the one who is unwilling to work at resolving the problem in order to have peace. If it is within your power to put the issue to rest, do so. Be willing to agree to disagree agreeably. Are you experiencing peace with others?

C. ***Internal Peace in Heart (Col. 3:15)***

Peace should be a hallmark of a godly person. Colossians 3:15, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye also are called in one body, and be ye thankful.” The word *rule* means to arbitrate, referee, govern, or umpire. The peace of God calms our anxious hearts, it keeps us under control. The opposite of internal peace is anxiety and worry. A Spirit-filled and controlled believer will evidence the fruit of the Spirit which is peace. How can we cultivate this fruit in our lives? God has given us a three-fold plan for peace in Philippians 4:4-7.

1. *Peace Comes Through a Person (Phil. 4:4) – “in the Lord”*

Peace is not the absence of problems. Peace is the presence of Jesus in the midst of your problems! You will never find peace looking for peace, you will only find peace when you look for Jesus! Remember the Sunday School song, “With Christ in the vessel I can smile at the storm, as we go sailing on”? It is true, peace comes through knowing Christ as your Savior and rejoicing in His sovereignty in your life. The Prophet Isaiah declares, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Is. 26:3). Jesus told his disciples, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (Jn. 14:25-26). Once again there is a direct relation between Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of peace.

2. *Peace Comes Through Prayer (Phil. 4:6) – “by prayer”*

The antithesis of peace in your heart is worry in your head. The word *worry* means “to struggle or to choke.” Worry and anxiety choke out the fruit of the Spirit (peace). Someone has said, “Worry pulls tomorrows clouds over today’s sunshine.” The answer to the pressures and cares of life is not in the medicine cabinet but a prayer closet. God says “don’t worry, pray!” He has instructed us, “Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Pet. 5:7). We must turn our cares into prayers!

3. *Peace Comes Through Praise (Phil. 4:6) – “w/ thanksgiving”*

It is tempting to wallow in self-pity when things are not going our way. However, we must make the choice to rejoice, and praise the Lord even in the midst of problems in life. When your heart is filled with praise and your mind is filled with prayer, your soul will be filled with peace!

CONCLUSION

Horatio Spafford (1800’s) was a prominent lawyer in Chicago. He had great holdings in real estate, but he much of his wealth in the Chicago fire of 1871. Shortly after the fire he decided to take his family to England to enroll his children in an English Academy. A last minute business development made it necessary for Spafford to remain in Chicago. He sent his wife and 4 daughters (ages 11, 9, 5, & 2) ahead planning to join them in a few days. The ship transporting his family was involved in a collision while crossing the Atlantic and sank taking 226 souls down with it. The rescue boats picked up the survivors, one of which was Mrs. Spafford. She sent a telegram back to her husband in Chicago that read, “Saved alone.” The couple’s four daughters died in that tragic accident.

It was through these clouds of darkness and despair that there shone into the heart of Spafford the bright light of God’s promise. God would not forsake him in the trying hour no matter what the circumstances. Mr. Spafford soon penned the words to the well-known hymn *It is Well*. “When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul!” That is not the natural human response to such a tragedy. That is a supernatural response! That is the fruit of the Spirit. As you examine your life do you find the fruit of the Spirit growing there? By “walking in the Spirit” we can experience both spiritual victory and vitality as the fruit of love brings about joy which yields peace.

In order to cultivate this fruit in our lives, we must be Word-filled believers. The Scriptures are the preeminent means of grace to the child of God. Reflection upon and obedience to the Word of truth yields Christian character and the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, and peace.