

Text: Various

Title: "The fruit of the Spirit in Christ - Love"

Time: 7/28/2019 am; 8/4/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: In his book *A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*, atheist Richard Dawkins described his worldview this way: "In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."

Well, the universe Dawkins believes he sees not only has no room for ultimate justice, it also has no room for love. Love is full of design, purpose, avoidance of real evil, promotion of real goodness, and care. The universe that has "at bottom . . . nothing but pitiless indifference" is a world that has no love.

The materialistic atheist worldview was, of course, unknown to the Apostle Paul, or if he new of such a view (the one propounded by the Sophists or the Atomists of ancient Greece, for example), he rejected it as false, just like we reject the Dawkins view. The Dawkins view is not a new one. Paganism is actually very old.

Instead, Paul describes a world made by God, full of men made in God's image, who have sinned against Him, and who need His salvation. That salvation is by faith in God's Son who became a man to die in the sinner's place. Those who believe on him for salvation do so with a faith that

works by love through walking in the Spirit. The fruit of walking in the Spirit begins with love.

Somewhat inconsistently, Dawkins wrote about the reality of love in a much-publicized letter written to his daughter who was 10 years-old at the time. It said in part, "People sometimes say that you must believe in feelings deep inside, otherwise you'd never be confident of things like 'My wife loves me'. But this is a bad argument. There can be plenty of evidence that somebody loves you. All through the day when you are with somebody who loves you, you see and hear lots of little tidbits of evidence, and they all add up. . . . There are outside things to back up the inside feeling: looks in the eye, tender notes in the voice, little favors and kindnesses; this is all real evidence."

So somewhere in Dawkin's world of "nothing but pitiless indifference," he also claims to have found evidence of something he calls "love." Such are the foolish contradictions of men who have said in their own heart, "There is no God" (Ps. 14:1, 53:1).

Paul challenges Galatian church members to fill their lives with the fruit of the Spirit. I want to pause on that challenge in the weeks ahead and focus on what life is like when this fruit is produced in us. In our materialistic, atheistic, secular world today, we can demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is real through this fruitfulness.

In endeavoring to do so, we seek to follow our Savior, who is the Christ. *Christ* means *Anointed One*, and He bears that title as the One who was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism to bear the fruit of the Spirit as our Mediator. This morning we consider the first fruit, love, and we will find answers in our Bibles to three questions: "Whom or what

does Christ love?"; "How has Christ demonstrated His love?"; and "What influence should the love of Christ have on us?"

I. Whom or what does Christ love?

Illustration: I came across a biography of a mathematician named Paul Erdős that is titled, *The Man Who Loved Only Numbers*. The book tells about how Dr. Erdős slept only 3 hours a night, worked 19 hours a day, published 1500 papers, and did so on a constant diet of coffee and amphetamines. He once said, "A mathematician is a machine for turning coffee into theorems." Erdős loved numbers.

Application: What we love says much about our love. The love of numbers is a certain kind of love, one that any machine can also do. When we look to our Bibles to see who or what Christ loves, we immediately see that no mere machine could do this. Note three things Christ loves.

1. Christ loves righteousness (Heb. 1:8-9). To love righteousness is also to hate iniquity. Hatred of iniquity is always an important part of Christlike love. He taught his disciples that in the last days "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). It was the fruit of the Spirit in Christ to love righteousness and hate iniquity, so His love never waxed cold. When we speak of the fruit of the Spirit, we are always speaking of the Holy Spirit. That is His name because He is holy. The love He produces is a holy love that loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and we see that in Christ's example. Do we see it in our own lives? Do we love righteousness and hate our iniquity? Or do we have a tender spot in our heart for our many iniquities? Failure to hate sin and love righteousness will quench the Spirit, making our love cold.

2. Christ loves the lost (Mark 10:21). The rich young ruler was lost, and the text tells us that Jesus loved him. Because Christ loved him, he had a difficult message for him. The difficulty of the message lay in the fact that this self-righteous moral young man could not see his sinfulness before God's law. It was Christ's love for him that refused to allow him to continue under that delusion. In love, Christ was willing to tell him, "One thing you lack."

What he lacked was a true understanding of what it takes to have treasure in heaven. The only way to have treasure in heaven is to obey God's law without fail, which says in part that we must love our neighbor as ourselves, to go sell all that we have and give it to the poor. Only one man was able to live up to that law - Christ did so for us. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). We have the treasure in heaven that He earned for us. That is the only way for sinners like us to have it. Do you see what you lack this morning? Do you see your need for Christ? If so, do you love the lost enough to tell them what they lack in this regard?

3. Christ loves His people (Rom. 8:35-39). This is a special covenantal love for the elected ones, those whom God has justified (v. 33).

As we read of this love for his people, we read of two aspects. First, Christ loves His people individually. The Bible tells us he loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:3, 11:5, 11:36). The apostle who wrote of His love for these individuals called himself, "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20). And Paul affirmed in our Galatian epistle that the Son of God was the one "who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Jesus loves His people individually and personally.

Jesus also loves His people corporately as His church. Eph. 5:25 instructs husbands, "Love your wives as Christ loved the church." Jesus loves His church. He loves His local churches. Together, we are His bride, the chaste virgin espoused to a loving groom, just as the local church at Corinth was (2 Cor. 11:2). Just as it is important to respond to Christ's love for us personally, so also it is important for us to respond to the truth that Christ loves us corporately. The love that is a fruit of the Spirit loves God's people personally and individually, and also corporately as the church. Do you love your fellow believers? Do you love your church?

Conclusion for Part 1: The Bible speaks of many unworthy objects of love – money, the praise of men, the lusts of the world, our own selves. The fruit of the Spirit is love for the things Christ loved: love for righteousness; love for the lost; and love for believers both individually and as the church. Has the Spirit born this fruit of love in your life?

If not, remember that Galatians tells us that He can – *walk in the Spirit* means confession of sin and time in His Word.

II. How has Christ demonstrated His love?

Illustration: That Paul Erdős was more than a machine that converted coffee into theorems was plain in an account about the way the mathematician cared for a fellow math expert who was afflicted with brain cancer. After brain surgery, this man feared that he had lost his ability to work in the field he loved, but Erdős visited him regularly and gave him mathematical problems to restore his confidence.

Application: If what we love tells us something of the nature of our love, what we do for whom we love says even more. The nature of Christ's love is described many ways in the Scripture. We have already noted that it is personal and

individual. To this we may add emotional, for the Jews noted how he loved Lazarus when they saw Jesus weep at his tomb. Jesus's love is faithful and enduring, so John testifies that He not only loved His disciples, but also that He loved them to the end (13:1). Nothing can separate us from this love (Rom. 8:35, 37, 39). It is past understanding (Eph. 3:19), because it is just like God's love for His Son (John 15:9).

But the greatest revelation of the nature of Christ's love is the marvelous ways it is demonstrated to those He loves. It is one thing to love someone and quite another to let them know by demonstrating that love to them. Jesus demonstrates His love in three ways.

1. He gives his life for those He loves (John 15:13-14). Paul says, "He loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). It was his genuine faith in the truth of those words that explains how the terrorizing persecutor Saul of Tarsus became the born-again apostle Paul. Do those words explain anything about what has happened to you?

2. He disciplines those He loves (Rev. 3:19). There is only one set of misbehaving kids that a parent is concerned about correcting. It is the few that they love as their own. Believers and their churches belong to Christ, and He loves us with a correcting, disciplining love. He is going to let the statehouse, the local library, the recreation department, and town bank get away with things that He is not going to permit at New Boston Baptist Church. He is going to tolerate some things in our unbelieving neighbors that He is not going to allow in us. Why? One simple answer: His love.

3. He deals with those who harm those He loves (Rev. 3:9). "I will make them know that I have loved you." Someday, He shall cause our enemy to know that He has loved us.

We must trust His love – the love that died for us must be trusted; the love that disciplines and corrects must be trusted; and the love that will deliver us some day from our enemies must be trusted. We are the strongest spiritually when we know the love of Christ for us in this way (Eph. 3:16-19).

III. What influence should the love of Christ have on us?

Application: In addition to the spiritual strengthening we receive from knowing the love of Christ, knowing that love influences us in other ways. His love for us constrains us to tell others to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:14), it influences us to keep His commandments (John 15:9-10), and it enables us to live in victory over suffering (Rom. 8:37).

But the love of Christ for us has one influence over us that has greater emphasis in the Scripture than any other – Christ’s love for us influences us to love one another in the same way (John 13:34, 15:12, Eph. 5:2). When we see how much He loves all of us, we are instructed to do the same for one another.

Conclusion: Christ was anointed by the Spirit. His life bore the fruit of love for believers, individually and corporately. He demonstrates His love by giving Himself for His church.

Have you and I been at all influenced by this love? In the context of walking in the Spirit in Galatians 5, fruit inspection plays an important role in experiencing this power. If upon inspection of our own lives this morning we find ourselves having fallen short of the love that God’s Spirit produces as fruit, let’s confess that sin and find power in the Word of God to begin anew. In Christ we have a perfect example of the fruit of the Spirit that is love. His Spirit can

make us more like Him. Walk in the Spirit, and you shall in no way fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Instead, you will love.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching