

Growing in God Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 25, 2024

SETTING THE STAGE

KEY 1 – Last week we spent our time addressing precepts outlined by the apostle Paul in the following selection:

Galatians 5:16b–17, 19–25 (NIV)

16 . . . walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Q. What does it mean to “walk by the Spirit”?

A. it means to live under the dominion of the Spirit and according to His power, under the direction of Scripture.

KEY 2 – Thus, there is a two-fold aspect herein: **a)** submission unto His authority; and **b)** reliance upon His power.

Q. Why should we walk by the Spirit?

A. Walking by the Spirit is the only way of transcending our sinful or carnal instincts, that we might live for God!

Galatians 5:16b (Emphasis Mine)

16 . . . I say, walk by the Spirit, **and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh** [lit. sinful and depraved nature].

Q. What if we fail to walk by the Spirit and allow the flesh go unchecked?

A. We will manifest spiritual wickedness, making us liable to divine judgment.

Galatians 5:19–21

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Q. What if we walk by the Spirit?

A. We will experience spiritual growth.

Galatians 5:22a–23 (Emphasis Mine)

22 . . . the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

KEY 3 – Perhaps we do well to consider the fruit the Holy Spirit produces in and through us (cf. John 15:8)! Note:

LOVE

Q. What is love?

NOTE 1 – We do well to understand that the ancients who spoke the language of the N.T. had 4 words for love. That is to say, they utilized four terms to describe four differing and distinct types of affection. Please consider:

1) EROS. The ancients who spoke Greek used this term to connote the love present within romantic connections. Thus, this form of love is connected to sexuality, attraction or marital bliss. Eros is the root for our term “erotic.” However, the apostle Paul is not using “eros” in Galatians 5:22.

2) STORGE. The ancients who spoke Greek used this term to connote the love present within familial bonds. Thus, this form of love is shared between parents and their offspring, among siblings and relatives of v. degrees. However, the apostle Paul is not using “storge” in Galatians 5:22.

3) PHILIA. The ancients who spoke Greek used “philia” to connote the love present within the bond of friendship. The term indicates “brotherly love” and speaks to our affections beyond the family to peers and our community. However, the apostle Paul is not using “philia” in this bib. selection.

4) AGAPE. Rather, the apostle Paul is using the term “agape” herein!

Q. What is “agape” love?

A. An unconditional and sacrificial sense of love; the type of love God demonstrates time and again in Scripture!

Q. What are the qualities or characteristics of such love?

A1. Agape love is not contingent upon the attractiveness of its object; extending to the outcast and the broken.

A2. Agape love is not contingent upon the response of its object; it loves regardless of reciprocity and rejection.

A3. Agape love is not contingent upon what one may receive; its focus is solely upon what it can give to another.

A4. Agape love is not contingent upon relationship; it extends beyond the confines of family and friends to ALL.

A5. Agape love does not produce mere sympathy but compassion (i.e., which is noted by accompanying action).

Q. Is this not how the Lord God loves (ELABORATE)?

KEY – This is the type of love you and I are to demonstrate.

NOTE 2 – Of course, you may say that such is impossible. You and I could never produce such love on our own. In this saying you are correct! We cannot. However, this is what the Lord can produce within us by His H. Spirit. As we walk by the Spirit (i.e., under His influence and by His power) and abide in Christ, such virtue is produced!

Galatians 5:22b (Emphasis Mine)

22 . . . the **fruit of the Spirit is love** . . .

Q. What does such love look like in operation?

Luke 10:25–37

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ [Deut. 6:5]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ [Lev. 19:18]”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Q. What do we see in the Good Samaritan?

A. An aspirational example of the “agape” love!

NOTE 3 – It is nigh impossible for me to touch upon the topic of such love and not touch upon this Pauline text:

1 Corinthians 13:4–8

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

NOTE 4 – Such is the nature of love! Love is, in many ways, the fount of all virtues and the eradicator of all vice. Thus, it is little wonder that love—i.e., “agape” love—occupies the place of primacy and supremacy in Galatians. Those who would draw near to God will learn to love like God, for He is love (cf. 1 John 4:8). What glorious truth!

JOY

Q. What is joy?

A. The term herein (i.e., “chara”) is defined as a “DEEP and ABIDING inner rejoicing” belonging to those in Christ.

NOTE 1 – We do well to realize that joy, in the biblical sense, is in no way contingent on outward circumstances. In this sense, there is quite a sharp distinction between spiritual joy and what we would call earthly happiness. Whereas happiness is founded upon situation and event, joy is founded solely upon an immutable source: God!

NOTE 2 – Men and women have searched for joy in every conceivable way, only to be let down by the end result.

1) Joy Will **NOT** Be Found in **DISBELIEF**. Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. In the end he wrote: “I wish I had never been born.”

2) Joy Will **NOT** Be Found in **PLEASURE**. Lord Byron lived a life of indulgence. In the end he wrote the following: “The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone.”

3) Joy Will **NOT** Be Found in **PROSPERITY**. Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of mine. He wrote: “I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.”

4) Joy Will **NOT** Be Found in **POWER**. Lord Beaconsfield, former PM of the UK, found this to be true: “Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.”

THIS BEING SAID...

Q. Where can joy be found?

A. In and through Christ alone.

Q. Why is this the case? Why in Christ alone?

A. Because He and His Word are immutable or unchanging.

NOTE 3 – The only way to secure joy is to find union with something beyond death and the passage of time! Only as we abide in the eternal Christ (cf. John 15) and walk with the everlasting Holy Spirit of God (cf. Gal. 5) will we tap into the joy that is available to us. Consider once again (Gal. 5:22a): “The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy”

NOTE 4 – Let us never underestimate the power of possessing joy in your life. What does Scripture say re: joy?

Nehemiah 8:10b (Emphasis Mine)

“10 . . . The joy of the Lord is your **strength**.”

NOTE 5 – Let us never underestimate the power that joy might have upon others. I love the following selection:

ILL. As a third-century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: “It’s a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them.”

SUMMATIONS

Galatians 5:22–23 (Emphasis Mine)

22 . . . the **fruit** of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace**, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.