

The First Fruit of the Spirit



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CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

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Introduction

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love.”—Galatians 5:22

The worst enemy we have is the flesh. Augustine (AD 354-430) used frequently to pray, “Lord, deliver me from that evil man, myself.” All the fire which the devil can bring from hell could do us little harm if we had not so much fuel in our nature. It is the powder in the magazine of the old man which is our perpetual danger. When we are guarding against foes without, we must not forget to be continually on our watch-tower against the foe of foes within. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Gal 5:17). On the other hand, our best Friend, Who loves us better than we love ourselves, is the Holy Spirit. We are shockingly forgetful of the Holy Ghost, and therein it is to be feared that we greatly grieve Him; yet we are immeasurably indebted to Him. In fact, we owe our spiritual existence to His divine power. It would not be proper to compare the love of the Spirit with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as even by implication to set up a scale of degrees in love; for the love of the regenerating Spirit is infinite, even as is the love of the redeeming Son. But yet for a moment we will set these two displays of love side by side. Is not the indwelling of the Spirit of God equal in loving-kindness to the incarnation of the Son of God? Jesus dwelt in pure manhood of His own; the Holy Spirit dwells in our manhood, which is fallen, and as yet imperfectly sanctified. Jesus dwelt in His human body, having it perfectly under His control. But, alas, the Holy Spirit must contend for the mastery within us, and though He is Lord over our hearts, yet there is an evil power within our members, strongly entrenched and obstinately bent on mischief. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” Our Lord Jesus dwelt in His body only for some thirty years or so; but the blessed Spirit of all grace dwelleth in us evermore, through all the days of our pilgrimage. From the moment when He enters into us by regeneration He continueth in us, making us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. You sing

Oh, 'tis love, 'tis wondrous love,

in reference to our Lord Jesus and His Cross—sing it also in reference to the Holy Spirit and His long-suffering. He looks at us from within, and therefore He sees the chambers of imagery where hidden idols still abide.

He sees our actions; not from without, for therein, perhaps, they might be judged favorably; but He discerns them from within, in their springs and in the pollution of those springs; in their main currents and in all their side eddies and back waters. O brethren, it is wonderful that this blessed Spirit should not leave us in indignation; we lodge Him so ill; we honor Him so little. He receives so little of our affectionate worship that He might well say, "I will no longer abide with you." When the Lord had given up His people to the Roman sword, there was heard in the temple in Jerusalem a sound as of rushing wings, and a voice crying, "Let us go hence." Justly might the divine Presence have left us also because of our sins. It is matchless love which has caused the Holy Spirit to bear with our ill manners, and bear our vexatious behavior. He stays though sin intrudes into His temple! He makes His royal abode where evil assails His palace! Alas, that a heart where the Spirit deigns to dwell should ever be made a thoroughfare for selfish or unbelieving traffic! God help us to adore the Holy Ghost at the commencement of our discourse, and to do so even more reverently at its close!

The Holy Ghost when He comes into us is the Author of all our desires after true holiness. He strives in us against the flesh. That holy conflict which we wage against our corruption cometh entirely of Him. We should sit down in willing bondage to the flesh, if He did not bid us strike for liberty. The good Spirit also leads us in the way of life. If we be led of the Spirit, says the apostle, we are not under the Law. He leadeth us by gentle means, drawing us with cords of love, and bands of a man. "He leadeth me" (Psa 23:3). If we take a single step in the right road, it is because He leadeth us, and if we have persevered these many years in the way of peace, it is all due to His guidance, even to Him Who will surely bring us in and make us to enjoy the promised rest.

*And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.*

The Holy Ghost not only creates the inward contest against sin, and the agonizing desire for holiness, and leads us onward in the way of life, but He remains within us, taking up His residence, and somewhat more: for the text

suggests a still more immovable steadfastness of residence in our hearts, since according to the figure, the Spirit strikes root within us. The text speaks of “fruit,” and fruit cometh only of a rooted abidance. It could not be conceived of in connection with a transient sojourning, like that of the wayfaring man. The stakes and tent pins that are driven into the ground for an Arab’s tent bear no fruit, for they so not remain in one stay; and inasmuch as I read of the “fruit of the Spirit,” I take comfort from the hint, and conclude that He intends to abide in our souls as a tree abides in the soil when fruit is borne by it. Let us love and bless the Holy Ghost! Let the golden altar of incense perfume this earth with the sweet savour of perpetual adoration to the Holy Ghost! Let our hearts heartily sing to Him this solemn doxology—

*We give Thee, sacred Spirit, praise,
Who in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living springs of grace arise,
And into boundless glory flow.*

1. A Winnowing Fan

Now, coming to our text, I shall notice the matters contained in it, and the first thing which my mind perceives is *a winnowing fan*. I would like to be able to use it, but it is a better far that it should remain where it is, for His “fan is in *his* hand, and *he* will thoroughly purge his floor” (Mat 3:12). The handle of this winnowing fan is made of the first syllable, “*But*.” “*But* the fruit of the Spirit is love”!

That “but” is placed there because the apostle had been mentioning certain works of the flesh, all of which he winnows away like chaff, and then sets forth in opposition to them “the fruit of the Spirit.” If you will read the chapter, you will notice that the apostle has used no less than seventeen words (see Gal 5:19-21), I might almost say eighteen, to describe the works of the flesh. Human language is always rich in bad words, because the human heart is full of the manifold evils which these words denote. Nine words are here used to express the works of the flesh—see how many are gathered together!

The first set of these works of the flesh which have to be winnowed away are *the counterfeits of love to man*. Counterfeited love is one of the vilest things under heaven. That heavenly word, *love*, has been trailed in the mire of unclean passion and filthy desire. The licentiousness,¹ which comes of the worship of Venus, has dared to take to itself a name which belongs only to the pure worship of Jehovah. Now, the works which counterfeit love are these: “*adultery*, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.” To talk of “love” when a man covets his neighbour’s wife, or when a woman violates the command, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exo 20:14), is little less than sheer blasphemy against the holiness of love. It is not love, but lust; love is an angel, and lust a devil. The purities of domestic life are defiled, and its honours are disgraced when once the marriage bond is disregarded. When men or women talk of religion, and are unfaithful to their marriage covenant, they are base hypocrites. Even the heathen condemned this infamy; let not Christians tolerate it. The next fleshly work is “*fornication*,” which was scarcely censured among the heathen, but is most sternly condemned by Christianity. It is a wretched sign of the times that in these corrupt days some have arisen who treat this crime as a slight

offence, and even attempt to provide for its safer indulgence by legislative enactments. Has it come to this? Has the civil ruler become a panderer to the lusts of corrupt minds? Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. “*Uncleanness*” is a third work of the flesh, and it includes those many forms of foul offence which defile the body and deprive it of its true honour; while to bring up the rear we have “*lasciviousness*,” which is the cord which draws on uncleanness, and includes all conversation which excites the passions, all songs which suggest lewdness, all gestures and thoughts which lead up to unlawful gratification. We have sadly much of these two evils in these days, not only openly in our streets, but in more secret ways. I loathe the subject. All works of the arts which are contrary to modesty are here condemned, and the most pleasing poetry if it creates impure imaginations. These unclean things are the works of the flesh in the stage of putridity—the very maggots which swarm within a corrupt soul. Bury these rotten things out of our sight! I do but uncover them for an instant that a holy disgust may be caused in every Christian soul; and that we may flee therefrom as from the breath of pestilence. Yet remember, O you that think yourselves pure, and imagine you would never transgress so badly, that even into these loathsome and abominable criminalities high professors have fallen. Ay, and sincere believers, trusting in themselves, have slipped into this ditch from whence they had escaped from pollution—have so fallen that they have had to be saved so as by fire! Oh, may we keep our garments unspotted by the flesh; and this we cannot do unless it be in the power and energy of the Spirit of holiness. He must purge these evils from us, and cause His fruit so to abound in us that the deeds of the flesh shall be excluded for ever.

The winnowing fan is used next against the *counterfeits of love to God*. I refer to the falsities of superstition—“Idolatry” and “witchcraft”. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love.” Alas, there are some that fall into *idolatry*; for they trust in an arm of flesh, and exalt the creature into the place of the Creator; “their God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame” (Phi 3:19). The golden calf of wealth, the silver shrines of craft, the goddess of philosophy, the Diana of fashion, the Moloch of power, these are all worshipped instead of the living God. Those who profess to reverence the true God, yet too generally worship Him in ways which He has not

ordained. Thus saith the Lord, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exo 20:4-5). Yet we have Christians (so called) who say they derive help in the exercise of devotion from images and pictures. See how their places of assembly are rendered gaudy with pictures, and images, and things which savour of old Rome. What idolatry is openly carried on in certain buildings belonging to the National Church! What sensuous worship is now approved? Men cannot worship God nowadays unless their eyes, and ears, and noses are gratified. When these senses of the flesh are pleased, they are satisfied with themselves; “but the fruit of the Spirit is love.” Love is the most perfect architecture, for love buildeth up. Love is the sweetest music, for without it we are become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Love is the choicest incense, for it is a sacrifice of sweet smell. Love is the fittest vestment—“Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:14). Oh, that men would remember that the fruit of the Spirit is not the finery of the florist, the sculptor, or the milliner, but the love of the heart. It ill-becomes us to make that gaudy which should be simple and spiritual. The fruit of the Spirit is not idolatry—the worship of another god, or of the true God after the manner of will-worship. No, that fruit is obedient love to the only living God.

“*Witchcraft*” too is a work of the flesh. Under this head we may rightly group all that prying into the unseen, that rending of the veil which God has hung up, that interfering with departed spirits, that necromancy which calls itself spiritualism, and pays court to familiar spirits and demons—this is no fruit of the Spirit, but the fruit of a bitter root. Brother Christians, modern witchcraft and wizardry are to be abhorred and condemned, and you will be wise to keep clear of them, trembling to be found acting in concert with those who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Idolatry and witchcraft are caused by a want of love to God, and they are evidences that the Spirit’s life is not in the soul. When you come to love God with all your heart, you will not worship God in ways of your own devising, but you will ask, “Wherewithal shall I draw near unto the most high God?” and you will take your direction from the Lord’s inspired Word.

The service which He prescribes is the only service which He will accept. The winnowing fan is at work now—I wonder whether it is operating upon any here present?

But next, this great winnowing-fan drives away with its “*but*” all *the forms of hate*. The apostle mentions “*hatred*,” or an habitual enmity to men, usually combined with a selfish esteem of one’s own person. Certain men cherish a dislike to everybody who is not of their clique, while they detest those who oppose them. They are contemptuous of the weak, ready to take offence, and little careful whether they give it or no. They delight to be in minorities of one; and the more wrongheaded and pugnacious they can be, the more are they in their element. “*Variance*” too, with its perpetual dislikes, bickerings, and quarrellings, is a work of the flesh. Those who indulge in it are contrary to all men, pushing their angles into everybody’s eyes, and looking out for occasions of fault-finding, and strife. “*Emulations*”—that is, jealousy. Jealousy in all its forms is one of the works of the flesh: is it not cruel as the grave? There is a jealousy which sickens if another be praised, and pines away if another prospers. It is a venomous thing, and stingeth like an adder; it is a serpent by the way, biting the horse’s heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. “*Wrath*” is another deed of the flesh—I mean the fury of angry passion, and all the madness which comes of it. “But I am a man of very quick temper,” says one. Are you a Christian? If so, you are bound to master this evil force, or it will ruin you. If you were a saint of God to the very highest degree in all but in this one point, it would pull you down; ay, at any moment an angry spirit might make you say and do that which would cause you life-long sorrow. “*Strife*” is a somewhat milder, but equally mischievous form of the same evil; if it burns not quite so fast and furiously, yet it is a slow fire kindled by the self-same flame of hell as the more ardent passion. The continual love of contention, the morbid sensitiveness, the overweening regard to one’s own dignity, which join together to produce strife, are all evil things. What is the proper respect which is due to poor creatures like ourselves? I mean that if any one of us did get our “proper respect” we should not like it long: we should think that bare justice was rather scant in its appreciation. We desire to be flattered when we cry out for “proper respect.” Respect, indeed! Why, if we had our desert, we should be in the lowest hell! Then our apostle

mentions “*seditions*,” which occur in the state, the Church, and the family. As far as our Church life is concerned, this evil shows itself in an opposition to all sorts of authority or law. Any kind of official action in the Church is to be railed at because it is official; rule of any sort is objected to because each man desired to have the pre-eminence, and will not be second. God save us from this evil leaven! *Heresy* is that kind of hate which makes every man set up to create his own religion, write his own Bible, and think out his own gospel. We have heard of “Every man his own lawyer,” and now we are coming to have “every man his own god, every man his own Bible, every man his own instructor.” After this work of the flesh, come “*Envyings*,” not so much the desire to enrich one’s self at another’s expense, as a wolfish craving to impoverish him, and pull him down for the mere sake of it. This is a very acrid form of undiluted hate, and leaves but one stronger form of hate. To desire another’s dishonor merely from envy of his superiority is simply devilish, and is a sort of murder of the man’s best life.

The list is fitly closed by “*murders*,” a suitable corner-stone to crown this diabolical edifice; for what is hate but murder? And what is murder but hate bearing its full fruit? He who does not love has within him all the elements that make a murderer. If you have not a general feeling of benevolence towards all men, and a desire to do them good, the old spirit of Cain is within you, and it only needs to be unrestrained and it will strike the fatal blow, and lay your brother dead at your feet. God save you, men and brethren, every one of you, from the domination of these dark principles of hate, which are the works of the flesh in its corruption. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love.”

Next time you begin to boil over with wrath, think you feel a hand touching you and causing you to hear a gentle voice whispering, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love.” Next time you say, “I will never speak to that man again. I cannot endure him,” think you feel a fresh wind fanning your fevered brow, and hear the angel of mercy say, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love.” Next time you are inclined to find fault with everybody, and set your brethren by the ears, and create a general scuffle, I pray you let the chimes ring out, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love.” If you wish to find fault, it is easy to do so. You may begin with me and go down to the last young member that was admitted into the Church, and you will not have to look

long before you can spy out holes in our coats. Whenever you are bent on the growling business, pause awhile and hear the Scripture admonish you, “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” When you wax indignant because you have been badly treated, and you think of returning evil for evil, remember this text, “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” “Ah,” you say, “it was shameful!” Of course it was: and therefore do not imitate it; do not render railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing—for “the fruit of the Spirit is love.”

The winnowing-fan is at work: God blow your chaff away, brethren, and mine too!

The next thing which the winnowing-fan blows away is the *excess of self-indulgence*—“drunkenness, revelings, and such like.” Alas, that Christian people should ever need to be warned against these animal offences, and yet they do need it. The wine-cup still has its charms for professors. Nor is this all: it is not merely that you may drink to excess, but you may eat to excess, or clothe your body too sumptuously, or there may be some other spending of money upon your own gratification which is not according to sober living. Drunkenness is one of those trespasses of which Paul says “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21). The revelling which makes night hideous with its songs so called—call them howlings and you are nearer the mark—the revelling which spends hour after hour in entertainments which heat the blood, and harden the heart, and chase away all solid thought, is not for us who have renounced the works of darkness. For us there is a better joy, namely, to be filled with the Spirit, and “the fruit of the Spirit is love.”

2. A Jewel

The second thing which I see in the text is *a jewel*—that jewel is *love*. “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” What a priceless Kohinoor² this is! It is altogether incalculable in value. What a heavenly grace love is! It has its centre in the heart, but its circumference sweeps, like omnipresence, around everything. Love is a grace of boundless scope. We love God—it is the only way in which we can embrace Him fully. We can love the whole of God, but we cannot know the whole of God. Yes, we love God, and even love that part of God which we cannot comprehend or even know. We love the Father as He is. We love His dear Son as He is. We love the ever-blessed Spirit as He is. Following upon this, for God’s sake we love the creatures He has made. It is true in a measure that

*He prayeth best that loveth best
Both man and bird and beast.*

Every tiny fly that God has made is sacred to our souls as God’s creature. Our love climbs to heaven, sits among the angels, and anon bows among them in lowliest attitude; but in due time our love stoops down to earth, visits the haunts of depravity, cheers the garrets of poverty, and sanctifies the dens of blasphemy, for it loves the lost. Love knows no outcast London; it has cast out none. It talks not of the “lapsed masses,” for none have lapsed from its regard. Love hopes good for all, and plans good for all. While it can soar to glory it can descend to sorrow.

Love is a grace which has to do with eternity; for we shall never cease to love Him Who first loved us. But love has also to do with this present world, for it is at home in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, nursing the sick, and liberating the slave. Love delights in visiting the fatherless and the widows, and thus it earns the encomium³—“I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Mat 25:35-36). Love is a very practical, home-spun virtue, and yet it is so rich and rare that God alone is its author. None but a heavenly power can produce this fine linen; the love of the world is sorry stuff.

Love has to do with friends. How fondly it nestles in the parental bosom! How sweetly it smiles from a mother's eye! How closely it binds two souls together in marriage bonds! How pleasantly it walks along the ways of life, leaning on the arm of friendship! But love is not content with this; she embraces her enemy; she heaps coals of fire upon her adversary's head—she prays for them that spitefully use her and persecute her. Is not this a precious jewel indeed? What earthly thing can be compared to it?

You must have noticed that *in the list of the fruits of the Spirit it is the first*—"The fruit of the Spirit is love." It is first because in some respects it is best. First, because it leads the way. First, because it becomes the motive principle and stimulant of every other grace and virtue. You cannot conceive of anything more forceful and more beneficial, and therefore it is the first. But *see what followeth at its heel*. Two shining ones attend it like maids of honor, waiting upon a queen. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace": he that hath love hath joy and peace. What choice companions! To love much is to possess a deep delight, a secret cellar of the wine of joy which no man else may taste. He that loveth is like to God, Who is the God of peace. Truly the meek and loving shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace. He is calm and quiet whose soul is full of love; in his boat the Lord stands at the helm, saying to the wind and the waves, "Peace, be still!" (Mar 4:39). He that is all love, though he may have to suffer, yet shall count it all joy when he falleth into divers trials. See then what a precious jewel it is, that hath so many shining brilliants set at its side.

Love has this for its excellence, that it fulfils the whole Law: you cannot say that of any other virtue. Yet, while it fulfils the whole Law, it is not legal. Nobody ever loved because it was demanded of him; a good man loves because it is his nature to do so. Love is free—it bloweth where it listeth, like the Spirit from which it comes. Love, indeed, is the very essence of heart liberty. Well may it be honored; for while it is a true grace of the Gospel, it nevertheless fulfils the Law. If you would have Law and Gospel sweetly combined, you have it in the fruit of the Spirit, which is love.

Love, moreover, is Godlike, for God is love. Love it is which prepares us for heaven, where everything is love. Come, sweet Spirit, and rest upon us

till our nature is transformed into the divine nature by our becoming burning flames of love. Oh, that it were so with us this very day!

Mark, beloved, that the love we are speaking of is not a love which cometh out of men on account of their natural constitution. I have known persons who are tenderly affectionate by nature; and this is good; but it is not spiritual love—it is the fruit of nature and not of grace. An affectionate disposition is admirable, and yet it may become a danger, by leading to inordinate affection, a timid fear of offending, or an idolatry of the creature. I do not condemn natural amiability. On the contrary, I wish that all men were naturally amiable; but I would not have any person think that this will save him, or that it is a proof that he is renewed. Only the love which is the fruit of the Spirit may be regarded as a mark of grace. Some people, I am sorry to say, are naturally sour; they seem to have been born at the season of crab-apples, and to have been fed on vinegar. They always take a fault-finding view of things. They never see the sun's splendor, and yet they are so clear-sighted as to have discovered his spots. They have a great speciality of power for discerning things which it were better not to see. They do not remember that the earth has proved steady and firm for centuries, but they have a lively recollection of the earthquake, and they quake even now as they talk about it. Such people as these have need to cry for the indwelling of the Spirit of God, for if He will enter into them His power will soon overcome the tendency to sourness, for “the fruit of the Spirit is love.” Spiritual love is nowhere found without the Spirit, and the Spirit is nowhere dwelling in the heart unless love is produced. So much for this jewel!

3. A Picture

I see in the text a third thing, and that is *a picture*—a rich and rare picture painted by a Master, the great Designer of all things beautiful, the divine Spirit of God. What doth He say? He saith, “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” We have seen many fine fruit pictures, and here is one. The great Artist has sketched fruit which never grows in the gardens of earth till they are planted by the Lord from heaven. Oh, that every one of us might have a vineyard in his bosom, and yield abundance of that love which is “the fruit of the Spirit.”

What does this mean? “Fruit,” how is love a fruit? The metaphor shows that love is a thing which comes out of life. You cannot fetch fruit out of a dead post. The pillars which support these galleries have never yielded any fruit, and they never will; they are of hard iron, and no life-sap circulates within them. A dead tree bringeth forth no fruit. God implants a spiritual life in men, and then out of that life comes love, as the fruit of the Spirit.

Love appears as a growth. Fruit does not start from the tree perfectly ripe at once. First comes a flower; then a tiny formation which shows that the flower has set; then a berry appears, but it is very sour. You may not gather it. Let it alone a little while, and allow the sun to ripen it. By-and-by it fills out, and there you have the apple in the full proportions of beauty, and with a mellow flavor which delights the taste. Love springs up in the heart, and increases by a sure growth. Love is not produced by casting the mind in the mould of imitation, or by fastening the grace to a man’s manner as a thing outside of himself. Little children go to a shop where their little tastes are considered, and they buy sticks upon which cherries have been tied; but everybody knows that they are not the fruit of the sticks; they are merely bound upon them. And so have we known people who have borrowed an affectionate mannerism and a sweet style; but they are not natural to them; they are not true love. What sweet words! What dainty phrases! You go among them and at first you are surprised with their affection: you are a “*dear* sister” or a “*dear* brother,” and you hear a “*dear* minister,” and you come to the “*dear* Tabernacle,” and sing *dear* hymns to those *dear* old tunes. Their talk is so sweet that it is just a little sticky, and you feel like a fly which is being caught in molasses. This is disgusting; it sickens one.

Love is a fruit of the Spirit; it is not something assumed by a man, but something growing out of his heart. Some men sugar their conversation very largely with pretentious words because they are aware that the fruit it is made of is unripe and sour. In such a case their sweetness is not affection but affectation. But true love, real love for God and man, comes out of a man because it is in him, wrought within by the operation of the Holy Ghost, Whose fruit it is. The outcome of regenerated manhood is that a man lives no longer unto himself but for the good of others.

Fruit again calls for care. If you have a garden you will soon know this. We had a profusion of flowers upon our pear trees this year, and for a few weeks the weather was warm beyond the usual heat of April, but nights of frost followed and cut off nearly all the fruit. Other kinds of fruit which survived the frost are now in danger from the dry weather which has developed and endless variety of insect blight, so that we wonder whether any of it will survive. If we get over this trial and the fruit grows well, we shall yet expect to see many apples fall before autumn, because the worm has eaten into their hearts and effectually destroyed them. So is it with Christian life. I have seen a work for the Lord prospering splendidly, like a fruitful vine, when suddenly there has come a frosty night and fond hopes have been nipped; or else new notions, and wild ideas have descended like insect blights and the fruit has been spoiled. Or if the work has escaped these causes of damage, some immorality in a leading member, or a quarrelsome spirit, has appeared unawares like a worm in the centre of the apple, and down it has fallen never to flourish again. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." You must take care of your fruit if you wish to have any laid up in store at the end of the year; and so must every Christian be very watchful over the fruit of the Spirit, lest in any way it should be destroyed by the enemy.

Fruit is the reward of the husbandman and the crown and glory of the tree. The Lord crowns the year with His goodness by giving fruit in due season; and truly the holy fruit of love is the reward of Jesus and the honor of His servants.

How sweet is the fruit of the Spirit! I say "fruit" and not fruits, for the text says so. The work of the Spirit is one, whether it be known by the name of love, or joy, or peace, or meekness, or gentleness, or temperance.

Moreover, it is constant; the fruit of the Spirit is borne continually in its season. It is reproductive, for the tree multiplies itself by its fruit; and Christianity must be spread by the love and joy and peace of Christians. Let the Spirit of God work in you, dear brethren, and you will be fruitful in every good work, doing the will of the Lord; and you will rear others like you, who shall, when your time is over, occupy your place, and bring forth fruit to the great Husbandman.

4. A Crown

Lastly, you see in my text *a crown*. “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Let us make a diadem out of the text, and lovingly set it upon the head of the Holy Spirit, because He has produced in the people of God this precious thing which is called “Love.”

How comes heavenly love into such hearts as yours and mine? It comes, first, because the Holy Ghost has given us a new nature. There is a new life in us that was not there when we first came into the world, and that new life lives and loves. It must love God Who has created it, and man who is made in His image. It cries, “My Father,” and the essence of that word, “My Father,” is love.

The Spirit of God has brought us into new relationships. He has given us the spirit of adoption towards the Father. He has made us to feel our brotherhood with the saints, and to know our union with Christ. We are not in our relationships what we used to be, for we were “children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3); but now we are “heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17); and consequently we cannot help loving, for love alone could make the new relation to be fully enjoyed.

The blessed Spirit has also brought us under new obligations. We were bound to love God and serve Him as creatures, but we did not do it. Now the Holy Spirit has made us to feel that we are debtors to infinite love and mercy through redemption. Every drop of Jesus’ blood cries to us to love; every groan from yonder dark Gethsemane cries love. The Spirit of God works in us, so that every shiver of yonder Cross moves us to love. The love of Christ constraineth us: we must love, for the Spirit hath taken of the things of the loving Christ and hath revealed them unto us.

The Spirit of God has so entered into us that He has caused love to be our delight. What a pleasure it is when you can preach a sermon full of love to whom you preach it, or when you can visit the poor, full of love to those you relieve! To stand in the street corner and tell out of Jesus’ dying love—why, it is no irksome task to the man who does it lovingly; it is his joy, and his recreation. Holy service in which the emotion of love is indulged is pleasant to us as it is to a bird to fly, or to a fish to swim. Duty is no longer bondage, but choice; holiness is no longer restraint, but perfect liberty; and

self-sacrifice becomes the very crown of our ambition, the loftiest height to which our spirit can aspire. It is the Holy Ghost that does all this.

Now, my dear hearer, have you this love in your heart? Judge by your relation to God. Do you live without prayer? Do you very seldom read God's word? Are you getting indifferent as to whether you go and worship with His people? Ah, then, be afraid that the love of God is not in you. But if you feel that everything that has to do with God you love—His work, His service, His people, His day, His book—and that you do all that in you lies to spread His kingdom, both by prayer, by word of mouth, by your liberality, and by your example—if you do love you can easily see it, I think, and there are many ways by which you can test yourself.

Well, suppose that to be satisfactorily answered, then I have this further question:—do you and I—who can say, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee”—do we sufficiently bless the Holy Spirit for giving us this jewel of love? If you love Christ, then say, “This love is given to me; it is a rare plant, an exotic; it never sprang out of my natural heart. Weeds will grow apace there, but not this fair flower.” Bless the Holy Spirit for it. “Oh, but I do not love God as I ought!” No, brother, I know you do not, but bless Him that you love Him at all. Love God for the very fact that He has led you to love Him, and that is the way to love Him more. Love God for letting you love Him. Love Him for taking away the stone out of your heart, and giving you a heart of flesh. For the little grace that you see in your soul, thank God. You know when a man has been ill, the doctor says to him, “You are not well by a long way, but I hope you are on the turn.” “Yes, says the man, “I feel very ill; but still I think I am a little better: the fever is less, and the swelling is going down.” He mentions some little symptom, and the doctor is pleased, because he knows that it indicates much: the disease is past the crisis. Bless God for a little grace!

Blame yourself that you have not more grace, but praise Him to think you have any. Time was when I would have given my eyes and ears to be able to say, “I so love God”; and now that I do love Him, I would give my eyes and ears to love Him more. I would give all I have to get more love into my soul, but I am grateful to the Holy Ghost. Worship and adore Him specially and peculiarly. You say, “Why specially and peculiarly?” I answer—Because He is so much forgotten. Some people hardly know whether

there be any Holy Ghost. Let the Father and the Son be equally adored; but be careful in reference to the Holy Spirit, for the failure of the Church towards the Holy Trinity lies mainly in a forgetfulness of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore I press this upon you, and I beg you to laud and magnify the Holy Ghost, and sedulously⁴ walk in all affectionate gratitude towards Him all your days. As your love increases, let your worship of the Holy Spirit become daily more and more conspicuous, because love is *His* fruit although it be *your* vital principle. To the God of love I commend you all. Amen.

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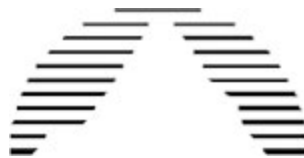
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Notes

[[←1](#)]

licentiousness – unrestrained immorality.

[[←2](#)]

Kohinoor – famous diamond that is one of the British crown jewels.

[←³]

encomium – a formal expression of high praise; eulogy.

[←4]

sedulously – diligently; constantly; persistently.



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