

The Fruit of the Spirit - Love Part 2

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[0 : 00] Well for a short while I'd like us to turn to Galatians chapter 5 and we're going to continue looking at the fruit of the Spirit. We can read Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23.

You can keep a wee bookmark in 1 Corinthians 13 because we'll be coming back to that shortly. Galatians 5 verse 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. As many of you will know we've been studying this great topic over the past few weeks and a couple of weeks ago we began looking in detail at the first element of this fruit, love. And today I want us just to complete our study of this amazing topic and as I said a fortnight ago a sermon on love can only ever scratch the surface. God's love for us is just absolutely immense. Don't worry at all if you weren't here a fortnight ago when we began looking at this. I can just recap very briefly what we said. We were focusing on the fact that Paul is mentioning this for lots of reasons but in particular because of the situation in Galatia. He's writing to a church in Galatia and it's a church that's got problems. And in this chapter and in this letter Paul is addressing two mistakes that we can easily fall into as Christians. The first mistake as we said a fortnight ago is the mistake of legalism and that was the main problem in Galatia. The idea that we add our own contribution to God's salvation. It's not just that God saves us we have to do something ourselves. We have to either be good enough, we have to either do certain things, we have to make ourselves better. We have to do some sort of work in order to be saved. That's one mistake that's very easy to make, the mistake of legalism. The other mistake is the opposite of legalism which is called anti-nomianism.

Anti means against. Nomianism, nomos is the Greek word for law. So it's the idea of being against the law and it's the view that you think that the law has no place in the Christian life. You think God has forgiven me, I can do whatever I like. He doesn't care how I live, doesn't matter what I do and I can sin or do whatever. It makes no difference. These are two mistakes, kind of opposite mistakes but they are very very common mistakes in the Christian life and Paul is addressing these mistakes. As I said legalism was the main problem in Galatia particularly in relation to circumcision. The idea was if you want to be saved you need to be circumcised and Paul is emphasising that the solution to that problem is to focus on God's love. All through chapter 5 there's this emphasis on love.

Verse 6, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith working through love and it's a great reminder that God's love is never under the power of legalism. If we say that we have to do certain things for God to love us we are basically saying that God's love is kind of under our control. Depending on what we do or don't do will shape whether God loves us or not. God's love is not under any power. God's love is his own love and he freely loves his people. He freely loves this world and we can't do anything to make God love us more or love us less and that I hope gives you great assurance because it should give you great assurance because so often we feel that we are unlovable to God and God is saying what you are is not what counts, what counts is the fact that I love you and so we should have great assurance from that. So Paul addresses the problem of legalism. You can't earn God's love you don't need to earn God's love but Paul also addresses the opposite problem, the problem of anti-nomianism that you can do whatever you like attitude and he touches on this in verse 13. For you are called to freedom brothers only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another. Do you see what Paul is saying there? He's saying yes you have been set free in

[5 : 03] Christ but that's not giving you the opportunity to just do whatever you want and again his focus is on God's love. He's highlighting the fact that if we are loved by God, if we are loved by God as a perfect father we are to love him and because we love him we are to please him and we are to live in his ways. When we get a glimpse of God's love for us it should fill us with love for him

because God's love for us is so great and so wonderful and we should just stand back and think wow Lord how can you be so loving to me and yet filled with love for him and that should give us great motivation to live our lives in God's ways. If we love God then we want to walk with him every day and that means praying to him every day that means reading his word every day and listening to what he's saying and living our lives for him not just thinking oh yeah God's done that for me but I'm just going to forget about him but just saying Lord I want to live today for you

I need your help with that but I want to serve you I want to glorify you so a focus on God's love gives us great motivation not to do whatever we want but to do what God wants to live for him and the great emphasis that Paul is making is that the solution to both legalism and anti-nominism is to focus on God's gracious love. It's Sinclair Ferguson who makes a very very good point he says that these two sins are opposites legalism and anti-nominism they're opposites but he says the cure for them both is the same the cure is to focus on God's love and when we hear terms like this legalist anti-nominism they're important terms because we all fall into these traps and it's easy to think oh I'm not one of them or I'm not one of them and and I'm sure in many many ways you're not but these are very easy traps to fall into in our lives and I'm sure if we all think about it we've probably had times where maybe we've been a bit legalistic and we've thought oh you know God will love me more because I've done this or we can be a bit anti-nomin and think oh well I know I shouldn't do that but it doesn't really matter the key thing in it all is to focus on God's love and at the heart of living the Christian life is to focus on love and that's why love is primary in the fruit of the spirit so that was basically what we tried to say a couple of weeks ago our question today is how do we practice this in our everyday lives as God's people how do we live lives of love well if we go back to Galatians chapter 5 we notice something really really interesting as we said Paul is very much emphasizing God's love for us and he is very much emphasizing our love for God and he's saying that in Jesus Christ we have been set free and our lives are being transformed by the amazing love of God but you would expect Paul to say Jesus has set you free therefore love God that would make a lot of sense if you said that but Paul does not say that he doesn't say you have been set free therefore love God Paul says Jesus has set you free therefore love one another look at verse 13 and 14 you are called to freedom brothers only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another for the whole law is fulfilled in one word you shall love your neighbor as yourself and as Paul is highlighting the centrality of God's love in the Christian life he is emphasizing love for each other now isn't that interesting you could perhaps think of somebody who maybe spends their life in isolation because they're so devoted to God they keep away from everybody else and they just spend all their time in devoted love for God and you would think wow that person is really loving God and of course in many ways they are but Paul is emphasizing that at the heart of loving God

is not ignoring each other but it is loving each other and the reason for this is very simple it's because in the New Testament love for Jesus and love for one another are totally inseparable you can't have one without the other and it's put very very forcefully in the New Testament 1 John 4 verse 20 if anyone says I love God and hates his brother he's a liar now that couldn't be expressed more strongly anyone says I love God and hates his brother no brother it means fellow Christian he's a liar for who he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen and this commandment we have from him whoever loves God must also love his brother and it's emphasizing the fact that these two things are totally totally inseparable and that's why love for one another is a fruit of the Holy Spirit if the gospel has had any effect on us at all then we will love each other as Jesus said this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you now we could not exaggerate the importance of this and the language John uses that makes it abundantly clear if we love God that means we must love one another and of course that raises the really important question how are we to love one another as God's people whenever anybody comes into contact with Christians they should see that we love each other deeply but that has to manifest itself in practical terms which means we have to ask how do we do this well the New Testament teaching on love is very simple which is wonderful because it means it's it's easy for us to apply in our lives because the New Testament emphasizes that in terms of the practical application of love there are certain things that love is and there are certain things that love isn't and that's the great emphasis of 1st Corinthians 13 here we have four verses in fact it's only three and a half verses because the last bit is just the start of verse eight in these four verses Paul makes 16 points now I can barely make three points in in half an hour Paul gives us 16 points in these verses

love is patient and kind love does not envy or boast it is not arrogant or rude it does not insist on its own way it is not irritable or resentful it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endure all things love never ends and in this great paragraph Paul is saying that there are certain things that love is certain things that love isn't and I want us just to pick these out one by one together so first of all what love is not he says first of all love does not envy and the word envy really just means exactly that the idea of being resentful or jealous that's an easy thing to fall into especially when you see somebody doing well or things succeeding Paul is saying love does not envy and that's a really really important thing for us to remember as a church because sometimes you know you can hear of great things happening in other churches great things happening in other congregations and sometimes the seeds of envy can start to take root and grow in you but what we have to remember is that what happens in another church is is is something that we share in as well with God is doing great work in Edinburgh or in the Middle East or in China we are part of that and we share in that we have no reason to envy and it's the same in terms of material possessions or whatever it else is God is emphasizing love does not envy Paul and says love does not boast again it's the idea of bragging the idea of speaking in a way so that you get vain glory glory for yourself glory that puffs you up and this kind of thing creeps into every single part of life even from children in primary school through to to to life to the workplace socializing whatever it may be you get people who boast and it's such a strange thing people think that by boasting that they will impress people you often see that with children they they boast about what they are thinking that they're going to impress their friends and all they do is they make their friends think

I wish that person wasn't doing that and instead of filling their friends with respect it it makes their friends think I'm not sure I like that person so much boasting is so self-destructive and yet we do it so much Paul is saying love does not boast that's a good thing to remember he then says love is not arrogant which is is similar and literally the phrase here love is not puffed up the idea of puffing yourself up and trying to present yourself as as more important than you are or to exalt yourself or to to glorify yourself love does not do that love in other words is not about you it's not about puffing ourselves up love is always prioritizing the benefit of others love is not rude that's that is to say that love does not behave in an inappropriate way it does not behave in a disgraceful way or a shameful way or anything like that and I think the word here is not so much emphasizing rudeness in terms of abruptness I think it's more referring to rudeness in terms of just that which is inappropriate and and immoral and love takes no pleasure in that again very important to remember because the rest of the world takes a huge amount of pleasure in that but we must not so love is not rude love does not seek its own does not insist on its own way I love the way Paul can sum something up so beautifully in just a few words insisting on your own way how often do we find that maybe in the workplace you can have a meeting and there's all sorts of tension because people are insisting on their own way people get hurt because others are insisting on their own way the idea that it's me that's the most important thing and we can all easily do that but Paul is saying love is not like that love is not selfish neither is love irritable in other words it's not easily exasperated it's not easily provoked and that's a really really important thing because sometimes things get on our nerves don't they sometimes things can push our buttons and we can react and we can easily think well I was provoked

[18 : 43] Paul is saying Paul said it doesn't matter if you were provoked you must not do it the provocation will always be there love does not let the provocation set you off love is not irritable neither is love resentful the literal phrase here it does not take into account evil and so here's the idea of keeping a record and so Paul is saying you know in life things can happen to you and you can easily keep a record of that can't you somebody said this to me I'm making a record of that somebody hurt me I'm making a record of that something happened to my family I'm making a record of that people keep a record of evil things and that can leave you trapped in this world of being unforgiving whereby because I have this record of evil done against me I am going to hold it against that person forever I've made an account and I'm holding them to account and I think that we can probably all think of examples of that and I hope that none of us can see examples of that in our own lives because Paul is saying love tears up that account love has got no interest in keeping a record of wrongdoing you know you could all make a long long record of things that I do wrong you could do that of anybody but love doesn't do that love has got no interest in having that kind of record in having that kind of account and it's something that that we're far far better off without and then the eighth thing that Paul says about love that it isn't he says love does not rejoice at wrongdoing now that's a really really important phrase as well because things go wrong things go

wrong in people's lives things go wrong in churches things go wrong in society and we have a massive machine called the media that just delights in wrongdoing and delights when people mess up and delights when all sorts of bad things happen Paul is saying love does not rejoice in wrongdoing and all of these things it's it's wonderful because all of these things that are things that we can all just do without in our lives and I think we would all agree we don't want anything to do with any of that and that's why the practical instructions of scripture are so wonderful because Paul is saying that God is saying through Paul we must never never do these things to each other it's just not an option we are never to do these things and of course we have probably all done these things or some of them but when we read things like that our prayer should always be Lord forgive me and Lord keep me keep me from doing these things and forgive me for when I have because life is much better without all of these things the other thing I want to just mention at this point is that we have to remember that God is never ever any of these

things God is never these things to you God is not just using you to seek his own way God is not resentful of the fact that you've made mistakes in your life God is not looking to to just boast or envy or any of these things God does not gloat over wrongdoing in your life or bad things that happen God is never any of these things God is a loving father to his people and it gives us great comfort because the world does these things to us God won't and so that's what love isn't but secondly Paul even in these tiny verses tells us eight things that love is and it's wonderful to think about these love is patient now the Greek word for patient basically means to have a long term view now isn't that a great way to think about it when you are patient with somebody you're taking a long term view because in the short term you'll find people make mistakes in the short term you'll find that people go wrong but love does not react to the short term love takes a long term view and we must remember that God has a long term view of you and isn't that great it's expresses his commitment but it's a reminder we should have a long term view of each other as well sometimes we are far from what we want to be but in God's grace in many years time we will grow and we should have a long term view of each other a commitment to one another a patience love is patient love is also kind again a very simple word a very familiar word but it reminds us that love basically is disposed towards doing good to others to be of use to other people it's in other words it's the opposite of selfishness i'm here to do you good i'm here to help i want to be kind to you that's love is kind in every different way that it can be in every day of life love also rejoices with the truth this is in direct contrast to rejoicing at wrong doing don't rejoice at wrong doing we rejoice in the truth and again that's such an important thing and such a good thing because certain things are right certain things are wrong certain things are true certain things are false and we focus on the truth and we rejoice in that truth we rejoice in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ and in everything that scripture tells us we joy in these things love takes delight in the truth and then we have these great phrases from verse seven into verse eight love bears all things it's the idea of forbearance the phrase the word here is sometimes used to say cover over with silence that's what one of the the Greek dictionaries i looked at says love covers something with silence and what does that mean well sometimes love keeps quiet you know sometimes we make mistakes sometimes we have lots of things that people could pick out and pick fault with us about but love keeps silent sometimes it bears these things it has that long-term view and it looks beyond the mistakes that we make and of course that's like the characteristic of god god doesn't condemn us the moment he sees sin in our lives God says no i freely offer you forgiveness in Jesus Christ so love bears all things and often we have to bear with each other but isn't that such a good way to be to bear with one another love believes all things now that doesn't mean that love is gullible and believes that the earth is flat or that anything else that is obviously unthused it's not the idea of gullibility it's the idea of trust love loving one another means trusting each other not being suspicious of each other not being skeptical of each other not being negative of each other but trusting one another that's at the heart of what our relationship should be as gods people now sometimes trusting people means that we get hurt and that can happen but first and foremost our default position should be trust to see the good in others to be willing to have faith and confidence in one another and that leads on to the next point that love hopes all things it emphasizes that we are not pessimists as Christians we're optimists we have a sense of expectation expectation of one another expectation of what god can do through us expectation of what god can do in his church expectation of all that god can do in our lives love hopes all things so in every situation even when it's dark even when it's difficult we have hope we have confidence and that makes perfect sense because god is in control god is king and we can trust him so we can

hope all things then we have this wonderful phrase endure all things and that basically conveys the idea of staying put love stays put so when we love one another we stick with one another we stay put because that's exactly what god does for us and then it's all summed up by the great these amazing three words that you could probably preach a thousand sermons on love never ends the idea of love never failing love never ceasing because this world fails and this world is fading and there are things that come along that we never ever expect but we remember that the steadfast love of the lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end and when things fail here when things fall apart in this life when things come to an end we must always remember that god's love is not finished you remember that in your life remember when things are hard when things go wrong when things are unexpected you remember god's love is not finished and we should always be that ourselves always always always with our love for one another that does not fail and so if the first eight things we looked at are what we should never do these of course are the things that we must do

this is how we are to treat one another and again we remember that god is all of these things god is patient god is patient with you god is kind god rejoices in the truth in the truth of your faith and of your efforts to serve god bears with you god has such optimistic confidence for you and for your future god hopes all things and promises such great things for you and god will endure all things with you and his love for you will never end and we see just how amazing the love that the bible presents is and this is just verse karentheon 13 the rest of the new testament gives more amazing teaching about love i'm going to pick out three or four verses Ephesians two says walk in love that word walk means that's your daily life what you do from day to day to day to day so this is monday morning tomorrow morning walk in love that's that's our plan for tomorrow morning and every day roman's 12 9 says let love be genuine and that literally means without hypocrisy our love is not to be an act it's not something that we put on it's genuine first peter says love one another earnestly and that word basically means in a in a way that is eager in a way that is intense you know something that we really put effort into it's not something we say oh yeah i love one another it's like i am really committed to this it is an earnest love for one another and it's something that should grow and grow and grow philippines 19 it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more that word abound is beautiful because it conveys the idea of being far more than what you expected far more than what you expected now that sums up god's love it is far more than what you expect and it should also sum up our love for one another i hope you can be in here today and think these people love me far more than i thought they would isn't that an amazing testimony of god's grace in their lives that our love for one another is way more than anything we expected and so these are the practical ways in which god's love the love as the fruit of the spirit should be applied in our lives and if we want to see a good example of how this is done all we have to do is look at jesus christ because he is the example who embodies all of this and that makes perfect sense because the fruit of the spirit is just making us like jesus it's the fruit of his spirit we are being conformed to his image jesus loved his neighbor we read about that when sinners came to him people were saying why does he eat with sinner but that's exactly who he came to eat with jesus loved his brother and sister in the gospel he have a tax collector's a chaos and people think what on earth is jesus doing with him and he says he too is a son of abraham he is also part of my family jesus went and loved those who were in desperate need the leper who came to him says you can make me clean and it says verse 41 jesus was moved with pity and he says of cushion willing i'll make you clean people who were in awful situations jesus loved them and jesus even loved his enemies when they came to the place that is called the skull there they crucified him and the criminals one on his right and one on his left and jesus said father forgive them for they know not what they do we can see the perfect fruit of love in jesus christ the great challenge for us is that every single person we meet should see the same thing in us just as we close i want us to say one final thing about the love of god we've got various verses there that highlight god's love for us and it reminds us that at the heart of the gospel is god's love and that the heart of that is the cross the cross is the great manifestation of god's love as we read at the very beginning and there's a second verse up there says it is because of god's love that we have the cross god so loved the world that he gave his only son that you ever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life at the heart of the gospel is god's love his love for us our love for him and our love for one another it was love that motivated jesus it was because of love that he laid down his life for his friends it was because of love for his father that he went to the cross and love for us that he was willing to make himself a sacrifice in the gospel we see absolutely amazing love and i want to close by highlighting

john 15 verse 9 where jesus says as the father has loved me so i have loved you now that phrase there is just a mind-blowing description of jesus's love for you as the father loved him so he loves you and then he gives this brilliant phrase abide in my love now the word abide just means to stay to stay in the same place so today with everything that is going on in your life with everything that has gone on in the past week let your mind drift to the depths of god's love for you in jesus christ that immeasurable love love that died for you and that gives us hope in a dark world let your mind go to that place and stay there abide there amen let us pray