

# The Key to Having Holy Spirit-Filled Love

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

Love is the first and greatest of the fruit. It is quite unscriptural to say, “I am seeking love, the greatest gift of all.” Instead of expecting the character of 1 Cor. 13 to be dropped suddenly and completely into the heart as a finished gift from God, we should see that it is the fruit or result of the working out of a divine principle within us. It is perfected by a life of close communion with the Lord, and in no other way.

Love is not emotion nor warm feelings nor tolerance. It is a deliberate act of the will, motivated by the welfare of the recipient, for true love must have an external object. John, the apostle of love, understood the active nature of love: “My little children, let us love not in word and speech, but in action and truth” (1 John 3:18). The love which the Spirit produces in us as a fruit is the fruit of Christ’s love, and of His own life. It is not something different which He can give us as a gift, but something of His own Self which springs up in us because He is living within.

Paul uses the Greek word *agape* to express love as the fruit of the Spirit. This *agape* is basic to all the other fruit. This word in the New Testament usually expresses divine love in distinction to human love. This ‘agape’ is the love that expresses the heart of Jesus’ great commandment: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27). In fact, Jesus made

the exercise of this love a condition for eternal life (Luke 10:28).

Someone has said the fruit of the Spirit is like an orange—it is singular but has various manifestations just as the one orange has several sections. If that is an accurate comparison, the whole fruit would be love and the sections would be joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Paul defines love with exact detail in 1 Cor. 13—the love of God Himself. This love is not an increase of natural love. It comes only as a result of spiritual life from above.

Natural or human love flourishes in an atmosphere of friendship. It loves only when it is loved in return. But divine love produces love for enemies. Christ prayed, "Father forgive them." Stephen prayed, "Lord do not lay this sin to their charge." If we have love, the fruit of the Spirit, we will love one another even when we are treated unkindly and misunderstood. We will pray for one another instead of finding fault. If the divine life of the living God is in our spirits, we will love. However, we have the love of God only to the extent that we have God Himself. God does not dispense the fruit of the Spirit apart from Himself. We have the love of God only to the degree that God lives His life in and through us.

God will not drop neat little virtue packages of the fruit into our lives. He never does. We are deluded if we think we can produce fruit with no effort and no time for development. The fruit comes only as a result of His increased presence in us. The more I have Christ, the more I have His love. The more I have God, the more I have His goodness. The more I have the Holy Spirit, the more I have the whole of His fruit in me.

The key to love, the fruit of the Spirit, is selflessness. This love is self-giving, self-sharing, self-sacrificing. It willingly gives up personal desires for the love of God and

His people.

God's love is a powerful life principle. It is a divine dimension of living, a radical life style. What is the most irresistible force upon the earth? Love! What pulverizes strong prejudice and builds enduring allegiance? Love! What binds people together in indestructible devotion? Love! What is underneath all generous and magnanimous actions? Love! What is the source of strength for people who gladly serve and die for one another? Love! If this is true even of selfish mortal humans, how much more is it the very life of God! The love of God is the life of God poured out lavishly and constantly.

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