

# Living by the Spirit

## *The Virtue of Love*

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**Text: Galatians 5:22-23**, “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.

### Introduction

Living in the Spirit is made possible by the “fruit of the Spirit” or by the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, the term “fruit of the Spirit” could also be translated the “harvest of the Spirit.” It is an expression of what is produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as we allow Him to work and produce spiritual growth within us.

**The virtue of love:** “The Greek word agape (love) seems to have been virtually a Christian invention -- a new word for a new thing (apart from about twenty occurrences in the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is almost non-existent before the New Testament). Agape draws its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ. It is not a form of natural affection, however, intense, but a supernatural fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is a matter of will rather than feeling (for Christians must love even those they dislike -- Matt. 5:44-48). It is the basic element in Christ-likeness.”

-James Packer, *Your Father Loves You*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

The fruit of the Spirit, or the manifested virtues of the Spirit in a Christian’s life are contrasted against the acts or works of the flesh. (*Note Galatians 5:13-26*)

### ***Now, let’s go back and read the complete thought of Paul in Galatians 5:13-26 NIV***

**13** You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

**16** So I say, 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. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

**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. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Note the **contrasts** between living with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and living without His empowerment. Because of the Holy Spirit...

## **I. Godly Love Is Characteristic of a Christian Life.**

### **A. Godly love is meant to preserve the Body of Christ.**

**13** You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

### **B. Godly love is meant to stand in contrast to the works of the flesh.**

**Verse 20**, “...hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions...”

## **II. Godly Love Indicates the Presence of the Holy Spirit in our Lives (vv.16-18).**

**16** So I say, 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. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law

### **A. The Holy Spirit brings with Him the love-inspired desire to please God.**

### **B. Godly love sets us free to live and serve God without the bondage of the Law.**

## **Conclusion**

The **contrasts** between living with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and living without His empowerment are clearly seen, especially in the area of love. The harvest the Holy Spirit manifests is one of the most reliable witnesses of the work taking place within in the believer. So much so, it can be said that, “The Fruit of the Spirit is outward expression of Christ dwelling within.” — Maxie D. Dunnam