

# Saint Matthew AME Church Online Bible Study

24 January 2023

Reverend Leslie Wilson, Facilitator

The Fruit of the Spirit: Love



## Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

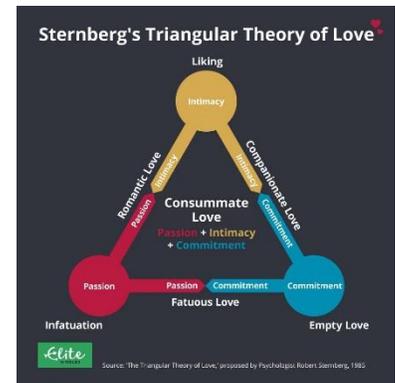
<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

### What Is Love - Generally?

Love is considered by positive and negative but generally used in contrast to hate. Love is physical, spiritual, psychological. You can have compassionate love, fall in love, friendship love, love addiction, love at first sight, platonic love, self-love, unconditional love (put a pin right here).

Ancient Greek philosophers identified six forms of love:

essentially, familial love (in Greek, *Storge*), friendly love or platonic love (*Philia*), romantic love (*Eros*), self-love (*Philautia*, *narcissism*), guest love (*Xenia*), and divine love (*Agape*). In his book "Four Loves", CS Lewis talks about Christian love and focuses on: *Storge*, *Philia*, *Eros*, and *Agape*:



- *Storge* is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring.
- *Philia*, a dispassionate virtuous love, it includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. *Philia* is motivated by practical reasons; one or both of the parties benefit from the relationship. It can also mean "love of the mind."
- *Eros* is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. Although *eros* is initially felt for a person, with contemplation it becomes an appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even becomes appreciation of beauty itself. *Eros* helps the soul recall knowledge of beauty and contributes to an understanding of spiritual truth. Some translations list it as "love of the body".

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- *Agape* means *love* in modern-day Greek, it means *I love you* in Greek. It generally refers to a "pure," ideal type of love, rather than the physical attraction suggested by *eros* and also means "love of the soul".

Our focus for tonight's Bible study will be on unconditional, *Agape* love!

## **What Is Love – According To John?**

“John, called the Evangelist, was also known as the “Apostle of Love.” This nickname is based on two observations. First, John called himself “the disciple Jesus loved” (John 21:20). Second, John wrote more about the subject of love than any other New Testament author.” John gives to the Christian understanding that love comes from God, who is Himself Love and “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:8 (NIV). For John knowing God is knowing love. Without God one cannot truly know love.

## **What Is Love – According to Paul?**

Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to address the conflict and tension between the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, which ultimately rested in a conflict over identity.

Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, the Church of Galatia, essentially the defense of the Gospel, to counter the message of missionaries who visited Galatia after he left and taught that Gentiles must follow parts of the Jewish Law in order to be saved. The churches were led astray from his trust/faith-centered teachings by individuals proposing "another gospel". These missionaries taught that Christian men had to accept the Jewish rite of circumcision. They taught a continuation of the Mosaic Law and led some to confusion about the issue of justification.

Why does God justify us? Justification—the forgiveness of sins—comes to us because Christ bore our sin, bore our curse, bore our guilt, and so released us from condemnation. This is what it means that we are justified "through the redemption in Christ Jesus." We are released from their punishment because He bore their punishment.

<sup>16</sup> “know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in<sup>[a]</sup> Christ and not by the

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works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. <sup>17</sup> “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!” Galatians 2:16-17 (NIV)

In Galatians 5, Paul, a missionary and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, answers the question, “how should Christians live if we are no longer under the law of Moses?” He talks to us about freedom in Christ!

5:1 “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” <sup>5</sup> For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love...  
<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh<sup>[a]</sup>; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other... <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love....

Paul’s letter to the Galatians on love mirrors 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a: “<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails.”

See also Colossians 3:12-15: <sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

## What Is Love – According To Jesus?

Christians believe that God has unconditional and enduring love for all human beings, known as agape. They believe that he showed this love by sacrificing his son, Jesus, to atone for human sin. In this sense, agape is also a self-sacrificing kind of love. Jesus' mission was based on agape. Jesus, love, came down!

For example, regarding love for enemies, Jesus is quoted in the Gospel of Matthew 5:43-48 (NIV): "**You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you**

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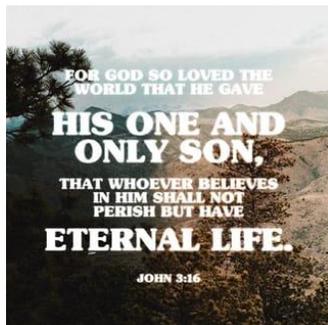
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**may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**

The meaning of “fruit of the Spirit” is the attributes that surface and mature in the life of people who have truly surrendered their lives to God and have been filled with His Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the result of allowing God’s Spirit to transform a person into His image. (Source: Christianwalls.com)

## What Is Love As A Fruit?



Love is a fruit (result of growth; one characteristic of the fruit, single) of the Spirit that is true and genuine, loving God, and loving others the way that God loves others. We cannot produce the type of love God desires without the leading and strength of the Holy Spirit. It is sacrificial, thinking of self-last. Jesus gave the ultimate expression of love and selflessness with His death on the cross. His love was sacrificial. *“But God demonstrates his own love for us*

*in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Romans 5:8

The fruit of the Spirit shows love through a genuine concern for humanity, “dying out” to unforgiveness, lack of compassion and other selfish emotions that hide the Spirit of God.

## Of Note – Love Of God and Country



On January 6, 2021, following the defeat of then U.S. President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, a mob of his supporters attacked the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. In the media we saw Christian Nationalist, election deniers,

displaying Christian symbols (Christian flag, the cross, images of Jesus) as “Love of God and country”. “Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America’s

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constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation.” (Source: [christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org](http://christiansagainstchristiannationalism.org))

Christian Nationalism cast opponents as enemies and threats to the country, is a total fusion of religion and politics, and promotes aggressive public engagement directed by fear and anger. The love is anything but other-oriented.

## Bottom Line



We are free in Christ! Let us not take this freedom for granted but love “selflessly” with an other-oriented attitude, showing consideration for others expecting nothing in return. “Against such things there is no law.”

<sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

## NEXT WEEK

The Fruit Of The Spirit - JOY

## 7 DAYS A WEEK PRAYER LINE

6:00 A.M. and 9:30 P.M.

206-806-9984