

## The Sign of a Christian

Galatians 5:6, 22-25

### Preface

At the close of an important speech to Congress on January 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt shared his vision of the kind of world he wanted to see after the war was over. He envisioned four basic freedoms enjoyed by all people: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

In America we enjoy many freedoms but one freedom we still lack is freedom from ourselves; freedom from the tyranny of our own sinful nature. Legislation and laws can't change man's basic sinful nature. It is not the law on the *outside*, but only love on the *inside* that can truly change a person. We need another power within to be truly free, and that power comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

### Scripture Text

<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>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.  
Galatians 5:6, 19-25 NIV

### Introduction

Christians are like birds. We come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some Christians are construction workers, some are farmers, some are doctors and some are dentist. I had some dental work done last week. I have been in pain all week. There were a few times this week my dentist was the devil himself to me.

But the point is that Christians come from every walk of life. So how does one person tell that another is a Christian? What

common characteristic should every Christian have that immediately labels them as a follower of Jesus Christ?

The answer to that question is found many places in the Word of God. The answer is love, the fruit of the Spirit (Agape). What is the "fruit of the Spirit?" **The fruit of the Spirit is the supernatural outcome of being filled with the Spirit.** It is the living proof that the Spirit of God dwells in us.

The fruit of the Spirit is the living proof that we are a born again Christian. God's word says the world will know us as Christians by our love.

### 1. Christ inspired love will resolve your conflicts

The amazing thing about love is that it takes the place of all the laws God ever gave. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" solves every problem in human relations.

If you love people (because you love Christ), you will not steal from them, lie about them, envy them, or try in any way to hurt them. Love in the heart is God's substitute for laws and threats.

<sup>34</sup>"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

For Christians, there is no place for selfishness, unconcern or hard heartedness. We are called to love. In fact, our ability to love others, even the unlovable, is a direct reflection of the depth of our faith.

Whether it is a co-worker or a neighbor we should love others. What does this mean from a practical standpoint? It means we never desire to see others fail or fall. We never do anything to hurt or put down others. We are more concerned with lifting others up than watching them fall.

We are to love others with Agape; the unconditional love through which God loves us.

Do you possess this kind of love for others? Do others know you are a disciple of Christ because of your love for others?

Do you have conflicts with others in the work place, at church or elsewhere? If you will exercise love, your conflicts will become meaningless and resolved.

## 2. Christ inspired love will heal our families

Hardly a week goes by that I do not find myself speaking with someone about family problems. It burdens me to see how much families today are struggling.

Some family problems involve teenagers and their rebellious attitudes. Other family problems are centered around the husband and wife and their inability to get along or agree on certain issues. Still others are feuds between siblings over land or other items of inheritance.

Christ inspired love is the solution to our family struggles. If we will just learn to love others more than we love ourselves, we can see our family issues resolved.

What does this mean from a practical perspective? Just how far does this “love others above yourself” go?

When we put this into practice, we become more concerned about the happiness and welfare of our spouse than we are our own. Imagine the husband consumed with wanting to please the wife and the wife consumed with wanting to please the husband. What is the result? The result is two people making the rest of us sick watching them dote and do for one another.

Illus: Yesterday Pam wanted to go to Belks to look at dresses. I had my excuses to stay home but I knew she really wanted me to go with her. I mentioned that I needed to go to Home Depot so she said let's go together. We went to Belks where she took inventory of the entire dress department only to pick out 6 dresses to try on. I sat patiently in the metal folding chair they so generously had outside the fitting room. When she came out she said she didn't like any of them. From there we went to the Bath & Body Works store where we purchased some fufu soap to go in the bathrooms. Then it was on to Dillard's where she tried on about 8 dresses and did purchase two. Finally, we went to Home Depot where I purchased a broom, some bug spray and wasp spray. I didn't have to check out every single thing in the department. I didn't try on anything and she didn't have to wait in a little metal chair for me. Later I started thinking about the entire experience. Initially I reasoned how I had gotten the raw end of the entire trip. Then when we got home, she started looking at her dresses and putting out her new soap. I thought about how much she enjoyed that little shopping trip. I realized what joy my little sacrifice had brought her. I was reminded that this is the way love is supposed to work.

We should love seeing others receive joy more than we desire joy for ourselves. Paul speaks of this when he tells women to love, honor and respect their husbands. He then tells men to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

Love your spouse more than yourself and your family can be healed.

## 3. Christ inspired love will make our life complete

With love in our heart, life is exciting and fulfilling. Without it, everything is black and white. Without love, everything and everybody in life is for us or against us.

Glatians 5:13 says, “By love serve one another”.

As believers, our spiritual life is not complete until we flesh out our faith with love towards others. This means showing love to those we do not naturally desire to love. This means showing love towards others when there is nothing in it for us.

**Jesus wants us to love one another with a kind of love that convicts the world.** Our love for one another should be so profound that the world longs to know our Savior.

Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Jesus is asking each of us, “Do you love me?” If you do, you will love one another.

James reminds us in chapter two that faith is not dead. Faith is alive and faith produces works. Our text says, “The only thing that really counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

The Bible tells us that the believer is identified with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. Christ not only died for me, but I died with Christ.

As believers, we are to die to ourselves and live for Christ. This means loving others with the love and grace afforded us.

Love is the first quality of the fruit of the spirit. Love is what grows from our spiritual relationship with God. Our ability to love others is the first indicator of true relationship with God.

Christians are not complete until they bear the fruit of the Spirit. We are to bear the fruit that has the qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We don't get to pick one of these attributes. If we are in the right spirit with God, we are to possess a fruit, a uniqueness that reflects all of these.

## Conclusion

Illus: I am fascinated by machinery. I also like watching that show on television "How's it's made." I would love to own a factory where we make something. I have a friend who owns a broom and bush factory. It is fascinating to watch those machines spit out brushes and brooms.

But machines cannot make fruit. Fruit is a living thing that must grow from a living organism. It cannot be manufactured.

The fruit of the Spirit cannot be imitated. A person cannot pretend to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. They must be inspired by faith in Jesus Christ.

You and I must produce the fruit of the spirit in response to our relationship with God. Others must see our love as a result of God working within us.

**The measure of your faith is none other than the measure of your love.**

## Next Week:

*13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*<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 is not rude, 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. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 NIV*