

Doctrinal Summary of Love: A Part of the Spirit's Fruit

In Galatians 5:22-23 the Apostle Paul identifies unconditional love as one part of the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

The word “fruit” is translated from the Koine Greek word καρπός (“kar-pos”) which more literally means, “product produced as a consequence of a process, based on initiation.” It can be used to refer to fruit and produce from produced by plants as well as the result brought forth in the character, life, or actions of an individual. Though the word “fruit” can refer to both the singular and plural forms of fruit, καρπός is a singular form of the word in Koine Greek. Thus, there is only one fruit of the Spirit which is comprised of nine attributes. The production of this nine-attribute fruit is the consequence of the Holy Spirit's work in the believer while he is under the Holy Spirit's leading and control.

The word “Spirit” is translated from the Koine Greek word πνεύματός (“p'neu-ma-tos”) which more literally means, “spirit, being a tool or instrument used to accomplish something.” It most commonly refers to either the Holy Spirit or the human spirit that was made alive in the believer. Only context can identify which of those two or any of the less frequent referents it refers to. In Paul's statement to the Judaized Galatian believers, he contrasts the human flesh with the human spirit. Thus, Paul's usage is most likely referring to the human spirit that each of the Galatian believers possesses because of the Holy Spirit's work in each of them at that moment when they relied upon Christ for salvation (Gal. 3:2-5).

Originally, the human spirit was designed to be a governor of man's soul. It allowed man to communicate and understand spiritual things and occurrences. This is a necessary component to humanity if man wants to communicate and understand God who is a spiritual being. Likewise, this is a necessary component if man wants to understand God's thought process which is spiritual and not natural. Man's ability to relate spiritually to God allowed him to impart to his soul the necessary understanding of what decisions to make in order to carry out God's instruction. Loss of the human soul at the fall has proven catastrophic for humanity, but for the grace of God who provided Jesus Christ as the propitiation for man's sins that man could be saved from sin and death and made spiritually alive once more. Once spiritually alive and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the believer can function spiritually to govern how he makes decisions in this world. Because the believer can be controlled by the Holy Spirit as he operates from his human spirit, he is able to allow the Holy Spirit to produce a byproduct in and through him that manifests nine attributes simultaneously. Love is one of those attributes.

The word “love” is translated from the Koine Greek word ἀγάπη (“a-ga-pae”) which more literally means, “self-sacrificial love that manifests itself in being given regardless of the response it receives because of the character and decision of the one doing the loving, based on response.” It refers to unconditional love that is derived internally by one's decision to pursue what is best for those around him instead of his own desires or objectives.

While the believer walks by means of his human spirit as it is led by the Holy Spirit the nine attributes of the spirit's fruit are produced. The fruit is a consequence of being saturated to the point of control in the human spirit by the Holy Spirit. Thus, as the believer is walking spiritually so too will the fruit of the spirit be on display, with unconditional love being visible as one part of the spirit's fruit.