

# Love

The Fruits of the Spirit · Fruits of the Spirit

Love stands preeminent among the Spirit's fruits, for it encapsulates the very nature of God Himself. Scripture declares categorically that 'God is love' (1 John 4:8)—not merely that He loves, but that love constitutes His essential being. This divine ἀγάπη (agape) transcends all human affections, sentiments, or emotions. It represents selfless, sacrificial devotion that seeks the highest good of its object regardless of merit, response, or reciprocation. When the Holy Spirit reproduces this love in believers' hearts, He imparts nothing less than a participation in God's own character.

**Note:** The Greek language employed three primary words for love: ἔρως (eros, romantic/passionate love), φιλέω (phileo, brotherly affection/friendship), and ἀγάπη (agape, selfless, volitional love). The New Testament writers, under divine inspiration, chose agape to describe God's love and the love commanded of Christians—a deliberate, determined commitment to another's welfare regardless of personal cost or their worthiness.

The Apostle Paul's magnificent exposition in 1 Corinthians 13 reveals love's essential characteristics and supreme value. This love 'suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.' It does not behave unseemly, seeks not its own interests, is not easily provoked, and thinks no evil. Unlike human affection that often proves fickle and conditional, divine love 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' Most remarkably, 'charity never faileth'—when prophecies cease, tongues fail, and knowledge vanishes, love abides eternally. Without this love, the most spectacular spiritual gifts, profound knowledge, mountain-moving faith, sacrificial generosity, and even martyrdom profit nothing. Love alone endures beyond the veil, for it reflects God's eternal nature.

Christ commanded His disciples, 'Love one another; as I have loved you' (John 13:34-35), establishing His own sacrificial death as both the pattern and power for Christian love. This proved no mere moral aspiration but the distinguishing mark of authentic discipleship: 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' The Christian's love for God and neighbor does not originate in human will or effort but flows from the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. Paul testified that 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us' (Romans 5:5). This supernatural love enables believers to fulfill the law's demands, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10). All divine commandments find their sum and substance in loving God supremely and loving one's neighbor as oneself.

Moreover, Scripture reveals that this love demonstrates authentication of salvation. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren' (1 John 3:14). Conversely, 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.' The presence or absence of genuine love toward fellow believers provides evidence of one's spiritual condition. This is no peripheral matter but strikes at the heart of Christian profession. True love manifests practically—not in word or tongue merely, but in deed and truth. It covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8), edifies the church, seeks the profit of others, and reflects Christ's own heart toward His body.

The cultivation of this love requires intentional pursuit. Paul exhorted believers to 'put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness' (Colossians 3:14), and to 'follow after charity' as the 'more excellent way' (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1). As the Spirit produces this fruit, believers must cooperate by walking in love, actively choosing to love even the unlovely, forgiving those who wrong them, and extending compassion to all. This love proves costly, demanding death to self-interest and rejection of the world's quid pro quo

mentality. Yet it brings profound reward: communion with God (for he that dwells in love dwells in God), joy in service, unity among brethren, and powerful witness to the watching world. Above all, it glorifies God, for in loving as Christ loved, believers manifest the invisible God to a dark and loveless age.

## Key Verses

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.

### **John 13:34-35**

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

### **Romans 13:10**

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

### **1 John 4:7-8**

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

### **Matthew 22:37-39**

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

### **1 Peter 4:8**

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

**Ephesians 5:2**

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

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