

The fruit of the Spirit is love

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“The fruit of the Spirit is love...” (Gal. 5:22)

The phrase “the fruit of the Spirit” teaches us at the outset that the virtues that follow can be produced only by the Holy Spirit. An unconverted man is incapable of manifesting any of these graces. Even a true believer is powerless to reproduce them by his own strength. So when we think of these graces, we must remember that they are supernatural and other-worldly.

The love spoken of here, for instance, is not the eros of passion, or the philia of friendship, or the storge of affection. It is agape love—the kind of love which God has shown to us and which He wants us to show to others.

Let me illustrate! Dr. T. E. McCully was the father of Ed McCully, one of the five young missionaries martyred by the Auca Indians in Ecuador. One night when Dr. McCully and I were on our knees together in Oak Park, Illinois, his thoughts went back to Ecuador and to the Curaray River that holds the secret of the whereabouts of Ed’s body. He prayed, “Lord, let me live long enough to see those fellows saved who killed our boys, that I may throw my arms around them and tell them I love them because they love my Christ.” When we arose I saw rivulets of tears zig-zagging down his cheeks.

God answered that prayer of love. Some of those Auca Indians later professed faith in Christ. Dr. McCully went to Ecuador, met these men who murdered his son, threw his arms around them, and told them he loved them because they loved his Christ.

That is agape love. It is impartial, seeking the highest good of all—the homely as well as the handsome, foes as well as friends. It is unconditional, asking for nothing in return for its constant giving. It is sacrificial, never minding the cost. It is unselfish, more concerned with the needs of others than its own. It is pure, free from any trace of impatience, envy, pride, vindictiveness or spite.

Love is the greatest virtue of the Christian life. Without it our noblest endeavors are worthless.

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