

Galatians 5: 22 – “The Believer’s Love”, Message # 42 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on August 19th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.

Tonight I want to begin our study of the fruit of the Spirit by thinking about this grace of love. All of these 9 fruits which are listed here are graces given by the Spirit. What each of us needs to understand is that they are graces which are given to each and every Christian so that they will be able to fulfill their chief duties, which are to love God and love man, in that order. For the first and greatest commandment is that we would love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. And the second is that we would love our neighbor as ourselves. This is the fulfillment of the law. The fulfillment of the righteous requirement of the law (or what God expects) in the life of a Christian, comes through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our obedience to His commands. For our obedience to these commands to glorify God, they must be done in love. And while we are going about to do and keep these commands, we must specifically believe and consider 2 all-important truths. First, that Jesus Christ has gone before us in love and purchased this grace for us. And 2nd, He has given us the Holy Spirit so that we will have His love at work in our hearts and lives.

So, 1st of all – Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone before us in love and purchased this grace for us.

Turn with me over to Luke Chapter 10, verses 25-37. “And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’” “He said to him, ‘What is written in the law?’” “What is your reading of it?” “So he answered and said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.’” “And He said to him, ‘You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.’” “But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” “Then Jesus answered and said, ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.’” “Now, by chance a certain priest came down that road.” “And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.” “Likewise, a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.” “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.” “And when he saw him, he had compassion.” “So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” “On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’” So which of these three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’” “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

Here we have many good truths to think about, and so let’s take them in order as they come to us. This man who came to Jesus was “a certain lawyer”. In our day, we usually think of lawyers as being people who are skilled in understanding the political laws of the land. But, in this case, the lawyers of Israel being under God’s holy law as a Theocratic nation, they were also required to know the law of Moses in its entirety; moral, civil, and ceremonial. So this man would have known the law of Moses pretty well. At least he thought he did. He would make his boast in what he knew about the law of God. He “stood up” it says, and “he tested Jesus, saying, ‘Teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’” I think that he thought that he would be able to do whatever Jesus asked him to do to inherit it. And so, Jesus turned him back to the Scriptures, and he says to him: “What is written in the law?” “What is your reading of it?” And the lawyer answered – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,

and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And Jesus told him that this was correct; that if he would do this that he would live; meaning that he would inherit eternal life if he could keep these commandments perfectly. The man probably thought that he was keeping the law in relation to God. He probably thought that since he was keeping the ceremonial and civil laws of Israel, and the moral laws outwardly, that he was he was well on his way to eternal life. But was he? He was still a little uncertain about who his neighbor was. After all, the Jews were the people of God, and he had always thought that he had loved other Jews. And many of the teachers of Israel said that their neighbors were only those Jews who lived near them; their blood relations and people who worshiped the true God in the same way that they did. So wanting to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Since this man had come asking this question in order to “test” Him, we can believe that what he was trying to do in getting Jesus to answer this question was to discern whether Jesus believed the same way that most of the other Jews around him, especially the scribes, and Pharisees, and rulers of Israel believed; that loving your neighbor meant loving other Jews alone. But Jesus very clearly shows him that loving your neighbor is to love people around you who are in need of your help; not just those of your religious affiliation or denomination, but any particularly needy person whom God providentially places in your path. And so Jesus instructs this man with this parable. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Jesus did not say that he was a Jewish man who fell among the thieves; it could have been any nationality of man who fell into this trouble. But these thieves stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Jesus then says that a certain priest came by, and when he saw this poor man lying at the side of the road, he passed by on the other side. And likewise, a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked and passed by on the other side.

But then, a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where this man lay, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. He went to him, and he bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And then Jesus says to him in verse 36 – “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”. And the man, of course, correctly said: “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him: “Go and do likewise.” I am sure that the man had not understood, before this, that this was what it meant for him to be a neighbor, and as such, he was probably convicted of his own sin; of not treating all men in need, that he came across, with compassion and mercy. And further, he probably realized the lack of compassion which existed in the people whom he had often looked up for guidance; the priests and the Levites. He was probably having a hard time now, justifying himself in the sight of God and man. What was it that this man really needed? He needed something that he did not have in himself. He needed grace from God to pardon and cleanse his own sins, and he needed grace from God to be able to do what was right in situations exactly like the one that Jesus described. Where would he find it? He would find it through the One who was telling him the parable.

Indeed, if we look more carefully at this parable we will find that the Lord Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of all that Good Samaritan in the parable did for the man who was in this tremendous need. The man who fell into this trouble is representative of all mankind sinners; people who because of Adam’s sin have been stripped of their original righteousness (their spiritual clothing), and have been severely wounded by sin in their very nature. Isaiah 1: 5 and 6 – “Why should you be stricken again?” “You will revolt more and more.” “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.” “From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment.” All mankind now lies wounded, helpless, and dying in

the road of life, spiritually speaking. The priest and the Levite represent the law of God. They see the plight of this man but they have no compassion and no help that they can give, or will give him. The law only sees that the person who is wounded by sin is someone that he cannot help. And people who are legalists have no real compassion for those who are wounded by sin. The priest and the Levite probably thought that it was this man's own fault that he traveled on that road and had been taken advantage of by evil men. They had interests of their own to keep track of, in relation to being defiled by such men and so they passed by on the other side.

But the Lord Jesus Christ is like the Good Samaritan. You say: How can He, being a Jew, be considered a Samaritan? Well, turn over with me to John 8, verse 46 – Here we find the Lord Jesus talking to a group of men who were very much like the priest and the Levite of our parable. Jesus says: “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” “And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?” “He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” “Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’” You see, these people had heard of Jesus' being born of Mary, but they did not believe that she was a virgin. They suspect her of marital infidelity with a Samaritan, and would assert this to Jesus. Samaritans were hated by the Jews, and so was our Lord Jesus dishonored by these Jews by being called a Samaritan. But in this parable He would tell this man that a Good Samaritan could prove himself the best neighbor and friend of men, though He was falsely called one by some legalistic Jews.

The Lord Jesus “journeyed” from heaven to this fallen and sin-cursed earth. And when he came he saw the plight of fallen sinners, and He did something about it. He had compassion on sinners; people who are represented by this poor man lying in the road, weak and wounded and helpless. He died on the cross and purchased the forgiveness of their sins and the complete healing and restoration of them, both soul and body by His actions. He can therefore come to any sinner whom He chooses and bind up their wounds. He can heal the broken-hearted, and pour in oil and wine into their wounds; apply the efficacy of His blood and righteousness to them and give them the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit to heal their sin sick soul. He sets them on His own animal; the complete and finished work of His salvation wrought out by His own self-denial and sufferings which completely fulfilled the will of God in respect to all these good things done by Him for them, and He brings them to an inn which is representative of a church of Christ. Christians are travelers here in the world; they are not at their final home yet and so need to be brought to an inn to be cared well cared for in a spiritual sense. Having so helped this man, in saving him and bringing him to a church, He leaves him in the good hands of the innkeeper who represents the ministers of the church who will be giving them their food and showing them all the good things in Christ's house, and will help them come to a better understanding of what has happened to them and what Christ expects of them, now that He has saved them. He expects them to learn this same way of mercy, self-denial and love that He has so perfectly exemplified. Love is compassion, care, and kindness in action. And it is based upon what Christ has done for us and what He has shown us in loving us.

Now, 2nd – Christ has given us the Holy Spirit so that we will have His love at work in our hearts and lives.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love.” And we know what Christian love is because Christ perfectly exemplified it during the time of His earthly ministry, and has given us the Holy Spirit to teach us this way of love more perfectly so that we will exercise this holy grace of love, and in this way glorify God during the time of our stay here upon the earth. Turn with me over to 1st John 4, verses 7-13. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He

loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” “No one has seen God at any time.” “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” We see here that love is of God; it is a part of the precious imparted grace given to us by Christ through the Holy Spirit’s working. “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us,” it says in Romans 5: 5. The person who loves with this kind of love which I have described for you here tonight, is born of God and knows God. He truly sees where love comes from; that is from God having sent His Son so that we might live through Him. Christian love is the concern, the care, the kindness for other people that will lead to self-denying, God honoring, help being shown to people in need; giving them the things that they need for the life of the body if they are danger of losing it, and for the life of the soul through sharing the gospel in word and deed.