

“Flesh vs. Spirit”

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:16-26

Don Maurer

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Don: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning!

Don: A few introductory remarks. Last night I was diagnosed with OCD. Because I was at Gerry and Gail Burford’s last night celebrating Thanksgiving, and I was sitting on their rocker and counting the furniture tabs. *(Laughter)* And it came out to exactly seventy-one furniture tabs. *(Laughter)* So I had to share that with you.

And also, as I have for the past thirty-some years, I have been planning which tapes I’m going to listen to at what time on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, culminating, of course, with “The Hallelujah Chorus” at midnight on the 25th of December. *(Laughter)* So that is a classic case of OCD, I’m sure. *(Laughter)*

Also I need to let you know That I’m coming off of a raspberry chocolate chip ice cream with fudge sauce and blackberry ice tea high this morning.

Men: Wow! *(Laughter)*

Don: So if I say something off the wall, you erudite theologians are going to have to correct me, all right? *(Laughter)* Okay.

Participant: What is OCD?

Participant: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Don: Yes.

Participant: You erudite theologians that don’t know psychology.

Don: Right, that’s right. And never the twain shall meet. Okay.

The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Don: Let us pray. Our great and gracious heavenly Father, we come to You this morning with thanksgiving and praise. Lord, Thanksgiving is every day. We know that. As one of Your servants has said recently, it’s not just a day of the year, but it’s a theological act. Every day we are to be thankful. But we thank You, Father, that we were able yesterday, most of us anyway, if not all of us, to celebrate a day where we could be with family and friends and enjoy the bounty of Your great store of resources and gifts. And Father, we thank You for the answered prayer that we have heard this morning for Reed and for Joe Sweeney’s relative, and for the other people that we have prayed for. And Father, You are a God who hears and answers prayer, and we thank You. And we pray, Father, that You would instruct us, Lord in Your word, and that we would behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Don: Okay. You have on your handouts—Sig, do they have their handouts?

Sig: I hope they do.

Don: Okay, very good.

Sig: We have extras if anyone needs them.

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Don: Okay, then. In your handouts you can read Galatians 5:16-26. Follow along as I read from the English Standard Version. Galatians 5:16-26, the word of God.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Don: Amen and Amen. Well, for the past several months we’ve been studying the book of Galatians. The Galatian church had a crisis, a doctrinal and theological crisis, on its hands. The Judaizers were troubling the Galatians, insisting that they needed to observe Old Testament Jewish rituals such as circumcision to be saved. Paul in no uncertain terms says that this is another gospel. And, unlike his other epistles, where he commends them and praises them with the affection that he has for them and all the good things, he launches right into the diatribe against the false doctrines of the Judaizers.

Paul goes to great lengths to show that the gospel of grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone was not something new that he had invented, but had its roots as far back as Abraham, where he says that in Abraham, and ultimately in Christ, that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, and that *“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

And then in chapter five, which we are now studying, which we’ve been studying for about a month, Paul talks about applying this freedom in Christ to the practical living situations that they had. Bruce is very fond of saying that doctrine precedes practice. And of course, in all of Paul’s epistles, what he does is that he has a couple chapters on doctrine and the importance of teaching. Of course doctrine is something a lot of people are afraid of today. But then he uses the applications in other chapters.

And so he gives the application here. What does it mean to have freedom in Christ? What is Christian liberty all about? Are there any limitations? Are there any restraints?

And then Paul says that we are to walk in the Spirit, which is a continuous day-by-day activity. And he points out in verse seventeen something that we all struggle with, the Spirit versus the flesh—the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit.

The Westminster Confession of Faith in the chapter on sanctification says that there arises in the believer an irreconcilable war, the Spirit warring against the flesh and the flesh warring against the Spirit. Verse seventeen says that these things are contrary to one another, so that we do not do the things that we wish, either good or evil. And, of course,

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it’s a lifelong struggle. All of us know that. It’s spiritual warfare, and we know that all too well.

Now last week Bruce began to unpack for us the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. And he asked me to continue that theme today. And so what I’ll do is that I will touch briefly on the works of the flesh and go into at least an introductory mode and talk a little bit about the fruit of the Spirit. I’m sure that Bruce is going to go much more in depth into these things when he comes back next week.

Now first of all, number one on your handout. You have *the works of the flesh*. And don’t forget that the word *flesh* means the sinful nature, not just the body. We tend to think of these works of the flesh in sexual terms. And of course that’s included here, but it’s not exclusively this. Or gluttonous terms, like all the food I had yesterday. I don’t know the line between pleasure and gluttony. But nevertheless—

Participant: You crossed it. (*Laughter*)

Don: Yes, I’m sure I did. But how do you know? (*Laughter*) Boy, I’ll tell you, I guess he thinks he has words of knowledge now. (*Laughter*) But anyway it includes much more than that, as we’re going to see. And the NIV translates the word *flesh* or *sarx* in the Greek as “sinful nature.” And I think that’s the proper way to understand this.

So as Bruce said last week, these works of the flesh are divided into four categories. And the first one is *sexual*. “*Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality.*” And other translations say “uncleanness” or “lewdness.”

Sexual immorality, of course, is any kind of sexual activity outside of the God-given and God-regulated bonds of Biblical marriage. I have to say Biblical marriage because the Supreme Court thought they redefined it a year ago.

Impurity is anything that would stimulate thoughts or actions in that regard. Sensuality or pornography gets involved here.

And of course the first century in which Paul lived and more and more our culture today, are awash in such things. You know, there was a show on NBC about a year ago that lasted only one season, thank God. It was called “The New Normal.” And I think it dealt with just about every kind of expression of sexuality. This was the theme of that show.

You know, I remember when I was growing up that when a man and a woman had sex before marriage it was a shameful thing. It was a scandalous thing. They talked about out of wedlock, or illegitimate children. That was a scandalous thing. Now it’s almost expected! It’s almost the norm! You’re weird if you don’t have sex till after you’re married. If homosexuality and so-called gay marriage and so-called transgenderism is challenged in any way, it’s regarded as hate speech more and more in our culture.

It’s interesting that Paul lists these vices first, as he does in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6. Would anyone like to venture a guess as to why that might be? Why does Paul mention sexual sins at the head of the list? There’s no right or wrong answer here.

Participant: It was the most pervasive in the culture?

Don: Okay. I think that’s a real good point, Sig. Yes, most pervasive in the culture. Okay. Anybody else?

Participant: They affect the body, the soul and the spirit.

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Don: Thank you very much, Charlie. I think that’s absolutely right. It’s foundational. It parallels our relationship to God, doesn’t it? Paul says in 1 Corinthians six that “*all other sins are outside a man’s body.*” But when a man sins sexually, he sins against his own body in a very profound way.

And of course marriage has many uses—companionship, reproduction. But it’s also supposed to be a mirror of Christ and the church. And so you can see why Satan has perverted this from the beginning.

I mean, what do we have in Genesis chapter four? After Cain killed Abel and the ungodly line is built up, we have polygamy. Not too many chapters later we have homosexuality, Sodom and Gomorrah. We have incest, all in the first nineteen chapters of Genesis. And one of the people involved in that was a righteous man, Lot, incredibly enough. Sexual sins.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes, Sig?

Sig: I don’t want to put you on the spot, but—

Don: Yeah, you do. (*Laughter*)

Sig: I’ve not seen a passage in the Old Testament where it talks about going from multiple wives like our buddy Solomon. He had seven hundred wives, is that right?

Don: Yes, and three hundred concubines.

Sig: Okay. I don’t want to say that out loud. (*Laughter*) To the point where God says, “Hey, guys, it’s one man and one woman.” I mean, when did that become enforced or instituted, or, you know—

Don: Genesis two. (*Laughter*)

Sig: Well I know. But it seems like it was pervasive throughout the culture. It never seemed like someone tried to stand up.

Don: Well, in Malachi chapter two you have the Lord saying, “You have forsaken the wife of your youth,” not the wives. Marriage between one man and one woman has always been the standard. I mean granted, God didn’t strike polygamists dead. He was very patient and merciful. Nevertheless, that was never to be God’s standard.

Sig: How do you know that? Just from the Genesis passage of Adam and Eve?

Don: Yes, and from the Malachi passage I quoted. “You have forsaken the wife of your youth.” Or in Proverbs, many of the passages there against adultery, that kind of thing.

Sig: Yes. I understand the adultery part. But if they’re married—I mean, was Solomon married to all seven hundred women?

Don: Well, if it says it, I have no idea, brother.

Sig: I never knew. It’s like all of a sudden, in the New Testament era, it’s one man and one woman.

Don: No.

Sig: Which I agree with. I didn’t know how it came about.

Don: It came about because of the sinful imaginations of man.

Sig: Thank you.

Don: That’s about all I can say there, brother. Anyway, thank you.

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Okay, we go now to the next category, *the religious category*—idolatry and sorcery. Idolatry, of course, is the worship of or trusting in something or someone who is not God, worshipping a false god. And it’s interesting to me that there is a connection. And Paul does it here too, as he does in Romans 1. He connects idolatry and sexual immorality. It’s not a coincidence that the people of Israel in the Old Testament combined idol worship and sexual immorality, imitating the pagans around them.

But, you know, the scary thing about idolatry is that it’s so subtle. It’s possible to be involved in it without knowing it. You know, we can flatter ourselves and think, “Well, I don’t worship Baal. I don’t worship a statue of Buddha, or whatever. So I’m all right.”

Well, no. We can be involved in idolatry in many sophisticated ways. Bruce defined idolatry as desiring or trusting something or someone to give you ultimate joy or fulfillment, which only God can give—even things that are good and legitimate in and of themselves, like Bruce’s desire that he talked about two weeks ago, to be a father. That’s a good thing in and of itself. But he wanted it above everything else. For some people, for women, it might be the body of a model. Of course, then, women suffer bulimia or anorexia. Or “Oh, I’d like that new car.” We were talking on the way about worshipping our sports heroes, the Steelers or whatever. For me, oh man! Internet radio! I wish those stations would come back on that are off the air. We think that something or someone can fulfill us when only God can do that.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Could you sort of recite the thing you just referred to about Bruce wanting to be a father, and you asked the question. How do you reconcile that? Can you repeat what he said?

Don: Oh boy, let me think here.

Participant: Sorry.

Don: No, that’s okay. I asked him where you draw the line between a legitimate desire to be a father and where it crosses over into idolatry. And boy, let me think. I believe he said that he was obsessed with it. He felt miserable. He wanted that and it consumed his thoughts night and day. He wasn’t happy until that would take place. Then he had to just eventually give it over to the Lord and say, “Thy will be done.” Of course, Dick, you could always refer to the transcript and you’ll find out what he has to say. (*Laughter*)

Dick: Buddy, you’re acting like your friend.

Transcriber’s Note: A mutual friend. (*Laughter*)

Don: Which friend? Never mind. (*Laughter*)

Participant: He did not have any biological children, right?

Don: No. Exactly.

Participant: And I think that’s what he wanted. His passion was to have his own biological children.

Don: Yes. That’s exactly right. It was just basically giving it over to God. The Lord did convict him of that. He said that he struggled with this for years.

So next we have *sorcery*. And Bruce defined it as doing the works of men by the power of demons—the occult, séances. I have no problem per se with Halloween, with

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kids dressing up in costumes and getting candy. But if you’ve noticed, over the years there just seems to be a real preoccupation during that time with ghosts and demons and witches and all kinds of stuff like that, witchcraft and that kind of thing. Superstition, astrology and drugs are part of that too. As a matter of fact, I understand that the Greek word there for sorcery is a word from which we get the English word *pharmacy*. So any attempt to achieve well-being or something that only God can give through demonic means is sorcery. Now, of course, that excludes caffeine and chocolate! (*Laughter*)

Participant: For you, yes.

Don: But we are all familiar with the horrors of addiction in our society. I’ve even had to deal with that. It really hit home with a cousin of mine who committed suicide over a month ago. He was in horrible pain, addicted to pain meds, with catastrophic results for the rest of the family. But anyway, I’ve heard of so many overdoses, even around here, where people who had such promising careers died at young ages because of drug overdoses. It’s a horrible thing. They are part of the works of the flesh.

Okay. C. on your handout—*relational sins*. And there are a whole bunch of these here. Enmity or hatred. Strife, or quarreling all the time. Jealousy, being angry or sad at the good fortune of others. You know, it’s one thing, and it’s almost understandable, that you don’t like someone because of the way they treat you. But it’s even a worse sin to be envious or jealous of somebody when they receive something that you wish you had. That is not a good thing.

Fits of anger or wrath, as the older translation says.

Now at this point you may be asking this. But doesn’t God say that He is a jealous God? Isn’t wrath one of the attributes of God? How could those things be bad if those are attributes of God?

Well, we have to keep in mind that the jealousy and the wrath of God are not like ours. Ours is inherently sinful, even when we have righteous anger or righteous jealousy.

For example, I hope that those of you who are husbands are jealous for your wives. If your wife said, “Oh honey, you know, I prefer the company of this other man,” I don’t think you’d say, “Oh, that’s okay, honey. Whatever makes you happy.” No, I think that you would be rightly jealous and rightly very upset, because you want the exclusive love of your wife.

But God’s jealousy and God’s anger are good things. They’re not these sudden irrational outbursts of anger or jealousy. He’s jealous because He knows what harm it can do to us. Of course it’s for his glory, but He knows the harm it can do to us if we have other gods. So I think that we need to keep that in mind.

Rivalries. We’re not talking about the rivalry of sports teams, although that can get out of hand too. These factions, these dissensions! I think of the political scene this past year. Oh, my goodness, this election year! The vitriolic language that was exchanged between the Presidential candidates, and the aftermath of the protests and everything!

Sure, we’re passionate about what we believe. I’ve gotten into discussions and even arguments, and I’ve had to ask the Lord to forgive me for raising my voice about such things. But I’ve heard on the news about people whose family relationships were severed because of who they voted for, that they weren’t invited to Thanksgiving dinner! I mean,

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my goodness, and death threats in schools because someone’s father voted for a certain candidate! But this is the manifestation of the works of the flesh.

We have divisions. Other translations say “heresies”—false doctrines, unorthodox opinions.

There was a survey by Ligonier Ministries a couple months ago entitled “The State of Theology In America,” and it’s very revealing. They interviewed thousands of people.

Two-thirds of Americans apparently believe that people are by nature good. Now of course that’s probably nothing new. But it goes directly against what the Bible teaches. One-third of these people believe that they will have a second chance to get right with God after they die.

Participant: Wow!

Don: There’s nothing in the Bible that supports that. Over seventy per cent of Americans believe that their personal efforts contribute to their justification and their salvation.

Now is there effort involved in the Christian life? Yes. Look at 2 Peter 1 and other passages. Bruce talked about that two weeks ago. But it doesn’t merit anything before God. We don’t give ourselves credit for any of that. It’s faith alone in Christ alone. And that’s a gift.

And over 44 per cent of professing evangelicals believe that Jesus is not equal with the Father. That is severe. That is serious. Over 80 per cent of Americans disagree that their sins merit eternal damnation.

Now folks, we’ve got our work cut out for us if these statistics are true. And unfortunately, in many churches these things are not taught. And if you belong to a church where these things are taught, and the message of salvation is preached and true doctrine is there, you are blessed indeed. This is a sin in the church as well as the culture.

And then we have envy, and some translations add “murder.” Envy is a step below jealousy. It’s wishing that you had what someone else has and doing anything to get it, like Ahab and Jezebel did with Naiboth’s vineyard, killing him in order to get it. Envy leads to murder.

And then we have *the social sins* of drunkenness and orgies and things like these. It’s very interesting to me that the mainstream thinking of our culture today is that drunkenness is no longer a sin. It’s a disease. Now I don’t want to go into all the physiological and psychological aspects of that. There are some people who may have a tendency and may be predisposed to that sin. Nevertheless, drunkenness is condemned in Scripture.

And then Paul says this, a warning. Those who do or practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now Paul repeats this warning in 1 Corinthians 6, Galatians 5, Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. And then John repeats it in Revelation 21 and 22. How many times does God have to say something before we’ll believe it? Sadly, I’m sure that this is neglected in many churches in this country.

Now let me just say this before we go on to the fruit of the Spirit. Are Christians capable of any of these sins? Absolutely. We are capable of any one or all of these sins. We may even struggle with them. But we must repent. And to practice these things, Paul

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says, people will not inherit the kingdom of God. So before I go on to the fruit of the Spirit, are there any further questions or comments?

Participant: When you say that people who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God—

Don: I didn't say it. Paul said it. God said it. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Okay. When it was said by Paul, *(laughter)*, my question is that if I would read those things—and I know there are other parts of Scripture that remind us about God's mercy—

Don: Yes.

Participant: And His grace—

Don: Yes.

Participant: But the idea is that, as you just mentioned and I want to clarify, the difference is repentance, huh?

Don: Yes.

Participant: If we're not repentant of these things, or when we're made aware of these things, or when I realize that I can't keep doing this,— I mean some of us might have gotten a little drunk last night. We had family, we had good food, we had wine—

Don: Sure. I might have eaten a little too much. I didn't feel that I did. Sig, I think—

Sig: I didn't see gluttony on there.

Don: I didn't either. *(Laughter)* Thank you. Get me off the hook. *(Laughter)* There are other parts of Scripture. But no. I think, Sig, that Psalm 51 is a very good illustration of repentance. David is confronted with his sins of adultery and murder by Nathan the prophet. And he repents deeply.

You know, when it's brought to your attention through the reading of Scripture, and “Oh, I shouldn't have done that.” Is your attitude “Well I don't care. I like it. I'm going to continue doing it,” or “Lord, please help me. Yes, I struggle. Yes, Lord, I have a weakness in that area. And Father, I confess this sin.” May we do it again at some point? Yes. “Lord, I confess it. Please forgive me.” And of course it has to be sincere and heartfelt. Sometimes we need to repent of our repentance. “Lord, I can't do this. Please help me, Lord Jesus! Help my unbelief!”

I think that's the difference. You don't want it. You hate it. Lord, if I don't hate it enough, please cause me to. Whereas reckless abandonment—“I'm just going to do this. I don't care what the Bible says.” I think that's the key there. I really do. That's what repentance is all about.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Is this where the conscience, the second dispensation comes in? God gave every man a conscience.

Don: True. Yes, He certainly did.

Participant: Hard hearts do occur.

Don: Yes they do. That's for sure. It's scary. I think that's the key, Sig. I hope that helps. And if you're truly His, God won't let you continue permanently in sin. You'll be

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chastised. Something will happen where He will bring you back to your senses, and that’s a good thing.

Participant: It kind of goes back to that word *practice*.

Don: Exactly, Kirk.

Kirk: You know, it’s a way of life.

Don: Right.

Kirk: A lifestyle.

Don: A habitual lifestyle.

Kirk: A condition.

Don: That’s exactly right. Very good.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: You know, as you’re reading through this list here, one thing that I’m reminded of is how pervasive all these things are in our society.

Don: Oh my, yes.

Participant: It’s in the movies. It’s on television. It’s there in the people that we work with. And not to be accepting of these things often puts us in conflict with those around us, even—

Don: Oh, yes! You’re intolerant, you know? You’re a homophobe, or just out of step, or whatever. Yes, indeed. And how do you think Paul felt in the first century? Absolutely right. Go ahead.

Participant: One last thing, and I think it might answer Sig’s question. Bruce always says that his biggest sin is presumption on God.

Don: Oh, amen.

Participant: And I think where you’re at and what really speaks to that is that we know these things. Yet maybe we have that extra piece of turkey. Maybe we have an extra drink. Maybe we—

Don: Cherish that lustful thought.

Participant: Whatever it is. And it’s easier to point out the sins that we don’t have than the sins that we do have.

Don: Sure—to compare ourselves to others. “At least I don’t do that!”

Participant: Right.

Don: But look at what you do, yes.

Participant: And I think that really we have to look at the two tables of the law. Are we loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? And the answer to that is no. But striving towards it, always being repentant, always praying and always striving to be Christlike.

Don: Amen.

Participant: It’s really by grace. We don’t have to work for justification, but we have to work with the Spirit—

Don: Amen. I like what John MacArthur says. Sanctification is not the perfection of our lives, but it is the direction of our lives. And I think that is very well said indeed.

Participant: Don?

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Don: Yes?

Participant: Where does fear come in, the fear of God?

Don: Well Ted talked about that, right? The fear of God is very important, isn't it? Could you speak louder please, Bill?

Bill: It's more important in many ways than love. If you don't have the fear,--

Don: I wouldn't say that it's more important. I think they go hand in hand.

Bill: Yes. Love is more important than anything.

Don: Well—

Bill: Fear has to come first.

Don: Well fear does have to come first, and it's still there for us. But it's also with love, knowing that the same God that we fear, the same God who is able to cast both body and soul into hell is also the God who is our Father and merciful to us, and that we will not be condemned if we're in Christ. So we've got to keep both of those in mind. I would refer you back to Ted's lessons because he did an excellent job on that topic.

We're going to go overtime, guys. Let me just warn you. But this is a great discussion. Let's at least start on the fruit of the Spirit. Let me just give a few introductory remarks.

First of all, *this is something supernatural*. This is not natural. We all know people who are nice people, who put us to shame in some instances, who put Christians to shame. There are unbelievers who are very pleasant to be with and to associate with. But that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about the fruit of the Spirit that only a Christian can have.

And it's *fruit*, not fruits. It's fruit singular, not fruits plural. It's one package. Now of course we can certainly ask the Lord to improve us on our patience, to improve us on our gentleness, or whatever. But it's all given by the Holy Spirit. And when we're filled with the Spirit, as Bruce says, “be being kept filled,” that is how we have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

So let's talk here first of all about the fruit of the Spirit, which is *love*. And that is foundational. That is absolutely foundational. It encompasses everything. It's the culmination. A lot of these virtues that we have here in this list are the products of love. Sig, would you read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 for us,. Please?

Sig: Yes. *“Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

Don: Okay. Thank you very much. I'm not going to go into all this now. You can refer to the lesson that I taught two years ago on that if you want a further exposition of this. But the characteristics of this love is that it is a supernatural love.

Let me just give you two illustrations, one from the past and a current one. I may have shared this with you before. After World War II, Corrie ten Boom, after everything had cooled off—and I believe this may have even been in the '50s or '60s, she was speaking in Europe on the topic of forgiveness and how important it is. Well, little did she know

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that in the audience was one of her S.S. guards from one of the Nazi concentration camps that was responsible for the death of her sister and Corrie’s mistreatment.

Afterwards, this man came up to her and said, “I was one of those S.S. guards. Do you remember me? Can you please forgive me for what I’ve done?”

Well, at first her throat tightened and her stomach was in knots. But by the sheer force of her will and by the power of the Holy Spirit she said, “Yes. I forgive you.” And they embraced and they both wept together. That’s love. That’s the fruit of the Spirit.

A couple weeks ago one of the pastors of this church (Christ Church At Grove Farm), Jamie Kendrew, gave a very moving testimony, and I have his permission to share it.

His father was what the world calls an alcoholic. Alcohol, according to Jamie, was his god. He kept beating his wife all the time, beating her senseless. Eventually the wife filed for divorce. He was arrested one time for this because she was almost killed. But somehow by a fluke of the system he was set free.

They got a divorce. But one night he came knocking on her door, came in, beat her unconscious and raped her. And Jamie was the result of that horrible act.

I don’t know how much contact Jamie had with his father. But he learned one day that his father was in the hospital near death. And he had many angry thoughts in his mind. But after the Holy Spirit convinced him of the right thing to do, he and his brother went. He may have been semi-conscious; I don’t know. But they went and shared the gospel with him. That is love. That is the fruit of the Spirit. That is not natural. That is supernatural.

Okay. We have *joy*. Let’s see. Roger, would you read John 15:11 and 16:13, please?

Roger: I didn’t bring my reader.

Don: Oh. You don’t have a handout?

Participant: He has one. He needs glasses.

Don: Oh, I’m sorry. Okay, would someone else—

Participant: John 15:11. *“These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”* And John 16:13 says, *“So also you have sorrow now. But I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”*

Don: Okay. Thank you, Brian. Wow! Powerful words! And, you know, it’s interesting that in Luke’s version of the account where Jesus had just upbraided the cities of Tyre and Sidon—“Woe to you, Tyre and Sidon! It will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you on the day of judgment.” But then it says, “Jesus, at that time filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” You know, even at times when He was expressing His righteous indignation, or even the night before His crucifixion, He still had that abiding joy.

And what does He say? He says in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you.” Why? So that you don’t go to hell, or because I’ll be disappointed in you if you don’t obey My commandments? No. *“That My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.”* He wants that for you! He wants that for me! He wants that for all of us!

Now what is the nature of this joy? I’ve said it before. It’s not happiness the way the world defines it, because of circumstances. When things go well for me, I’m happy. I was

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happy yesterday being with family and friends at Thanksgiving. But, you know, when things don't go well for me, then I'm not happy.

But this joy is different, isn't it? It's steadfast. It's abiding blessedness and contentment which lasts forever because it is rooted and grounded in Christ. And it's something that we can have when things are good, like last night at Thanksgiving, or when things aren't good, like when you've been diagnosed with cancer, or you've lost a job, or for people around the world who are being tortured for Christ. It's that kind of thing that lasts, all right?

Peace. Kirk, would you read John 14:27 and 16:33 for us?

Kirk: *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* And then John 16:33. *“I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Don: Okay, thank you. Oh, just blessed, blessed words, aren't they? Now this peace is not just the absence of conflict. It's not like, “Well, we have a truce here. But I won't speak to you for two or three weeks. And if you cross that boundary, if you push my buttons, then the war is going to start all over again,” like the world's peace treaties, right?

Or the Mizpah benediction between Laban and Jacob. *“The LORD watch between you and me while we are absent one from another.”* That has turned into a benediction. But that's not the way it originally was. That's not what it originally meant.

But it's this abiding contentment even when things aren't going well. Jesus had peace and joy knowing that they were going to kill Him.

Charles and John Wesley were on a sinking ship. And the Moravians who were a part of that ship were at peace. And they said to them, “How can you be at such peace when your lives are in danger? You're about to drown!”

And they said, “Because we know that we will be with the Lord.” And that resulted in the conversion of John and Charles Wesley. It's the peace that passes understanding. And I think we've all experienced that to a certain extent as Christians. It's a blessed, blessed thing.

Patience or long-suffering may be an even better way to put that. Bill McCoy, could you read Psalm 37:7-9, please?

Bill: *“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices. Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off. But those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.”*

Don: Okay. Thank you. It's not always easy to wait upon the Lord, is it? Augustine's mother prayed for her son for twenty years before he came to the Lord and became the outstanding theologian in the first few centuries of the church. How patient are we, and how persevering are we in prayer? It's not easy to be patient with others, is with your kids, with your wives, with other people that you know.

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But our Lord was. How many times did the apostles say, “I want to be the greatest?” They were the Muhammed Allis of their day. “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God?”

And Jesus had to constantly, patiently exhort them about that subject. A lot of times I’ll think, “Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now!” (*Laughter*)

Kindness. Goodness. E. on your handout. I think those are pretty self-explanatory.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Real quick. With anger, is there any—I struggle with this.

Don: Don’t we all?

Participant: I think you used the words *righteous anger*. But are there places for the appropriate use of anger?

Don: Yes.

Participant: Or is it always wrong?

Don: No. Ephesians 4—I believe it’s Ephesians 4:12—says, “*Be angry, but do not sin.*” Now I think a lot of times we are angry and we do sin. But social injustice should anger us. Heresy, false doctrine should anger us. Our own stubbornness, our own sinfulness should anger us. But when it deteriorates into wrath or selfish motives, which much too often I know I have, then that is when it’s wrong, or when it hurts others, etc. But I think that there is a legitimate anger.

Participant: I often think of Jesus coming into the temple with the money changers.

Don: Yes.

Participant: A lot of anger. Of course, I never want to do that, to predispose or put myself in His position, to think that I’m equal to Him.

Don: Right.

Participant: I want to tone it down. Is this appropriate anger I’m feeling?

Don: Sure. And we all struggle with that. We all struggle. Why would Scripture say, “*Be angry and do not sin*” if there were not appropriate anger?

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Would Hosea and Gomer be a good example for men to read about?

Don: Yes, that’s right. For jealousy? Absolutely! Yes, right.

Participant: Even if she goes into town as a prostitute, he’d go get her.

Don: That’s right. I’m sure he was angry. I’m sure he was very angry and upset. But what does he do? He goes and does everything he can, even reducing himself to a slave, auctioning her and bringing her back to illustrate the love that God has for His people. Absolutely. Good.

Participant: Don, it’s a bit of a challenge, if you look at how the American church conveys Christ.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Participant: He’s this lovely, bird on His shoulder, beautiful flowing hair—you know, this super nice guy. But if you read Scripture, the disciples were scared to ask Him questions. The disciples had (*unclear.*)

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Don: Uh-huh.

Participant: So although He is ultimately love, boy, there was a side of Him so that people feared Him.

Don: Well, that’s true. And we’re going to talk a little about the gentleness later on. But you’re absolutely right. He’s the Lamb of God, but He is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* is illustrated. He’s not safe, but He’s good. So you’re right on.

And I really think that comes into sharp focus at this time of year, when many people focus on the birth of Christ, the baby Jesus. And of course less and less people are singing about that now. But I remember Andy Williams and Perry Como and Frank Sinatra would sing about the baby Jesus, but nothing about the Lord of Lords and the other hymns and things like that. You’re right, although we don’t want to get rid of the gentleness of Christ either, which we’ll talk about in a few minutes. But thank you for bringing that to my attention.

Participant: Wasn’t the Flood a sign of God’s anger?

Don: Indeed!—the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the swallowing up of Dathan and Abiram, the plagues on Israel, the judgment to come. Absolutely.

Okay. *Faithfulness*. Who should I call on here? Sig, I’ll call on you again. Lamentations 3:21-24.

Sig: *“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness.”*

Don: Oh, wow! What a tremendous passage! *“Great is Your faithfulness”*—a chief characteristic or attribute of God that is so important in contrast to the way that we act. Sig, would you also read 2 Timothy 2:13 on the handout?

Sig: *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”*

Don: Okay. How is it and why is it that we can believe and trust God’s promises for eternal life, that we’re not afraid that sometime in the aeons of eternity He’s going to say, “Well, I’ve revoked that. Eternal life is coming to an end and you’re going to hell because of what you deserve.” No, we believe Him because we trust Him, because He is faithful and His promises are faithful and ever sure. How can we believe that all things work together for our good because we are called according to His purpose? Because of His faithfulness, unlike ourselves. I mean, just look at the divorce statistics in this country as an example of that.

Or business dealings. Someone had told me before that there are a lot of companies that refuse to hire Christians because they think they can just take advantage of things. It’s a shameful thing. Of all people, we’re supposed to be the ones who are faithful, right?

Now I think that the statement in 2 Timothy 2 is a double-edged sword. Yes, He is faithful to us, even when we’re not as faithful as we should be. But He is also faithful to the faithless. I don’t believe there is such a thing as a faithless Christian. And He is faithful to carry out His judgment to those who are faithless, who are unbelievers. The faithfulness of God is very important.

Okay. *Gentleness*, or *meekness*. Dick Clouser, would you read Matthew 5:5?

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Dick: *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* Do you (also) want Matthew 11:28-30?

Don: Yes.

Dick: Matthew 11:28-30. *“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Don: Oh, precious, precious Scriptures! Now meekness or gentleness, as Bruce has pointed out so many times, is not weakness. It’s not unmanly. It’s strength under control. And of course Bruce has all kinds of illustrations from his personal experience of how that was applied in his life.

But I think, for example, of the night before Christ’s crucifixion and of Peter. “I’m going to use that sword!” I’m convinced that he was going for the man’s head. But he went to the high priest’s servant and cut off his ear. But what does Christ do? He heals him. He restores that ear. “Put your sword away, Peter.” So that is strength under control. That is meekness.

We find other examples of that in the Old Testament, like King David. A couple months ago, when they were writing bios for people in my church. They had a column in our newsletter entitled, “Meet the Member.” I was one of them. And one of the questions was, who is your favorite Old Testament character? And I said King David, because he was just the ultimate man, an example of how we should be with the struggles and failures that we have. He was a man after God’s own heart. He was a warrior. Yet he was also a poet. He was strong and brave, but he could weep at the death of Jonathan and even his enemy, Saul. You know, it’s very, very great.

And even though Brian brought up the fact that so many people regard Jesus as this gentle, meek character, let’s not forget that He is gentle. He’s both the Lion of Judah and He’s also the Lamb of God who submitted to the Father, who submitted to being crucified. That wasn’t weak. That was manly. That was for our sake.

He was strict with the Pharisees. But He was gentle and tender with the woman at the well, or the immoral woman in Luke’s gospel who became aware of her sin and wept at His feet and kissed Him, and wiped the tears with her hair. Jesus commends her for that.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: One thing off of king David and his gentleness. If you remember, after his son and he had that split and he was driven out of town, there was one from Saul’s tribe. I can’t remember his name. But he was throwing dust and stones and rocks at him.

Don: Shimei.

Participant: Shimei. Everyone around him said, “Let’s take him out!” And he goes, “No, no, no. Maybe this is God’s will. This is what he’s doing.” And whenever he came back, you know how he’s all repentant. And then they say, “Let’s kill him!” And David says, “No, no, no. He might keep me humble.”

Don: Yes. And God will deal with it.

Participant: Yes. And part of that gentleness is remembering that God is sovereign.

Don: Amen.

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Participant: And not trusting in our own results, which might help us in our anger and how we—

Don: Exactly, Brian. That’s very good. And of course, Saul also was his enemy and he wanted to kill him for ten years. And yet David refused. He tried it and his conscience smote him. He refused to do it. Good point, very good point.

Did it ever occur to you that Jesus was the only Person who could rightly say that He was humble and gentle and get away with it? (*Laughter*) If we were to say that, then we would lose our humility. If you say you’re humble, then you’ve just betrayed the fact that you’re not, right? But because Jesus is the perfect God-Man, He could say it and we can rejoice. Yes, we come to a Savior whom we are to fear. But we also come to a Savior who is patient and loving and gentle and humble, and will be patient with us and love us to the end. That’s wonderful.

And then we have, finally, *self-control* or *temperance*. Brian, Titus 2:11-14, please.

Brian: *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and passions, to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, who are zealous for good works.”*

Don: Okay. It’s the exact opposite of the mindset of our culture, right? And it’s our natural mindset. We want it now. Was it the old Budweiser commercial, or Miller Lite? I can’t remember. “Go with gusto.” Or the Grass Roots Song. Sig, I couldn’t get away without mentioning some song from the ‘60s, right? “Sha la la la la, live for today.”

No. Self-control; delayed gratification. We deny ourselves—not in the sense of becoming austere or monks or anything like that. But we deny ourselves because we look for future glory. We look for greater and more wonderful and more lasting happiness, pleasures at God’s right hand forevermore.

Obviously, Paul says, *“Against such things there is no law.”* There is no law against kindness, goodness, faithfulness. And even though the world persecutes Christians, deep down in their hearts I think they would love it if everyone were like that. There is no law against those things.

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” It’s a daily activity. The only way that we do that is to walk by the Spirit by the grace of God. And, as Philippians 1:6 says, *“God is faithful and He will do it.”*

Let us pray. Our Father and our God, we thank You that You have changed us, that You have regenerated us, that You have brought us to Yourself. And Lord, however imperfectly—and we know from our old man that it is imperfect—nevertheless, we do have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. And may it manifest, Lord Jesus, more and more as we grow each day in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and that the works of the flesh would be put to death in our lives until that great day when we are perfected, and we are with You forever. We ask it in Jesus’ name. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.”

Participant: Hey, Don?

Don: Yes?

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I have a question for you. You said that sanctification is not something in our lives, but the direction of our life. What was the first—

Don: Not the perfection of our life; it’s the direction of our life.

Participant: It is not the perfection?

Don: There won’t be perfection until we die. We won’t be perfect in this life.

Participant: Sanctification is not the perfection of our life.

Don: It’s the perfection of our life.