

"Now the fruit of the Spirit is love." The first thing mentioned is love, and certainly the preaching of the pastor should engender love in his heart and in the hearts of his people. I've known people who stood very strongly for the Word of God. Nobody could stand more strongly for it than I do, assure you. I've known people who have hated the efforts of Satan to lead people astray from acceptance of the truth of the Bible, and nobody can hate it worse than I do. But the Lord wants us to show forth a love toward all who believe--no matter how muddled their minds may be. He wants us to protect his people from unbelief, but he wants a spirit of love that shows itself in our words, in our life, in our actions. This is the first fruit of the Spirit and it is a vital part of the purpose of preaching--is to develop this fruit in the hearts and lives of those who hear us. "The fruit of the Spirit is love."

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. Well, what's left over to love anybody else then? That is this does not mean that our hearts have only love for God, but it means that our whole heart is devoted to love to God but also devoted to love to other human beings. We should love the Lord. We should love other human beings. Love is certainly a very vital part of the work of the Christian minister.

Love joy, peace. Surely peace is something very vital. It is very easy for the world to get the idea that we are always fighting that we are always arguing about doctrine. I believe we should stand foursquare on the great central doctrines of Scripture. I believe that on the lesser doctrines, the doctrines that are less emphasized, or presented less clearly we should present our view, but present it in love. We should not draw lines to shut out those who truly believe in Christ though we should make it clear they are allowing themselves to be used as instruments to lead people away from the Word of Christ.

We should show peace in our lives, in our actions. Of course we need to have the peace of God in our lives. We ought to hear a great deal about these fruit of the Spirit--love, peace. But I wonder how often we think of the fact that it says, The fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace. Joy is mentioned separately. How often do we preach about joy? How big a part does that play in our lives, in our attitudes? or in what we are engendering in others? The Apostle mentions it right after love. Mentions it even ahead of peace! Joy!. I've been looking through the NT to see how often joy is mentioned. I find that the Greek word Chara is translated joy 53 times in the NT, and 3 times it is translated gladness. How can we have joy in a world that is in the situation it's in today? How have joy in a world in which wickedness is spreading? It's wonderful to see 52 people rescued from being prisoners in Iran. Wonderful. But you know I think there are at least 1000 people murdered in the US every month! Recently I was reading a man's autobiography. He told of moving into NY a few years ago. He said when I moved into NY there was only one murder a day on the average! When I left it had risen to 4 murders a day!