

Ministry - the Fruit of the Spirit

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon emphasizes love as the first fruit of the Spirit and the importance of the Holy Spirit's role in empowering believers to fulfill God's commandments.

Duration: 34:37

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:34, John 3:5, Acts 2:38, Romans 8:9, Romans 13:10, Galatians 5:22-23

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that as humans, we are made in the image and likeness of God and that God loves us. He explains that love is not just an emotion, but a purposeful action to seek the highest good and happiness for ourselves and others. The preacher illustrates that our emotions are not under our control, but our thoughts and choices are. He references Matthew 22:34-40, where Jesus teaches that the greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The preacher concludes by highlighting that the fruit of the Spirit, including love, is not automatic, but requires our active participation as Spirit-filled believers.

Transcript

Can I touch it? Last time I touched it, it came off, so I'm a little careful. Turn to Matthew chapter 22, 22nd chapter of Matthew, verse 34. But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silent, they were gathered together, and one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? And Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, 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 neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Father, we come this morning to consider the fruit of the Spirit, love. We ask that our minds may be quickened. We may understand that no scripture is a private, separate, isolated interpretation, but it all relates to everything that's gone before and all that follows after, that it might be a complete and a cohesive whole.

And we're asking thou touch our minds and enable us to grasp the implications of the fruit of the Spirit, in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We've been talking about the spiritual life in these days.

Last Sunday we talked about being filled with the Spirit, the evidence of being filled with the Spirit. Not last Sunday, but Sunday that I last spoke to you on the theme. On Palm Sunday I was in Flint, Michigan, and last Lord's Day we were considering the resurrection of Christ.

Now today we're back on the theme of so great salvation. And I remind you that we have talked about two crises in the Christian life, the crisis of being born of the Spirit, and then subsequently the crisis of being filled with the Spirit. Now everyone born of the Spirit has the Spirit of Christ.

He has joined in quickening our natures, for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But we saw that the Lord Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and yet at his baptism, even though the Spirit of God was in Christ, he came upon him. It was an anointing for service, and that everything done by Christ in the three years of his public ministry was done by the Father through the Spirit.

Now he could have done it all as son, because as son he had created the world and sustained the world. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. But if he had performed his ministry in his own essential power as son, he never could have said, as the Father sent me, so send I you.

But because he accepted the limitations of his humanity, and relinquished the right to act in his essential deity as son. Now notice my words very carefully. He did not relinquish his deity.

He relinquished the right to act in his essential deity as son. And being found in fashion as a man, he accepted the limitations of his manhood, his humanity, and he presented his body to the Father, and the Spirit of God came upon him, even while the Spirit of God was in him. Now think of that for a moment, because you're going to hear people say, well if when you're born again the Spirit of God comes to bring life, you've got all there is to get.

You've just got everything then. Well, remember Christ was indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and yet the Spirit of God came upon him. At the same time, he was in him.

Now, you explain it. How can you explain the omnipresence of God? How can you explain that the Holy Spirit is here, and he's in all the other, he's everywhere. He's in Australia, Brother Rose, he's in all the other parts of the world.

He's everywhere, but he's here, and he can be in us and not come upon us. We saw from the statement made by Dr. Tozer years ago, everybody filled with the Spirit knows it. Everybody filled with the Spirit knows when, and everyone filled with the Spirit was filled suddenly.

So we're talking about the Spirit-filled believer, the one who's subsequent to being born of God has come to the place of identification with Christ in death, death to himself. I'm crucified with him, buried with him, quickened with him, raised with him, seated with him, and I present my body to him as a living sacrifice. And then, in answer to faith, clothed upon with the Holy Spirit.

Now, this is nothing new. This didn't begin 30 years ago. This truth has been held by the church ever since Peter stood before the people that day, and he said the promises to you and to your children and to them that are far off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call, and all through the centuries.

This has been the teaching. The strange and old John Wesley talked about entire sanctification, and up in Scotland, Richard Baxter talked about the saints' everlasting rest. But if you analyze what Wesley said, and you analyze what Richard Baxter said, and compare it to what we're saying today, it's one and the same.

Subsequent to being born of God, there's a privilege. That wasn't that what John said, remember? He said, there cometh one after me who's preferred before me. He it is that baptizes you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

We saw that it's the work of the Holy Spirit to present Christ to the sinner. He's the one that awakens the sinner, as the word is preached. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts the sinner of his crime against God.

The Holy Spirit is the one who stirs and quickens the heart with repentance. He's the one that quickens faith to savingly embrace the Son of God, to reach 2,000 years into the past and lay hold of Christ. And he it is that witnesses to us.

Now, with all of those things, awakening, conviction, bringing us to repentance, quickening faith, regenerating us and witnessing to us, he never identifies himself. You don't need to even know there'd be a Holy Spirit in order to be born of God. It's not through faith in the Holy Spirit that you're born of God.

It's through faith in Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit is to present Christ. Now, after you're born again, when you're in the family of God, then you find that it is Christ, by his word, presenting the Holy Spirit's work in person to the believer.

You see, as his Father sent me, so send I you. How was he sent? He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, that is, he was born of the Spirit. He was indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

He presented his body to the Father, and the Spirit of God came upon him. And all the ministry of Christ was done by the Father through the Holy Spirit, not by himself as Son. So what about us? We're born of the Spirit.

We have the witness of the Spirit, the first fruit of the Spirit. We too present our bodies to the Father, to the Lord Jesus, and we ask him to fill us with his Spirit. And so everyone filled with the Spirit knows it, knows when, and was filled suddenly.

Now, the first, what's the ministry of the Spirit-filled believer? I like to use simple things because my mind demands that it's simple. I think that's probably compatible with my mind. So when I'm striving always to make the truth simple enough for me to get a hold of it, and if I'm successful in doing that, I'm hopeful that somebody else may be helped.

So when we were talking about, when I was studying years ago, oh, many years ago now, in fact, I'd like to tell you, but I'm going to be afraid to, 30 years ago, I was studying this, and I said, what is the ministry of the Holy Spirit? And it was almost as though I looked at my hand, ah, there it is, there it is. So my outline is attached to my fingers. And today we're talking about the thumb.

I had a doctor friend who was listening to me give this years ago, and he said, the thumb is the thenar. And I, what's the thenar? And he said, the thenar is the strongest digit on the hand. And then I said, well, that's, I didn't realize that.

And he said, look at that little dinky, pinky, little finger. Oh, he said, that's a hypothenar. That's the next strongest digit on the hand.

And what? Yes. You see, the little finger controls that whole bundle of muscles down the side of the hand. And the other three digits don't have bundles of muscle to control, as does the little finger.

So it's important. What I'm trying to say is, each of these five are important. We're going to name them Sunday by Sunday.

Today, we're talking about the thumb ministry. Now, the significant thing about the thumb is where it's placed. They've been told that if you could give one of the simians, a monkey or orangutan or a chimpanzee, education in carpentry and a full set of tools, they couldn't build a house because of the way the thumb is set.

It's not set in such a way as to give strength to each of the digits, but for the purpose that they use it. Now, every one of the digits, I see a lot of joggers, you know, and you can tell I'm not one of them. But everybody's got to have physical exercise.

So mine is this. I slip my hand out from under the sheet and I go through it. If I can touch each digit with my thumb, I know that I'm ready for the day.

I use this finger for telephoning and these three for writing and eating and so on. But most of the work I do is done with the digits. So they're very important.

And I want to talk to you for a while about this thumb because it gives strength to all the other ministries of the spiritual believer. And you've already been told that the subject is love. The fruit of the spirit is love.

But what is love? Is love an emotion, a sensation, a warm feeling? Is that that you have a warm, cuddly, emotional feeling when somebody mentions the name of God? Is that what love means? Is love an emotion? Well, I don't think so. Because the scripture I read says, And your emotions are not under the control of your will. And this is a commandment.

Therefore, love is not an emotion. We're not talking about an emotion when we talk about love. We're talking about something else.

Let me illustrate how your emotions are not under the control of your will. I'm going to count to three. And on three, I want you to be angry.

Very angry. All right? Let's go. One.

Two. Three. Be angry.

You're laughing. You're smiling. It's ridiculous.

It's ludicrous, isn't it? Why? Because your emotions are not under the control of your will. Now, if I want you to be angry, I can have a technique for getting you angry. I know how to do it.

The way you do it is to get you to think about the thing that's going to make you angry. Because as a man thinks, so is he. You see, the flow is always from the mental to the emotional to the volitional.

You choose what you think. Your emotions respond to what you think. And your will is determined by what you feel.

Mental, emotional, volitional. Mental, emotional, volitional. That's the way it moves.

It never moves from the volitional to the emotional. You are not angry because you decide to be angry. Only because you think about that.

Now, the only thing that God gave you total control of is what you think. You can't control what you hear. Listen to all the raucous noises in civilizations such as ours.

You can't control what you feel. You don't control the weather, the rain, or the car that comes across the median and hits you. You don't control what you feel.

The only thing you totally control is what you think. God gave you absolute control over your mind. And that's why he said, gird up the loins of your mind.

Bring every thought into the captivity of Christ. So, God is not going to contradict the way he's made us. And when he says, thou shalt love, the commandment, then love has to be something other than an emotion.

What is it? Love is that commitment of the will to seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of another. Did you hear what I said? Love is the commitment of the will to seek the highest good and blessedness and joy and happiness and well-being and satisfaction of another. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God means the total commitment of mind, spirit, soul, all of one to the end of pleasing God, of satisfying God, of making God happy with you.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Now it says, thou shalt love thy neighbor. What does that mean? To seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of your neighbor.

And thou shalt love thyself, thy neighbor as thyself. So what is, what's the obligation there? To seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of yourself. There is a legitimate and proper self-love.

You are important, you are valuable, Christ died for you, you're not a worm in the dust, you're not a clot in the ashes, you are made in the image and likeness of God and God loved you, that is, he sought your highest good and blessedness and happiness, which included the giving of his son, that your potential might be realized for time and for eternity. Now, what the script text says is, you've got to purpose to please God in everything. To seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of your neighbor and to seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of yourself.

Now that is the whole of the law. On these two commandments in all the law and all the prophets. You don't understand the teaching of the law, you don't understand the definition of love.

You don't understand the teaching of the prophets, if you do not understand the definition of love. You must understand this, said he, if you're to ever have the door open to see the meaning of the law and the prophets. On these two commandments hang, hinge the door that swings back so you can see what they mean and how they apply and where they relate.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Now, what is the essence of sin? At the age of accountability, each of us, sin, that is we made a sovereign choice of our human spirit to please ourselves at the expense of God and others. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, means that you're going to please God.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor to seek the best interest of your neighbor. Thou shalt love thyself. And when we get to understand sin, we understand that it's the committal of the will to the pleasing of oneself at the expense of God and at the cost of others.

Now, thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Whatever the spirit of God does is going to be totally and absolutely consistent with the nature of God. God is love.

What is that? God is committed to seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and well-being of the entire universe. Doesn't mean that God is emotional, that he has great warm sensibilities about things. It means that there's this commitment to the well-being, to the happiness of others.

Now, when the spirit of God fills us, what is he going to do? He's going to be consistent with the nature of God. God is love. So if you're filled with the spirit, you're filled with the spirit of God.

And what is the spirit of God going to do, be? He's going to be himself in us. And so the fruit of the spirit is love. Because that is who is there.

The God who is love, who's brought us to the place in repentance of repudiating the principle that we embraced at the age of accountability and brought us to the place of committing ourselves to the purpose of pleasing God. Now, if we understand then that there is a tie-in between Matthew 22 and Galatians 5, then we're going to find that when the spirit of God is in us, his purpose in us is to enable us. To enable us.

That's the word. He is not going to turn us into automatons, into robots. Being filled with the spirit does not make us robots.

Everyone, it seems, is looking for a relationship with the Lord so that they no longer have to choose or to will or to obey or to believe but where things are automatically done for them. If anything happened to me that violated my own sense of freedom to choose, I would not consider it a very great blessing from the Lord. I do not believe that any of the gifts of the spirit are compulsive, that any of the ministries of God are compulsive, and that any of the provisions of God are compulsive.

We're not automatons. We're not robots. And being filled with the spirit and the fruit of the spirit does not mean that automatically we're going to be forced like martinetts that have been wound up with a string to go plump, plump, plump, plump down the road.

As though somehow or other he has overridden our own wills and our own power of choice, and now we're going to become little martinetts that are marching to his drumbeat and we're no longer capable. Isn't it interesting? All of the teachings in the New Testament were given to spiritual believers. All of the warnings in the New Testament were given to spiritual believers.

And all of the exhortations in the New Testament were given to spiritual believers. Why? Because that's the only kind there were. See, after they'd been baptized in water, the elders gathered around, prayed for them, and they were filled with the spirit.

This was the way it went. Read the New Testament and you'll discover that's the way it was. So what's happening? What's taking place? All the warnings, all the teachings, and all the exhortations of the New Testament were given.

So let's understand that Paul could write to Timothy and say to Timothy, Stir up the gift that is in you with the laying on of my hands. Paul had prayed for him. Paul had probably prophesied over him.

And Paul had recognized that God had given to Timothy a gift, and Timothy hadn't been using it. And he had the power not to use it. He had the ability not to use it.

The gift was an enabling. It wasn't a compulsion. And the fruit of the Spirit is a provision and not a compulsion.

It doesn't mean that you're going to be forced to have joy and peace and longsuffering and gentleness and goodness and meekness and self-control or temperance and faith. You're not going to be forced to do these things. The fullness of the Spirit does not override your own ability to use the power of your mind to worry yourself sick, make yourself ill.

It doesn't in any way overrule the power of your mind to make a choice contrary to the will of God. Listen, there is no state of grace set forth in the New Testament where a person is above being tempted. Did you know that? Absolutely no state of grace that is going to bring to a person the place that they can't be tempted.

If there was, it would mean that we were holier than the Lord Jesus. If there was any state of grace where we were above the possibility of being tempted, then it would mean that at that point we were holier than he was because the Lord Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. No, as long as we live we're going to be tempted, and as long as we live we're going to have the ability to choose that which we are tempted.

He's never going to override our ability to choose, but he makes provision. That's the thing we're talking about. There is provision made by the fullness of the Spirit.

So if you wish to walk in the Spirit, that's the word Paul is using here. Walk in the Spirit. In other words, permit the Holy Spirit to do in you what he wants.

Then you will find that he is giving the fruit of the Spirit in all the relationships and activities and ministries. Oh, I think it's so important for us to understand the nature of the results of being filled with the Spirit. They are not compulsive.

Does not overrule our power of choice. They are in response to our own choice and our own decision and our own faith. So important to understand that.

You see, were the fullness of the Spirit to result in our becoming automatons, moral spiritual robots, then that would mean that we were something less than human. No. The whole purpose of grace is to bring us to the full potential of our humanity, not to destroy our humanity.

So if we understand this, then we're going to realize that being filled with the Spirit in the normal Christian life is not something that we should fear, not something we should be afraid of as though I'm going to be forced to do something or say something or be something that I don't wish to do or say or be. No. But it

does mean that we have a relationship that fulfills our potential and God's purpose.

And if we understand this, I think it's going to help us to have a more wholesome attitude toward being filled with the Spirit. I don't know why there are some people that think that if they heard that Charles Finney was filled with the Spirit and he began to preach in the whole of New York State, that area where he visited was brought to a great revival and so they feel, well, if I'm filled with the Spirit, I'm going to be the same. No, no, no.

The manufacturer of electric light bulbs makes some bulbs 300 watts, 500 watts, and some 10 and 15 watts and 25 watts. I'll tell you, when a 15-watt bulb is filled with electricity, it's just as full as a 500-watt bulb. But it doesn't give as much light, or it doesn't go as far, but it's just as full.

It's just as full. And the Lord made each of us, and He inscribed on us a wattage size. And when we're filled with the fullness of Christ, filled with His Spirit, you know what we're going to be? Just us, the best us possible, for the greatest possible glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And isn't that what we want? Isn't that what the apostles talk about? Well, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

And when He lives in you, when He's in you, the Spirit of God is in you, He's in you, when He's in you, you're just going to be the best you, you can be, for the glory of Christ. But I'll tell you one other thing. He's not going to leave you content.

There's always going to be a hunger in your heart, stirred by Him, until you do come into the experience of the fullness of the Spirit, if you haven't. And you're always going to have, once you have been filled with the Spirit, a yearning and a longing to walk in the fullness of the Spirit. But no compulsion.

No compulsion. Blessed provision, blessed privilege, glorious possibility, but no compulsion. Shall we bow in prayer? Father of Jesus, O Thou God of all grace, who designed, before the world began, so great a salvation, and in the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus died to procure and make possible everything without its purpose.

And now the Holy Spirit is waiting to make effective in us all that you purchased and all that the Lord Jesus provided. Stir our hearts with hunger, Father. We want everything He died to make ours.

We don't want to get home to heaven and have the cupboards open and show that there's great blessing, bundles of blessing with our names on it, that we desperately needed in our journey through time, but we were too indifferent or too unbelieving to ask for. Like someone getting notice of an inheritance and too lazy and indifferent to even go and claim it. Save us from being like such.

And stir our hearts with a great hunger to be all the Lord Jesus died that we could be and to have all that He died to make ours, that we might in everything glorify Him who loved us and who gave Himself for us in His worthy name. Amen.

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