**Foundations (36 of 60) The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - RC Sproul**

The Holy Spirit is receiving a lot of well-deserved attention in today's churches. So what's His role? And what does He do? That's our subject on Renewing Your Mind. The work of the Holy Spirit is often so subtle that sometimes we may not even recognize when He's active in our lives.

This weekend on Renewing Your Mind, the founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries, Dr. R.C. Sproul, details the work of the Holy Spirit and explains how the Spirit's aim is to apply the fruit of the gospel in our lives. This lesson is part of the 60-part series called Foundations, an overview of systematic theology. And right after this lesson, we'll explain how to get a copy of the entire series on DVD.

Here's Dr. R.C. Sproul. The tendency in the church today is not really that unlike what the church has always had to struggle with, with respect to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our interest is piqued whenever anything unusual, extraordinary, or even spectacular takes place in our midst.

And so we want to give our attention to the novel, to the exciting, to the extraordinary, looking for some kind of special manifestation of the presence of God. And for that reason, because of this tendency within us to gravitate towards the exciting, we have a tendency to spend much more time focusing on the question of the gifts of the Holy Spirit than in focusing on the matter of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And yet, it is the chief goal of the Holy Spirit to apply the fruits of the gospel in such a way to fulfill God's mandate that this is the will of God, even your sanctification.

And the greatest manifestation of our progress in the things of God will never be through the spectacular manifestations of gifts that we have, whatever the gifts are. A person, for example, today could be an extremely gifted preacher or a gifted teacher, and yet show very little evidence of growth in maturity in the things of God. Beloved, we're going to be examined and evaluated at the end of our lives, not by the number of gifts we display, nor by the talents God has given to us, but we will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ by how much fruit we have borne as Christians.

And let's take a look at this matter of the fruit of the Spirit, which excites so much less interest and investigation than the matter of the gifts of the Spirit. Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians in the fifth chapter. Beginning in verse 16, I say then, walk in the Spirit.

Stop right there. Here's the first apostolic mandate that as Christian people we are called to walk in the Spirit. That does not mean that our primary task is to be pursuing mysticism or to be caught up in forms of magic or in shortcuts to spirituality.

I've mentioned in the past one of the things that disturbs me in my whole career as a teacher. I've had countless students come to me in the seminary and other places and say to me, Dr. Sproul, how can I become more spiritual? Or how can I become more pious? Or how can I become more gifted? I've yet to have a student come to me and say, what I really need to know is how can I become righteous? And yet, the New Testament, Jesus Himself says, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added unto you. Now, it may be a commentary on my life and on my witness that nobody asks me how to become righteous because they don't see that I have any particular corner on that market.

But that is what we are supposed to be seeking. We are supposed to be demonstrating our spiritual growth, our walk in the Spirit of God, which demonstration of our walk in the Spirit of God is not to be seen in the manifestation of the gifts. The demonstration of our walk in the Spirit is to be manifested by the fruit of the Holy Ghost.

Paul goes on to say here, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now, this is a very important segment of the epistle here because Paul makes a distinction here, and not just a distinction, but a contrast between flesh and Spirit. It's a little bit difficult because the word that he uses here in the Greek for flesh is the word sarx, and the word for Spirit is the word pneuma. Now, the word sarx, which is translated flesh, sometimes is distinguished from another Greek word, which is the word soma, which is usually translated by the word body.

However, the term sarx sometimes functions as an exact synonym for soma. That is to say, sometimes the term sarx simply refers to the physical character or nature of our bodies. However, in many, many cases, when the New Testament speaks about our corrupt nature, our fallenness, it uses the term sarx.

Now, let me show you an example of the two ways in which the term sarx is used. Paul, on one occasion, says that he did not know Jesus kata sarca, after the flesh. What does that mean? I did not know Jesus during His earthly incarnation.

When He was physically, bodily walking around the area here, I didn't know Him. I never met Him. Earlier, we see Jesus saying, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

And in your flesh you can do nothing. There, He's not talking about your physical body. He's talking about your fallen human nature, which includes not only your body, but your mind, your will, your heart, and so on.

So, how do we know, whenever we run across this word sarx in the New Testament, whether it's referring to our fallen human nature, or whether it's simply a reference to our physical capacity? Well, if there's a rule of thumb, it's this. Anytime you see sarx, or flesh, discussed in direct contrast to pneuma, or to Spirit, then that's a key to us to indicate that what is being discussed here is not the difference between the physical body and the mind, but between the old nature, the corrupt nature, the fallen nature, and the new man that has been quickened in us by the indwelling Holy Spirit. And if there's any text in the New Testament where this is clearly the case, it's here in the Galatian Epistle.

Now, before Paul talks about what it means to be led by the Spirit, and before the Apostle details for us the fruit of the Spirit, he first shows us what the fruit of the Spirit is not. Because remember, he's making a contrast here between the flesh and the Spirit. So, he begins with the negative.

He says, And this time the Apostle leaves no doubt that this list is not exhaustive, because he adds, This is one of the scariest passages in the Bible. Those who practice such things, adultery, fornication, lewdness, hatred, jealousy, wrath, selfish ambition, heresy, drunkenness, and so on, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now, why is that so terrifying? Well, because we know all kinds of people who have made profound professions of faith in Christ who fall into adultery, who struggle with alcohol, who battle with pride and contentiousness, and things of this sort through their whole lives.

And if you just look at this text, you might come to the conclusion, well, anybody who ever falls into any of these sins has no hope of salvation. But when Paul speaks about practicing these things, he's not saying that if you get drunk once, you won't go to heaven. That's not what he's saying.

But he's saying if these things define your lifestyle, if you put a mirror up to your life and this is what your life looks like, that this is your practice on a regular basis, then that's an indication that you are in the flesh, that you are not of the Spirit of God, and that you are still unregenerate and will not be included in the kingdom of God. I think it's important for us to understand that, because here, against all types of antinomianism that says, well, I believe in Jesus, now I can live however I want to live, and that there's no change in my life from my regeneration, those people need to read this portion of Galatians to see that Paul gives the very sober warning, that if this is your practice, then those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now, in contrast to the works of the flesh, Paul gives the fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another or envying one another. Now, notice, he is giving an admonition to people in the church who are believers not to fall into the works of the flesh, but to manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

And that tells you, doesn't it, that even Christians, as long as they are Christians, still have to battle with the old nature, still have to battle with the flesh, so that there is that element of flesh that remains in the Christian life that has to come under the constant scrutiny of the Word of God, that has to come under the constant discipline of the Holy Ghost, that we may be convicted of sin and flee from these things and seek to cultivate the opposite kind of practice. And that which is cultivated is that which bears fruit. And we remember our Lord said, it is by their fruit that you will know them.

Now, what do you want on your gravestone? Do you want it said that you earned so much money, or that you won so many battles, or that you expressed so many talents and were prodigious in extraordinary feats? Or do you want to have on your tombstone, Here was a person who manifested love and joy and peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. And yet the thing is, these are the things that God wants from us. These are the things that God delights in.

And yet we do not make them a priority in our lives. Now, we are all aware that we should be more loving. And that particular fruit has been given lots of ink and lots of space, and yet even at times we have a very superficial understanding of what love means.

But love in its spiritual dimension is inseparably related to the other fruit. Now, notice the difference here between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. In the gifts of the Spirit, Paul labors the point of unity and diversity.

And he goes through that lengthy rhetorical sequence when he says, Do all have the gift of preaching? Do all have the gift of teaching? Do all have this gift or that gift? And the obvious answer is no. He doesn't do that with the fruit of the Spirit. It's not like the apostle is teaching here that just as the Spirit distributes individual gifts to particular people in the church for the edification of the whole body, so that one person may have the gift of administration, the other person may have the gift of giving, the other person helps, or whatever it is.

And then in like manner, he gives one person the fruit of love, another person the fruit of gentleness, another the fruit of patience, and another the fruit of joy. Now, the fruit of the Spirit in all of its fullness is to be made manifest in every Christian's life. All of us are called to bear the fruit of love.

All of us are called to gentleness or to meekness. Now, it's one thing to be called to wimpdom. So often in our culture, the idea of being meek or gentle means that we lack strength, or we can begin to give accolades to the coward.

No. A gentle person is a person who has strength but restrains the use of that strength. I can remember having a discussion with a young man who had been elevated into a high position of authority in an organization, and he was very young to be in such an authoritative position.

And the complaints from his subordinates were continually that he was tyrannical in the way he was managing his subordinates. And so I had a discussion with him about it, and I said, Why is this? And he said, Well, they don't respect my authority because they think I'm too young, so I have to show them who's boss. He said, I have to show them where the power is.

I said, Hold it. He said, No, you don't. You have the authority, and with the authority, you have the power.

And I said, One of the secrets of leadership is that when you have the power, you have a high responsibility for how you use that power. And here's the neat thing. When you have the power, you can afford to be gracious.

You don't need to be tyrannical. It's when you're not secure in your power that you begin hitting people over the head and fail to be gentle. Now, gentleness is something akin to sensitivity.

And again, to be gentle means to use less force than you could use in a given situation. It doesn't mean that you never use your strength. I think we take a cue from Jesus at this point.

One of the things that I find remarkable about the behavioral pattern of Jesus in how He deals with people is that He is exceedingly tender with the weak and the powerless of His world. The woman caught in adultery. Everybody was ready to rip her to shreds, and He was tender and gentle with her.

But when the power mongers of the day, the Pharisees, came on Jesus, trying to exercise their strength, He responded with great strength. In other words, He was strong against the strong, firm against the powerful, but tender with the weak. And we have a tendency to think that we're supposed to treat every person that we meet in the same manner.

No. We have to learn how to monitor and moderate the strengths that we have. The fruit of the Spirit is joy.

You know, it's to be a mark of the Christian life that as Christian people who are walking in the Spirit of God that we are not sourpusses, that we have real joy in our lives. I mean, even the joy of the Spirit does not preclude grieving. It does not preclude experiencing pain and affliction.

But the point is, as the Apostle explains particularly in his epistle to the Philippians, that in all things we learn to rejoice because the basic conduit for our joy is our relationship to God and the redemption that we have, which is never threatened by the loss of a loved one or the loss of possessions or the loss of the job or the loss of anything else. We may suffer all kinds of setbacks and afflictions in this world that are painful, but those things are not to rob us of the foundational joy that we have in Christ, that we can rejoice in all things because the rest of these things are insignificant compared to the wonderful fullness of the Spirit that we enjoy in the presence of God. But that is something that has to be cultivated.

The more we understand our relationship with God, the more we understand His promises in our lives, the greater the joy that we will begin to bear as the fruit of our Christian life. Love, joy, gentleness, peace, long-suffering, and kindness. Long-suffering is kind of related to patience.

Notice that in these fruits that we are called to emulate, that these fruits imitate the very character of God. It's God who is love. It's God who is the author of joy.

It's God who manifests the supreme gentleness to His people. And if anyone can be said to be long-suffering, it's God. God is not quick to anger.

He's not hasty to judge. But He's patient, He's forbearing, and He gives people time to turn around. He doesn't just off with their heads the first time they do something that annoys Him or that irritates Him.

The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness and goodness and kindness. You know, kindness is one of the most difficult virtues there is in the world to define. And yet, there's a sense in which it doesn't need to be defined because everybody in the world knows what it is.

You know it when somebody is being kind to you, don't you? And you know it when somebody is being mean to you. And so the opposite of meanness is kindness. And that simply means that we're caring, that we're considerate, and that we are nice to people.

And that's part of the fruit that we are to manifest. Well, time does not permit us to go in further detail into the fruit of the Spirit, but I think you get the idea that this is where the priority of the Holy Spirit is. This is what God desires from us.

Not that we are achievers. It's not so much what we do, but it's who we are as people, that we will either please or displease and grieve the Holy Ghost. On the fruit of the Holy Spirit, you're listening to Dr. R.C. Sproul and the weekend edition of Renewing Your Mind.

The message featured today represents one small portion of a much larger study. We're working our way through the basic foundations of our faith, looking at everything from the nature of God to the sinfulness of man to our redemption in Jesus. The series covers 60 lessons from Dr. Sproul.

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The address is facebook.com slash Ligonier. Next weekend, Dr. Sproul looks closely at the miracles of the Bible and asks the question, Are miracles for today? Don't miss the answers in our overview of systematic theology coming up one week from now. This is Renewing Your Mind, the radio outreach of Ligonier Ministries with R.C. Sproul.