

Surrender 102

Andrew Murray's Second Chapter in "Absolute Surrender" (adapted by Chris)

Sunday Afternoon Reading:

Let's take a look at what the practical life lived in the Holy Spirit produces. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon humans to reveal mysteries of God or to do an act of power. But then the Spirit did not dwell in them. Many want the Old Testament gift of the Spirit for power and work, but do not understand the greater gift offered in the New Testament of the indwelling Spirit, completely transforming and giving new life for holy character. We should desire after a disposition that says, "I need the Holy Spirit sanctifying my whole inner life if I am to truly live for God's glory."

Let us now dwell on what Paul means in Galatians 5:22a, "the fruit of the Spirit is love." Paul says elsewhere in Romans 13:10b, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Let us test ourselves by this fruit. Is our daily habit seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit of love? Have we experienced a filling of Spirit toward a transformation of becoming more loving?

How different would the Church be if this were her aim! Pray that God gives us the ability to seek such a filling. Remember that a vessel can only be filled if it is whole, in the same way, the Church must become a unified vessel seeking love. We must all seek this transformation toward love in order for God to make the Church the blessing God intends her to be. Let us join together praying, "Lord, unify us as one vessel by the power of your Holy Spirit, who at Pentecost made them all of one heart and one soul, so that we may do your blessed work in our community." Give yourself up to the Holy Spirit of love and he will teach you to love more.

Sunday's Reflection:

Light your candle and imagine it as a symbol of God's presence in your life. Do you feel the warmth, smell the smoke, see the flickering of the light? What evidences of God's presence in the Holy Spirit do you see in your own life? How might you Surrender yourself more fully to God's presence of love in God's Holy Spirit within you?

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Monday's Reading

God is Love

Why is it that the fruit of the Spirit is love? Because God is love (1 John 4:8). But what does that mean?

God's very nature and being delights in communicating Himself to creation. God has no selfishness and keeps nothing to himself. God's nature is always giving. We see this in the sun, moon, and stars; in every flower, bird in the air, and fish in the sea. Even in the angels around the throne of God, they have their glory because God imparts his glory to them. And even us, God's children, God delights to pour out his love to dwell in us. Why? Because God keeps nothing for himself. From eternity God the Father gives everything to the one begotten Son, nothing of the Father is held back from the Son. One of the Church fathers spoke of how we can understand the Trinity as revelation of divine love. The Father, as the fountain of love; the Son, the beloved one, the Reservoir of love, in whom love was poured out; and the Spirit, the living love that united both and overflowed into this world.

Humankind Needs Love

Why do we need love? It is the one great need of all humans. It is the thing Christ's redemption came to restore. When humanity sinned, what happened? Selfishness triumphed and humans sought self instead of God. Remember the story, Adam at once accuses the woman of having led him astray and God for giving him the woman. Love to God had gone, love to humanity was lost. We see it again in the first two children of Adam, one murders the other! Sin has robbed the world of love. Examine history and it is clear. There are examples of love, even among sinners, but only as a remnant of what was lost. Selfishness cannot accomplish true love. True love is selflessness.

God's Son was given to the world to show what true love is. He lived in fellowship with his disciples, in compassion to the poor and miserable, in love to even his enemies, and he died the death of love. He then sends the Spirit of love to banish selfishness and bring the love of God into the hearts of all humans. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Does the world recognize we are his by his love being found in us? (John 13:35) Let us ask God to transform us in his love that we might restore God's purpose to creation.

Monday's Reflection:

Light your candle once again and sit in God's presence. Ask God to reveal to you any place where God's love does not dwell. As God reveals those places to you, surrender them to God.

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Tuesday's Reading

Love Conquers Selfishness

Nothing by the love of God can conquer our selfishness. This is another reason that, “the fruit of the Spirit is love.”

Self is the great curse of sin, in relationship with God or our fellow humans. But praise God, Christ came to redeem us from self and restore love. Sometimes in the Church we talk about deliverance from the self-life—and praise be to God for it!—but I am afraid some people think deliverance from the self-life mean they will no longer experience difficulties serving God. We often forget that deliverance from self-life means being a vessel overflowing with God's love to everybody all day long.

This is why so many people pray for the power of the Holy Spirit and get something, but far too little. They prayed for power to do God's work, power for blessing, but they did not pray for power for full deliverance from self. Not just in communion with God but the unloving self in communion with our fellow humans. I bring to you the glorious promise of Christ who is able to fill our hearts with true love.

Most of us try very hard to love. We force ourselves to love, and it isn't wrong, it is better than nothing. But it usually fails. In the end we have to confess it fell short of the kind of love Christ shows. Why is this? Simply that we have not learned to believe and accept the truth that the Holy Spirit can pour God's love into our hearts. We limit Paul's message to us in Romans 5:5b, “because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”, to mean only God's love toward us. What a limitation on God's power! God's love toward us is only the beginning. The love of God is always the love of God in its entirety and fulness as indwelling power. Love that responds back to God in surrender and overflows to our fellow humans. God's love to me, my love to God, my love of all humanity, are one in the same. They cannot be separated.

It must become our very nature through the transformation God offers in his indwelling Spirit of love. Consider the lamb. Does it need to study to be gentle? No! It is gentle by nature. And the wolf? It is cruel by nature and desires to put its fangs into the poor lamb. Our very nature must be transformed by God for us to experience God's love fully. Surrender yourself to be transformed in this way.

Tuesday's Reflection:

Light your candle once again. As you recognize God's presence with you, imagine God emptying your heart of everything that is not God's love and filling you with the fullness of God's love.

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Wednesday's Reading

Love Is God's Gift

We can ask again why love is a gift from God. The answer is simple, without the gift, we cannot live a daily life of love.

Our tempers can be a good gauge of living in this gift. Think of a clock with hands. What do the hands mean? The hands tell me what is inside the clock. If I see that the hands no longer turn, or that they point at the wrong time, I know something inside the clock is not working properly. Temper is like the clock hands of our inner life telling us whether something of Christ's love dwells within us.

We may find it easy in religious settings to control our tempers. In worship, fellowship of meetings with our brothers and sisters. But what about your daily life when you are with your spouse or children? When you are alone in your car and someone cuts you off or follows too closely? It is easier to appear holy and happy for others than when we are with those we are most vulnerable with or alone.

God has prepared for us a wonderful redemption in Christ, and God longs to make something supernatural of us. Have we learned to long for that redemption and ask for it? What about expecting it in fullness?

Consider the tongue. We speak of the tongue when we talk of the better life, the restful life, but just think about how many liberties we give to our tongues. We may say, "I have a right to think what I want." When we speak about one another, our neighbors, strangers, how often are there sharp and judgmental remarks? We must pray, "God keep me from saying anything that would be unloving, shut my mouth if I am not to speak in tender love." You may say, "But what I am saying is true." True or not, is it said out of selfless love or selfish gain? There should be in every one of us the same kind tenderly love a mother gives to their child when we speak about and to one another. Seek after that kind of love. Pray for that kind of love.

Through God's transformation only can you experience the fruit of the Spirit as love. And from there comes all the other graces and virtues; joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness; no sharpness or hardness in your tone, no unkindness or selfishness; meekness before God and other humans.

Wednesday's Practice:

Light your candle and examine recent times you have been with those closest to you, where you are most vulnerable and the workings of your heart come forward. Or when you are alone. What does your temper show you about Christ's love in you?

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Thursday's Reading

Our Love Shows God's Power

Why are we taught that “the fruit of the Spirit is love”? Because the Spirit of God has come to make our daily life an exhibition of divine power and a revelation of what God can do for God's children.

In the second and the fourth chapters of Acts we read that the disciples were of one heart and of one soul. During the three years they had walked with Christ they never had been in that spirit. All Christ's teaching could not make them of one heart and one soul. But the Holy Spirit came from Heaven and shed the love of God in their hearts, and they were of one heart and one soul. The same Holy Spirit that brought the love of Heaven into their hearts must fill us too. Nothing less will do. Even as Christ did, one might preach love for three years with the tongue of an angel, but that would not teach any man to love unless the power of the Holy Spirit should come upon us to bring the love of Heaven into our hearts.

Think of the church at large. What divisions! Think of the different bodies. Take the question of holiness, take the question of the cleansing blood, take the question of the baptism of the Spirit—what differences are caused among dear believers by such questions! That there are differences of opinion does not trouble me. We do not have the same constitution and temperament and mind. But how often hate, bitterness, contempt, separation, unlovingness are caused by the holiest truths of God's Word! Our doctrines, our creeds, have been more important than love.

If we want to pray in power, and if we want to expect the Holy Spirit to come down in power, and if we want indeed that God shall pour out God's Spirit, we must enter into a covenant with God that we love one another with a heavenly love. Are you ready for that? Only that is true love that is large enough to take in all God's children, the most unloving and unlovable, and unworthy, and unbearable, and trying. If my vow—absolute surrender to God—was true, then it must mean absolute surrender to the divine love to fill me; to be a servant of love to love every child of God around me. “The fruit of the Spirit is love.”

Oh, God did something wonderful when the Father gave the Son, at His right hand, the Holy Spirit to come down out of the heart of the Father and His everlasting love. And how we have degraded the Holy Spirit into a mere power by which we have to do our work! God forgive us! Oh, that the Holy Spirit might be held in honor as a power to fill us with the very life and nature of God and of Christ!

Thursday's Practice

Light your candle and just pray this simpler prayer before sitting in silence before God's presence. “Father in heaven, make me the empty vessel so that your Spirit may fill me with your love.”

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Friday's Reading

Christian Work Requires Love

"The fruit of the Spirit is love." I ask once again, Why is it so? And the answer comes: That is the only power in which Christians really can do their work.

We want not only love that is to bind us to each other, but we want a divine love in our work for the lost around us. Examine yourselves. Do you undertake your work for God out of a deep and selfless loving Spirit for God's presence with you? Do you serve other people with a surrender to God's selfless love in you for them?

There are hundreds of believers who say, "I work for Christ, and I feel I could work much harder, but I have not the gift. I do not know how or where to begin. I do not know what I can do." Brother, sister, ask God to baptize you with the Spirit of love, and love will find its way. Love is a fire that will burn through every difficulty. You may be a shy, hesitating person, who cannot speak well, but love can burn through everything. "God fill us with love! We need it for our work. O God, baptize our ministers with a tender love, and our missionaries, and our Bible-readers, and our workers, and our young men's and young women's associations. Oh, that God would begin with us now, and baptize us with heavenly love!"

Friday's Practice:

Light your candle and reflect today. What work are you doing for the Lord? Is it in God's love or selfish motives? Is it filled with God's Spirit or your own power? Look through a list of things to do this week, give each one to God. Imagine yourself holding the work in your hand and letting go of it that it may be God's and not yours.

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Saturday's Reading

Love Inspires Intercession

Once again. It is only love that can fit us for the work of intercession. I have said that love must fit us for our work. Do you know what the hardest and the most important work is that has to be done for this sinful world? It is the work of intercession, the work of going to God and taking time to lay hold on God.

A person may be an earnest Christian, an earnest minister, and a person may do good, but how often we have to confess that we know but little of what it is to sit with no hurry in God presence. May God give us the great gift of an intercessory spirit, a spirit of prayer and supplication! Let me ask you in the name of Jesus not to let a day pass without praying for all saints, and for all God's people.

I find there are Christians who think little of that. I find there are prayer unions where they pray for the members, and not for all believers. I pray you, take time to pray for the Church of Christ. It is right to pray for the unbeliever, as I have already said. God help us to pray more for them. It is right to pray for missionaries and for evangelistic work, and for the unconverted. But Paul did not tell people to pray for the heathen or the unconverted. Paul told them to pray for believers. Do make this your first prayer every day: "Lord, bless Thy saints everywhere."

The state of Christ's Church is indescribably low. Plead for God's people that God would visit them, plead for each other, plead for all believers who are trying to work for God. Let love fill your heart. Ask Christ to pour it out afresh into you every day. Try to get it into you by the Holy Spirit of God: I am separated unto the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit is love. God help us to understand it.

May God grant that we learn day by day to wait more quietly upon him. Do not wait upon God only for ourselves, or the power to do so will soon be lost; but give ourselves up to the ministry and the love of intercession, and pray more for God's people, for God's people round about us, for the Spirit of love in ourselves and in them, and for the work of God we are connected with; and the answer will surely come, and our waiting upon God will be a source of untold blessing and power. "The fruit of the Spirit is love."

Have you a lack of love to confess before God? Then make confession and say before God, "O Lord, my lack of heart, my lack of love—I confess it." And then, as you cast that lack at God's feet, believe that the blood cleanses you, that Jesus comes in his mighty, cleansing, saving power to deliver you, and that he will give his Holy Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love."

Saturday's Practice:

Light your candle and pray for believers as Murray encourages in today's reading.