

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PART 1 (Hannah Heather)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Galatians 5:13-26

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. ¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

"The fruit of the Spirit," Hannah said, "is the organic growth of character which occurs when the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of a believer who co-operates with his indwelling to become like Jesus." She added, "The gifts of the Spirit are the way the Spirit works through us. The fruit of the Spirit is the way the Spirit works in us." 'Fruit' is singular, for these are not individual 'fruits' which may be experienced separately (as we might enjoy grapes, cherries, oranges, and peaches), rather a 'concatenation'¹ – an interconnected chain of qualities which together reflect the indwelling life of Christ. We must 'abide in Him' – 'sink ourselves into [Christ]'.²

John 15:1-12 (1,4-5,8-10,12)

¹ 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener... ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹ 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love... ¹² My command is this: love each other as I have loved you.

- Paul's teaching on the fruit of the Spirit in the context freedom in Christ, which can be misused (Gal 5:13). So, he writes, 'Through love serve as slaves for one another' (literal trans.) What does that mean for us today?
- What do you think is the connection, for both Jesus and Paul, between the law of love and the growing of 'fruit'?
- Paul uses three descriptions of our relationship to the Spirit: to 'live by the Spirit', to be 'led by the Spirit', and to 'keep in step with the Spirit'. Jesus speaks of remaining/abiding in him. What do you think they each mean?
- Is there an aspect of Paul's fruit 'concatenation' which you find to be a particular challenge? Is there an ingredient missing in your fruit salad?

¹ This is the word used by the 18th Century American revivalist preacher and Congregationalist theologian, Jonathan Edwards to describe the way in which Christian graces 'are all linked together, and united one to another and within another, as the links of a chain are; and one does, as it were, hang on another, from one end of the chain to the other, so that, if one link be broken, all fall to the ground, and the whole ceases to be of any effect... all the graces of Christianity are concatenated and linked together, so as to be mutually connected and mutually dependent.' <https://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/charity13.htm>

² Andrew Murray writes, 'We have to trust and obey, to detach ourselves from all else, to reach out after Him and cling to Him, to sink ourselves into Him. As we do this, through the grace He gives, a character is formed, and a heart prepared for the fuller experience: "I in you," God strengthens us with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and Christ dwells in the heart by faith.' https://ccel.org/ccel/murray/true_vine/true_vine.x.html