

home, went to their next-door neighbours and said: 'I am a Christian, is there something that I can pray about for you, is there something that I can do for you?'. Within weeks that church was revolutionised, and people were ringing it up to say: 'Is that the church that helps people?'

Imagine 2000 years after the Lord Jesus Christ, the people in the world are only starting to ask the question: 'Is that the church that helps people?'. I've gone over my time, but what is the fruit of the Spirit like in your life?

Lord, we remember that the cry of the world on one occasion was: 'We would see Jesus'. Lord, our cry today is: 'I would be like Jesus'. May we surrender all to Him, and allow Him to live His life in us. Amen.

# "Fruit"



*Is the fruit of the Spirit visible to others in your life?*

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*by Pastor David Legge*

# “Fruit”

We're turning to Galatians 5, and we just take the one word title 'Fruit', beginning to read at verse 13 - Paul, writing to the Galatians, says: *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty”, or unto freedom, “only use not liberty”, or freedom, “for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth”, or striveth, “against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another”.*

There is in Israel a counterfeit olive tree. It is counterfeit in the sense, being called the Oliaster, that it is just like the olive tree to look upon - its texture, its leaves, its bark - but the problem with it is that it yields no fruit at all. So to the naked eye at a certain season during the year, you would think it was just a natural ordinary olive tree, but when the fruit bearing season of harvest comes you would find that it bears no fruit. Now here's the unique thing about it: in every aspect, apart from not bearing fruit, it is like the natural olive tree. It is like it in this sense: it takes up a large area in the garden or in the orchard, it absorbs as much sunlight as it can on its leaves, and it turns that sunlight into the energy that would normally feed fruit on any other plant. Its great roots that go deep into the ground draw upon the vast nutrient sustenance that is in the soil - yet with all these things, it never ever bears fruit.

How many oliasters do we have? How many counterfeit olive trees that do everything that Christians do, and draw upon all the resources that are given to Christians today in our world by the Spirit and by the church, yet you are not bearing fruit or substantial fruit to the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ? I've heard people say: 'An unfruitful Christian is not a failed Christian, but a false Christian'. Now I don't follow that all the way, to say that if you aren't bearing fruit at this minute you're not saved, that is not what I'm saying. But I am saying this: that if you are not bearing fruit to the glory of God in your life presently, you should at least ask the question of yourself, 'Am I really saved?' - for the Lord has said, 'By their fruits, ye shall know them'. Surely if the life of Christ is dwelling in you, pulsating through your spiritual veins and vitals, people ought

tells of being invited to a big conference, and there were many speakers there and pastors and teachers also listening and being taught, but there was one man who particularly impressed him by the name of Juan Carlos Ortiz. This man, when he introduced himself to him, was the pastor of a church in Buenos Aires, South America. When he went to that church there were only 300 people in his congregation, but within three to five years that congregation was multiplied to 3000 people - imagine that, we'd be building a new building all over again! One day, high with the pride that such things can give a man, he was driving past his cemetery and he noticed that it was growing as well. He thought to himself: 'When I came to this church we had 300 fat Christians getting fatter, who didn't really care about anybody else but themselves. Now after three to five years we have a church of 3000 average Christians, fat Christians getting fatter, who don't really care about anybody but themselves'. He became unhappy about the situation, and wanted something more and something real.

He decided he was going to preach a series on love. The first Sunday he got up, while he was in the pulpit - this sometimes happens to preachers - he felt the Lord telling him not to preach his sermon, so he binned it. After the worship time he got up to preach, and he said: 'This, brothers and sisters, is my text, 'Brothers and sisters, love one another'. Then he sat down. The worship leader, after a couple of minutes, got up and said: 'Do you want us to sing another song?'. He said 'No, that's it'. Then he got up again and he said: 'Brothers and sisters, love one another'. Then he sat down, people looked at one another, his wife in the balcony thought he'd finally flipped his lid - until he got up again and said: 'Brothers and sisters, love one another'. Then the fourth time he got up, there was someone in the back corner of the church turned to the other person and said: 'Tell me some way that I could love you?'. For three months he preached that sermon - now you might think that's ridiculous - but that first morning there were 28 unemployed men who went out of that service employed. There were single mothers who went out of that service with a guarantee that they would become an adopted member of another family where they could eat twice a week. This man, Juan Carlos Ortiz, said: 'If I had preached and differentiated between the various Greek words for love in the New Testament Scriptures, I would have got a pat on the back on the way out, but there would have been 28 men that would have gone out still unemployed, and many young single mothers who would have gone out without a helping hand'.

Well, as you would know, there were 300 people who objected. They said they were going to leave, 'We've employed this man to preach the word of God, sure anybody can say 'Brothers and sisters, love one another'. His retort was, 'Well, I've been preaching and teaching for years and you don't listen to a word that I'm saying, and now things are getting done'. But nevertheless, after three months, he got up and said 'Brothers and sisters, I've changed my text', and there was a roar and a shout and a round of applause, as you can imagine - 'Brothers and sisters, love your neighbour as yourself. They all looked at one another, and then got out of the church and into their cars and drove

love one another in their own way, and have the same fellowship that we can have, and the Lord is saying: 'What is that more than anyone else?' - this is the fruit of the Spirit: to love someone who you don't like, and to love someone who you've nothing in common with!

Now my friend, if you don't have that love, you, I would say, don't have the fruit of the Spirit. It's natural to love someone who's like you, it's supernatural to love someone who is beyond your particular taste - and I give you the reputation of our Saviour, when it was said of Him 'He is the friend of publicans and of sinners'...is that your reputation? If people aren't talking about the type of people you're hanging about with, you don't have the reputation of Christ - and I apply that to myself as well.

### *Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness*

We must move on swiftly, that's the fruit of internal experience: love, joy and peace. Secondly the fruit of external behaviour: long-suffering, that is patience, gentleness, goodness. This is the fruit of the Spirit towards others - not just how we relate to ourselves with the Spirit of God with love, joy and peace, but how we relate to others around us. The Lord Jesus, it says, was reviled, and when He was reviled He reviled not again, and when He suffered He threatened not - He had patience! Gentleness, the gentleness of Christ - we could spend all morning talking about that. Goodness, it says of Him that He went about doing good continually; and Dorcas, His disciple, was full of good works, because goodness is godliness! Are you patient, are you gentle, are you good towards others?

### *Faith, Meekness, Temperance*

The fruit of internal experience, the fruit of external behaviour, but thirdly the fruit of spiritual character - towards God this time. Not into yourself, not out to man, but towards and up to God if you like: faith, meekness and temperance. That faith there is just faithfulness, that's the sense. Faithfulness, temperance, another word for self-control. Meekness, faithfulness to the Lord - if you're filled with the Spirit, like the disciples who were timid and fearful, all of a sudden when they were filled with the Spirit they followed and were faithful unto death! What about meekness? Is the meekness - not the weakness - but the meekness and humility of Christ being reproduced in your life? The One who said: 'I am meek and lowly in heart'. What about temperance? Self-control? We come back to the start again: are you mastering the appetites and the passions, sensually, that are in our old nature that we all have. This is what makes us different from animals, God has given us the ability to control ourselves!

Do you know what this list is a summary of? It is God's complete responsibility towards men regarding Himself and regarding other men, it is the sum total of the law of God to the New Testament Christian. Can I leave you with a story that Charles Price told? He

to know that you belong to Christ because of the fruit that is in your life.

Now maybe it's exaggerating to say that some of us don't have any fruit in our lives - it may well be possible - but probably nearer the truth is this: many of us only produce some fruit in our lifetime. Now if we are saved, we must produce some fruit at least - but the question is this: how much fruit are you producing as a Christian? This is one of the purposes of the Lord in saving us, He said to His disciples in John 15: 'I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit'. Can I ask you today: how much fruit do you produce for Christ?

Now I've talked about the oliaster tree, the counterfeit olive tree, but in the United States of America there's another tree in the southwest desert area that is called the century plant. It is, in Latin, for all you avid gardeners, 'Adave Americana'. It thrives in rocky places, in mountainous desert sites where there's not much sustenance, that's where it likes to live - but if you were to look at this plant you would see that it has dramatic splayed leaves that grow sometimes to over a foot wide. This tree has a great domineering feature about it, because it can grow to about 12 feet in diameter; but what is unusual about this tree is not, like the oliaster tree, that it doesn't produce any fruit at all, but it has a long reproductive cycle - that is why it is called the century plant. Now you're not meant to take it literally, it doesn't mean it only produces fruit every 100 years, but only every 20 to 30 years does this century plant produce flowers. You could live two decades or three and never see any flowers or fruit produced from the century tree, and then all of a sudden one year without any warning or announcement, there's a new bud that sprouts and apparently there is this glorious fruit that is shown - but you have to wait a very long time for it.

Can I say very compassionately and tenderly, as far as I can, that some of you are like the century plant. You're saved, and you're well saved at that, and you've shown some fruit in your past, but it takes an awful long time for your fruit to be produced, and for you to do really anything for Christ that means anything in a chronological sense. Your fruit only comes about after a long period of time, and that very seldom.

Often, sadly to say, we as believers do not produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, but what Paul calls in Galatians 5 the works of the flesh. Look down at these descriptions that he gives us: '*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery*', you know what that is, '*fornication*', you know what that is, '*uncleanness*', which is also impure thoughts, '*lasciviousness*', which is another word for lustful pleasures, '*idolatry*', putting something before God and in His place, '*witchcraft*', all that's involved in spiritism, '*hatred*', obvious, '*variance*', or discord, '*emulations*', jealousy or '*wrath*', fits of rage, '*strife*', which is like self-ambition, pushing yourself before others, '*seditions*', which is dissension, '*heresies*', which describes false doctrine but also describes factions and splits. Verse 21: '*Envyings*', obvious, '*murders, drunkenness, revellings*', which is another word for orgies.

Now when we read down this awful list of infamy that describes the type of things that even go on in our world today as much as Paul's day, we think to ourselves: 'Isn't that awful? Isn't that heinous? Isn't that an abomination unto God that people could practice such things?' - but we need to remind ourselves, as we did when we looked at this great subject of temptation, that we as human beings, fallen human beings in the Adamic race, have two natures, two natures! There is what the Bible calls in this passage 'the flesh', the old nature that you were born with when you were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. You've got it, and in the day and the hour that you're saved you don't lose it, no matter what anybody says; but you gain another nature, and that is the divine nature that is the very life of God in Christ imparted to you at faith and conversion, but you've still got this old nature - the fruit of which we have been reading in these verses from 19 to 21.

The remarkable thing here is, if you count down there are 17 works of the flesh, but there are only nine fruit of the Spirit. Boy, does that tell you something about human beings, doesn't it? Fossett, the commentator, put it like this: 'It is a proof of our fallen state how much richer every vocabulary is in words for sin, rather than for the graces'. We can describe sin in all sorts of ways, but when it comes to the holy things of God we're dumbfounded, and that declares our nature as sinners, as warped and fallen before God. Archbishop Trent illustrated it in this way, he said that the Tasmanian natives had scores of words for the sin of infanticide, killing children, but they had not one word for 'home' or for 'love'. Many ways to describe the sin of 'unlove' and the destruction of the family, but when it came to the positive, that which is righteous and holy in the sight of God, the home and love, they had no description.

Now here's a challenge that I want to throw out to you before we go on any further, and it's this: do you realise, and will you admit even as a believer today in this church, that you are capable of any of these sins that are written down in verses 19 to 21? Can you admit that? I will freely admit to you from this pulpit, and it's no big thing, that I am capable in and of myself to commit any of these sins, any and maybe even every one of them. Sometimes I hear in the prayer meeting, when folk are describing the type of things that are going on in our world, people saying that they can't understand how people could do such things - well, if you can't understand it, you don't understand yourself! You don't understand the deep depravity that your old nature can delve to, that your very nature as a human being could be harbouring the seeds for every one of those sins that you've read about this morning. If you're honest, as a believer, that is the reason for the struggle that is in your life at this moment in time. Because if you're honest - yes we've got to learn to hate sin, and I've taught you that in recent weeks; and that can happen when you surrender yourself completely to God's nature - but if you're honest you've got to admit that as we go down this list, some of us if not all of us not only like this stuff, but we love it.

You might be sitting there audibly or inaudibly 'tut-tutting', but the fact of the matter

That's what the Lord said in Philippians 2, when He came to this earth and made Himself of no reputation, and he told them to let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus - what was the mind? Esteeming others, Philippians 2 verse 4, better than yourselves! The sense is not 'higher up than yourself', the sense is esteeming others more important than yourself.

Some people here and everywhere are intoxicated with a sense of their own importance, rather than esteeming others more important than themselves. If you were to ask the question: how do you know someone loves you? What would be the answer? Well, I think perhaps the answer - at least one - could be this: you feel important to them, you feel important to them. Someone has well said: 'People don't care how much you know, till they know how much you care'. That is what this fruit of love is, it's found in 1 Corinthians 13, look at it for a moment please - 1 Corinthians 13, this great chapter on love. Verse 4, substitute 'charity' with 'love' for a moment: *'Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never fails'*. Now what is that? Oh, it's very apt description of love, isn't it? But I want you to do something for me: let's read that again and substitute the word 'love' for 'Jesus'. 'Jesus suffers long, Jesus is kind; Jesus does not envy; the Lord Jesus does not vaunt himself, is not puffed up, He does not behave Himself unseemly, He does not seek His own, He is not easily provoked, He thinks no evil; He rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; He bears all things, He believes all things, He hopes all things, He endures all things. Jesus never fails'. Is this not the character of Christ?

Now, do another thing for me: put your name in. 'David suffers long'...well, I'll agree with that one...'He is kind, he does not envy'...I'll have to stop. I can't go on any further, can you? This is the character of Christ, that is what the Spirit wants to make you! Years ago it was said of the Christians: 'See how they love one another' - I wonder can that be said today? Charles Price asked the question: 'Is that really a characteristic of the true Christian and the fruit of the Spirit, because Christians love one another?'. Can I remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:46, where He said: 'Even the tax collectors and publicans love one another, you're not any better than they if you just love each other'. You're a Baptist, or you're a Brethren, or you're an 'Iron-Hallite' whatever that may be - and you love the people here because they all think like you, and they talk like you, and they look like you, and they walk like you - but what about the people who call themselves Christians who aren't like you? I'm not talking about ecumenism here - ecumenism does not stop us loving people, you may think it at times! But here in East Belfast there are many churches, denominations, and we who believe not in denominations can be the very ones that use denominations in order to separate believers - that seems an irony to me. Maybe you can explain that one to me sometime. But the fact of the matter is this: there is also working men's clubs, football pubs, and they each

flowers make the tree and the plant look better - but they don't really do an awful lot. The idea of the fruit of the Spirit here is not that Christians are nice people to have around, and say nice words, and are all polite to you all the time - because they're not, apart from anything else! But the idea here is fruit that can be eaten and digested by other people - fruit is food, and food is for hungry people! You see, you don't go home and hang some apples and bananas on the wall, unless you're having a harvest service, because they're food. They're not to decorate the place. John Stott put it like this: 'The Christian should resemble a fruit tree and not a Christmas tree'. Fruit is for feeding hungry people, and these qualities of the fruit of the Spirit - you would think at times, to hear us, that they're in order that people would just stop and look up into our eyes and say: 'What a wonderful person he is, isn't he tremendous?'. These attributes of fruit are to feed hungry people, they're in order that people who need love will find love, that people who need joy and peace and longsuffering and gentleness and kindness and faithfulness will find it in us as God's people! If people see us as good, and we never get involved in their lives, that is not fruit.

### *Love, Joy, Peace*

Let's move on, because I want to give you in closing three categories of this fruit that are mentioned in verse 22 and verse 23. Let's take the first three: the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Now this is tremendous, think of this: there is no limit involved to the Spirit-filled believer regarding the way that they may experience love, joy and peace. You can have as much love, joy and peace as you can handle if you're filled with the Spirit of the living God. You may, Paul says, enjoy the love of God that passeth knowledge. You may enjoy joy unspeakable and full of glory. You may enjoy the peace which passeth all understanding. Imagine this! Is this yours? This is the fruit of internal experience, the internal experience that the child of God ought to have.

You'll notice that love is mentioned first, because all the other fruit in this whole series of nine outflows from love, and are really love in different forms and shapes. You will notice in Galatians 5 verse 14 that love is commanded: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. You might say: 'Well, how can something that is commanded be a fruit? If I have to do it, and you say it's not work, how it can be a fruit described in verse 16 to 18, walking in the Spirit that you should not fulfil the lusts of the flesh'. The reason is simply this, we were singing it last week: 'Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey'. You're to obey the command of God to love your neighbour; but if you're a believer you're to trust God to give you the resources, sometimes, to love people who are very unlovable - and that's being honest.

You see, love in the Scripture is more volitional than emotional. It's not this airy-fairy feeling and tickle, and hairs going up the back of your neck that Scott and Heather are enjoying at the minute, but it's something more than that. It's something less subjective but objective, something that you can see in the actions of men, rather than feelings.

is: there is something in all of us that enjoys the works of the flesh, and if you can't admit that you're a liar. You see, this is how the producers of the soaps get people hooked - because you could read this verse 19 to 21 almost as a script to 'Eastenders' or to something else that maybe you cherish very dearly. This is how the press sell their tabloids, by plastering all of this type of work of the flesh all over the front pages - and people buy it! Now when we are saved we get a new nature, but we still have the old nature, and God's plan - mark this please - is not to improve upon our old nature, but to replace the old with the new. This is where people flounder, because they try in some kind of way, in a legal sense, to restrict themselves. They try to bind the flesh, they try to tame the flesh, they try to train the flesh - one of the greatest illustrations of that is the monks in the monasteries. They try to cut themselves off from the world, but it does not work - Christ has created us as new beings to be in the world, but not of the world. There is a power in the Holy Spirit that we'll see in a moment that can allow you to walk through the world, not leading yourself into temptation, but walk through this age with all its temptations and trials and resist them in the power of Christ - not cut yourself off from them.

You see, the Gospel is not about, from start to finish, what I can do for God, it's about what He can do for me. That's why you should never try to sanctify the flesh, because the flesh is bankrupt, even the good flesh, even your own righteousness is as filthy rags in the eyes of God. But God's goal in redemption is to replace all that the old nature loves with all that Jesus is - can I make that any plainer? The goal of the Gospel is to make you like God's Son! It is through, of course, constant transformation - 2 Corinthians 3:18 - that we are being changed into the same image of the Lord Jesus, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is a process, but I'm asking you, before we look at this fruit of the Spirit: how is the process in your life today? Are you feeding on the works of the flesh - you can do that as a believer - or are you producing the fruit of the Spirit?

Well, let's look at the fruit of the Spirit. If I was to ask you the question: how many are there are of them? The answer would probably come back 'nine', but if you look at verse 22 you will see that the word fruit is not in the plural, it does not say 'the fruits of the Spirit', it says in singular 'the fruit of the Spirit'. It does not say 'the fruit of the Spirit are', even though there are plural descriptions given, but it says 'the fruit of the Spirit is'. This is a singular fruit, it is not nine fruits, it is one fruit. So the idea that the apostle Paul has here is not: 'Tom has love, he's a very loving person; and James, he has peace; and Joy, she has joy', and you could go down a list of people with these particular attributes - he is saying that this is one fruit, and all of these attributes are evident in the life of the person that has this fruit in them. Do you understand that?

In fact, this fruit could be described in just one word, it is the word 'character' - character! What is your character like? I hear people say: 'Well, I'm quick-tempered', 'Oh, I'm humorous, I have to make a joke about everything', and we could go on and describe all

sorts of characters: those who are melancholy, those who are jumping over the moon all the time. That is what you are as a natural individual, and taking personality descriptions aside, there is a certain amount of that that is rooted in our old nature that we can't just resign ourselves to and say: 'Well, that's just the way I am' - your character has to be changed into the character of the fruit of the Spirit. Now you ask: 'Whose character is that?' - one word answer again, the character of 'Jesus'. That is simply what it is.

Oswald Chambers, that great spiritual writer, put it like this: 'The works of the flesh are separate acts performed by the man, but the ninefold fruit of the Spirit is the issue of the one life within'. One life issuing ninefold fruit, one fruit, because it is the life of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ! If nothing else proves that this is beyond man to live it, it is that: that only the life of Christ can produce such fruit. Philippians 1 reads like this, verse 11: 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ' - the fruits of righteousness. Righteousness is the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit is the character of His righteousness.

So if you like, the fruit of the Spirit given here ninefold is a perfect portrait of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore, not only is it a portrait of Him, but it is a description of the ideal Christian, for Christian means 'follower of Christ', 'Christ's-one', 'one who is like Christ'. For true Christian character to outflow in us there must be the fruit of the indwelling Spirit of Christ living within us. If you would pardon the expression, we all should be 'little Christs' walking about the face of the earth!

One true evidence of the fullness of the Spirit that we looked at several weeks ago is not gifts, whether you call it tongues or this, that or the other; or any preaching gift, or any other particular gift - that is not the evidence for the fullness of the Spirit. The evidence for the fullness of the Spirit is not ability, whatever you may be able to do for God and for men, that is not the evidence. The evidence of the fullness of the Spirit of God is character - character! The fruit that is in your life.

Let me show you this, in Matthew 7:22, the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said that on the day that He would come again and judge the world, that many would say unto Him: 'Lord, Lord' - in other words, they would have the language but not the life. Then they would say: '*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? Have we not cast out demons in Thy name, and done many great miracles in Thy name?*' - they had gifts, they had gifts, but the indwelling Spirit of God was not in them! Do you know what that tells me? You can counterfeit gifts, you can counterfeit ability - anybody can preach, anybody can talk, anybody can perform a miracle even with the power of the devil himself, and we'll see that tomorrow night - but no one can counterfeit the character of Jesus Christ! That is impossible. There's only one Jesus, and there's only one Spirit of Jesus.

Now I want you to notice the difference not only in the fact that this is one fruit, not plural fruit even though there is a ninefold description given - but I want you to notice

the difference between the word 'works' and the word 'fruit'. The works of the flesh, this word 'work', what does it speak of? When you think of work - don't all turn off now on me! - but when you think of work you think of effort, don't you? You think of energy, you think of mechanics and toil and labour, and stress and strain, and being spent - that's what works does. What is the result of work? It is weariness, faintness, tiredness, frustration - and it could be that there's someone here who is trying to live their Christian life through works. You're putting in all the energy and it seems that you're getting nothing back in return, only weariness and frustration, because fleshly effort and fleshly display and noise is all that work has got to do with, but that is not what brings forth the character of Christ. What you do doesn't matter to an extent! This is not works, this is fruit.

What does fruit involve? Well, it doesn't involve any work on the part of the tree, but it is the result of life working within. In other words, it's the result of receiving - the tree receives the nutrients, the tree receives the sustenance and the light, and it yields to it - it doesn't close up its leaves and dig its head into the ground - it accepts it all, and because it surrenders completely to the resources and environment around it, it yields fruit.

My friend, this is very simple, but it is profound; because what I'm asking you from that illustration is this: one, have you received from God everything that He has provided for you to bear fruit? Two, are you yielding your life and everything that you are and have to God, so that you might bear fruit. Three, are you accepting God's will for your life and all these aforementioned, and if you are you will bear forth much fruit. Someone has said well: 'A machine works, but only life can produce fruit'. Are you just working for God, or are you living for God and allowing the life of Christ - which is the only life that can please God - to live through you?

Do you know what it means, if you're going to bear fruit? It means this: that you will have no confidence in the flesh, that means the good flesh as well. You know you can do good works, and say good words, and pray good prayers in the flesh; but if you want to bear fruit you will have no confidence in the flesh, but you will do a couple of things - one, you will confess your weakness and utter depravity before God, because the Lord Jesus said 'Blessed are they that are poor in spirit'. You will make an earnest plea - now I'm talking to Christians - for forgiveness in your life for those things that you have done that you ought not to have done, and for those things that you have left undone that you ought to have done; and you will make a complete surrender to the will of God and Christ in your life - now, have you ever done that? Because I think most believers today, especially in Ulster, have never done that!

You might ask the question: why is the picture here fruit rather than flowers? Have you ever thought about that? Flowers are, in a sense, the produce of a plant; but why does Paul use fruit here? Well, I believe the reason is because flowers are decorative things,