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Fruit

Greek *karpos*

Aramaic *'eb*

Hebrew *priy*

NIV

KJV *fruit*

DRB *fruit*

Latin *fructus*

fruit, bough, reward;

fruit (as plucked);

qualities of the heart

Setting the Scene

IN THE FIRST CENTURY, GALATIA was a region in the Greek province of Asia Minor (Anatolia). The people who lived there were descended from Thracian Gauls: Celts originating from Gaul (now France) who had migrated to Thrace (now Bulgaria) and later settled in Anatolia (now Turkey).

The Galatians had a colourful history: their exploits included mercenary stints serving as a bodyguard first to Cleopatra and then to Herod. By the first century, they had become thoroughly Hellenised as a society. That said, their unique military and ethnic background spoke into that culture.

Paul wrote letters to the cities of Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessaloniki and Colossae, but his letter to the Galatians encompassed a whole swathe of Roman territory. The towns in Galatia that he had personally visited included Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

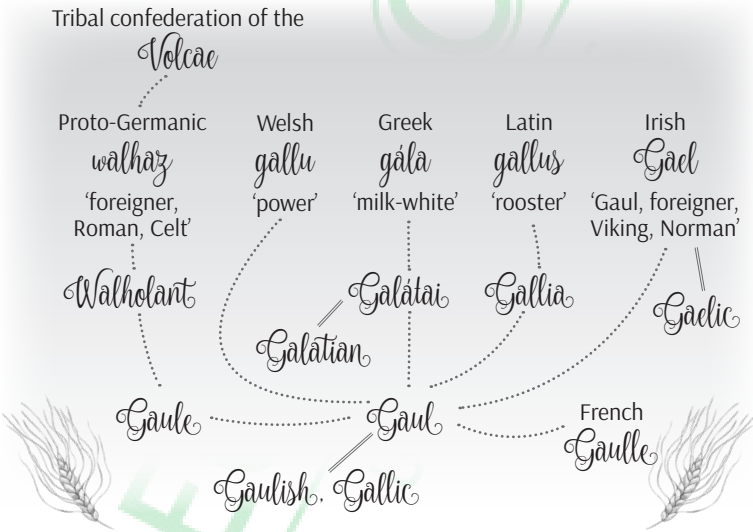
To a people whose culture was built on merit, rank, endorsement, legalistic discipline and spiritual bondage, he wrote of grace, an 'operating system' as different to theirs as Microsoft is to Apple. And, famously, he wrote of fruit.

Quite a variety of vegetables, fruits and nuts were grown in Galatia, and it might surprise you to know that in ancient Hebrew culture, at least, grains were considered a kind of fruit. *Britannica* backs this classification up:

Technically, most grains are actually a type of fruit with a seed that is difficult to separate without milling.

The Gauls had many 'gods', among them – according to Julius Caesar – variations of Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, Minerva and Pluto.

The etymology of *Gaul* is complicated. It shares that of *Wales, Cornwall, Wallonia, Wallachia* and *Gallipoli* in that it's another translation of *walhaz,* 'outlander.' Yet the region name also sounds like the Latin *gallus,* 'rooster,' and is related to the Cornish *galleos*, 'powerful' people. Throw into the mix Late Greek *galea*, 'ship' and *galeos*, 'dogfish shark.'



According to linguists, the French *Gaul* cannot be derived from the Latin *Gallia* because of g/j changes. This means that everybody collectively arrived at 'fierce white strutting stranger' by coincidence – or perhaps agreement!

If the early Gauls were not filled with *bitter* gall, perhaps they were filled with gall in the sense of *audacious confidence*. Gall is,

after all, yellow bile: choler. They feared only the sky falling. The 'indomitable' characters of the *Asterix* comics come to mind! Cultures often have a sort of temperament, if you look at them with *very* broad brush strokes: phlegmatic Australia, sanguine Philippines, melancholic Germany – and perhaps choleric Galatia.

When, therefore, Paul wrote to the Galatians about coming to Christ on the basis of *faith* – which could likewise be described as audacious confidence – as the key to grace, he was drawing on their robust heritage. He calls them back to their fearless origins, pointing up the *source* of faith as God Himself. There could also be, between the lines, a warning to the rooster-like not to get 'cocky' about how well they could keep the Law!

Paul writes to these Hellenised Gauls about the fruit of the Spirit – that which emanates from the nature of God, growing in us and

flavouring us – in *Koine* (common) Greek, which was the lingua franca (should I say *lingua hellenica*?) of the day. If you consider that Paul was, in fact, a Jewish man (who likely did his everyday thinking in Aramaic and his spiritual thinking with Hebrew) you can almost feel him struggling to find all-encompassing words to pin to the Person he knows and the overflow of that Person's DNA. What we tend to misterm *the nine fruits,* and the Vulgate renders as *twelve* virtues, were perhaps only *seven* Hebrew concepts, and simply needed more language to express in the Greek and, later, the Latin. English tends to want more words still, when it comes to fully capturing the concepts, though our translations tend to settle on 'something close' in order to maintain narrative flow. It's because of the seven Hebrew descriptors that kindness, goodness and faithfulness have been combined in this book. They all come from the same ancient word.

I'm unsure why St Jerome's Vulgate lists the characteristics in the order it does, when some seem clearly allied further up or down the list. Longanimity, for example, is a specialised form of patience – though when I was beginning this series I thought it meant 'generosity' and wrote on it at length!

Perhaps more has been lost in translation than we think, though taken as a whole, nothing is truly missing even if we can't really come close to describing God. *The Passion Translation* enumerates all the virtues under Love as a heading, which is really insightful; and *The Message* gives a holistic description rather than bullet points. You'll find three versions laid out at the end of this volume. For the purposes of this series, I'm choosing to dig into all twelve ideas – not in isolation, but in concert, as part of each other; and I'm pandering to familiarity by titling them under semi-traditional headings. However, let's not lose sight of the fact that the fruit is **less of a list and more of a picture**. That's why *karpos* in the Bible is singular, not plural: the **fruit** (not fruits) of the Spirit.

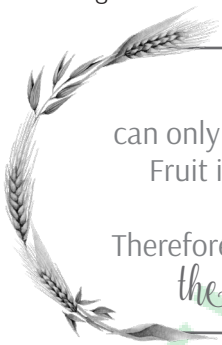
It is likely that Paul, when he wrote in Greek to the Galatians, was aware of the Greek myth of the character Karpos, a beautiful youth born of the West Wind and the Springtime. It's best not to read too much into legends, most of which are terribly tainted, but it's worth noting that in the Galatians' minds, there might have already existed an association between 'fruit', 'wind', and 'new birth'. Sometimes, these associations have been set up by God long before they transmute themselves into stories. God is a linguistic master. When He confused everyone's languages at Babel, He was typically artistic about it, as the One who brings beauty from ashes. Language is rich and fun and carries within it traces of the path back to God.

Jesus Himself, as a Jew, linked being born again – born of the Spirit – with the mystery of the movement of wind, using the single Greek word *pneuma* (breath, blast of air) for *spirit*, *Spirit* and *wind*, each of which we would otherwise have regarded as independent. Psalm 39:5 and Psalm 62:9 state that man's life is but a breath (Hebrew: *hebel*). The English translators have used 'breath' in an idiomatic sense because *hebel*, which is often translated 'vanity', has the connotation of something meaningless in its brevity. It would still hold true if we re-translated *hebel*'s appearance in Ecclesiastes 1:2 by saying, 'Breath! Breath! Everything is just hot air!'

A movement of the Holy Spirit is like the wind, be it a gentle breeze or a mighty rushing hurricane. It happens when it happens, it can be directed somewhat but not contained, it isn't any other *not-Him* thing, and in ancient times it was hard to pinpoint what precipitated it. In short, it's outside our control. We can ask for it, prepare for it, welcome it – but we can't *generate* it. Much as we can't wait for the next move of the Spirit, John 6:44 tells us that nobody comes to the Son unless the Father draws them through the Holy Ghost. Prayer may be the forerunner of revival, but it's not its engine: *we* are not creating the move of God. It's the Lord Himself *answering*

prayer. I think of a circuit diagram, where prayer is the switch which facilitates the current's flow, but is not itself the power. We must never take credit for the Holy Spirit's work, nor rail at others that they didn't 'pray enough' to make it happen. All we can do is stir the hunger, stoke the fires, beseech the Throne. The timing is up to Him.

The wind that is breath – evidence that spirit is resident in the body – is a mere three-to-five-second interval of oxygen and carbon dioxide. The *fruit* of the Spirit is not so ephemeral. Jesus spoke of 'fruit that remains,' and I believe He was talking about the fruit of their lives, not just the fruit of their ministries. This fruit comes from the partnership between the Holy Spirit and ourselves. He Himself is the very opposite of ephemeral: He existed before inventing Time itself.



The fruit ***of*** the Spirit
can only be produced ***by*** God's Holy Spirit.
Fruit is produced in accordance with
the DNA of its plant.
Therefore, the fruit ***of the Spirit*** embodies
the DNA of God's heart.

The fruit comes from Him. And while it can be said that God is love, He is joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled – we can't reverse that and say that 'if it's loving it must be godly,' and so forth. God *has* the virtues, but the virtues are not themselves God – merely piecemeal reflections of Him. Very beautiful, meaningful reflections. As we look in this volume at three-in-one of these puzzle pieces, ask Jesus our Wisdom to speak to you and show you the beauty of who He is.

The Fruit of the Spirit

– short definitions –
by Warren Ravenscroft

Unconditional, sacrificial love for others.

A deep-seated gladness that transcends circumstances.

A sense of wholeness and tranquillity that comes from being right with God and others.

Endurance and forbearance, especially in the face of difficulty.

A gentle and compassionate nature.

Moral excellence and righteousness.

Loyalty and dependability.

Meekness and humility.

Discipline and moderation in one's actions and desires.

A Choice of Fruit

There's a recurring theme in Scripture about fruit. The way things start is the way they tend to go on. If there's a large-scale disruption in the relationship between humanity and God, it all too often tends to revolve around a bad choice involving eating.

Adam taking the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the first obvious bad choice that results in disaster for the entire world. The pattern quickly repeats itself when a second Adam, a new primeval father from whom all of humanity can trace their descent, is born. In his lifetime, the upheaval of the earth is followed by a new birth.

Noah is this second Adam. Their stories and the creation/re-creation narrative that flows around them have significant parallels. Consider these comparisons:

- the formless chaos of the deeps of creation and the formless chaos of the flood
- the Holy Spirit 'hovering' over the waters of creation and the ark 'walking' on the waters of the flood
- the emergence of dry land during the days of creation and a similar emergence during the days of re-creation after the flood
- the appearance of plants, then animals at the beginning of time and, once again, their re-appearance after the flood receded
- both Adam and Noah are ancestral fathers to all mankind
- Adam originally lived in a garden on a mountain in the time of God's rest. Noah lived in a garden he planted – a vineyard – on a mountain after the ark came to rest.

- Adam eats the forbidden fruit and things go pear-shaped from that point on. Noah makes some wine from the grapes he's cultivated and things go very wrong.
- Adam becomes aware he is naked after eating the fruit and tries to cover himself. Noah becomes blind drunk and only becomes aware he has been naked after he wakes up to find two of his sons have made sure he was decently and honourably covered.
- Adam receives a curse on his work and on the land as a result of eating the fruit. Noah, as a result of his consumption of fermented fruit juice, sets a curse on his grandson Canaan. Noah declares the destiny of Canaan is to be a slave – this aggressively magnifies the curse laid on Adam regarding work. Where Adam would have to toil to receive reward from his labour, Canaan was deprived of enjoying those rewards by being forced to give them to another. The fruit of his work would be denied to him.

Now, Scripture is not clear what happened to Noah. Ham, Noah's son, was the perpetrator of some unspecified objectionable act. However, Noah bypasses Ham and lets fly with a curse on Canaan instead, dispossessing him of both freedom and inheritance. Because the story is so allusive and ambiguous, we tend to give Noah a free pass on this and consider he must have been justified in his action.

However quite apart from the parallels with Adam in Eden that suggest Noah failed some test at this point, there's Jesus' actions to consider. It's only when we realise that the work of Jesus in turning water into wine at Cana involves (amongst other things) an overturning of this act of dispossession by Noah that we can sense this was the moment when the second Adam failed.

And so it went on – all through the ages. Bad decisions involving food and fruit continued to have disastrous consequences. Consider

Joseph. He set in motion the political mechanism that would, in time, be used against his own people when he set the price of grain for the Egyptians during the third year of the famine as their land and their bodies. They then became Pharaoh's slaves along with their farms. The measures were permanent: there was no redemption. To survive, the Egyptians had to buy food – that they'd supplied in the form of tax – by selling their own freedom and that of their descendants into perpetual slavery.[1]

Another bad decision involving food occurs in the story of Elijah. He's on the run from Jezebel and he collapses under a broom tree out in the desert. Waking up, he finds an angel has provided food and water for him – and, in the strength of that provision, he travels another forty days south to the mountain of God. Bad decision. The angelic food wasn't given to him to go on but to go back. He was meant to change the government and take advantage of the power void just created by the removal of all the king's advisors – the prophets of Baal and Asherah.[2]

Of course, the story of the wilderness wanderings has repeated references to bad decisions about food: incessant grumbling about manna, not to mention deaths from eating quail. But there's a decidedly odd decision about food that is easy to overlook. It involves Moses. For forty days, while he was on top of Mount Sinai receiving the stone tablets with the commandments inscribed on them, Moses fasted from food.

Now it wasn't as if God couldn't provide: after all, just prior to Moses' ascent of the mountain to receive these written laws, he'd been with seventy elders who'd been up there banqueting with God. Food wasn't an issue. So why did Moses fast? I suspect it was because accepting God's hospitality, as an individual – apart from a delegation – meant agreeing to the name and threshold covenants God repeatedly offered him. Fasting is completely consistent with

Moses' behaviour all through the decades – right up to the moment when he strikes the rock and, as a result, God declares he cannot enter the Promised Land. The striking of the rock is a refusal of threshold covenant just as surely and definitively as NOT accepting hospitality is.[3]

Notice that the very first test the devil sets in front of Jesus, the Last Adam, is a temptation about food: *turn stones into bread.*

Clearly decisions about fruit and food are not just physically critical but spiritually too. Bearing this in mind, what about the Fruit of the Spirit? In particular, what about goodness, kindness and faithfulness – that distinctive flavour of *chesed?* It's clearly significant because we see Adam failing the test of faithfulness, Noah failing the test of kindness and Joseph failing the test of goodness. All of them, at a crucial juncture, lack some aspect of the beautiful Hebrew description of God's character: *chesed.*

In today's world, the Fruit of the Spirit is often regarded as unimportant. It's seen as kids' stuff – appropriate to Sunday School or children's church. Believers would never say that the Fruit is something we grow up and out of, but plenty of us act as if it's the case that we can simply leave these virtues behind. Instead of wanting to mature the Fruit in the tests of life, we toss it aside as unnecessary now we've got one of the Gifts of the Spirit to exercise. Such an attitude is a sign of our own immaturity.

The Fruit, as we've seen throughout this series, is actually one aspect of the armaments given to us for spiritual warfare. It complements the Armour of God. Its nature as weaponry is a consequence of the assault in Eden: there fruit was weaponised against Adam and Eve and so, now, by the sowing-and-reaping principle, the Fruit of the Spirit is a peerless weapon against the enemy.

Learning to deploy the Fruit involves surrendering to the Holy Spirit's strategy in the heat of everyday battle. And to making wise decisions on the basis of His instructions.

Chesed involves *faithfulness*. Some leaders interpret faithfulness with an expectation their employees or followers will be unquestioningly obedient and unconditionally loyal. But every leader, sooner or later, is going to be like Adam, or Noah, or Joseph, or Moses. They're going to face the 'fruit decision' or the 'food decision' and the outcome, if the evidence of human nature is anything to go by, is probably not going to be Jesus-like. There is never a time when we should give to another person the kind of trust that is rightly reserved for God alone. Hence, if a boss is making a bad decision about *chesed*, we're not absolved if we follow their lead. 'I was just following orders,' isn't a defence in the spiritual world any more than it is in the secular.

In addition to *faithfulness*, the *chesed* bundle also involves *kindness* and *goodness*. It's easy to be *kind* to people we like, but *goodness* is that quality that takes us out of our comfort zone and calls us to be *kind* to those we don't like too. *Kindness* doesn't mean ignoring injustice, it doesn't mean appeasing a sadistic abuser, it doesn't mean minimising the effects of violence or placating an outburst of anger with a deflecting half-truth. *Kindness* doesn't encourage people to remain in harm's way simply to demonstrate submission. *Kindness* is not people-pleasing niceness. And this sort of niceness does not belong to the Fruit of the Spirit.

Goodness, kindness and *faithfulness* spring from a seed of *truth* – uncompromising, unswerving truth. Paradoxically therefore, *chesed* is fierce: fiercely protective, fiercely loyal, fiercely righteous. Yet *chesed* is also loving, as evidenced in its older English translation, 'lovingkindness.' So truth must be tempered with grace and seasoned with wisdom.

Truth takes courage. Especially when it's uncomfortable or inconvenient to those in power. Truth also takes humility. Especially when it's uncomfortable or inconvenient to ourselves. How often we

take sides before hearing all the various viewpoints – before learning whether there's a selective gap in the truth-telling that makes all the difference. There's a huge and obvious gap in the Noah story that makes discernment impossible until Jesus comes along. And there's a gap in Elijah's memory and thus in his truth-telling when he states three times he's the only prophet left in Israel, just after he's been told about a hundred of them hidden in two caves! Even after God tries to shake him out of his woe-is-me depressive forgetfulness with wind, fire and earthquake, Elijah remains stuck in untruth and repeats exactly the same self-pitying statement.

Courage, humility, truth, grace, wisdom – these are the seeds, stems, roots and branches of *chesed*. They are the virtues that we need to ask the Holy Spirit to empower in us, so that in all the 'fruit decisions' of life, we choose rightly.

1 See: Anne Hamilton, *The Summoning of Time: John 2 and 20*, for details on how Jesus reverses the dispossession of Noah towards Canaan, as well as Joseph towards the Egyptians, during the wedding feast at Cana.

2 See: Anne Hamilton, *The Elijah Tapestry: John 1 and 21*, for details on how Jesus shows that Elijah was given the breakfast by the angel to go back to face his fears, not continue to flee.

3 See: Anne Hamilton, *The Lustral Waters: John 3 and 19*, for details about why Moses striking the rock was a refusal of covenant and how Nicodemus was involved in healing this historical wound.