

Core Values

GENTLENESS

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The DNA of God Series

- Core Values:  Love
- Core Values:  Joy
- Core Values:  Peace
- Core Values:  Patience
- Core Values:  Kindness, Goodness, Faith
- Core Values:  Gentleness
- Core Values:  Self-Control
- Core Values:  Walking By the Spirit



Contents



	Setting the Scene	10
	Gentleness	26
	Gentleness in Warfare	34
	From the Seed of Friendship and Leadership	57
	The meekest Man?	62
	Junctions	72
	Mildness	120
	Once More unto the Breach	149
	Prayer	152
	Aligning Three Modern Versions	154
	References, Symbols & Notes	164





Greek
karpōs

Aramaic
ܩܪܦܘܨ

Hebrew
priy

Fruit

NIV

KJV
fruit

DRB
fruit

Latin
fructus




fruit, bough, reward;
fruit (as plucked);
qualities of the heart



Setting the Scene

I HAVE SPENT THE JOURNEY of this series so far falling more and more in love with the Lord. It's my prayer that you, too, will come to know Him more intimately. My mother once said, 'We talk a lot about loving the Lord and serving Him. But the greatest thing is to *know* Him. For when I know Him, I can't help but love Him. And when I love Him, I can't help but serve Him.'

This series is built upon the revelation that the fruit of the Spirit, like that of any living being, must necessarily carry His DNA. It is therefore not only accurate to say, 'God is love,' but also that God is joy, God is peace, God is patience, God is kind/good/faithful, God is gentle, and God is self-controlled.



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



Once I started looking up Galatians 5:22–23 in various translations, I realised that the list was not consistent. Was I supposed to see *gentleness*? *mildness*? *meekness*? *humility*? *tolerance*? or *modesty*? Why weren't the lists in the same order and with the same descriptors? Could the fruit be a wholistic picture, where all of those terms were true, and all of them were trying to describe the same ethos? *Gentleness* in all its variations was the fruit-aspect which opened up this idea for me.

The Greek term *karpos*, 'fruit,' is singular – indicating that there are not seven or nine or twelve *fruits* of the Spirit, but *one fruit*, described in several *terms*.


Of the seven fruits of the Promised Land, barley is the most appropriate as a motif if we want to look at gentleness more closely. While the stalk has a spiky look, it does bend. As the grain becomes mature – as its usefulness and palatability increases – it bows its head more and more. Its spikelets soften into hair.

As my husband Chris and I bounced these ideas around between us, and I expressed my wonder at how the aspects of God blurred across the joins, he offered the following opinion.

In Micah 6:8 we are given a definitive list of how to please God under the Law: to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Since God's commands echo God's nature, if one likes, one can loosely allocate these three items to each member of the Trinity. (without forgetting that God is One). We must keep in mind, though, that all three members of the Godhead engage in all three activities. And so this outline is an instruction to mirror the heart of God.

In the same way, the fruit of the Spirit mirrors the heart of God by producing His heart *in* us. The fruit, in fact, empowers us to *fulfil* Micah 6:8. As in the Old Testament, so in the New: externally in the Old to produce internal habits, and internally in the New to produce external expressions. Justice, mercy and humble devotion



are writ large upon love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control. Consider also grace, woven and expressed through them all; both the grace of graciousness and the grace of enabling.

Notice this: Paul talks about 'fruit' without ever narrowing down the example to one variety of fruit tree. You might be a coffee bean, good at waking people up in hot water. You might be a citrus: a little acerbic but full of vitamin C. You might be an olive: savoury, with a hundred uses including making other food palatable, but dependent on partnership with others to bring these about. You might be an acorn, small and insignificant but with the kernel of strength and greatness inside you. You might be an apple: refreshing on the surface and tough at the core. You might be a cluster of grapes, dispensing small but frequent and lovely doses of goodness.

It's beautifully ambiguous: Paul doesn't lock us down to one thing, but simply observes that *fruit happens*. And this also frees God up to speak our language, to describe Himself to us as our individual nature (and geographical thinking) best receives Him. He is as invigorating as coffee. He can deliver zingy one-liners like a citrus. He stoops into partnership with us like an olive. He is the mighty oak who reduced Himself to an acorn at Bethlehem. He scatters tiny kindnesses through our days. And He is hardy and sweet as an apple.

Jesus Himself spoke of vines. Unless He meant *us*, exactly what sort of 'fruitless branches' could the humanised Son of God possibly have had? And yet He told His disciples that every branch in Him that wasn't bearing fruit, the Father (like any good vinedresser) would lift up (*airo*) back into the sunlight for reinvigoration. Having a season where areas of your life are unproductive? Have no fear; you're in good company! It's just a short matter of time before the Heavenly Husbandman comes along to provide assistance. The very fact that the words *vinedresser* and *husbandman* are synonymous should tell us something about the tenderness with which God shapes us.



'asot mispat

Do justly: an **action**
upholding right/s

The **Spirit** gives us grace as He lives within us and teaches us to see others through the eyes of love, kindness, goodness and faithfulness.



'ahabat chesed

Love mercy: an **attitude**
compassionate,
forgiving kindness



hasnea' leket

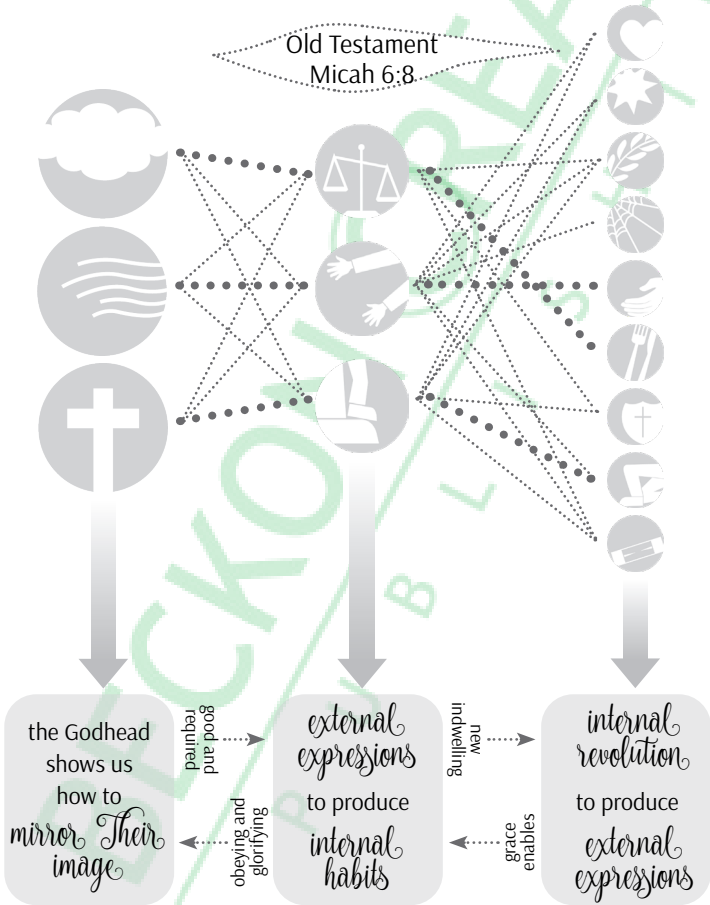
Walk humbly: a **posture**
active, chastened

And the **Son** showed us how to shed our entitlements by becoming a man, submitting daily to the will and vision of the Father as He walked humbly upon the earth in communion with Him.

As in the Old, so in the New ...

New Testament
Galatians 5

Old Testament
Micah 6:8

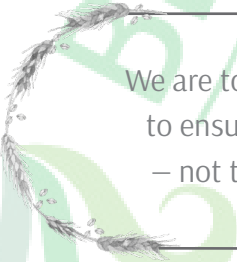




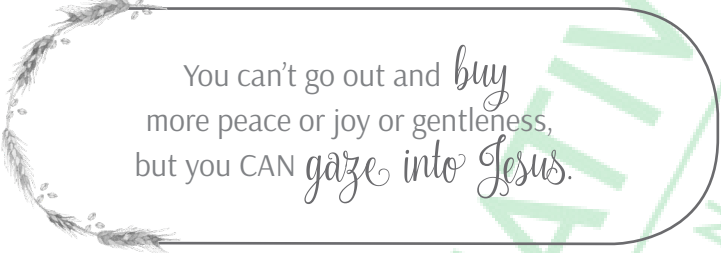
Keeping the ‘apples and oranges’ ideas lined up with the ‘stay in your lane’ concept, it’s clear that comparison is right out. We are warned against ‘biting and devouring one another’ – and this in the phrases immediately before describing our growing Jesusness as *fruit*. Perhaps it’s a way of saying ‘mind your own business and stop taste-testing each other’s immaturity in order to write each other off.’ We are told to examine *ourselves* to ensure we are still in the faith – not to examine our peers. And even then, our fruit takes a long time to grow and ripen.

The answer to anxiety is not ‘get more peace.’ That’s about as helpful as saying, ‘Too short? Grow taller.’ You can ask God to *be* your peace; He’s not expecting you to manufacture it out of nothing.

The solution is not to ‘get more joy,’ which is essentially what we’ve been telling depressives for years. While counting your blessings and exercising thankfulness will increase your joy and God’s glory, you are also allowed to own the true way you feel, by bringing it to God the way King David did. We can’t get healing if we keep calling our missing limb a ‘flesh wound’ for fear of losing out on gold in the Suffering Olympics. ‘How deep is the mud?’ asks the meme with a big and filthy labrador next to a tiny and filthy Jack Russell terrier. ‘Depends on whom you ask.’ Even if your aches are first-world problems, that’s no reason to reject Jesus as your confidant. Bring Him everything. Faith is not *living in denial*. Faith is *clinging to a better reality* that advances toward us as a gift in Jesus’s hand.



We are told to examine *ourselves*
to ensure we are still in the faith
– not to examine *our peers*.



You can't go out and *buy*
more peace or joy or gentleness,
but you CAN *gaze into Jesus.*

Statements that victim-blame by saying, 'Get more peace, get more joy, snap out of it, stop focusing on yourself, you're actually very blessed, you ingrate,' bring guilt and despair rather than relief. The answer to anxiety is not 'get more peace' or 'get more joy.' You can't buy these at a store, except in reception-tool forms such as art or therapy. But you can gaze into Jesus, the window into God's heart. You can reflect on the nature of the Holy Spirit. You can offer up thanks, which promotes both memory and joy, while you're asking for your needs to be met. You can take hold of the Father's hand held out to hold you up. He is your glory and the lifter of your head, a shield to you.

The more you do this – rejoicing in the beautiful nature of the Saviour we have been given – the more *who He is* will seep through you. And the more joy and peace you will experience to help you through the outworking period. The old song *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus* remains startlingly accurate. Let the frettables fade to a blur as you bring Jesus into focus. You will not become perfected overnight, but He is already perfect on your behalf. Your needs will not go away, but obsessing over the negative and the hopelessness and the uncertainty will. Things seem a lot more doable when we remember we've linked arms with the Almighty.





Fruit that Remains

When we think of ‘fruit that remains’ we automatically turn to John 15:16; but there are two things to remember. One, there is a wider context to that verse. And two, this is not Jesus’s first reference to fruit. Let’s have a look at another of them:

‘No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Why do you call Me, “Kyrie, Kyrie,” and do not do what I say?’

Luke 6:43–46 NIV

kurios
lord, master, owner,
supreme one,
controller

Jesus is showing His audience that their words and their deeds are not matching up. They claim to be Abrahamic, but they are not bringing forth the faith and obedience of Abraham. And they claim He is their boss, but they ignore what He says. It’s as if He’s saying, ‘Your hearts are full of routine, so that’s what comes out of your mouth. But we’ll know you’re a true child of God when you exercise Abraham’s faith, and we’ll know I’m really your Lord when you obey Me.’

I don’t know much about horticulture, but I’m pretty sure there’s a difference between a bad fruit tree and a simple bad fruit. A healthy tree will drop its fruit when said fruit passes its peak. And so when we find negative fruit – something rotten and stinky – in our lives, it’s best we also drop it and start over. It’s only a warped or poisoned tree that consistently brings forth poisoned fruit. By the grace of God, that is no longer us.



So, with these ideas under our belt – healthy tree, healthy fruit – we can look at the Farewell Discourse with another layer of meaning. Translations disagree on how to render it, so bear with me while I look for common and uncommon ground.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will **last** (NIV) **abide** (ESV) **remain** (KJV) – *and so that whatever you ask in My name the Father will give you.*

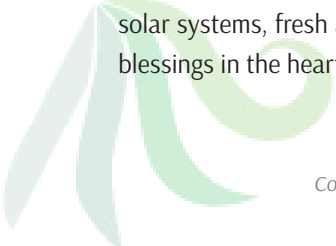
John 15:16

meno
 remain, abide, stay,
 continue, dwell, endure,
 be present, stand

While I believe Jesus is talking about the fruit of their *lives* – the fruit of the Spirit, rather than the fruit of their *ministries* – what is curious and *Kyrios* here is that the fruit is supposed to REMAIN. Natural fruit will fall off the tree if it becomes ripe enough. But Jesus is speaking of *supernatural* fruit, which instead of peaking and plummeting, goes from glory to glory. Imagine a fruit tree so laden with ripe, edible fruit that it is always in season, year-round! Or, in our barley motif, a field where nourishment can be obtained at any time without decay or atrophy.

Here is a profound Edenic picture.

What if Adam & Eve, in their ‘able to not sin and die’ state, were not, in fact, ever supposed to grow old? If everything in the universe, in its original state, was never designed to rise to maturity, go over the hill, get infirm, and pass away? Imagine it. You would be born, you would grow up ... and up ... and up. Your health and beauty and strength and intellect would increase with the years, not decrease. At 90,000 years old, you would still be growing in who you are, starting new hobbies and sports and inventions, spreading to new solar systems, fresh and unwrinkled, sharper than ever, finding new blessings in the heart of God, rich beyond measure.





This is the spiritual renewal on offer to us. This is fruit that remains: a repackaging of the gifts of Eden. *‘Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day,’* says Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16 niv. Our love-joy-peace-patience-lovingkindness-humility-self-control does not ripen and fall off the tree because it is ‘past it’. There is no longer any such thing as ‘overripe’. There is only goodness and sweetness in increasing measure as we are conformed to the glorious blueprint of Christ. And the very *leaves* of the trees are for the healing of the nations.

And if that were not enough, Jesus says that the byproduct of fruit-that-remains in our lives is that the Father will then be able to trust us with anything we wisely ask of Him!

While we await the redemption of our bodies, the redemption of our souls is once again following that glittering path laid out for us at the foundation of matter. And it is all thanks to the Lamb slain there.

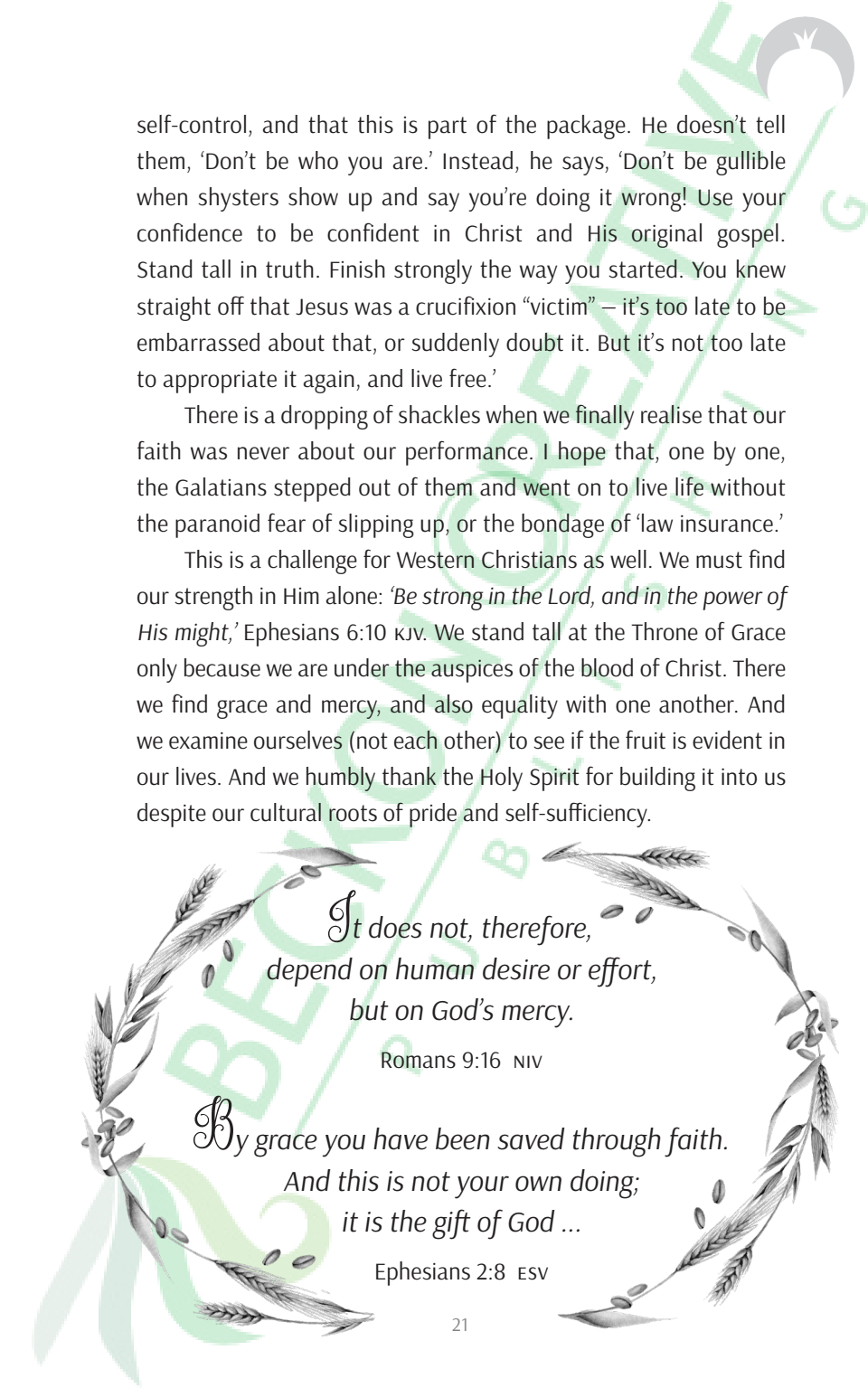


Adaptation

As a people, gentleness and humility were not in the nature of the fierce Galatians. They were tough, descended from mercenaries. Their culture spoke of strength and dominance, military obedience and pride. Not pity. Not tenderness.

When they accepted the gospel, the challenge for these folk would have been around how to reconcile Kingdom culture with their own. How were they to emulate a Person who presented with compassion – kneeling – when everything in them instinctively stood up tall and strident? How were they to stop measuring themselves by how precise they were, how well they followed orders? What were they to make of *new* orders mandating love and meekness? Could they even stop seeing them as ‘orders’?


And so Paul writes the truth – that the Spirit in them is evident when they exhibit love, joy, peace, patience, *chesed*, humility and



self-control, and that this is part of the package. He doesn't tell them, 'Don't be who you are.' Instead, he says, 'Don't be gullible when shysters show up and say you're doing it wrong! Use your confidence to be confident in Christ and His original gospel. Stand tall in truth. Finish strongly the way you started. You knew straight off that Jesus was a crucifixion "victim" – it's too late to be embarrassed about that, or suddenly doubt it. But it's not too late to appropriate it again, and live free.'

There is a dropping of shackles when we finally realise that our faith was never about our performance. I hope that, one by one, the Galatians stepped out of them and went on to live life without the paranoid fear of slipping up, or the bondage of 'law insurance.'

This is a challenge for Western Christians as well. We must find our strength in Him alone: *'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,'* Ephesians 6:10 *κiv*. We stand tall at the Throne of Grace only because we are under the auspices of the blood of Christ. There we find grace and mercy, and also equality with one another. And we examine ourselves (not each other) to see if the fruit is evident in our lives. And we humbly thank the Holy Spirit for building it into us despite our cultural roots of pride and self-sufficiency.

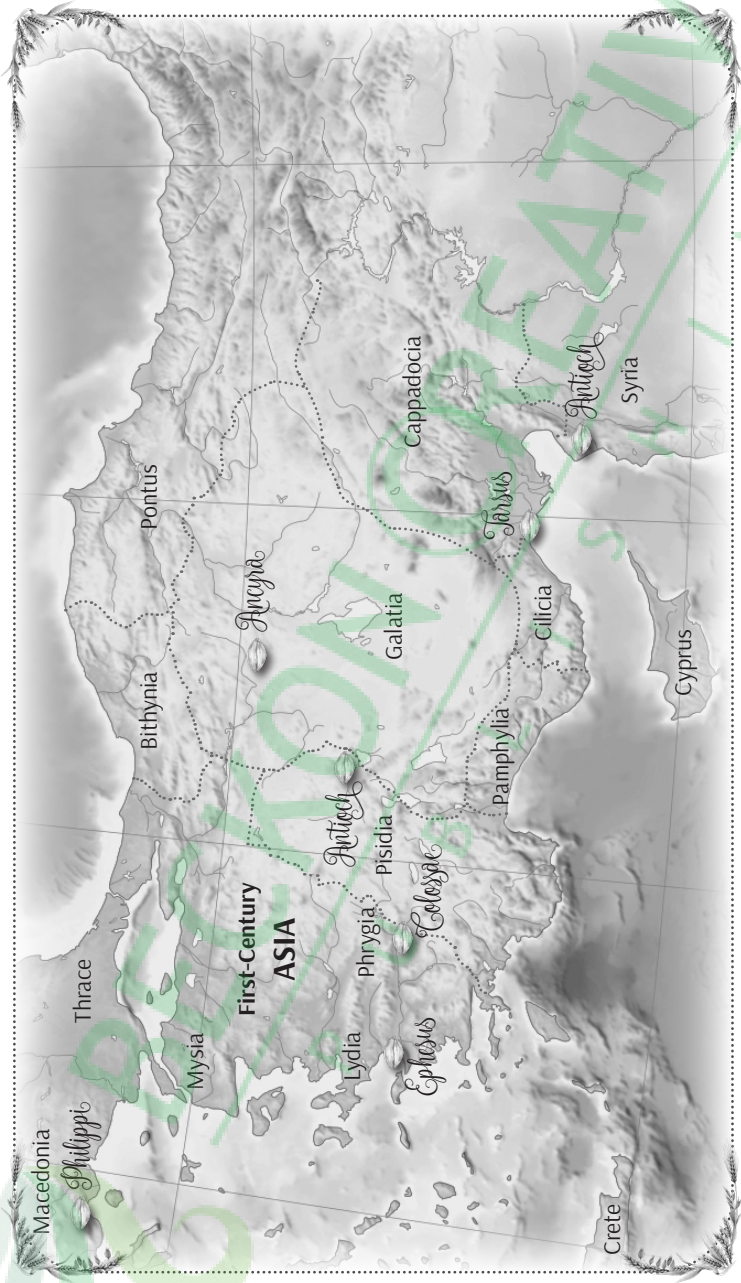


*It does not, therefore,
depend on human desire or effort,
but on God's mercy.*

Romans 9:16 *niv*

*By grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God ...*

Ephesians 2:8 *esv*



Bad Fruit



& Dirty Lies

As we are exploring the flavours of God's Spirit, we'll also examine some of the *parallel lies* the enemy brings along to slander the Lord and attempt to negate His identity. These are vain pretensions that we are to cast down: things coming against the knowledge of God.

We'll also look at Galatians 5's list of *negative fruit* in verses 19–20. While these aren't nice things to talk about, they will help us identify the things the Spirit wants to eliminate from our lives. If they persist in us, they serve as 'red flags' which indicate we've moved away from walking in the Spirit.

None of us want to have rotten fruit in our lives, and none of us mean to treat God like a pest control service rather than a Person. The list of bad fruit is not meant as a 'To Don't' list. We already know we can't get rid of sin by ourselves, so I do not mean to suggest that we become fabulous fruit-bearers by our own efforts at sin-avoidance. I am rather advocating such a close walk with the Lord that He is best placed to continue our development along *His* lines.

*The acts of the flesh are ...
But the fruit of the Spirit is ...
Let us walk in step with the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:19, 22, 25

