

Week 6: Singular Fruit has Skin (cover) –
Faithfulness, Gentleness and self-control.

Prayer

Introduction.

The fruit of the Spirit is distinct with its cover and character. The Fruit skin/cover helps in the identification of the fruit as well as draws attention to its form. The form of the fruit of the Spirit gives a demonstratable evidence of the Christian who is developing for Christ's witness. The inward grace of God and outworking of grace is made visible to all by the work of the Spirit. The Fruit of the Spirit points to more than the character of the Christian in public life. The fruit is the evidence of maturity of the faith and submission to the life of Christ among the people of God. This maturity of faith is both appealing to good relationships and attractive in breaking down barriers and strongholds toward opening opportunities to witness about the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Most fruit seen and held have a covering or skin. The skin may have different colors, textures, and take the shape of the fruit. The cover of the fruit may indicate when it is ripe or unripen or showing defects affecting maturity. This outer covering is likened to showing out the visible availability to those attracted to the any fruit. The attributes of FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS AND SELFCONTROL are like the graceful covering of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

FAITHFULNESS and faith (Pistis -Greek), means being just or justified without putting trust initially in God's "faithfulness" on account of God's love and pardon of sin. Paul quotes from Habakuk 2:4 from the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, in Galatians 3:11. "But since no one is made righteous by the Law as far as God is concerned, it is clear that the righteous one will live on the basis of faith" CEB. God's act through Christ breaks the curse of the works of the Law as reference to those who were relying on adherence to circumcising males as sign of covenant with God. Paul insists that only by faith in Christ in line with faith of Abraham will align with God's intention. Faith is associated with Pauline talk about salvation.

Paul views salvation as involving God, Christ, the Spirit, the preacher, hearing, and faith. When believed and acted on in absolute trust of one's

whole life is given to God. [Galatians 1:15; Romans 3:3; 5:6-11; 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:9-11,14,17. The Interpreter's Bible Volume 10, Galatians, Abingdon Press, 1981, page 568.]

Paul's faith rested it would appear, on the faithfulness of God in offering of grace in Jesus Christ. Paul's faith was God's own creation, and the apostle only had to follow. [1 Corinthians 1:31; 2:15]

When Paul responded to faith of God the Spirit moved him into activity for God. Paul learned to walk in total reliance in the life of God as faith developed his belief, to love, to hope, and to exercise courage the sufferings of Christ (Colossians 1:24). Throughout the reading of the writings of Paul, his faith allowed his self-presentation as a living sacrifice in the rational service of God. Faith was developed in the practical life encounters. Paul's faith located purpose in the crucible of God's love. Faith of God and our faithfulness like Paul's cannot be separated.

Question: How could you answer the question, "What do you mean by having faith in God in the real world?"

GENTLENESS or Meekness offers texture to the skin of the Fruit of the Spirit. Translated from the Greek, *Prautees*, this quality of the life of Christians could be understood as "gentleness," "courtesy," even "Modestly." In the beatitudes in Matthew's gospel, we are reminded, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5). In a world where power and resources attached to power are coveted and wielded, the bible point to the power inherited by the powerless, the respectful, and those who are modest as keeping the earth relationships together. In the book of Matthew 11:29 the meek will inherit or gain Christ himself. The quality of meekness or gentleness keeps company with lowliness and patience (Colossians 3:12). In Philippians 2:1-11 meekness is an aspect of having "the mind of Christ." In an appeal to the churches gathered at Rome, the Christian is to be sober, measured and gracious to one another, just as Christ has treated them (Romans 12:3).

Not to have this external quality of the Spirit, is to exercise the negative of meekness or gentleness. In the Greek it the opposite of Hubris, which for some Greeks – deliberate, arrogant defiance of the gods by overstepping the

limits set for wickedness, in harming the, robbing and enslaving the righteous “meek,” and take possession of the earth themselves. (p.569, The Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. 10, Galatians).

Psalms 37 is one psalm among many that reject violence to the life of the righteous meek and who are advocated for by the Yahweh even as the psalmist struggles with the wicked who seem to always prosper. At the end the psalmist writes:

“The Lord will help them and rescue them – rescue them from the wicked – and he will save them because they have taken refuge in him. (Psalm 37:40).

Question: Do you have the gentleness to struggle and overcome disadvantages of living in the world today? What is the value of having meekness in a mean world as a Christian?

SELF-CONTROL (temperance) *Hygkraateia* (GR).

Self-control seems to be referencing Temperance. Temperance is having mastery over the effects of some human pleasure or proclivity such as excessive drinking of alcohol. John Wesley insisted on sober Christians that would not do any harm to themselves and to those who are their neighbors. This temperance to alcoholic beverages allows for the making of rational decisions and to act within reasonable control. In the letter to the Corinthians, reference is made about the control of sexual appetites, drunkenness, and revelry as part of the “works of the flesh” (1 Corinthians 7:9). In 1 Corinthians 9:25 the verb is used to include varied levels of self-control similar to that of an athlete.

Self-control as an aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit contrasts to the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). In Galatians 5:1, Paul states the value of having Freedom in Christ, in contrast to enslavement with a system or power. Freedom for Paul meant not giving sovereign to one’s own desires or impulses. Paul suggested in 1 Corinthians 10:23,31, three keys to self-control. What are these three keys?

- 1.
- 2.

3.

Self-control for Paul was not an achievement. His self-control was focused on “Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). This self-discipline came out of all of Paul’s spiritual experience and not from some induced attractive teaching. The practical relationships and interactions with people helped shaped the working of the Holy Spirit during his ministry.

Wesley Hymn:

Author of faith, eternal Word,	John 1:2, Heb. 12:2
Whose Spirit breathes the active flame	Matt. 3:11, Acts 2:3
Faith like its Finisher and Lord,	Acts 20:21, Heb. 12:2
Today as yesterday the same.	Heb. 13:8

Things unknown to feeble sense	1 Cor. 2:9,
Unseen by reason’s glimmering ray	1 Cor. 1:21
With strong, commanding evidence	Heb. 11:1
Their heavenly origin display	

End Prayer