

## Bearing Fruits

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15. 8

There are things in our lives that need to go so we can be better Christians. God wants the best for us, so He reveals those things to us and removes them. Just as the branches can't grow fruit unless they are connected to the vine, we can't do anything useful unless we are responding and following closely after Jesus.

### Read Galatians 5. 1, 13-18

The passage starts with this great proclamation: "it is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (verse 1) but a little later Paul writes, "but do not use your freedom to indulge the *flesh*; rather, serve one another humbly in love" (verse 13).

- What do you think Paul is getting at here?

The Christians in Galatia (mainly non Jewish people) had believed in the Good News of Jesus who incorporates us, brings us into the family of God through his life, death and resurrection. A group of so called Judaizers were now teaching, quite convincingly, that trust in Jesus was not enough. They were bringing back certain elements of the law, esp. circumcision, food laws and festivals.

Paul reminds us that our right standing and our adoption are grounded uniquely on the merits of Jesus (what he has done for us).

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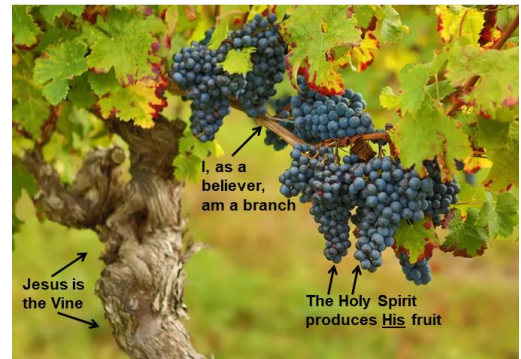
*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.*

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- Is there something Jesus has helped you with recently (something you could not have done in your own strength)?

### Read Galatians 5. 19-26

The freedom Paul is speaking about is more radical than we think. When Paul speaks of the flesh/Spirit contrast, he does not refer to an internal duality. For him the antithesis flesh/Spirit represents two successive modes of existence, separated by Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. For Paul, the believer has been transferred from the realm of the flesh where sin, law, death and condemnation are reigning to the realm of the Spirit characterised by freedom, the Spirit of God and life.



- What kind of fruits does a life guided by the Spirit produce?
- Encourage one another by pointing something of God's fruit in someone else.

### Read Romans 6. 11-13

- How does this passage help us understand and live the new life we have in Christ?

Paul summons the believers to exercise faith by considering themselves dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11). He gives them the responsibility to "not let sin reign" in their mortal bodies (Rom. 6:12) and to stop "presenting the members of" their bodies to sin "as instruments of unrighteousness" (Rom. 6:13); but to present themselves to God as those alive from the dead (Rom. 6: 13).

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*Bishop Taylor Smith, former Chaplain General to the Forces once had a conversation with a young man that went like this*

*Bishop: "When you think about the cross of Christ, what do you see?"*

*Young man: "I see Christ and two thieves crucified either side of him ... I see the soldier gambling ..."*

*Bishop: "If that is all you see, I think you will have trouble with the Christian life. When I see the cross – with all that – I see old Bishop Taylor Smith. I was crucified **with** Christ"*

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### **Read John 15. 1-8**

In our first reading we are called to walk by the Spirit and here Jesus tells us to abide in him and his teaching.

- How do you live that out in your life?

Remember what Mike Gillingham said on Sunday



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*Without me (Jesus) NOTHING . . . With me ALL THINGS*

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### **Prayer**

Take a moment to reflect in silence about the picture of the branch and the vine, the call to abide in Jesus and to walk in step with God's Spirit. What is God saying to you?

Finnish the silence by saying:

Lord Jesus we come to you the source of life and truth. Holy Spirit we need your guidance and your strength.