

Subject: Bearing Spiritual Fruit – SELF-CONTROL

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-24

We live in a world that is self-centered and self-seeking. It's all about self-satisfaction. Counselors and life-coaches teach us how to build up our self-esteem and self-confidence and how to improve our self-image.

Actually the Bible has much to say about self, but not in the same way. In fact, it's just the opposite. The Bible teaches us about self-denial ("If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"). The Bible teaches about self-sacrifice ("Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God"). And the Bible teaches about self-control, and that's what we are going to focus on today.

Our text presents the struggle of the flesh against the Spirit and the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh can be described as a life out of control, but the fruit of the Spirit describe under control, the Lord's control. This is a life under the Spirit's control; it's a life of self-control.

1. The nature of self-control

The New Testament word for self-control (*egkrateia*) is derived from the word for strength. It can be defined as "the exercise of inner strength under the power of the Holy Spirit that enables a believer to do, think, and say the things that are pleasing to God." It is that quality that enables you to control your desires rather than allowing your desires to control you. Self-control is a wall of defense against the world and its desires that wage war against your soul. Self-control is God's control over your will.

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

"Abstain" means to hold yourself away or keep yourself away. It means control yourself.

A. Self-control is based on the Holy Spirit's control

It is not just human will power.

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13 ¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* ¹³ *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Self-control is our responsibility, but it's more than that. It is our response to His ability.

B. Self-control is based on the believer's obedience

Romans 6:11-13 ¹¹ *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* ¹² *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.* ¹³ *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

C. Self-control is based on self-sacrifice and self-denial

Luke 9:23 *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

Romans 12:1-2 ¹ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* ² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

D. Self-control is based on God's standard of righteousness

Acts 24:24-25 ²⁴ *And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.* ²⁵ *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

Felix was the Roman governor of Judea from 52-59 A.D. He lured his wife Drusilla away from her husband Agrippa.

Genesis 39:7-10 ⁷ *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.* ⁸ *But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knows not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;* ⁹ *There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* ¹⁰ *And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.*

2. Areas of self-control

A. Control over our physical desires

We are created with God-given appetites; they are healthy and good, but they must be controlled. It's like a river of cool, clear water. It is good and helpful when the water runs within its banks, but if it floods outside its banks it can bring harm and destruction.

Proverbs 23:1-2 ¹ *When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:* ² *And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.*

Proverbs 6:9 *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?*

1 Corinthians 6:20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

B. Control over our thoughts

2 Corinthians 10:5 *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Jerry Bridges: “Our minds are mental greenhouses where unlawful thoughts, once planted, are nurtured and watered before being transplanted into the real world of unlawful actions. People seldom fall suddenly into sin, but sinful thoughts are savored in mind long before they are enjoyed in reality. The thought life is our first line of defense in the battle of self-control.

C. Control over our emotions

Proverbs 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

Proverbs 25:28 *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Ephesians 4:26 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*

D. Control over our words

Psalms 39:1 *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

Ephesians 4:29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

James 3:2 *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

Control over our words is a mark of spiritual maturity.

3. Examples of self-control

Daniel 1:8 *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NKJV) *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate (self-controlled) in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

Paul was like a disciplined runner and boxer.