



THE FRUIT OF SELF-CONTROL

Fruit-Full | Part 9

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Self-control is something most all of us struggle with. Now you may exercise enviable control over your money, your schedule, your personal life, your eating, or any number of areas but still have one thing with which you constantly struggle. And that one thing becomes an endless source of discouragement. As we wrap up this series, let's tune into what God has to say about self-control, what it is, what it isn't, what works and what does not. This is a must hear message you don't want to miss!

But the fruit of the Spirit is... self-control... Galatians 5.22-23

The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire. Nehemiah 1.3

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1.4

Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit. Proverbs 25.28

1. WHAT IS SELF-CONTROL?

The flesh is empty and feels empty all the time

2. SELF-CONTROL IS NOT AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD

The impassibility of God

God is "a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions." - Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF 2.1)

I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills...Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Psalm 50.9-10,13

God chose to have a human experience

3. THE STRUGGLE WITH SELF-CONTROL IS REAL

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Galatians 5.17

The flesh is one of the toughest weeds that grows in the garden of our lives.

❑ The Inner Civil War

The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up... Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. Is there no one who can do anything for me? ...The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. Romans 7.21-25 (Message)

So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Galatians 5.16-17

And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us. Romans 7.3-5 (Message)

It's His "I will" overcoming our "I can't"

worm in an apple

❑ What keeps so many of us defeated

JUST SAY NO



“Our ordinary method of dealing with ingrained sin is to launch a frontal attack. We rely on our willpower and determination. Whatever may be the issue for us – anger, fear, bitterness, gluttony, pride, lust, substance abuse –we determine never to do it again; we pray against it, fight against it, and set our will against it. But the struggle is all in vain, and we find ourselves once again morally bankrupt...”
– Richard Foster

“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” ...Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom...but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence... Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 2.21-3.2

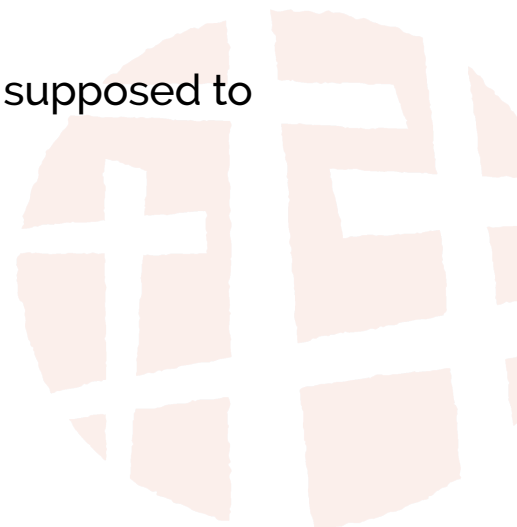
...sin found a way to pervert the command into a temptation, making a piece of “forbidden fruit” out of it.
Romans 7.8 (Message)

wet paint, don't touch

“I have found, in my own spiritual life, that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit.”
– Charles Spurgeon

“Legalism fails miserably at the one thing it is supposed to do: encourage obedience.” – Phillip Yancey

❑ The nature you feed will grow



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cuckoo bird

nest with eggs

one cavernous cuckoo mouth

feeding cuckoo

4. TO BE SELF-CONTROLLED, ONE MUST BE SPIRIT-CONTROLLED

And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36.27

God's Spirit doesn't make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control. 2 Timothy 1.7 (CEB)

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26.41

"The more you accept God's control over your life, the more self-control he gives you!" - Rick Warren

"...the Holy Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believers would conquer the age-old dilemma of 'I want to be different but can't. I know what's wrong, but I keep doing it anyway.' This empowerment by the Spirit would be the dynamic source

throughout time for all who live and labor for Jesus Christ.” -
Jim Cymbala

...against such things there is no law. Galatians 5.23

Man-made religion says, Become by self-effort what you're not.

True Christianity says, Become by grace what you are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. One of the defining characteristics of the flesh is its emptiness. It is empty and feels empty all the time. Which is why the flesh craves the overconsumption of anything and everything it desires. Can you give examples of this? Pastor Keith pointed out that in Galatians 5, Paul contrasts the flesh with the spirit. Take some time to read Galatians 5.13-26. What differences do you notice between the flesh and the Spirit? What characterizes the flesh? What characterizes the Spirit?

2. Unlike humans, God does not share in our fleshly desires (excessive or normal). He is not needy like us. But at the same time, He chose to have a human experience in Jesus Christ with all the normal needs that humans have. What sorts of needs do all humans share? Can you think of examples in Scripture that illustrate the humanness of Christ? How did Christ handle the temptations in the wilderness and what does it teach us about how to handle temptation (Read Matthew 4.1-11)?

3. What did you learn from this message about the inner civil war believers fight? It is not uncommon for believers to experience levels of victory in certain areas of their life in regards to self-control while at the same time experiencing defeat in other areas. Where have you experienced victory? Where have you struggled? What are you learning about the key to victory?

4. Willpower and Spirit power are two entirely different things. What are the limitations of willpower? Why does the Bible offer us cautions in regards to rule-keeping as a way to defeat sin?

5. How do we yield to the Holy Spirit? How do we nurture our life in God as opposed to feeding our fleshly appetites? What is your biggest takeaway from today's message?

