

### Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.<sup>24</sup> And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

We continue to study the spiritual “fruit” of “self-control”. In the last study we saw that it is a word that speaks directly of the individual deliberately choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to bring their will under His influence and His power. We saw that when this fruit of the Spirit is operating in a believer’s life, they will have the ability to control their emotions, control their speech, and control their thought life. We saw that there is something innately difficult within every believer that needs to be constantly controlled. We saw that we cannot do this alone and need to draw on the work of God in our life to restrain us from doing those things that we know are displeasing to God. It is not just someone’s behavior that is necessarily in focus, but the emotions below that behavior that draw out the wrong and inappropriate responses to the difficult moments in life. Self-control is emotional, it is mental, it is physical, and it is much more than just simple self-renunciation.

[1 Timothy 4:7](#) says,

1Ti 4:7 (NKJV) **But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.**

The word “exercise” is “*gumnazo*” and means to train, to discipline ourselves, and in this case, to discipline ourselves to be godly – all of which require self-control. It is in the imperative mood, present tense, active voice which means that it is a command and something that we as believers are to always be doing – always disciplining ourselves to do what is right and to say what is right. It is important to appreciate that no believer lives in a static or unchanging spiritual condition. Either we are growing or we are regressing. Either we are hearing and obeying or we are hearing and not obeying. Either we are making progress in spiritual matters or we are ignoring spiritual matters. There is nothing in the middle. There is no middle ground where we can rest and be content. When we hear what God says to us in His Word, we have to make a conscious choice to obey what He has instructed us to do, or we simply stand in outright disobedience to His Word, and for that there is no reward. For this spiritual scenario that confronts every believer every day, all of this requires great self-control that is being continuously reinforced by the Holy Spirit.

The issue for the believer is simple. He has to realize that to be Spirit-controlled is to be self-controlled. Whenever the Holy Spirit is controlling someone’s life, it means that He is producing in them the ability, the proficiency, and the power to exercise self-control. So, when we see someone who lacks this self-control, it simply means that they are not allowing the Holy Spirit to control their mind and heart by His Word.<sup>1</sup> Listen to how [Colossians 1:29](#) states this,

Col 1:29 (NKJV) **To this *end* I also labor, striving (*agonizomai*) according to His working which works in me mightily.**

<sup>1</sup> Precept, *Galatians 5:23, self-control*, ep.

In this context it is speaking specifically about striving to warn and teach men so that he may present them as mature believers to Christ. However, the principle is still the same. As believers, we all have a spiritual responsibility to always be submitting our life to the Holy Spirit for His control, for His influence, for His direction, for His strength. That is as much a part of self-control as anything. No country wins a war accidentally. There is strategy, discipline, preparation, and an unwavering commitment to the goal. Spiritually it is exactly the same. Every believer has to be fully devoted to the spiritual battle in which they are constantly engaged. No wonder Paul said in [Galatians 5:16](#),

Gal 5:16 (NKJV) **I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Walking in the Spirit is a very deliberate and conscious effort. It involves time, energy, understanding, and patience. What if you fail? Well, you just recognize that there will always be setbacks and failures, and that there will always be those moments that do not go as planned or expected. When that happens, you consciously devote yourself to the battle that you are facing, and devote yourself to continuing to look to the Holy Spirit for the strength and grace that you need to be what He wants you to be. God always teaches us more through personal failure than He does success, but that does not mean that He is pleased when we consistently fail and do those things that we know are not pleasing to Him. The more a believer chooses to ignore what God is teaching them, the closer it becomes to simple rebellion in their life. I have said it often, but a church that truly teaches the Word of God is a dangerous place, both for believers and unbelievers. Why is that? It is because the Word of God is always making spiritual demands on our life – everyone's life.

I am convinced that the quality of biblical “**self-control**” being exercised in a believer's life is directly linked to a proper knowledge of the Word of God. Whenever a believer is under God's influence in their life, they demonstrate that by limiting and restricting those things in their life that they know will not honor God. How do they know what those things are? Well, they are those areas that are clearly revealed in the Scriptures as commands – imperative tense verbs. These different areas requiring consistent obedience are clearly defined in the Scriptures so that there is no reason why a believer should find themselves continually living in disobedience. They have biblical knowledge and they have the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are crystal clear as to exactly how God wants us to live. If you study the Word of God carefully, it should be self-evident that there are no options for behavior when they are clearly defined in Scripture. Self-control always involves learning how it is that God wants us as believers to live, how He wants us to behave, how He wants us to talk, and how He wants us to think. The greater our knowledge of God's Word, the greater will be our spiritual capacity to do what God wants us to do. It is my opinion that it is incredibly important for a believer to have a study journal where they are consistently writing down those things that God clearly commands all believers to do.

Every believer needs to have well defined goals and priorities for their life, or they will never be spiritually successful. It is nearly impossible to achieve something that you are not pursuing or to obtain a level of spiritual maturity for which you have no ongoing focus to achieve. If you really want to accomplish something, there has to be a high level of effort, concentration, and application. For some Christians, the only real goal they have is to possibly attend church on a Sunday morning, but our entire life is to be under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit. We are to control our emotions, control our thoughts, control our speech, and control our activities so that they do not become a priority that supersedes what God wants. We are to control our schedules and our time, control when we go to bed

and when we rise, and control what we watch or what we read. We are to control what we eat, how we spend our resources, and how we treat people. Everything is to be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit, and that takes tremendous discipline and self-control to do so. On a scale of 1-10, the average Christian probably would be in the 2-3 range at best when it comes to allowing their life to have this kind of focus and self-control. For most Christians, it is too time-consuming and requires too much energy on top of their already busy schedule. However, the greater our personal resolve to allow God to control our lives, the greater will be our spiritual effectiveness. It must be appreciated that the Scriptures never, not one time, glorify those who are indifferent, lethargic, and passive about their Christian life. I am convinced that many Christians do not realize how much their undisciplined bad habits virtually consume and continually impede any spiritual progress that God wants them to achieve. It is as if they are completely oblivious to the fact that their life, their speech, and their undisciplined habits are hindering the Holy Spirit from working in their life. They simply lack self-control, and probably never even realize that reality.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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