

 **Fruit of the Spirit: Self Control**

Lesson 9: Wednesday, May 18, 2022

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**TEACHING NOTES**

Good evening church family. Turn with me in your bibles to Galatians chapter 5.

I have the privilege to teach on **Self Control** tonight. Look with me at our theme passage …

**Galatians 5:22-23** …the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control;

Let’s first: Define **Self Control** (Greek word: *egkrateia)*

**self-control:**  temperance; the virtue of controlling one’s desires and passions;

 sober-minded; one who is mentally/emotionally stable

Self-control is a spirit empowered reigning in of the flesh. It is a proper stewardship of our mind and tongue and actions. It is a spirit powered managing of the flesh that keeps it in bounds and controlled.

**1. Not controlled**

Before we consider what self-control looks like and how it bears fruit in our life let’s start by considering what a lack of control looks like. **What does it look like when the flesh is not controlled?**  **When it’s free to run, to chase, to serve itself?**

The basic mark of the uncontrolled flesh is that it is unsubmissive to the good things of God.

It does not want to submit to God's absolute authority or rely on God's absolute mercy. Our Flesh left uncontrolled says, **"I'd rather do it myself and I want to do it my way"**

**Sounds like a moody toddler doesn’t it?**

One of the major works of the Holy Spirit when it comes into our life is to make war with the flesh. To reign in our sinful, selfish desires so that we replace them with God honoring desires and actions. So that we are self-controlled. So, **what does it look like when the flesh is not controlled?**

**Paul said it well in..**

**Galatians 5:19-21** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20**idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21**envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these….

We could really slow down tonight as break into all of these but we don’t have time for that so let me just hit on a few…

**When we lack self-control we give ourselves to over indulgence…**

So, it is not that we eat; it is that we become gluttons.

It is not that we have a drink, but that we become drunkards.

It is not that we have conversations, but that we become gossips.

It is not that you enjoy a café mocha, but that you can’t function in your day without your caffeine high.

It is not that we spend money, but we become absolutely absorbed with consumption and new stuff and undisciplined spending and therefore debt.

**Godly wisdom says..** If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it. -**Proverbs 25:16**

This is self-control. To enjoy a good thing of life but not turn it into over indulgence and sin.

Now, a **Christian, one whom Christ is Lord and the Spirit is at work is not a person who experiences NO bad desires**. No, our battle with the flesh is still a real thing we will fight until we are in glory.

 **A Christian is a person who is at war with those desires by the power of the Spirit.**

**The fruit of the Spirit is self-control.** We manage, reign in, put away fleshly desires to put on God honoring desires. But the one who does not. The one who has no self-control experiences many great and grievous consequences in their life and in the life of those around them.

Solomon says in…

**Proverbs 25:28** A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Think of the wreckage that a city broken into with not walls of protection, no guards at the gate. Just a free for all to take and ravage what they want.

Consider Solomon’s words for his son in Proverbs 5 where he warns him to have self-control to avoid the seductive temptress.. He passionately says..

**Proverbs 5: 8-14** Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,

9 lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless,

10 lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner,

11 and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed,

12 and you say, “How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!

13 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors.

14 I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.”

The one who didn’t heed the warnings, the wise counsel, who gave into the temptations and longings of the flesh experienced great ruin. Had their life stripped away and when left with nothing, in Great remorse, they said ***why didn’t I listen to wisdom.. why didn’t I practice self-control?***

Oh what a joy self-control is in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

**Self-Controlled**

Praise God that the Holy Spirit within us produces God’s good fruit in our lives. Produces: Self Control.

This is God’s good gift. The Spirit at work in us means we are no longer enslaved to the lustful desires of our flesh but can now practice self-control/ a holy moderation that honors our Lord.

Paul looks to build up Timothy in this truth when he says this in.. **2 Timothy 1:7** for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

This is truly a good gift of God in our lives.

**So, what does self-control look like?**

To have self-control means that you act in a manner that is appropriate for the given situation.

It means we defer when it is appropriate to defer.

It means we speak when we need to speak.

It means that we control our tempers and do not blow up every time things do not go our way.

It means that we ignore the minor mistakes of others instead of trying to prove that we are always right

It means that we put other people before ourselves.

It often involves putting the good of a group ahead of the good of an individual.

When your “self”, your “person”, your “Mind”, your “emotions” are in control, they are reigned in and not unleased!! It means you are “even tempered” and you practice “holy moderation”.

Now before I get into that let me say this…

**Self-control doesn’t mean we yield or just roll over to injustice and evil.**

No there are to be God honoring times when we are angry and or when we stand up for what is right. The key is that we do this in a way that truly and wholly honors the Lord and not the flesh.

The topic of anger is a really good one as self-control of our emotions is one of the biggest ways people struggle. So let’s spend some time on anger tonight to help us see God’s work in us to produce self-control.

**Be angry and do not sin**

Paul said it this way in **Ephesians 4:26** Be angry and do not sin..

Notice with me right away something that might strike us as odd.

Paul is encouraging the saints in Ephesus to “be angry”.

He is saying there is a good and right anger that we should practice. That we should put on.

Be angry. Think about that.

For most of us, anger has always been seen as a bad thing, a fleshly thing, a sinful thing and never a self-controlled thing. But what I want you to see tonight is that while most of the anger we practice is likely sinful and wretched before the Holy God there is a “righteous anger” that is good and right and God honoring.

Many OT passages recount the righteous anger of God against the wicked and even against His own people when they were to easily and often given to sinful disobedience.

Church: We see this modeled in the NT as well when looking at the sinless Christ himself!

**Matthew 21:12-13** ..Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 13 He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

**Mark 3:5** ..he (Jesus) looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,

We know that Jesus, who is God the Son in flesh and who is without sin, exercised righteous anger.

**What makes righteous anger different than sinful anger?**

The testimony in Mark 3:5 gives us some insight.

**Mark 3:5** And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,

His righteous anger was from grief for the peoples hardness of heart.

In other words, for their rejection of the Holy God and what He deserves.

**Righteous Anger is always targeted at sin and sins affects in this word.**

Related to this is God’s call for us to hate evil, to hate sin. Consider a few places we see this.

**Psalm 97:10** O you who love the LORD, **hate evil** …

**Romans 12:9** Let love be genuine. **Abhor what is evil**; hold fast to what is good.

Abhor means ***to detest utterly***!!!

To Love God, to belong to God, to live righteously means we will hate sin.

Church, there is a righteous anger that the saved saints should have for sin.

If we do not then something is wrong about our understanding of the Gospel and or our devotion to God and His righteousness.

Paul is clear to say that we are put on or practice ***righteous anger*** but that **we are to do it without sinning**.

This is where this gets tricky. Because the exercise of hating sin is worthless *if the anger you haver towards that sin is sinful*.

**Do you see this with me?** See the very fine line between righteous anger and unrighteous anger.

Because I believe that **all too often we are guilty of thinking we are angry in a righteous way but in the end we are not.** We are undone, we are unhinged, we are no longer trusting God, we are no longer acting in love or pursuing peace, we are not forgiving others but welling up with sinful bitterness, wrath, yelling slander, malice instead.

We must get righteous anger right because we CANNOT be guilty of thinking we are acting righteously when we are NOT. Understand with me that Righteous Anger is loving. It is even tempered. It is not self-righteous.

**Ephesians 4:26** Be angry and do not sin

David said this as well in **Psalm 4:4** Be angry, and do not sin; (in this text David goes on to say,) ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.

See with me that Righteous Anger is contained.

Righteous anger does not justify screaming, or throwing stuff. It is not out of control.

A way to think about this is to consider a Volcanic Mountain.

A Volcanic Mountain Experiences anger in two ways.

That Anger being the bright glowing searing hot Lava.

Righteous Anger is a **self-controlled** disposition of anger

(this is the settled lava at the base of the mountain) It is controlled and not hurtful.

Sinful Anger is uncontrolled outburst of words, volume, emotion and action.

 (this is the exploding/erupting lava out of the mountain) It is explosive and destructive and hurtful.

Now, what about Jesus?

- we just read that he turned over tables and drove people out of the temple courts.

That feels explosive!

What we have to rightly see is only what the text tells us and what we know about Jesus.

What we can’t do is picture how we think this went and say that is what happened.

Jesus never sinned! He was never out of control.

If you picture him that way you are putting falsehood on this situation.

Because to be out of control would have been to sin.

He is not unbridled. He is not upset or undone.

To be upset is being turned upside down.

It means you have no grounding. You have no mooring keeping you fixed in God, fixed on what is Holy. Consider what John testifies about this event.

**John 2:15** And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money- changers and overturned their tables.

See with me, that Jesus made a whip. That means he didn’t rush in and turn into the hulk and grab a whip and get crazy. No, he saw what was needed and he prepared the tool he would need to right what was wrong. The whip was not to hurt people but to herd people and their many animals. To herd them out.

**How do you move a heard of sheep and oxen?** **With a whip!**

And if you are going to move the people out, people who have a lot to lose, people who worked so hard to secure their spot to sell their goods that day, you would need some influence. A whip will help.

It says next…

**John 2:15b** And he poured out the coins of the money- changers and overturned their tables.

I know of no more direct way to rid yourself of a person who is addicted to money then to mess with their money. This is what Jesus did. He is taking their treasure and dumping it on the floor and turning their shrines of idolatry upside down. Again, he is not in a rage. He is not unhinged. His anger is righteous and he is not out of bounds. He is acting in love and he is fighting for what is right.

Let me ask you: When a father sees that his little daughter is about to grab a pot of bowling water and dump it on herself and he is on the other side of the room and only has a split second to respond and so he raises his voice to grab her attention with hopes to stop her from getting burned all over her body. In this, is he being out of line or is he acting in love? - It is loving right!

When a humble, peaceable, gentle man arrives as his house and discovers it has been broken into and his family is in danger of evil, rape and murder and so he grabs a bat or a gun to stop the evil attack, is he out of line or full of love? - It is loving & right to restrain the evil & protect the defenseless!

So, when the Son of God is in his Father’s house and thieves and swindlers and idolaters have set up shop to advance their own kingdom and not God’s kingdom, is the Son right to defend what is sacred and holy and to protect the children of God from being taken or manipulated by these crooks?

While, the physical actions of Jesus in this instance are very unique for him. (meaning he doesn’t get physical in other confrontations like he did here; but notice he doesn’t get physical with anybody in all the accounts that we have of this situation).

It makes sense why this is a somewhat shocking scene but you need to see how right it is.

**Now, we need to remember, this is Jesus, who was Holy in every way, thought and action. He was without sin.**

This means Jesus handled an incredibly intense situation, just right. He didn’t cross the line.

Oh, how we need the discipline of Jesus in and through us when faced with extreme moments like this. **That we too would exercise righteous anger and do what is right but without sin.**

You are likely thinking, ***but that is so hard.*** **I want to exercise righteous anger but how do I not let it turn to sinful anger?**

**I would say the answer to this lies in who really is at the helm of your heart.**

If you are truly grounded in Christ, if you are truly built on the rock, if you are truly satisfied in Jesus in every way then you will be self-controlled and respond with righteous anger and not sinful anger.

It is only when our identify, our treasure, our purpose, our joy is hinged to created things, temporary things we will be easily undone when those things let us down and that is when we are guilty of tipping over into sin.

If you are over clinging to an idea of:

what you want your kids to look like or behave,

what you want your spouse to look like or behave,

what you want your boss to look like or behave

Then when they do not deliver on that expectation, then you will be undone, unhinged.

It doesn’t matter how much you understand about needing to be committed to Christ alone,

**You have to do it.** We must cling to Christ. Abide in the vine so that the Holy Spirit produces self-control.

Understand: You can’t put on the altar of your heart, the performance of others in such a way that when they don’t meet that expectation, as good or right as it may be, you still will be undone in unrighteous anger,

**WHY?** **When you do this, Christ is not enough.** You are looking to these other things for your joy, identity, satisfaction, purpose in life “to some degree” and so when they don’t perform or meet your expectations, you get upset and unrighteously angry.

You have connected your performance or others performance or expectations to your joy, your identity, your satisfaction so that those things are not based on Christ alone. And when we do this we will get sinfully angry.

Hear this beloved:

**When the gospel is rightly at work in us, when our feet are fixed on Christ alone, when our hearts are satisfied with Jesus and all that Jesus is to us then we will have a “radical evenness of temper”.**

**Radical Evenness of Temper**

This is a huge part of the Holy Spirit’s work to produce self-control.

Paul speaks to this in his letter to the church in Philippi:

**Philippians 4:5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

Now, “reasonableness” doesn’t translate well here…

in King James translation the word is Moderation and in other translations the word is Patience

or gentleness. All of these fall short.  **In the Greek this word means a “radical evenness of temper”**

***Let your “radical evenness of temper” be evident to all***

We only have a radical evenness of temper because of Christ who lives in us and through us…

We must be fixed on Christ and Christ alone.

We cannot try to add any other relationship, experience, engagement to our core. Only Christ. **WHY?** Because Christ is the only one who satisfies unendingly.

Everything else is temporary and incomplete.

Paul describes this discipline in **1 Corinthians 7:29-31**This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

What is Paul saying here is: We must have a right view of this life in the shadow of the eternal life that is before us… Only God can give us a radical evenness of temper and when we look to anything in creation to fill this spot we will over grip and overreact when they let us down.

When we understand what Paul is saying here and have a right view of God and our eternal standing in Christ alone, only then will we have a radical evenness of temper in really good and really bad times.

**In trouble or hard times**…**those who are truly trusting fully in Christ** are able to say ..

I am let down but his is not my bottom line. So I am not crushed by this. Nothing can touch my bottom line because My foundation is Jesus who is unshakable and fully reliable.

**Same thing when we experience great success…**

Someone who is **truly trusting fully in Christ** is able to say, “settle down heart!”

This is nice.. This is cool .. but it is not my greatest Joy. It is not the most important thing.

Christ is the most important thing. Jesus is my greatest joy.

Without Christ and His gospel as our foundation we are only left to hope for and lean on “other things” as our bottom line & instead of experiencing peace we are filled with **worry** & **anxiety** and when they let us down, unrighteous anger!!

When we are fixed in Christ and don’t try to also cling to others or other things are we able to have a **Radical even temper**. **Do you see that in this you are poised to go through not just hard times but a lifetime of hardship?**

When it gets really hard you don’t throw in the towel, you are able to endure and testify Christ to those who are watching. And when they see your radical evenness of temper and they see Jesus.

They see the gospel. The only thing that can set them free and or give them joy in the midst of a lifetime of sorrow and suffering.

Jesus teaches the Disciples this and therefore us too in..

**Luke 10:17** The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”

The disciples had just returned from one of their Missional excursions that Jesus sent them on as part of their training and they were so excited to report that the Demons submitted to them in the power Jesus name.

But Jesus is quick to help them understand that they are in jeopardy of losing their grounding in Christ alone. That they are in jeopardy of pulling a circumstantial joy onto the alter of their heart and if they do they are sure to be let down by it. Look at what Jesus says in: **Luke 10:20** “… do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

What Jesus understands and is trying to teach the Disciples… it’s great the Demons responded today… but they may not tomorrow—the most important thing is having Christ forever.

* You marriage might be great today but it may not be tomorrow.
* The kids might be awesome today but tyrants tomorrow.
* Your boss might be kind today and a total jerk tomorrow.
* Your body might be feeling good today but it could be in the dumpster tomorrow.

He is saying, **De-center your temporary treasure**. Stop overly rejoicing in or clinging to your circumstances! But rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.

Rejoice in the Gospel alone. That you belong to Christ. Abide in the vine!!!

Christian: We must better understand and apply this if we are going to exercise self-control.

We must understand that our bottom line is not the things or people or status of this world but our Greatest Treasure, our true identity, our lasting hope, our purpose for living is Christ and Christ alone!

**This is Holy moderation**! This is Self-Control.

If this is our grounding then:

when the world is crumbling around you, you rest in Christ alone and enjoy the fruit of self-control.

And when you are on top of life’s mountains, you rest in Christ alone and enjoy the fruit of self-control.

**Practicing Self-Control**

Now, The Fruit of the Spirit is the work of the Spirit in us. It is not our work to produce self-control.

But we do need to practice the fruit the Spirit is producing in us. It is no good to have been given the tools in your toolbox but then not put them to work regularly in our lives.

We need to practice, Self-Control!!!

This is Peter’s charge in…

**2 Peter 1:3-4** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire

The First and most important things we much understand is:

Life and Godliness are rooted in and dependent on God’s grace.

His divine power, his granting, his precious and very great promises, his making us partakers of the divine nature and removing us from the corruption of the world and our sinful desires… FOR THIS REASON…. Based on this life changing truth.. upon this foundation of who you are in Christ by God’s grace…

**Because of and Based on God’s Saving Grace…**

Peter is going to talk about what we must do or PRACTICE in verse 5-7

BUT, we MUST not forget what our doing is always dependent on.. Based on.. The Gift of God’s grace to save us and set us free. Based on the Holy Spirit’s work in and through us!! All glory to God!!

You will not practice these virtuous things.. IF you are not first set free from being ruled by your selfish sinful desires. You need to be saved. You need the Holy Spirit to be your power.

DON”T EVER FORGET THIS.

ALL OF OUR DOING.. All of our practicing… IF it is going to be for anything good and God honoring has to be out of Christ alone! This is what makes the next part not man made religion or Works righteousness!

God's divine power has given us all things that lead to godliness (v. 3); "for this reason" make every effort to live godly. This leads us to what Peter says we are to do…

**2 Peter 1:5** … make every effort to …

**Make Every Effort = Practice**

Anytime we are talking about doing.. it is important to realize that you can do the right thing purely in order to earn the prize you want. But in Christianity it is different. We do because God did first.

We love because God first loved us!

Pastor John Piper said this so well when he said,

“This is the heart of New Testament ethics. We labor for virtue because God has already labored for us and is at work in us. Don't ever reverse the order, lest you believe another gospel (which is no gospel). Never say, "I will work out my salvation in order that God might work in me." But say with the apostle Paul, "I work out my salvation for it is God who works in me to will and to do of his good pleasure" ([Philippians 2:13](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%202.13)). Never say, "I press on to make it my own in order that Christ might make me his own." But say with Paul, "I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own" ([Philippians 3:12](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.12)).

So, let’s look at what he says we should do or practice in the Power of the Holy Spirit…

**2 Peter 1:5-7** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

When it says, “supplement your faith with” these … he is not saying add!

He is saying, **Flesh out.**
He is saying, Furnish the room of your faith with these…

Don’t leave the room of your faith empty… Furnish it with the couch of Virtue, the table of Knowledge, the light Self-control, the curtains of Steadfastness, the flooring of Godliness, the décor of Brotherly affection and Love

He is saying, don’t just sit in your new house of faith and do nothing.. furnish it.. Use is.. live it….

Put it to work… PRACTICE IT… advance in virtue (moral excellence and moderation);

and do not be stagnant but press on to increase your “knowledge of God's will”;

and do not be satisfied with your unhealthy habits but be diligent to practice self-control;

and persevere/ endure through hardship, paddle through it, don’t just ride the storm out;

and the divine nature of Godliness grow in you;

and in that strive to kindle your affection for other believers;

and give away your love to all those God puts in your path.

Peter is saying, don’t just sit in the promises of God.. live! Go, do. Make the most of it.

If God has saved you. **If you are his redeemed Child. You will practice righteousness and not lawlessness.** The Seed he has put in you will grow a godly person in you.

This is his refining Fire.. this is his unmistaken work in the life of those he paid I high price for.

So I am not standing here today to tell you, you need to start practicing righteousness, **I am telling you, if Christ is in you, YOU WILL practice righteousness.**

Thank God that He is at work in all of us whom He has redeemed in Christ and empowered with the Holy Spirit. He is producing the fruit of the Spirit. He is producing Self-control.

We need to continue to abide in Him and practice this righteous attribute that He alone has made possible. When we do we will mature in faith, be a bright light of the Gospel and a true blessing to those around us!!!

May it be so by God’s grace and for God’s glory!! Let’s pray