

# FRUIT OF THE WEEK: SELF-CONTROL

**2 Timothy 1:7** “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

The Apostle Paul brings it full circle with the last listed Fruit of the Spirit, self-control. We began with love, a characteristic that influences our actions outward toward others; and we are ending with self-control, a characteristic that influences our actions inward toward ourselves.<sup>1</sup> As the name implies, having self-control means having the ability to control yourself. So what exactly do we need control over?

Before Paul lists the Fruit of the Spirit, he lists the acts of the flesh. Galatians 5:19-21: “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like...”

These are the fleshly desires that we have to put in check. As you can see, that is quite a long list of sinful thoughts and behaviors. Walking by the Spirit means we exercise self-control over every part of the flesh. We don't get to pick and choose which sins to indulge in and which to control. Self-control is an all-or-nothing kind of deal.

When we look at this list of sinful desires, it raises questions about the range of our self-control. Take time to reflect on these questions: Are you in control of your body? Are you in control of your time and attention? Are you in control of your temper? Are you in control of your attitude toward others? Are you in control of your cravings? Are you in control of your tongue?<sup>2</sup>

The end of Galatians 5:21 tells us *why* it is so important to practice self-control, “...I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” A life without self-control is a life of intentional and willful sin. Ultimately, a lack of self-control reflects a lack of devotion to the Lord.

Exercising self-control means we are actively choosing God over our own selfish desires. We are choosing to obey God's Word and trust his eternal promises over choosing to obey our fleshly passions and their fleeting pleasures.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit: Growing in Christlikeness*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017) 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

Living a self-controlled life is living a life in obedience to God and his Word. It is living a life that is disciplined by the Holy Spirit. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit within us that empowers us to exercise self-control. The more we submit to the reign of Christ's Spirit, the more work Christ can do in our hearts.

Practically speaking, aside from humbling ourselves to Christ's reign, self-control requires us to do some purposeful thinking. We need to put into practice Colossians 3:2 and set our minds on things above, not earthly things. Our thoughts influence our actions. Our thoughts will either help us or hurt us when it comes to exercising self-control.

Do some intentional thinking this week. Be prayerful and dive deeper into the Word of God so your sinful desires can be exposed and you can walk further into the light. Trust in Christ to be your strength and discipline yourself to only obey his voice as it is the voice that always leads us to an abundance of joy, hope, and peace.