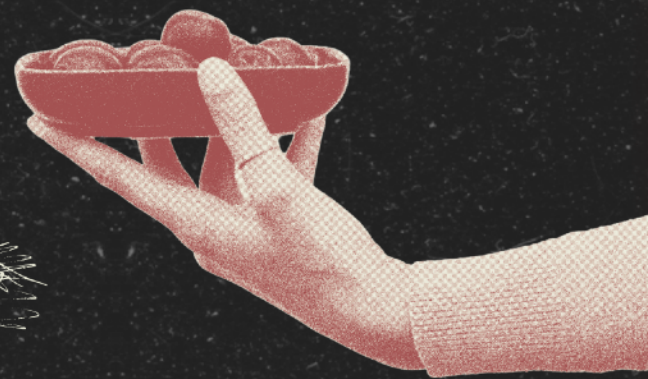


Fruit of the Spirit



LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS
GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL



“SELF-CONTROL”

Matthew 26:36-56

Self-control is the ability to delay a present desire because of confidence in a greater future good. In Acts 24, the Apostle Paul confronted Roman Governor Felix regarding righteousness, self-control, and coming judgment, demonstrating that living without self-control leaves a person spiritually vulnerable. Paul's teaching exposed Felix to himself. He possessed authority over others while lacking mastery over himself. Proverbs 25:28 portrays a person without self-control as a defenseless city. Jesus Christ is the perfect model of self-control. In Matthew 4, He resists the devil's temptations to satisfy His hunger, force the Father's protection, and obtain the kingdoms of the world without suffering the cross. Jesus refuses shortcuts because He trusts the Father's love and His Father's plan. The same pattern appears throughout His ministry. The Lord's greatest demonstration of self-control takes place in Gethsemane. Faced with unimaginable suffering, He submits His desires to the Father's will. On the cross, He continues to endure suffering rather than satisfy the demand to save Himself, trusting the joy promised beyond His suffering. Titus 2 shows us that it is God's grace to us in Christ which trains believers toward self-control. Christians learn self-control by looking to Christ and relying upon the Holy Spirit.

// GETTING THE MESSAGE

:: Read Galatians 5:16-25. What does Paul mean by “**walking by the Spirit**”? How does that relate to the fruit of the Spirit?

// GETTING THE MESSAGE

:: Proverbs 25:28 compares a person without self-control to “**a city broken into and left without walls.**” What does that image communicate about the lack of self-control?

:: Read Matthew 4:1-11 and answer the following questions:

- > Why was Jesus' refusal to turn stones into bread an act of self-control?
- > What did He choose to trust instead of satisfying His immediate hunger?
- > What was wrong with the devil's invitation for Jesus to throw Himself from the temple?
- > What does Satan promise Jesus in verse 8? Can you spot the deception? (See Psalm 2)
- > What does this reveal about the Lord's understanding of His Father's promises and timing?

:: Read Matthew 16:21-23. Compare this with Matthew 4:1-11. Why does Jesus identify Peter's attempt to prevent the cross with a temptation from Satan?



// GETTING TO CHRIST

:: We cannot produce Christlikeness by simply trying really hard, but by staring at and rejoicing in Christ. How does 2 Corinthians 3:18 support that argument? How do you think this works?

:: In the garden Jesus prayed, “**Not My will, but Yours, be done.**” What makes this such a profound definition of self-control? How does it expose the opposite attitude at the heart of sin?

:: Hebrews 12:2 says Jesus endured the cross “**for the joy that was set before him.**” How does the future joy explain the Lord’s ability to endure present suffering? How does it shape ours?

// GETTING TO YOU

:: Jonathan Cruse defined self-control as “*the power to wait on a perceived good or withhold present desire, with the knowledge of a guaranteed ‘better’ in the future.*” What most frequently competes with your confidence in God's promised future?

:: Think about the last time you were sinned against. How does the cross enable you to forgive?



// GETTING TO YOU

:: When you are anxious or stressed, what is your normal pattern of seeking comfort? What does this reveal about *where* you look for satisfaction? How would looking to Christ change your response?

// GETTING TO OTHERS

:: Felix was a powerful, wealthy, influential man. He was alarmed when Paul spoke to him about righteousness, self-control, and judgment. What does this teach us about how we might evangelize those who appear successful and self-sufficient?

:: What makes self-control a significant evangelistic strategy? How might our inability to control our desires expose sinner's need for Christ?

:: How could Spirit-wrought self-control make our church's witness to the world more credible? What kinds of gospel opportunities might arise when Christians visibly refuse retaliation, greed, comfort, status, or immediate gratification for the sake of Christ?

