Transformed By Fire – Self-Control

Galatians 5:22-23 / Romans 6:6 / Galatians 5:1 / 1 John 2:15-17

9/5/21

The last characteristic listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as a fruit of the Spirit is self-control. This is probably one of the most difficult of the fruits, as this is the equal sign to the equation. All these characteristics put together equals Self Control. It takes getting rid of self to allow these fruits to grow in you. None of these fruits are naturally easy. We need to always remember, we do not become a Christian on our own, and we cannot grow as a Christian on our own.

* Philippians 2:13 says that "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."
* Every good thing we do is done by the fruit of the Spirit's work in our lives.

**Self-control (“temperance” in the KJV) - The ability to control oneself.**

* It involves moderation, constraint, and the ability to say “no” to **our desires and fleshly lusts.**
* It is the active effort we put forth to resist the temptation to go back to the ways of the world around us once we’ve been shown God’s spiritual way of life. It is demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit instead of committing the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-23).

One of the proofs of God’s working in our lives is the ability to control our own thoughts, words, and actions.

* It’s not that we are naturally weak-willed. But our fallen nature is under the influence of sin. We were slaves to sin & self!
* Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we are incapable of knowing and choosing how best to meet our needs. Even if we assumed we knew what would be best, such as not smoking, another need would take precedence and enslave us again.

When we are saved by Christ's sacrifice, we are free!

* Galatians 5:1 - *So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.*
* That liberty includes, among other things, freedom from sin. “*We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin*” (Romans 6:6). Now, as the Spirit gives us self-control, we can refuse sin and selfish ways!

We as Christians need self-control because the outside world as well as internal forces are attacking

* Romans 7:21-23 - *I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.****22****I love God’s law with all my heart.****23****But there is another powerwithin me that is at war with my mind.*

Like a vulnerable city, we must have defenses.

* A wall around an ancient city was designed to keep out the enemy. Judges at the gates determined who should be allowed in and who should remain outside. Soldiers and gates enforced those decisions.
* The same should be instilled into our lives, these defenses might include gathering with other believers and meditating on the Word of God, rather than developing close relationships with sinners or watching garbage on TV or social media.
* We don’t exhibit self-control if we continually deal daily with that which would enslave us.

Self-control is a gift that frees us.

* It frees us to enjoy the benefits of a healthy body.
* It frees us to rest in the security of good stewardship.
* It frees us from a guilty conscience.
* It restricts the indulgence of our foolish desires, and we find the liberty to love and live as we were meant to.

*Imagine a small child throwing a tantrum—complete with throwing toys and shrieking—when they don’t get what they want.*

*Now fast-forward 20 years where that same child is in workforce. This version of the future self, one without self-control, is yelling in the face of their (soon-to-be former) employer for making do the job over again. A different version, one with self-control, would take the criticism from her boss and comply without retaliation.*

Examples such as this highlight even from a secular point of view the need for self-control, which is exactly what it sounds like: control over self.

For Christians, however, self-control is not merely about temperament. It is about resisting the temptation to break God’s law (which includes losing our temper) and react to others with demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in our thoughts and actions. The apostle Paul wrote about bringing “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Since thoughts lead to actions, this includes controlling ourselves completely, despite the pulls of temptations.

We must remember that the “natural” is part of this world and is temporarily run by Satan. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Therefore, as godly Christians, we must recognize that self-control includes abstaining from the evils of the world.

* Notice 1 John 2:15-17: “***15 Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you****. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.”*

**An example to follow**

The story of Jesus Christ is found mainly throughout the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) but is also illustrated throughout the entire Bible because He was the Creator who then came to earth in the flesh.

* We look to His experiences and actions as a human being and then try to model our lives after Him. Jesus Christ’s time as a human being defines self-control. To pay the penalty for our sins, Jesus had to live a sinless life. This required constant self-control with the help of God. Even in the face of blatant temptation by the devil, who offered Him the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, Jesus Christ remained in control.
* Jesus Christ also needed amazing self-control to allow God’s will to happen in the perfect way it had been planned. For example, Christ had to refrain from calling for legions of angels to save Him from torture and death. He also had to refrain from disagreeing with God’s will, looking to the spiritual rather than just the physical.

As with all the fruit of the Spirit, Jesus Christ is the only perfect example to follow in demonstrating self-control.

**An example to avoid**

Where does the attitude that is the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit come from? Just as Jesus Christ is the perfect example of self-control and the other fruits of the Spirit, Satan is the perfect example of loss of self-control and the other works of the flesh.

* The transformation of Lucifer the angel to Satan the devil, found in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-19, is a cautionary tale of loss of self-control. When sinful, violent, and prideful thoughts entered Lucifer’s mind, his reaction was to allow them to turn into a rebellious spirit.
* Revelation 12:9 says that Satan “deceives the whole world.” It’s safe to say he wants humans to love the world and its carnality, especially losing self-control—the very thing that stops us from committing the works of the flesh and keeps us demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit.

**How do we demonstrate Self-Control?**

We’ve seen that the need to demonstrate self-control is critical. But how do we make the necessary changes and demonstrate more of it?

* Keep track, either in a journal or chart, of various reactions you experienced during the week and categorize them as either demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit with self-control or a work of the flesh with loss of control. Examine the causes and the thinking that led up to the reaction.
* When presented with a stressful situation, have a phrase or prayer ready in your mind to help you focus on staying in control and looking to the fruit of the Spirit instead of a natural, knee-jerk reaction. (For example, if someone tends to irritate you at work, think to yourself, “God wants me to love & be kind; to rule over this”—before you lose control and insult them.)
* Pray daily for God to give you more of His Spirit, including the self-control to demonstrate that fruit and avoid temptation. The more we pray, study, meditate and fast to draw closer to God, the more we will have the control to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

In closing:

**Self-control self-examination questionnaire:**

1. Have I lost control to dangerous emotions or a damaging sin?

2. Why do I have difficulties restraining myself from what I know isn’t good for me?

3. Do others describe me as calm and collected or erratic and uncontrolled? Why?

4. Is my first reaction to something a fruit of the Spirit or a loss of control? Why?

Self hates instead of loves

Self finds unfulfilling things to simulate joy, bringing unhappiness rather than true joy

Self causes chaos or drama, rather than peace

Self has no patience for anyone but it’s self

Self naturally shows unkindness at every level, looking out for itself only

Self has no good in it at all...none

Self shows no faithfulness to its word or action; It only is interested is what’s best for self

Self shows no gentleness because self’s needs are more important than others needs

Once we allow the Spirit to transform us with...

* ***Love*** 
  + A love that is patient, kind, humble, unselfish, forgiving, truthful & never gives up. A love that is unconditional. A love that shows true godly love instead of lust and infatuation—to love others not as the world loves, but as Christ loved us.
    - *“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” – Eph. 5:2*
* ***Joy*** 
  + A joy that is your strength in the Lord, unspeakable & full of glory. Choosing this no matter what the situation and believing God has it all worked out.
    - “*Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” - 1 Peter 1:8*
* ***Peace***
  + To get along with others and make peace instead of constantly getting into conflict; Being filled with a peace that passes ALL understanding; doesn’t make any sense but we find ourselves “Still and knowing He is God”
    - *Blessed are the peacemakers” Matthew 5:9 / Psalm 46:10a “Be still and know that I am God!*
* ***Patience***
  + Patience that deals with the most difficult of situations and learning that – 1st the world doesn’t revolve around you / 2nd that we are all in this crazy life together and we all need a little patience when dealing with each other.
    - *“...be patient with all” - 1 Thessalonians 5:14b*
* ***Kindness***
  + Living kind; As a people who have been shown such great kindness, we should clothe ourselves with kindness daily and live as Paul encourages us to: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven us.”
    - *Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. – Phil. 2:4*
* ***Goodness***
  + We show goodness by forgiving others, living a life that is pure, both morally & spiritually, and by being gracious & generous, a person with a heart of compassion for others and their needs.
    - *In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - Matthew 5:16*
* ***Faithfulness***
  + First to be faithful to God, His Word, and His ways as he has always been to us. Then to be faithful to one another. Remembering that the body of Christ should be the place where people keep their word to one another, even when it’s inconvenient, uncomfortable, difficult, or costly.
    - *15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. - Romans 12:15-16*
* ***Gentleness***
  + Gentleness is being humble. Showing concern for others, correcting others gently, and ready to forgive. Gentleness mends brokenness, it restores what is broken.
    - *Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon – Phil 4:5*

Once we allow the Spirit to transform us with these fruits, it will develop a “Control of Self by the Holy Spirit”! Self will become less, and Jesus will become more...keeping “**Self-In-Control”**

Church, truth is we are to be walking billboards for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Over the past 12 weeks the Lord has dug deep into our hearts to break up the hard ground of our hearts to make changes to transform us by His Holy Fire, the Holy Spirit. This maybe the beginning of the journey for some, and maybe a rebreak of harden hearts for others.

But wherever you are at today, it’s not going to be easy with our old selves trying to stick its ugly hand up. But by being committed to Jesus and remembering daily that God has called us to be a “different/peculiar” people, and even more importantly, has called us to “Be Holy as He is Holy, we can be sure that we will become “Transformed by Fire” for the glory of the Lord!

May we all grow daily in demonstrating and living by these fruits of the Spirit in a way like we never have before!