

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

The Fruit of the Spirit **Lesson 10: “The Fruit of the Spirit Is Self-Control”**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NASB).

Many have no trouble understanding that the first eight facets of the fruit of the Spirit are in reality gifts that result from allowing the Spirit to live in us and produce those character traits. However, self-control sounds like something I must do. Yet, the Bible is clear, “self” control, the one listed last, is just as much a fruit of the Spirit as is *agape*, the one listed first. If we realize we cannot produce the completely selfless *agape*, why do some think they can produce divine self-control?

“ ... These [the fruits of the Spirit] must come forth spontaneously from the heart of the true follower of Christ. They cannot be forced. But they do not dwell naturally in us. It is natural for us to be angry and exasperated instead of gentle and long suffering when opposed. Note the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The first come naturally; therefore, in order for the good fruit to be born, we must be made completely over into new creatures. ‘The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good.’ Luke 6:45. Goodness comes not from any man, but from the Spirit of Christ continually dwelling in him” (*The Glad Tidings*, p. 121).

After lamenting he cannot control the war between the law of his mind and the law of “sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:23), Paul, feeling wretched, asks who will free him. The answer is filled with gratitude as he identifies that it is Christ who resolves this war. On that basis, he continues by saying that “there is *therefore* now (emphasis added), no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

Care should be taken here on a technical point. Some translations which rely on later manuscripts that may have been influenced by then current ecclesiastical thinking, add the phrase “who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” to the end of Romans 8:1. This addition suggests that walking in the Spirit is a condition to “no condemnation.” Paul is not talking about Christian living in this verse, although he discusses it later in the chapter.

Condemnation came from the transgression of the law, sin. Because Christ became accursed for us, and as the second Adam, took the entire human race in Him to pay the penalty for sin on the cross, there is therefore no condemnation for those who accept their position in Christ Jesus. That was accomplished by Christ before most of the human race was even born, so the removal of condemnation was not dependent on those individuals walking in the Spirit. As Paul accurately identifies, it is Christ Jesus who delivers us from the “wretched” man.

Waggoner put it this way: “We now come to the conclusion of the whole matter. In the eighth chapter of Romans the epistle reaches its highest point. The seventh has presented to us the deplorable condition of the man who has been awakened by the law to a sense of his condition, bound to sin by cords that can be loosened only by death. It closes with a glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who alone can set us free from the body of death” (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 8:126).

Thus we see that “self” control cannot be produced by “self” as long as the law of our nature (bent to self) is at war with the law written in our minds. Only the indwelling of the Holy Spirit from Christ can accomplish the resolution of that war. But, this does not mean there is nothing for us to do.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. ... When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. ... Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668).

What precious promises! Note the need for our action. “If we consent,” “When we know God,” “decide to do nothing ... that will displease God;” these are what we must do, not grit our teeth to develop self-control. If our walk in the Spirit does not advance in quantity or quality as we wish, it is probably because we have stopped seeking to know God, or somehow have withdrawn our consent regarding a “darling” sin that we secretly cherish.

It is also possible that we are relying on the removal of a defect in our character to assure us that we will be taken to heaven. We say, “If I only had more self-control, then I would know that I’ll make it to heaven.” It may sound complicated, but it is not. “If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch” (*ibid.*).

Christ personally asked the Father to give us His Spirit as a Helper, Teacher, and Comforter. We will actually know Him “because He abides with you, and will be in you” (John 14:16, 17). He is the still small voice Who whispers, “This is the way, walk in it.”

Christ has done everything, and the only thing it will cost us is our pride. Never should we feel proud that we are walking in the Spirit, because it all is a fruit of the Spirit which we accept by faith in Christ.

—Arlene Hill