

DATE: August 24, 2008

TEXT: Gal 2:22-25, Matthew 13:44-46

TITLE: "Fruits of the Spirit VIII: Self Control"



This morning I am wrapping up my summer series on the fruits of the Spirit. We have looked at each fruit and seen what it means to live a full life in Christ. It is tragic to see the state of Christianity in our country today. A high percentage of people.... I would guess it could be as high as 40 to 50 % claim the name of Christian... but have little to nothing to do with Christ. They go to church two to three times per year at the most. Equally as tragic is the large number of Christians that settle for a life of Christian immaturity. These people may have at one time experienced an encounter with the Lord. They may go to church on a regular basis.... but faith for them is an obligation, duty or habit. I believe the large size of these two groups is the reason why we call ourselves a "Christian" country... but we do not see Christian values as a base of our land. Throughout this series we have seen that when we are mature in Christ our characters change. We demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit.

Let me also share that this was a difficult series. It was difficult to look at each fruit

separately. I now understand why Galatians does not speak of the fruits of the Spirit but speaks of the fruit of the Spirit (singular not plural). When we are growing in Christ... our entire being is changed. We do not become more loving and than more joyful and than more peaceful and than more patience.. Until finally we have self control. Our entire character is molded by Christ.

This morning we are looking at the final fruit of the Spirit... self control. Philip Keller has given a great definition of Self Control in his book [A Gardener Looks at the Fruits of the Spirit](#).

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Self control for the Christian means that my “self”, my whole being, body, soul and spirit comes under control of Christ. It means that I am an individual governed by God. My entire life, every aspect of it-whether spiritual, moral, physical-has become subject to the sovereignty of God’s Spirit. I am a “man under authority”.

How do we gain self control? How do we make our entire self under the authority of Christ? I want to share three necessary steps. Again these are steps necessary for all of the fruits, separation is impossible.

**Step # 1** We must admit our weaknesses. I said at the very beginning of this sermon series that one use of the fruits of the Spirit is a barometer for our Christian maturity. We are able to

look at each of the fruits individually and see if they describe our life or not..... How loving are you? How joyful are you? How patient are you? How kind are you? How good are you? How much faith do you have? Are you gentle? Do you demonstrate self control in your life?

We can also look at the fruits of the Spirit as a whole and honestly ask ourselves... am I mature in my faith walk with the Lord. If we are honest I believe each and every person here will see that we have failed to gain the maturity Christ would have for every one of us.

It is sometimes hard to be honest. We often compare to other people and we come out ok. We are called to compare ourselves to God's expectations of us. The tool of Satan is deception. He whispers in our ears.... "oh You're ok.... you go to church often.... you are basically a good person.... you do your best". That is a voice of deception. Christ calls us to be honest.

The good news is this... when we are honest we are able to receive forgiveness. *1 John is very clear...*

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.**

I hope and pray that as we have looked at the fruits of the Spirit and you have discovered your failures you have not just shrugged them off and said to your self.... “no big deal, God know I am not perfect.” I hope and pray you have been honest and said “Father, forgive me... praise you for your forgiveness.”

**Step # 2** In order to live a life that is self controlled... under the authority of Christ, we need to make the decision to surrender to the authority to Christ,

Jesus tells the parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the Pearl of Great price. In each case a decision is made. The decision to sell all and acquire the treasure. The treasure, of course, is our Lord Jesus. Are we willing to sell all for Christ.

I have discovered that I tend to be an Indian Giver. I give to Christ and then I take it back.

I decide I want to live a life based on the truth of God’s word.... but find myself again and agin backing off that truth. “Oh Lord you don’t really expect me to love that neighbor.” “Oh Lord you don’t really expect me to be joyful in that situation” “Oh Lord you know my kids.. You can’t expect me to be patient with them all the time” “Oh Lord I know you have told me to share my

faith... but what if they laugh at me or reject me” “Oh Lord I know your command to tithe but money is just so tight”. I could go on and on and on. I could fill an entire sermon with these statements. In each case I need to come to the point of saying... forgive me Lord for my past failure... I have decided to chose obedience. But this can not be the final step. Because we are too weak to fulfill those decisions.

**Step # 3** We need to become empowered by the Holy Spirit. In *Zechariah 4:6* we read.....

**“So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD : 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.**

*Ephesians 3:16* states...

**I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

We can be strengthened by his strength. How? How are we empowered by his Spirit? I

want to end this series with a practical lesson. We are empowered by the Spirit by the discipline of obedient behavior. It is a circle of growth. The more we act in obedience. The more power we receive so we can act in obedience and receive more power and act in obedience and on and on.

Allow me to demonstrate this is a marriage illustration. A husband and wife have been married for a year and the luster of first love has worn off. They have fallen into a rut that is Ok... but not great. How do they discover the joy God intends for their marriage. Do they say... Today I'm going to feel deep feeling of love for my spouse. No, it doesn't work. What they do is this. The husband says. "Scripture calls for me to build up my wife. I don't feel like it. She makes me mad... but I will make a point of noticing her and complimenting her today." The next day the husband says to himself... "I am called to encourage my wife... today I will make a point of encouraging her". The wife says "I am called by the word of God to support my husband. I don't want to. I disagree with that decision... but I will support him" What happened eventually in this relationship is their actions of obedience become easier and eventually their feeling of love and care return. It becomes a circle of growth.

You are empowered by the Holy Spirit by first making the decision to be obedient and then taking the steps of discipline commanded in the Word of God. Have you ever noticed the most difficult step of obedience to take is the first step. Again and again I have talked to people

who have stopped coming to worship. Worship is a command of God. Even when you don't feel like coming to worship... come to worship. Scripture commands us to be people of the Word. To be empowered by the Holy Spirit we need to be in His Word. Beginning to coming to bible Study and Sunday school is not easy... it is necessary to grow in faith. We are called to be witnesses for Christ. Not an option ....a command. Chose to act in obedience and act... not easy... hard. But the amazing truth is this... When we start the Holy Spirit takes over and empowers us. You get on the circle of growth and before you know it the momentum of the Holy Spirit moves you forward and forward. The circle becomes a funnel moving upward closer to Christ.

I was very fortunate. When I first became a Christian as a senior in High school I had a mentor who taught me how to grow in the Lord. I never forget going to Lloyd and saying.... "I've just accepted Christ as my Lord. He said that's wonderful... welcome to the family of believers. Now Doug we have Bible study that meets Wednesday morning at 6:30am... I'll pick you up." "But Lloyd I don't know if I want to get up that early" "Didn't you tell me you

accepted Christ as your Lord” “Well yes” “Good, I see you Wednesday morning”. And for the next year I went to bible study every Wednesday morning.

I’ll never forget that first Wednesday morning. Lloyd picked me up and we went to his church... there was about 15 other kids there. I knew most of them from school. Lloyd said....”guys, Doug has accepted Christ as his Lord”... there was cheering and words of welcome. Then Lloyd said.. “Doug begin our time in Prayer” I said “out loud?” Lloyd said “yes” I said “I’ve never prayed out loud... I’m not very comfortable” Lloyd said “Doug do you believe Christ is with you right now?” I said “Yes certainly” He said “Good... just talk to him” And I learned how to pray out loud. Soon after that Lloyd gave me my first Bible and said “Doug Read this... it’s God’s word” I said “ok”. A week later Lloyd asked “Doug what have you read in the Bible” I said “I’ve had a busy week and haven’t read much” He said “you are ignoring Jesus” I began to read. About three months later Lloyd said... “Doug, It’s time you stood up in youth group and talked about your faith. I didn’t want to I hadn’t really told some of my close friends... but I did. About 8 months after I had become a Christian Lloyd said...

“Doug, it’s time to go to a new high School and be a witness for Christ”. I was scared to death. But I went. Each step of the way... acting in obedience, even though it scared me to death... I discovered the power of the Holy Spirit. Bible study became a joy of my life. Prayer became a joy. Witnessing the good news of Christ is the greatest joy Christ gives us.

“But Doug, how do I take the first step?” Take the small steps of obedience. Receive the forgiveness of Christ..... make the decision in one area of your life and step in faith. Allow me as your pastor to challenge you, as Lloyd did for me, to move forward. Also allow us as your church help you.

Christ calls us to walk close to Him. Let us not settle for a distant walk. Christ gives us the promise of love, of joy, of peace, of patience..... it is a promise of God. Let us take what is offered. Let us live a full life in Christ.

AMEN