

Works of the Flesh / Fruit of the Spirit

Part 46 (self-control 1)

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

INTRO:

I. SELF-CONTROL

Well we have now come to the last fruit of Paul's list here in Galatians chapter 5, and we have come to one which the New King James Version called self-control, it along with the ASV, ESV, RSV, and the Holman Christian Study Bible all use the word self-control where as other versions like the King James Version, the ERV and the Young's Literal Translation use the word temperance.

And even though they both are translated from the same Greek word which we will look at in a moment, there are some slight differences between the English definitions of word temperance and of self-control. And I want to just briefly show you this difference because I think the Greek word of the original can refer to both of our English words of self-control and of temperance depending on the context.

And so to jump right in, the Merriam-Webster dictionary says that temperance is;

1: moderation in action, thought or feeling

2a: a habitual moderation in the indulgence of the appetites or passions.

2b: moderation in or abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages

And then in the same dictionary under self-control it says;

1: restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotion or desires

Again, very similar in definition but still a little different, and that difference is that one is the 'habitual moderation or exclusion' and the other is the 'exercised restraint'. Wikipedia explains the division a little further and says that;

Temperance in its modern use is defined as moderation or voluntary self-restraint. It is typically described in terms of what a person voluntarily refrains from doing and self-control is the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behavior in the face of temptations and impulses.

A person who exhibits self-control wisely refrains from giving into unwise desires. A person who exhibits temperance does not have unwise desires in the first place because they have wisely shaped their character in such a way that their desires are proper ones.

EOQ

Again similar but with greater differences in what we are choosing not to do verse not wanting to do them. And if I were to put Wikipedia's definition into illustration I could say something like this; I would have perfect temperance if someone left a cigarette in my office or a beer in my fridge, because I have no desire for such things, I am perfectly temperate in the areas of smoking and alcohol. But... if you left a box of chocolate bars in my pantry, that is something I would really have to exercise self-control with.

But translated either as temperance or as self-control the Greek word Paul uses here is *egkrateia* *eng-krat'-i-ah* Strong's number 1466, and the Online Bible Greek Lexicon defines it as;

Self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites)

The Strong's dictionary says it is;

Self-control (especially continence) or temperance.

This word comes from the word egkrates *eng-krat-ace'* Strong's number 1468, a word that is a combination of the words by, with or, in along with the words strength, power or dominion. And is a word that means to have power over something or mastering or controlling something with strength including one's self and subsequently any selfish desires.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament speaks of egkrateia *eng-krat'-i-ah* along with other words from the same root saying;

1. This group takes its sense from the stem krat- denoting power or lordship. Thus enkratés means — having power over all things and the self, enkráteia means —dominion over the self or something, with the nuances of — steadfastness and — self-control...

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It is this idea of mastering the self in regard to its wants and desires is the mind set of almost all commentaries and dictionaries I looked at. And to give you some examples the Expositors Greek Testament says;

Self-control comprehends every form of temperance, and includes the mastery of all appetites, tempers and passions.

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown bible commentary says;

The Greek root implies self-restraint as to one's desires and lusts.

And commentator Albert Barnes says it;

has reference to the power or *dominance* which we have over exciting and evil passions of all kinds. It denotes the self-rule which a man has over the evil *tendency* of his nature.

Some commentaries talk about overcoming the evil desires of life, and to abstain or resist the wrong desires that the devil would lead us into by our own passions and sinful lusts.

Some talk about this world as meaning not to over indulge even in the good or acceptable things of life, just as the Online Bible Greek Lexicon talked about, having the control over appetites. And as I looked over the various references it seemed like it included all the bad desires of lust as well as the ‘ok’ or acceptable ones that come with legitimate things.

The desire of good things that eventually turn into bad things of sin if indulged in with no control. One example would be eating a whole box of chocolate bars, eating one is not sin, but eating a whole box turns it into gluttony which is a sin and would need self-control.

To have self-control or to be temperate in all things is that which keeps us from either end of the spectrum. Of bad things that lead to more bad things and from over doing it with good things that are not inherently bad but will lead to bad things by the overindulgences of such good things.

However even though they all go off in different directions and explanations, all of them have that one thing in common which is that mastering or controlling or restraining of one's self in the many things of one's life. On one hand it can refer to the evils we looked at in the first half of Paul's list, of the sins that keep one from the kingdom of heaven and not allow one's self to be in such sins. To overindulge with even the legitimate things of life as with food on the other. It is that strength as the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says in 'having power over all things and the self with self-control.

And even though the actual word is used only two times by Paul in the New Testament, once here in Galatians chapter 5 and the other in Acts chapter 24 verse 25 (which we will look at in the third message).

It is a concept or teaching that is pretty much found throughout all of scripture.

From Jesus speaking in the book of Matthew in chapter 5 when he compares hatred to murder and the looking lustfully at a woman as adultery, to Paul speaking in the book of Romans in chapter 6 in verse 16 where he says;

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

Or in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 in verses 24 to 27 saying;

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

It includes the things that are not necessarily sinful, to the bad things that are. To not allow the sensual appetites, passions and desires to overtake a person and take them off the track of their Christian walk.

Again something that we will be taking a closer look in that third message when we look at the self-control of the Christian.

1. The Self-control of God

But for today's message we want to look at the self-control of God. And on the surface we know that our God is a perfect God and that in His perfection in being all knowing and all power, that there is no such thing as God needing self-control. Because we already know that God cannot sin, He cannot lie, He cannot do anything evil, immoral or wrong. And nor is there any bad desires or passions, or any sensual appetites within Him.

And I think what we must understand that there is no self-control that God needs to exercise with Himself over such things that are bad, sinful, or evil.

But on the other hand there are actions that God desires, as to what He wishes to do with various people, with the people He gets angry with, and with the actions of man He will not tolerate.

And I think it's not so much as God excising self-control with His emotions but that He chooses that action that gives Him glory. That He maintains that balance between His desire, His justice, and with the glory He portrays in the world.

Because we know that God cannot do evil and that He cannot lie, those are absolutes with God. But with things as what He desires from man, how he interacts with man, how He exercises justice and a sense self-control with man, that is something that becomes applicable when we look at God.

And even though there are some who believe that God does not have a change of emotions, as Vine's says in his dictionary when defining anger and the anger of God he says;

This meaning is applied to God as a figure of speech whereby He is attributed human emotions. Since God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable and since anger is an emotion representing a change in one's reaction, God does not really become angry, He only appears to do so in the eyes of men.

I personally do not agree with Vine in believing that God does not get angry, or does not change emotions, that He is some emotionless God and remains unchanged in that area. But rather, I believe that when scripture talks about God being unchanging; it pertains to His righteousness and justice, His goodness, His promises, His commands and stance on sin, not with His emotions. If anything our great and awesome God can have any and all emotions simultaneously, as Psalm 7 in verse 11 it says;

God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.

And of you notice the phrase ‘with the wicked’ is italicized in your bibles meaning that it is not there in the original, the verse could literally read;

God is a just judge, And God is angry every day.

Or as the RSV says that He is; ‘a God who has indignation every day.’

Ezekiel chapter 22 verse 20 God says;

As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you.

Ezekiel chapter 25 verse 14 says;

"I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel, that they may do in Edom according to My anger and according to My fury; and they shall know My vengeance," says the Lord GOD.

But not if we go in the other direction as with the words of Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:22;

..."Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

I don't know about you or about William Vine, but I believe that God has different emotions and does get angry, but not that He always goes into some rage of anger when pushed far enough... that comes later in the tribulation. But that His anger would always lead to perfect justice and punishment of the disobedient rebellious man, or people, or even nations in order to bring about a change of character in the person or people or to end the wickedness of a nation. Just as the Lord says in Jeremiah 32 verse 37 regarding Israel;

'Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely.

Now this message is not here to show us that God can get angry, but that there is still that perfect self-control in justice and righteousness that is present in God as being a good God, even when He is angry. That as a perfect God in all things, there are still different avenues He can and will take with His creation and different aspects of self-control He exhibits as God. Not in overcoming bad desires, but different desires or decisions that lead to different outcomes and the self-control He exhibits in each one of them in order that He is glorified.

And one of the things you will notice with the rest of this message is that it will fly in the face of Calvinism sovereignty of God, and their predeterminism theology. I think that our God is much much greater than just running out the pre-narrated script of all and everything in existence. God is much greater than that, I believe that God knows the outcome of all of our decisions; He knows the outcome of every decision we make and even in the ones we don't make. And I often illustrate this with King David's inquire of the Lord regarding the inhabitants of Keilah, when fleeing from Saul.

In 1 Samuel chapter 23 in verses 10 to 13 David asks the Lord;

"O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake.

11 "Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down."

12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will deliver you."

13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

God knew what would happen if David stayed; Saul would come and the people would give David over to Saul. But David didn't say, and thus Saul never came, and the people never gave David over to King Saul. And the Lord knew all of this as well.

So this great dynamic between what God desires and what man does, and what God will do within the boundaries of His justice and righteousness becomes... not something that presents itself as the self-control in God in resisting bad things, but rather choosing the actions and works that best glorify Himself.

And to show us some of these, turn with me to the book of Exodus, to chapter 32, and I will begin reading from verse 7. This is right after the golden calf incident of Aaron and the people of Israel. Beginning in verse 7 of chapter 32 God speaks to Moses saying;

... "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

8 "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"

9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!

10 "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

Now the first thing we must note with such passages is that God never does anything by surprise, God always tells someone what is happening, what is going to happen and spells it all out what He plans to do before hand. Just as Amos 3:7 says;

*Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals
His secret to His servants the prophets.*

Everything from Noah's flood to the coming tribulation, it is all spelled out in the words of scripture in what the Lord will do.

And in verse 10 of Exodus chapter 32 God says to Moses 'let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them'... the Lord was angry with them and not only angry, He says that 'I may consume them', destroy them entirely and begin again with Moses.

But then note Moses intercession for the people in verses 11 to 13;

*Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said:
"LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your
people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt
with great power and with a mighty hand?*

*12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He
brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the
mountains, and to consume them from the face of the
earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from
this harm to Your people.*

13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

You see there would be no injustice in punishing the people for the wickedness they had committing, He would have been perfectly just in doing so, and if Israel were entirely eliminated, the promises of Abraham, Isaac and Israel would have continued through the lineage of Moses, and this is true because of what He told Moses in verse 10. How He would do this is not explained, or the timeframe it would take we do not know because it never happened. It never got that far. God never took that path of choice or told us how He would do it.

Because after Moses intercession, note verse 14;

So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

Did God have a change of mind... well there are those who say God cannot change His mind because that means He would change, and He cannot change, not even His mind.

Or is it that He choose a path that would continue to give Him glory as being a merciful God, a saving God, one who put up with all the disobedience and rebellion of wayward Israel and chose that would glorify Him in these areas, instead of destroying the nation and create a 'do this or else' image among the other nations.

Is it a self-control that mastered the desire of what He wanted to do with the nation of Israel when they sinned with the golden calf? Or is it the choice of choosing a path that glorifies Him the most? One that would reveal how He views disobedience and rebellion and yet by what appears to be self-control, show Israel and the world how gracious and merciful He really is with mankind. Because this was not the only time that the Lord desired to do this to Israel.

In Numbers chapter 14 in verses 11 and 12, the Lord said to Moses;

"How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?"

12 "I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

And again Moses intercedes for the people starting in verse 17 he says;

*"And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great,
just as You have spoken, saying,*

*18 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy,
forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no
means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the
fathers on the children to the third and fourth
generation.'*

*19 "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray,
according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You
have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."*

And then verse 20;

*Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to
your word;*

And to what purpose, what cause or reason... well listen to verse 21,
the Lord says;

*"but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the
glory of the LORD—*

It is all for His glory, His glory in showing mercy, His glory in
showing longsuffering, His glory in being that loving God to His

creation in providing salvation in order to fill the earth with the glory of the Lord.

You see, the Lord could destroy everything that ever rebelled against Him, destroyed everything that disobeyed Him and He could do all of that justly.

But then all His creation would simply become obedient robots. Living in a 'obey or else' mentality. But this is not what He desires; He seeks and desires obedience and faith not from robots but from a free will. Peter says that the Lord is 'not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance'. The author of Hebrews says in chapter 10 in verse 38 and 39 says;

Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

God does not want robots. If He wanted mindless robots he could create robots that would obey Him and praise Him all the time. As I said in the first message in the Feasts of Israel series saying;

...if it could have pleased God and give Him true glory, God could have created the most elaborate biological robots you could imagine, ones that would look and sound and act, exactly like you and me and maybe even better, they would have a heart and blood and even brains and they could praise him with a million programmed messages of praise and worship and glorify Him forever. He could have done this, but it would have never been real praise, it would never have been real glory, for they would only be biological machines who would be doing simply what they were programmed to do.

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As we have learned in the past, such created things could never give true glory or true love or true obedience to God. Because those things can truly only come from a free will and willing heart. Yes God has performed some very harsh action in the Old Testament, in destroying nations, and people, but it was so the nations and people would learn and see God for who He is, the power He holds and the obedience He desires. Paul writes of some of these harsh actions in his first letter to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, speaking of the things that disobedient Israel did and the punishment they received and then after describing it he says in verse 6;

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

And then also in verse 11;

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Not that we would become robots, or live in a state of ‘obey or else’ but that by examples we see how the Lord views sin and disobedience and the consequences that will eventually come from them. But to kill all those who disobey is not the only desires He has, even though He can justly do it, He desires all men to be saved, of their own choice come to love God. To see His love by His longsuffering and self-control and that they are now there for you and for me and for everyone else in the world.

One could think of it like this, that the longsuffering of the Lord will come to an end with the tribulation where He will punish the nations for their disobedience, and self-control is what keeps it from happening to the nations today.

If you look at our world as it is in today, we can see we are approaching the end of God's longsuffering, but how much self-control do you think is not needed when you look at all the wars happening in our world, the atrocities man is committing, the inhumanity to women and children around the globe. And yet still nothing happens in light of destruction on a grand scale on this earth.

He has done it in the past.

He destroyed almost all of humanity with the flood of Noah, and yet God promised in Genesis chapter 9 in verse 11 saying;

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And in Genesis chapter 18 where Abraham meets the Lord on His way to Sodom and Gomorrah and in verse 17, the;

LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,

And when Abraham was told what the Lord was planning to do, he questions the Lord in verse 23 to 25;

And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

24 "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it?"

25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And you know the account it went from 50 to 45, to 40, to 30, to 20 all the way down to 10, the Lord would not destroy it if 10 righteous would be found there. And even though Abraham said to God; ‘shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ Well the judge of the earth did right, for only Lot, his wife and two daughters were taken out of the cities and the rest were justly destroyed. And what does Jude says about this destruction, well in verse 7 he says;

as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

An example of the vengeance the Lord has for those who live in continual sin, and wickedness and disobedience, and yet by His self-control, wicked nations and evil people still continue and exist today. And by His self-control He waits, He is longsuffering, and even though He is angry every day, He exercises this form of self-controlled with the evil nations and people of this world every day. Just look at the arrest of Jesus, in Matthew chapter 26 starting in verse 51 it says;

And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

52 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

53 "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?

He could have called them, but He didn't, He could have called them, but instead gave us verse 54 which says;

54 "How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

What did the Lord desire? Not that He would call on ten thousand angels to come and destroy this wicked world when He could. But that the plan of salvation would be completed, that the love of God would be provided for mankind. That out of his kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control the scriptures would be fulfilled and in the end, God would receive all the glory in doing so by those who would follow and obey, the One who demonstrated that perfect act of self-control in fulfilling the scriptures.

As Psalm 86 and verse 9;

All nations whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name.

And as in the first 4 verse of Revelation chapter 15 it says;

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

His judgments have been manifested, and examples have been given and He has exercised the self-control that has kept back His destruction of this world, so that He would receive the maximum effect of glory for Himself among the nations. And if you think I'm wrong then let me ask you this, and I will give you a little test.

If I could give you this device, and I'll call it the God's justice device. It has a dial and a big red button on the top. And it works like this; if I turn the dial to Hamas and you push this button, every active Hamas member who committed the atrocities in last year's attack in Israel, would instantly die and receive just punishment and you would by no means be accountable or responsible for pushing it... would you push it? I'm sure there are many in Israel who would have pushed it a year ago already.

What if I turned it to Hezbollah and when you push the button every Hezbollah member would instantly die and receive just punishment would you push it?

What if I could set it to justly punish with death those tyrants who continually rape women and children on a daily bases around the world would you push the button?

If I could set it to every abortion doctor who tears apart the unborn in the womb, would you push the button?

Or what if I could set it to every pathological serial killer that is still out there taking advantage and abusing the vulnerable and then kill them and that when you push the button they would all instantly die and receive their just punishment, would you push the button?

Is it as the phrase goes ‘very tempting hammy, very tempting’

But let me ask you this, when would you stop pushing the button? When the world would be eventually conformed into obedient robots living in a ‘do right or else I push the red button kind of world’?

Because that is what God could do, God could have push the red button on all of us.

Systematically push the button on any one who sinned, disobeyed, rebelled against His will, and do it with all His justice and righteousness intact. And I don't need to look at Hamas or some psycho killer or anyone else sinning in the world, I only need to look at myself.

See, God is not seeking blind obedient robots who will 'obey or else', He is looking for those who will turn to Him, love Him, and be obedient to Him not because of the red button that is in His power, but see that He is a loving God, a merciful God, a caring God. One who lifts us up and helps us to stand, takes care of us and feeds us and clothes us, and above all provided the means of salvation through His son and covers us with His righteousness when we believe.

One who exercised self-control and did not push the red button when I deserved it. But rather, has covered me with the blood of His own Son and of His righteousness and has filled me with the Holy Spirit so that I may live and give Him glory for all eternity. That's what His self-control aims to do, not resist bad things, but not to push that button until it is time, has gone too far or is too late.

And so as we conclude, its not about power even though He has all power, it's not about righteousness even though He is all righteous, it's not about justice even though He can justly execute all justice. It's all about glory, it's about God getting the greatest possible maximum effect of glory He can get from His creation and I believe that is achieve large in part by His self-control.

And as we learned, with God, it's not a self-control as to not give into bad things as we humans must do, but rather not doing those actions He desires which would end up giving Him less glory, and rather do those things which glorify Him the most. Just as Numbers chapter 14 shows us, when the Lord said to Moses regarding Israel He said in verses 11 and 12;

"How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?"

12 "I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

And after a long intercession by Moses, in pleading the Lord to pardon the people, the Lord says in verses 20 and 21;

"I have pardoned, according to your word;

*21 "but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with
the glory of the LORD—*

A glory that will fill the earth and last for all eternity in that new heaven and new earth which is coming. That is what He is seeking, and it is by His self-control that will bring Him the glory He desires.