

Feast of Tabernacles –Day 5 2024
Fruits of the Spirit – Self-control
By Rich McConnell

Well, good morning, everyone. It's hard to believe that we are at the last of the seven days already and we only have one high day left, so, man it has gone fast. But it's good to be here again and have this opportunity to speak to you once again.

On Monday, you know, I gave the sermon about the three fruits of the spirit that didn't, weren't always mentioned, but yet were called fruits of the spirit. This morning, I want to do a study on one of the fruits of God's Spirit that is listed last in Galatians 5:23, and that's self-control, or as it used in the King James version, it's called, ah, it's. What is it called? (Laughs-senior moment) That's alright, we are going to call it self-control anyway, because the other one is kind of archaic anyway, so we'll go ahead and talk about that.

But if you are like me, you've heard a few sermons about the fruits of the spirit and usually they spend maybe ten minutes on love, ten minutes on joy, another ten minutes on peace and by the time he gets to the end of talking about longsuffering, you see this panic look on the persons face because he realizes that there's no way he is going to properly cover the rest.

And even ten minutes each isn't enough to even cover the first four. And by the time he gets down to the last one, there's ah, he just doesn't have any time left. And so, today I want to come in from the back side and cover the last one; I guess the poor sister of the fruits of the Spirit, that doesn't get much coverage. That is self-control.

Years ago, we had an associate pastor that decided to cover each of the fruits of the Spirit, but he only spoke every three or four Sabbaths. So, by the time he got through, you know, he did a pretty good job, he got through love, joy peace, longsuffering, it was time for the feast in the fall. So, what he did was, he said we have to cut off this series now and just talk about the feast topics, which he did, and he did a good job.

But after the feast he was going to pick them up again, and low and behold, he got transferred and so, we never did get to hear the last topics there covered. So, I thought I would go ahead and you know, talk about this last fruit and work from the back side up, because self-control always seems to get the poor sister treatment and didn't get really covered a lot.

So, we'll go ahead and do that this morning. Off the top, I guess, well let's start by refreshing our memory of what the Fruits of the Spirit are. Let's turn to Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23. Mark it down and turn later. That's Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23. It says:

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (or patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, temperance

That's the word I was trying to remember.
temperance, (or in more modern versions, self-control)

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And that is what we are going to use today.

Against such there is no law.

This morning, we are going to look at the last fruit on that list, self-control, and we'll ask the following questions.

What is self-control, or temperance if you want?

Why do we need it?

And then we will look at some examples of how self-control was used throughout the Bible, what some of those are.

And then we will finish up with, what are some of the ways to grow this fruit in our lives.

So, in the Greek, the word temperance or self-control is G1466. Strong's definition of self-control, in the Blue Letter Bible, is the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially sensual appetites.

Like I said, if you think about temperance, what does that mean, that word is old. When I think of temperance, I think of the Volstead Act, which was the national prohibition act, which outlawed the manufacture and sale of alcohol in the late 1920s. And we know where that all led, but that's about all I could think about when I thought about temperance. What is temperance, so, we won't use that, we'll go with the more modern version which is self-control. I think we all have a better understanding of what self-control is, than we would of the word temperance, which is that archaic word.

Webster defines self-control as restraint exercised over one's impulses, emotions and desires. So, going forward we are going to use self-control.

What is self-control then. Well, Boyd has put me on to using the thesaurus a lot more, and as you all know, the thesaurus is a book that gives synonyms, words that mean the same, and antonyms, words that mean the opposite. So. Let's start by looking at some of the synonyms of self-control and we will see how much broader this all is, rather than just one narrow definition of self-control.

So, looking at some of these synonyms.

Dignity is one, and that's bearing, conduct or speech indicative of self-restraint or appreciation of the formality or gravity of an occasion or situation.

So, we are starting to expand this definition a little bit now. Discretion, the power or right to decide or act according to one's own judgment; freedom or judgment or choice. The quality of being discreet, especially with reference to one's own actions or speech.

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In Proverbs 19, verse 11; that's Proverbs 19, verse 11, it says:

¹¹The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression.

Another one is poise, a dignified, self-confident manner or bearing. Restraint is another one, another synonym, it's the act of restraining, holding back, controlling, or checking, your emotions or whatever.

Self-discipline, discipline and training of oneself, usually for improvement. Athletes have that self-discipline to improve. Balance, that's mental steadiness or emotional stability, habit of calm behavior, judgment.

Constraint, that's repression of natural feelings and impulses. (Like wanting to punch one in the mouth or shake a fist at somebody.) Discipline, is behavior in accord with the rules of conduct, behavior and order maintained by training and control. I Corinthians 9:27; I Corinthians 9:27.

²⁷But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection,

This is Paul talking.

lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

In other words, you have to live what you say, what you preach. And then repression, that's the act of repressing bad memories, feelings, or impulses. Don't look to get even. Stability, that's steadfastness; consistency, as of character or purpose.

So, looking at all these synonyms we start to see that there is a whole lot more than this narrow one-word approach to self-control. Let's go back to Galatians 5, verses 16 and 17 and look at that. Galatians 5, verses 16 and 17, it says:

¹⁶I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

So, we need to walk, or to live in the spirit and grow the fruits of the spirit. So, that's the main premise, our spirit, our human spirits lust and are against God's Spirit in our lives.

So, the first reason why we need self-control is, we need self-control to rule our spirits.

If you turn over to Proverbs 25, verse 28 it says, that's Proverbs 25, verse 28:

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²⁸*Whoever has no rule over his own spirit*

Or no self-control.

is like a city broken down, without walls.

Well, back in that time, you were totally, totally defenseless, you know, if you didn't have walls around your city. Here, they're saying it's the same thing if you don't have self-control in your lives. So, let's turn next to proverbs 16, and we will read verse 32. That's Proverbs 16, and verse 32.

³²*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit*

One who has self-control

than he who takes a city.

And even in James, James 1:19 from the New Testament.

¹⁹*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear (God's word), slow to speak, slow to wrath;*

Drop down to verse 20, the next verse, it says:

²⁰*for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

If you don't have self-control in how you behave towards others, or towards situations, you can't have the righteousness of God. And that's one of the fruits of the spirit that I talked about last time.

Another reason; a second reason that we need self-control is that God is continually testing us to see if He can give us eternal life. Every moment in our lives we are being tested. You know, even in the little bitty things God is testing us and is watching us.

And you know, as He said, He won't allow us to be tested more than we are able. Boy, I'm thankful for that. You know, there is no way we could even think of passing these tests if we didn't have a lot of self-control. So, let's look at a couple of scriptures in Psalms and see how God is testing us. Psalm 66:10 David says:

¹⁰*For You, O Yehovah, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.*

And then in Psalm 105:19, and this is speaking of Joseph. It says:

¹⁹*Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of Yehovah tested him.*

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Think about this, Joseph was sold into slavery, he faithfully served his master, rejected Potiphar's wife's advances and was thrown in prison for doing what was right, after she accused him. There he interpreted the dreams and was forgotten. Boy, that would be just crushing to any of us if we were in that same situation. So, he had to have had a lot of self-control until God lifted him out of that situation. God tested him, and He knew that if he put him in this higher position, he could manage it and do okay with it.

So, Isaiah 48:10, speaking of Israel, that's Isaiah 48:10

¹⁰Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Jump over to I Peter 1, verses 6 and 7.

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, (or tests) ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, ...

Why all this testing, why does God do that? We get the reason by looking at a little bit of Abraham's life. If you go back to Genesis 22, and that's the story of where God asks Abraham to take his only son up to this far mountain and offer him to God.

You know, this was after Abraham waited years and years, and finally God gave him a son through Sarah. And here He says in verse 2, we'll start. Genesis 22, the end of verse 1, it says:

"Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."² Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering

One interesting thing here, of course Abraham didn't know it at the time, but He said to offer him, He didn't say to sacrifice him, but to just offer him. But in Abraham's mind that meant get out the knife and slay him as a burnt offering. It says:

offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

You know, look what he did. Verse 3 it says:

³So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which Yehovah had told him.

Now, think of the self-control he would have had to have to follow those instructions. Man, I just can't imagine that. it says:

⁴Then on the third day

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He had to think about this for two days while he was traveling, and yet the place, like looking at those mountains behind me, he

saw the place afar off.

I don't know how long it then took him to get to that mountain, but, you know, I mean, this has got to be going through his mind, I mean he had days to think about this. Let's go down to verse 6, it says:

⁶So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Oh my; that must have just crushed Abraham on the inside when said, God will provide and offering. And then they came to the place where Yehovah wanted him to build and altar. That took some time to build an altar, and he bound his son and laid him on the altar. I'm thinking that Isaac was not a child at this time, that he was probably older, a teen or older than that.

He laid him on the altar and Isaac willingly let his father bind him, he was willing to go through with it too. But now in verse 12 we see the real reason. This was after Abraham lifted the knife and may have been on the down stroke. It says:

¹²And He (the angel) said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now, I know that you fear Yehovah, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

The Me there is God the Father. The bottom line, we are tested in order that God knows that we fear and obey Him. But coming back, I guess Hebrews 10, verses 36 and 37 helps us out here. It says:

³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ³⁷"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry."

It says that God will not test us beyond what we are able. I can't imagine, you know, I have trouble when somebody cuts me off in traffic, so I am glad God tells us that He will not test us beyond what we are able, and He knows at what point we are able. What we are tested with is so insignificant, I just can't imagine what Abraham had to go through. But that's why Abraham is who he is.

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So, let's look at some other examples of self-control in action. And the first one of course is the Father's example, the self-control He has. Psalm 103, verse 8.

⁸*Yehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

Now, just think, if God reacted like maybe I would, that just wouldn't be good, I don't know what would have happened if I were in His place and Israel did the things that they did.

Job 34:14 And it says, that's Job 34:14, it says:

¹⁴*If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, ¹⁵all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.*

You know, we see God's self-control there, He had tremendous self-control, especially when Moses came down the mountain.

Let's look at Christ's self-control. I mean, He had to face Satan. Again, there is no way I could be in that situation. Matthew 4, and we'll skim through verses 1 – 10, where it talks about His encounter with Satan.

¹*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*
²*And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights.*

Again, I don't know how that happened, but it happened, physically that could not take place. In order for that to be true, He had to have had spiritual help. It says at the end of verse 2 it says:

afterward He was hungry

Ah, you think.

³*Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of Yehovah, command that these stones become bread."*

If? But note what Christ said. He said:

⁴*... "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of Yehovah.'"*

Christ quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, you can only imagine what I would have said in that same situation. "What do you mean, if?" You know, but He didn't. He just quoted God's word back to him. It says:

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⁵*Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,
⁶and said to Him,*

Again.

“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.

Jump off from here.

For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

You know, Satan knew the scriptures, he used the scriptures, but he twisted them so he could use them against Christ.

⁷*Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not test the LORD your God.’”*

Again, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16

⁸*Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory ⁹And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”*

And Christ didn't argue that he had the ability to give him all these things, but note what He did say, using extreme self-control.

¹⁰*Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You*

In other words, Satan.

shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

In other words, Deuteronomy 10:20 to remind Satan that Yehovah was also Satan's God.

Of course, then he (Satan) went away and the angels came and ministered to Him.

In Matthew 26, we will skip through that, and that's right before He was killed. It says in verse 36. Let's go back and check, yea, verse 36, it says:

³⁶*Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.”³⁷And He took with Him Peter and (James and John) the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁹He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying,*

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“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Now verse 40.

⁴⁰Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?”

You know, he just asked that question.

⁴¹Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

You know, again I can't imagine if I had been in that situation and came back and found them all asleep, and here I knew I was going to have to go through what Christ had gone through. I just can't imagine the self-control He had in seeing His disciples sleeping.

So, again, verse 42.

⁴²Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”⁴³And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

It doesn't say that he awoke them this time, He just went back and the third time he prayed. Verse 51 – 53. This was after He woke them and they went back out and they are starting to leave and here comes Judas and the mob of men.

⁵¹And 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.

I don't think he was aiming at the ear, but that's what he got.

⁵²But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Or do you think that I cannot now pray (or appeal) to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?”

Now, I don't know, what is a legion, a thousand? That would be twelve-thousand angels that could come at His call. But He didn't, He knew that He to drink this cup and take up what God had assigned to Him and do it.

So, later that night, verses 62 – 64.

⁶²And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men (these false witnesses) testify against You?”⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And

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the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

You know, that had to take tremendous self-control.

Well, let me give you a couple examples of self-control that I witnessed in my own father. I’m amazed at how my dad was able to maintain his self-control in a couple of these situations.

I was about thirteen years old and could drive a farm tractor as well as most adults at that time. One day my dad and I were hauling a load of straw bales home and I was driving. Most of you may know, but some may not know, straw bales are extremely slippery. So, we are going down the road and I’m driving and I turned to say something to my dad and the tractor drifted towards the ditch. And my dad said, “Watch where you’re going.”

So, I jerked the wheel back and of course the straw bales left the wagon, half of them went into the ditch. I’ll never forget what my father said. He just looked up, and he said, “Well, looks like we got some work to do.” We stopped and got off and had to reload the bales. You know, I can’t image at that time, what would have I said if my son had been driving the tractor. But he never said a word about not paying attention or anything else. All he said was, “Well, looks like we’ve got some work to do.”

Another time my dad told me to disk down some high weeds that had grown up after the flood had receded in the lower fields. And I went down there and I did it. No problem, I got it all done, but he told me not to go across and try to do the lower field because, I don’t know if any of you are familiar with river bottom mud or soil. It’s very fine and the sun will come out and it will dry on top, but you may have that much that is grease underneath. I didn’t realize that. That’s why dad told me not to try to cross over the culvert of the drainage ditch.

Anyway, I thought, I can get that, it doesn’t look bad, I can get across there. I approached this culvert and it was fairly narrow. All of a sudden, the whole tractor slipped sideways and right into about a six-inch (diameter) tree. The tree kept me from going into the ditch as it slammed against the side of the tractor. It broke the casting that held the muffler. The muffler fell off and it kept going, before I got it stopped, it kept going and bent the light bracket back too. That was steel, that didn’t break, just bent.

I’m thinking, oh, my dad is going to kill me. Here I’ve damaged the tractor, you know, I broke the tractor. So, I get off the tractor, shut it off, of course no muffler and it’s roaring. So, I get off and walked about three quarters of a mile back across the river, back to Blakeley, bawling all the way because I was just crushed, he’s going to kill me, You know, I got there and he saw me coming, walking, so he met me at the door of the

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shop, the repair shop that we had. And I told him that I tried to cross the culvert and I wrecked the tractor. He looked at me and he grabbed me and said, “Are you okay?” I said, yea, I’m okay, but I hit the tree and broke the muffler clean off and bent the light bracket. And again, he said, “Ah, it’s probably not as bad as what you think, let’s to look.

So, we got into the truck and we drove down there and he got up on the tractor and with a few maneuvers he had it off the tree and back up on the field road. He looked at it and he said, “I can weld that back into place, it will be as good as new, don’t worry about it.” And then he said as he looked at the light bracket, “We can just heat that up and bend that back into place and everything will be fine.

You know, he knew that I was well chastened for what I had done. You know, he never took occasion to get angry, and of all the things that happened over the years as I was growing up, I still remember those two events as if they happened yesterday. So, everything was going pretty good.

So, what are some of the ways that we can fertilize and grow self-control in our lives, the fruit of that Spirit. Well, God knows our sins, that times we fail to exercise self-control. So, we need to pray about these specific times of failure. In Psalm 69:5; Psalm 69:5 it says:

⁵O Yehovah, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You.

God knows everything that happens, so we need to concentrate on those things. In Proverbs 28:13 it says:

¹³He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

So, we need to ask God for help; we know where we have our weaknesses and loose our self-control. So, we need to concentrate on those things.

And then, avoid temptation by not going to the place where your self-control is weakest. You know, if you have a problem with drinking, don’t go to bars. Or if you have a problem with controlling your desires for sex, don’t go to beaches where, you know. Avoid those places, it may be as simple as that.

But, a lack of control involves anger issues too. Avoid talking to staunch liberals. Yeah, avoid arguments. Seriously, if you are having issues, like I say, drinking; don’t go to bars.

Job said in Job 31:1

¹ “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?”

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You know, like I said, don't go to beaches where they're mostly naked.

I Corinthians 10 and verse 13, it says:

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful (or trustworthy), who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Okay; very often the way of escape is to not go where you are tempted. You know, avoid arguments, remain calm. We all know where our weaknesses are and how to avoid them. James 1:12.

¹² Blessed is the man who endures temptation; (or trials) for when he has been approved,

Exercises self-control, and passes the trial.

he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him.

A third thing is that we can also pick one area in which to develop our self-control. Start small and don't get discouraged. Pick out one specific area where you are having trouble exercising self-control; then concentrate on that.

Then, every time you come into that area, ask, how can I build my self-control? Keep my mouth shut. You can look up scriptures about that particular weakness and keep them in mind. Do a little at a time until it becomes a habit to do that.

Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 15:1

¹ A soft answer (or gesture) turns away wrath, but a harsh word (or gesture) stirs up anger.

I personally, like I said before, mentioned that driving is one of the ways that God tests me and my self-control. Grrrr, when someone cuts you off. Okay, that's when Proverbs 15:1 comes in there. A soft answer or gesture, you know, don't do those things.

Proverbs 15:18, it says:

¹⁸ A wrathful man

Someone that maybe shakes his fist at another driver.

stirs up strife,

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Or in other words, you could get into a fight over it, and it has happened a lot. Road rage is something that is very common now.

but he who is slow to anger allays (or puts to rest) contention.

In other words, avoids an altercation.

Well, let's look at one more scripture that we can apply directly to driving. Proverbs 19:11, it says:

¹¹The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression.

You know, just say, yeah, okay. It's like the other driver cutting you off and passing in a no-passing zone. Driving is one of the ways we can learn.

Hebrews 4:15 says:

¹⁵For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,

God will help us.

but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

So, we can also review some of the antonyms of self-control, but that's something you can do later on. Well, that's about all I have with this subject of self-self-control. Start on growing this wonderful fruit, it will keep you out of a lot of trouble. As, you grow in the fruit of self-control it will keep you out of a ton of problems.

So, have a wonderful remainder of the feast, enjoy tomorrow. I can't believe this is the last day. So with that we will end the service.