

**The Fruit of the Spirit**  
**The Fruit of the Spirit Is Self-Control**

Lesson #10 for March 6, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 39:7-20; Judges 13-16; Matthew 5:6; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:1-10; Hebrews 12:1,2; 1 John 2:15,16.

1. In this lesson we will discuss self-control—the final portion of the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22,23. Self-control has been described as the glue that holds all of the other pieces of the fruit together. Why do you think that is? Does one need self-control to have love, joy, peace . . . ?
2. Many preachers and television evangelists continually extol the idea that we should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Why does Galatians 5 suggests that the fruit of the Spirit is self-control? Shouldn't we be striving for "Spirit-control"? Shouldn't we be praying for Spirit-control?
3. The Greek word *enkrateia* translated "self-control" consists of two parts. *En-* which means "inside" or "within" and *-krateia*—from which we get the word *Demo-crat*—"rule by the people." It means "to rule" or "to control." *Enkrateia* means "internal rule," "internal control," or "self-control."
4. To many people, self-control has a negative connotation. Why is that? Do you think of your mother or father saying, "Control yourself"? Or "Behave yourself"?
5. Who or what is in control of the life of the average person living in our world today? The Bible suggests that we are controlled either by the Holy Spirit or by the Devil. Does that fit with our idea of the great controversy? Social scientists suggest we are controlled either by our intellectual choices or by our feelings or emotions. How are these different aspects related? Do Christians really have the option of self-control? Other words for self-control include "self-discipline," "strength of mind," even "willpower." Self-control includes not only avoiding doing wrong things but doing that which is right.
6. Read Philippians 2:12,13. How do we explain this apparent paradox? Does God do part of the work, and then we do part of the work? How does God "work in us"? How do we "work out our own salvation"? Is our part to "work" or just to "surrender"? Or is surrender our part of the work? If we surrender can we still exercise self-control?
7. Read Genesis 1 and John 3:16. God made the world, and He made us; He described that world as "very good." He told us that He loves the world; but we are not supposed to love the world or anything in the world! (1 John 2:15,16) These verses describe three pitfalls of which we must be very wary: 1) "The lust of the flesh"—describing all strong desire for indulgence contrary to the will of God or what might even be described as an addiction. 2) The "lust of the eye"—implying desires that arise from sight. In our society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we may think immediately of such things as pornography and movies, etc. But the "lust of the eyes" also includes wanting to appear right, "seeming to do what is good," even legalism—pride because of our behavior. 3) "Pride of life" refers to materialistic satisfaction because of our worldly goods or wealth. It is a state of mind substituting materialistic things for spiritual things.
8. Self-control is something that begins in the mind. How do we control our thoughts? Have you ever tried to force yourself not to think of something? And immediately, you realize that you have just thought of it! The biblical solution for this problem is to fill your mind with what is good, true, noble, right, sure, lovely, and honorable. (Philippians 4:8) If our minds are constantly focused on Christ and our relationship to God and those things which fulfill the above criteria, we will hardly have time to think of things we should not be thinking of. Does

the Holy Spirit plant this “fruit” in our lives and we allow it to grow? Does He fertilize it?

9. But this is starting to sound like a “works” kind of religion. Do we believe that the Holy Spirit gives us these things? Where is the line between or the relationship between the gifts the Holy Spirit wants to give us and the struggles we go through to try to do what is right? Paul certainly understood the struggles that he described in Romans 7:14-8:1. Is this describing Paul’s experience before becoming a Christian, while becoming a Christian, or after becoming a Christian? If “sin” was in control of Paul’s life, was that self-control?
10. Some have described the challenge as “learning how to walk with the Spirit.” What does that mean? How do we do that? With so many other things striving for our attention here in this world, how do we lift our eyes to the things of heaven? Is the struggle both a vertical struggle regarding our relationship with God and a horizontal struggle impacting our relationship with other human beings?
11. We know that actions follow thoughts, but it is also true that thoughts follow actions. Our behavior is almost completely determined by what we have stored in our mind’s bank. **So, how much time each week do we spend storing the right kinds of things in our minds—Bible study, prayer, witnessing?** How much time each week do we spend storing junk in our minds?
12. Many of the things which are harmful to us are emotional in nature. Is that because the Devil finds it easier to attack us on emotional grounds rather than on intellectual grounds? If we think through the issues clearly, will he always lose?
13. Try to imagine the picture of a person who is perfectly self-controlled. Does a picture come up of a person who is legalistic and fanatical? When you think of a person who is perfectly self-controlled, does it give you spiritual discouragement, even depression?
14. The *Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* states on page 115: “Self-control is developed by allowing Scripture to inform our thinking.” What does that mean? How would that be implemented in actual living experience? In every situation do we think of Bible guidance? Did all of the disciples and even Paul have great self-control?
15. Two stories in Scripture show what were the results of contrasting approaches to self-control. The story of Joseph (Genesis 37,39-41) is the story of a young man who experienced tremendous disadvantages in his early life but ended up as a prime minister because he exercised self-control and did what was right. Joseph’s self-control probably saved his life. If Potiphar had really believed his wife’s story, most likely, Joseph would have been killed immediately! Review Joseph’s dealing with his brothers. By contrast, the story of Samson (Judges 13-16) illustrates how a young man given many advantages in his early years—including miraculous strength—made a mess of his choices, failed to exercise self-control, and ended up working as a blind slave! Should God have given Samson some period of tough times to build character before putting him in control? What about Daniel and his three companions? Is God handicapped because He has to use us? How many times since Eden has God had to start over? What events in Joseph’s life prepared him to be prime minister? His parents’ instructions at home? Working for Potiphar? Prison? Didn’t Jacob intend for Joseph to be the head of his household?
16. Read Genesis 39:7-20. On this occasion, Joseph did what was right, and he was rewarded by being sent to prison. Once again, Joseph worked hard even in prison—standing up for principle and finally, interpreting dreams for two prisoners. Requesting help from them, he apparently got none for two full years. And then, suddenly, he was lifted from being a prisoner to being prime minister. It is important to notice in this story that doing what is right does not always have immediate rewards.

17. Read Galatians 6:7,8. What does it mean when it says that no one can make a fool out of God? Don't we recognize that we will reap just what we have sown? But look at your own life and the lives of those around you. Virtually everyone hopes that he can somehow enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season" and still reap eternal life. Aren't we suggesting by that kind of behavior that God is lying to us? Or, do we really believe that we will reap just what we have sown? Paul went on to spell it out: Our natural desires will lead us to actions and thoughts that will eventually lead to death. It is only through a correct relationship with the Holy Spirit that we can enter into eternal life. We should not deceive ourselves into thinking otherwise. Almost everybody walking the streets of America believes that he will go to heaven! But we are Christians! Does Romans 2 apply to us?
18. Do people who exercise self-control prove of greater use to those around them than those who do not have self-control?
19. Why do you think so many attractions around us are appealing to self-indulgence rather than self-control? How many advertisements have you seen encouraging self-control? Are those ads direct attacks by Satan upon our relationship with God? It is almost impossible to avoid seeing and hearing such attractions almost continuously in our media-saturated world. How are we supposed to deal with those challenges?
20. Samson in his peril had the same source of strength as had Joseph. He could choose the right or the wrong as he pleased. But instead of taking hold of the strength of God, he permitted the wild passions of his nature to have full sway. The reasoning powers were perverted, the morals corrupted. God had called Samson to a position of great responsibility, honor, and usefulness; but he must first learn to govern by first learning to obey the laws of God. Joseph was a free moral agent. Good and evil were before him. He could choose the path of purity, holiness, and honor, or the path of immorality and degradation. He chose the right way, and God approved. Samson, under similar temptations, which he had brought upon himself, gave loose rein to passion. The path which he entered upon he found to end in shame, disaster, and death. What a contrast to the history of Joseph! (*ST Oct. 13, 1881*)!—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1007.1.
21. Read Judges 13:24,25; 14:19; 15:14,15. What do these verses imply about the relationship between the indwelling Spirit and Sampson's behavior? If Samson did that much damage with a jawbone, think what he could have done with a little backbone! Was the Holy Spirit responsible for Samson killing thousands of Philistines? Who gave him strength to pull down that temple at the end of his life? (Judges 16:28-30) Did he recognize the source?
22. In the plan of salvation, do you understand clearly what Christ's role is? What the Holy Spirit's role is? What you are expected to do? Do you see the great controversy played out in your life on a day-by-day basis?
23. In Paul's day the Stoics were known for their "self-control." A good Stoic was supposed to be able to endure almost any amount of pain without exhibiting any facial or emotional evidence that it was taking place. They believed that represented their cold, impassive "god."
24. The word *kosmos*—"world"—is used in both a good and a bad sense in Greek. It is basically a neutral word. It means "order." Thus, we get the word "cosmetology" to refer to those who study ways of making us look better—that is, more orderly. Cosmetics are supposed to bring "order" to our appearance. But *kosmos* can also refer to the evil, destructive practices, values, and priorities of our sin-burdened world.
25. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. When Paul was young, no doubt, he was exposed to various

forms of racing. The Greeks especially, but also the Romans, were enthralled with contests of various kinds. No doubt, Paul was thinking back to some of those contests when he described himself as running a race not for a perishable prize from this world but for an imperishable crown of victory that will last forever. He recognized that if we want to inherit such a crown, we must discipline ourselves and our bodies into subjection because we certainly would not want to fail to reach that most important goal.

26. When Paul described his struggle against self, was he thinking of some of his former traits while still a Pharisee? Paul was determined not even to think about failing in such a struggle. Did the Pharisees think they had self-control? Of course!
27. Read John 15:19. Does it give us courage in our battle against the sinful practices of this world to know that God has chosen us out of this world? How can we stop paying attention to our sinful natures? **It is impossible to stamp out sin. It is only possible to crowd it out by filling our minds and our thoughts with what is true, holy, and good.**
28. Read the list of names in Hebrews 11. Are those the cloud of witnesses described in Hebrews 12:1? Considering the life stories of all of these “heroes” of Scripture, we note with interest that it includes the name of Samson (Hebrews 11:32) as well as Joseph! (Hebrews 11:22) How did Samson get in that list? And what about Jephthah and Rahab?
29. What did Paul have in mind when he talked about this cloud of witnesses? Was he thinking that those heroes of faith were floating around like spirits watching our every action? The only one in that list that we think is in heaven is Moses! If all those people were literally watching you and you knew who they were, how would it impact your actions? Isn't God watching? Aren't your guardian angel and all the other beings in the universe watching? Just because we do not know their names, is it easier to forget that they are watching? What factors are preventing us from running successfully the race of self-control?
30. Read Colossians 3:1-10. Do we know how to set our hearts and minds on heaven—putting to death earthly desires and getting rid of anger, passion, and hateful feelings? Certainly, each of us must realize that these things are not easy! They must be practiced every day. As Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:12, we need to “fight the good fight of faith.” (compare Philippians 3:12)
31. Perhaps the key question we must ask ourselves is this: How much time each week do we spend in idle entertainment versus how much time do we spend considering, contemplating, and trying to put into action the words and thoughts of the Holy Spirit?
32. God recognizes that we will not develop perfect characters overnight. In Proverbs 24:16, He tells us that when we fail, we must get up and try again. He assures us that He will be with us to assist in any way that we will allow Him to. He can gain the victory for us.
33. Do those of us who espouse the “larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing” model of the plan of salvation understand these processes better than others? While we talk about knowing God, do we really know Him? How much does that impact our daily behavior? If we spend enough time in contemplation of the life of Christ, (DA 83.4) would it help?

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