

and God's Word. Is not the biggest problem with all too many Christians even that we fail all too often still to be as rigorous in seeking and serving the Lord as we are in pleasing ourselves and pursuing worldly gain? May this message call and encourage you in the way you should go, having also this fruit of the Spirit, self control.

Yes, for think yet what a rewarding fruit this is. Having self control, our lives become more meaningful and purposeful, functional and more useful, especially also in God's service and church and kingdom. It promotes our Christian witness and testimony; it increases work done in the service of the Lord; and it leads to us being more Christ-like in all we think, say, and do. Having this fruit of the Spirit is so rewarding physically and mentally, emotionally and spiritually, financially and materially, socially and eternally. Perhaps what is needed in your life and mine is this practical matter of a good dosage of the fruit of the Spirit, self control.

The fruit of the Spirit, self control, In whatever areas that come to your mind, where you can use that even as I mention it, why not make it a real matter of care and prayer and resolve following this message, looking to the Saviour Whose is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever? In Acts 24:25 we read of Paul speaking with ungodly, worldly Felix, "*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, [self control] and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*" You won't respond in that wicked and unbelieving most foolish way, will you?

Seven points irresistibly true about the fruit of the Spirit, self control, for your and my encouragement. It is a fruit God's people know on the basis of God's Word, that is relevant, right, required, rich, resisted, rigorous, and rewarding. In view of this will you not this fruit of the Spirit heartily pursue, each and all listening now? Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS TEMPERANCE

With this message, we come to the last of the nine graces of the fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-23, namely, the fruit of temperance or self control. Do you have this fruit of the Spirit, temperance or self control? The purpose of this gospel message is to give encouragement.

Is this fruit of the Spirit, self control, not a matter relevant to us all? Who will not agree that the matter of self-control in life is an issue, a battle, a challenge that we all face in one way or another? True religion, you see, is something very practical. The Christian faith affects and impacts our daily walk and life in every way. And when we are Spirit-filled, Christ-focused, and enthused for God and good, then also this fruit of self-control is something we will be pursuing in life. Self-control means to be in control of self, able to restrain the natural cravings and desires we have, and living in moderation in all things. Literally the word means to hold something "in strength" or you might say, 'in check'. It is about restraining ourselves from excess; about self rule; about overcoming the weakness of the flesh.

We can apply the word surely in reference to eating and drinking, and to sexual lusts, but we need to remember, as one commentator stated, "The word is to be taken in its widest significance." Yes, in reference to the whole of our lives. As I talk about the relevance of this fruit, which areas in your life, what struggles in your life come down to this - you need this fruit of the Spirit, self-control.

This fruit is surely something right. Temperance or self control fits exactly with all the other components of the fruit of the Spirit. In fact, can you imagine the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, without also this grace, temperance or self control? This grace of self control added just brings out how complete, well-rounded, and useful is the fruit of the Spirit altogether! It also explains why you find the call to self control more often in the Bible. In I Corinthians 6:12, Paul states how "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient [helpful]; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*" Clearly we learn from this and other Bible passages, and every Christian surely agrees with this, the fruit of self control is something right, in accord with all the gospel message too. Sin, and the way of sin, is about living out of control before God and man, but when saved by Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit, this grace of self-control is part of it.

It is a fruit the Christian knows not only as something relevant and right, but something required. The truth is we can't function without this fruit. The reality is too often, also in the Christian life, we wither and fade, we are weak and not strong in living for God and good, and we have little joy and zeal, exactly because we are lacking in this fruit of self control. It is a required fruit, and the lack of it stifles us and spoils our Christian testimony and witness to others. That it is a required fruit especially in living for God and good in Christian faith and service comes out very strongly in I Corinthians 9:24ff. Paul there compares the Christian life to that of an athlete competing in the Olympic Games. We all know you can't eat tons of so called junk food and not do exercises and yet be a good athlete in great shape for the games! No, as Paul says, "*every man that strives for the mastery is temperate, [showing self control] in all things*". And Paul says how much more shouldn't confessing Christians be self-controlled, living in self-restraint from excess in anything, and living holding yourself in check, that you might live all out for God and His service to His praise, and for the wellbeing of others, and for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The true Christian knows the fruit of self control is something required in his or her life, in living as God calls us to. Do you remember the children's toy, the big vinyl doll with a heavy round weight of sand in the bottom? You could knock it, and it would bounce right back up again? No matter how hard or often you would hit it down, it would bounce right back up again? Well, that bounce and bouncing back in the Christian life is lost when there isn't this fruit of self control. Think of the last time you failed to exercise self control in whatever way. Who will not admit, both excess and lack of restraint in any way can leave us feeling sluggish and unenthused? Lack of self control bites, you can say, whereas the fruit of the Spirit, self control, energizes a person. Do you know this is true too, from God's Word and your own experience as well?

But, let me go on to our fourth point about this fruit, one that also speaks so much comfort in connection with this fruit, and that is, what a rich fruit we have here. For again, remember, we are talking about the fruit of the Spirit! The Christian life is not a matter of 50% God's forgiving grace and then 50% our holy living, but it is all 100% a matter of grace! Our regeneration, justification, and sanctification are of God and through God and to God, including now this matter of self control! It is fruit of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, as He guides and guards God's people through the Word and in view of Christ Jesus, time and time again. We must exercise this fruit of self control, but it is not by human might, nor by our will power, but by the Holy Spirit of God within us and guiding us, and blessing us.

We are invited and encouraged to look to Him and depend on Christ as Saviour for us in every detail of the Christian faith, in becoming Christians

and in living as Christians, and in being living witnesses of the Saviour, strong also in the fruit of self control. Bringing your struggles, sins, and shortcomings also with self control in regards to anything before the Lord, surely help and strength, cleansing and renewal can and will be found with Him. Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:30-31, "*But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*" Some people don't like to hear this humbling truth so much, but the ongoing secret to a Spirit-filled and most useful fruitful Christian life is once, and again and again, needing Jesus, trusting Him, and living in sweet communion with Him and His Word.

But exactly here I want to go to our next point about this fruit, and that is, it is also a fruit that is resisted. By nature, left to ourselves, we resist the fruit of self-control, especially self control for Jesus' sake for spiritual reasons and for the furtherance of His church and kingdom. We will exercise human self control for our own worldly, self-centered goals, but self control as Christian fruit of the Spirit is something resisted by our flesh and by Satan and this world. The devil certainly knows what our weaknesses are, and if he can keep us from anything and everything that will help us be self-controlled, he surely will do that. The world, too, plays on people not restraining themselves! Our whole credit card system and advertising world is focused on no self control and urges our impulsive indulgence in all kinds of ways, never mind if you can't afford it, or if it isn't so good for you, or if it happens to hurt and set aside someone else. This fruit of self control is resisted by the flesh and by Satan, and by this world. Don't you experience and feel the resistance time and again too? But that brings us exactly to the heart of true Christianity, always needing the Lord Jesus for our salvation and sanctification, in and with everything, yes, every day and everywhere!

This also leads to our sixth point about the fruit of self control. This fruit of the Spirit is also a matter that is rigorous, that is, something we must rigorously pursue, if we will have this fruit strong and flourishing in our lives. I emphasized before it is a matter of grace, something received, a fruit of the Spirit, but that doesn't mean we are not also involved and called to be responsible about. Going back to I Corinthians 9, Paul shares there how he had to run if he would obtain; and fight if he would gain the prize! If you won't be rigorous in self control, the weeds of sin will soon take over in your life, without a doubt. Jesus speaks in Mark 9:43ff, "*if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off...or if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off...and if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out....*" This is not to be taken literally, but it means we are to take seriously also the matter of self control with sin and evil, and self control for God and good. It is the fruit of the Spirit, but that doesn't mean we can just sit back and wait passively for it. The true Christian knows this is a fruit that involves rigor on our part, led and guided by the Holy Spirit