

## The Fruit of the Spirit

### Part 8 – Self-control

Four pastors went on a fishing trip.

After they'd come ashore, they were sitting around the camp fire, and one of them suggested that they each confess a secret sin.

They all agreed, and the first pastor said, "Sometimes I go to the track, and place a bet on the horses. That's my secret sin."

The second pastor said, "Mine is my uncontrollable temper. I get so mad at my wife, I blow my stack and hit her."

The third pastor said, "Well I've kept this secret for years, but sometimes I can't resist having a few whiskies after a tough meeting with the elders."

There was a long silence as the three preachers looked expectantly at the fourth pastor.

Finally he said, "Well, I guess it's my turn. My sin is gossip. And I can't wait to get home."

#### **Galatians 5:22-23**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

### What is self-control?

#### 1. Take control of your tongue

Einstein was once asked for the formula for success.

He replied, "If A is success, I would say that the formula is  $A = X + Y + Z$ , X being work and Y being play."

They asked, "And what is Z?"

Einstein said, "Keeping your mouth shut."

#### **Proverbs 10:19**

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Which means: if you talk a lot, you will sin.

#### **Proverbs 13:3**

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

In other words, being careful in what you say will protect your life.

And think of this: that's not just your physical life.

#### **Proverbs 18:21**

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

According to that, our words will influence the course of our lives, to the point of life or death.

#### **Proverbs 29:20**

Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who understands what it means to have something slip out and then immediately regret it.

When I was a teenager, I bought a typewriter and a book on how to type.

It was a big step up from my handwriting.

If you've ever seen my handwriting, you'll know what I mean.

If you're young, you will never understand what it means to make a mistake on a typewriter.

You roll the paper up, white out the mistake, then you have to try and line up the paper to the exact position it was in before, then retype.

It always looks tacky.

Then along comes the computer:

With an Undo function.

Just click CNTRL Z and your stupid mistake disappears.

Don't you wish that your tongue came with an Undo function?

You're in a discussion and you're thinking, "You're an idiot."

Their face drops, their smile disappears.

And you're thinking, "Did I just say that out loud?"

You quickly say, "Hold on." CNTRL Z.

Their face brightens, the smile comes back.

Wouldn't that be handy?

### **James 3:8**

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

So what's the secret of governing the tongue?

Jesus gave us a clue.

### **Matthew 12:34**

...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

## **2. Take control of your passions**

Oxford Dictionary definition of passion: strong and barely controllable emotion.

Here are two passions that wreak havoc in people's lives.

### 1. Lust

Probably for most people, they think of lust as being something sexual.

But that's not necessarily the case.

### **Galatians 5:16**

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

The Greek word for lust means "to set the heart upon; long for; covet; desire."

It's the opposite of contentment.

It's the constant desire for what you don't have

And let me tell you this.

Lust will rob you of the pleasures of life

Because when lust is present, whatever you've got will never be enough.

Let's use sex as an example.

A movie star is married to a beautiful woman.

And he goes out and has an affair.

And you think: What just happened there?

His wife is absolutely gorgeous, and still he commits adultery.

Because when lust is present, what you've got is never enough.

The second passion we need to master is anger.

What a challenge anger can be.

And anger seems so logical when you're angry.

And then when you cool down, you think, "I can't believe I said that. I can't believe that I did that."

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on anger.

Except to say that our challenge is to control it by the Holy Spirit.

### **3. Take control of your lifestyle**

Here are four areas in taking control of your lifestyle.

#### **1. Control your time**

Time is a great leveller.

Some of us are smarter than others, better looking than others, richer than others, more famous than others, stronger than others or more talented than others.

But we all have the same allotment of time: 24 hours each day.

And we are accountable for what we do with it.

So get it under control.

Have a balanced work ethic.

Be a punctual person.

And most of all, give God the best of your time.

Don't give Him the leftovers.

#### **2. Control your finances.**

Investment guru Noel Whitaker said, "Most people don't have a money problem; they've got a spending problem."

Imagine you're walking through a shopping centre, minding your own business.

You see the most amazing outfit in the shop window.

And a conversation starts inside your head:

"I've got to pay the electricity bill." "But that outfit looks pretty amazing." "Nah, the electricity is more important." "I'll just take a little look."

So you go inside, and you hear a voice, "May I help you with anything?"

Question: What is the job of the person who asked you that?

Is it to help you?

No, that's why they don't follow you home and mow your lawn.

Their job is to sell you something.

"It's okay," you say, looking around at the salesperson. "I was just looking at the outfit in the window."

That's right, you were just looking.

But that's how Eve lost it too. She was just looking.

"You'd look great in that!" says the shop assistant.

And before you know it, you're trying it on.

Five minutes later, you're walking out the door with it.

I'm not saying you shouldn't spend money on yourself.

But if you can't afford it, don't put yourself in a place of temptation.

### 3. Control your phone

Here are symptoms of phone addiction:

Anxiety when without your phone; a constant need to check phone messages; increased anxiety as the phone battery runs low; a feeling of kinship for people with the same brand of phone.

Get it under control.

### 4. Control your health / fitness

Get your diet and exercise on track.

## 4. Take control of your spiritual growth

Here are three ways self-control applies to your spiritual growth.

### 1. Self-control means self-leading

Let me tell you about what I call Leaky Balloon Syndrome.

Imagine you throw a party and invite all your friends.

To set the mood, you organise the music, provide plenty of finger foods, and you decorate with a lot of balloons.

But only a couple of days after the party is over, your balloons are looking very, very sad.

What happened? Leaky Balloon Syndrome happened.

I'm going to tell you something that probably every pastor knows.

If you teach on reading the Bible, there will be some who say, "From now on, I'm going to read my Bible every day."

And they do; for a couple of weeks.

Then they gradually go back to what they were before.

That's Leaky Balloon Syndrome.

This happens with teaching on prayer too.

And giving, and lots of other topics.

This is why we teach regularly on the same things.

But a self-controlled person is self-leading.

They don't need to be constantly pumped up by someone else.

They take responsibility for themselves, their choices, and their ongoing spiritual growth and development.

That's self-leading.

### 2. Self-control means self-feeding

My wife is a great cook, but if she's away, I can still feed myself.

But babies can't feed themselves.

Food can be sitting right next to them and they'll starve.

Having self-control means to be a self-feeding Christian.

Self-feeding Christians build into their lives the things that are necessary for spiritual nourishment.

3. Self-control means self-replicating

I'm not going to say a lot about this one, except to say that mature adults are capable of reproduction.

God wants us to reproduce our faith in others.

The self-controlled person doesn't shrink away from this.

They continue to look for opportunities even when it's inconvenient.

Let's recap.

Four things that self-controlled people do.

1. Take control of their tongue.
2. Take control of their passions.
3. Take control of their lifestyle.
4. Take control of their spiritual growth.

All of this comes from the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray.