

We come this evening to the ninth and final fruit of the Spirit—I want to consider it under three headings—explained, expanded, and promoted...

I. Explained

1. The Greek word rendered "self-control"—brings with it the idea of "self-mastery" and even "inner-strength..."
2. It refers to the ability to govern ones own desires—the KJV renders it "temperance" which means "restraint or self-control..."
3. Closely related to self-control (if not synonymous) is self-denial—denying or controlling sinful desires...
4. Thus, fundamentally, self-control refers to the ability to govern or control our inner passions and desires...
5. Jerry Bridges—"Self-control is control *of* one's self. It is probably best defined as *the governing of one's desires...*"
6. Prov.25:28—"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls..."
7. In ancient days, a city was protected by its walls, a city without walls, was wide open to its enemies...
8. Thus conversely, self-control is having "rule over one's own spirit"—it's a city surrounded by walls...
9. [1] Self-control presupposes remaining sin—that is, the remaining principle of evil called original sin...
10. That is to say—there is a "self" or a "principle" within us, that needs to be "controlled" or "denied"...
11. Gal.5:24—"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"—this is past tense...
12. Every Christian, every person who belongs to Christ, HAS crucified the flesh with it's evil lusts and desires...
13. Yet, we also know from Scripture, that though the flesh no longer reigns, it very powerfully remains...
14. This is what's called original sin, remaining sin, and indwelling sin—it's the remaining principle of sin...
15. And it is this principle, death brethren, that desperate needs to be controlled—it needs to be denied...
16. Jas.1:14—"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (Jas.4:1)..."
17. 1Pet.2:11—"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul..."
18. Jerry Bridges—"External temptations would not be nearly so dangerous were it not for the fact that they find this ally of desire right within our own breast..."
19. [2] Self-control is essential to Christianity—a person that lacks self-control lacks the fruit of the Spirit...
20. Every Christian has the Spirit, thus every Christian has this fruit—it's fruit true of every Christian...
21. Conversely, a non-Christian is without self-control—they lack the inner strength to control themselves...
22. Now—again, as I have said all along these series of messages, there is a generic imitation fruit true of non-Christians...

23. Though non-Christians have no saving grace, they have common grace, that looks similar to fruit...
24. But—true self-control, the work of Christ's Spirit in our hearts, is a reality true only of true Christians...
25. Acts 24:25—"Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, God away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you..."
26. Paul summarizes the who message of Scripture in three words—righteousness, self-control, and judgment...
27. Righteousness has to do with being right with God—it largely has to do with our justification before God...
28. Self-control is here put for the whole of the Christian life—it assumes everything to do with sanctification...
29. Judgment to come—concerns the future and final judgment, and the eternal states of heaven and hell...
30. 2Tim.3:1-5—"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away..."

II. Expanded

1. Here I want to expand upon this subject, by suggesting three areas, where self-control is necessary...
2. [1] Sexual restraint—I wouldn't mention this, but for the fact, it is at the very heart of self-control...
3. GK Dictionary—"Self –control – the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, esp, his sensual appetites..."
4. 1Cor.7:8-9—"I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion..."
5. Larger Catechism—"What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment? A. Adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections...undue delay of marriage..."
6. [2] Bodily restraint—by bodily restraint I refers to those things more directly related to the body—gluttony and laziness...
7. 1Cor.9:25-27—"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*. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified..."
8. Here the apostle compares the Christian life with the athletic games, a marathon runner and fighter...
9. Athletes exercise self-control "in all things"—they watch what they eat and sacrifice many things...
10. So too, Paul applies the imagery to the Christian life, v27—"But I discipline my body and bring it into subject..."
11. Now—I think we must be carefully in interpreting this phrase, not to overly literalize what he means...
12. But—I suggest that he does include his actual body, and its appetites, such as eating and sleeping...

13. Literally, the apostle says—"I beat my body, brining it into subjection"—I control its natural appetites...
14. Tit.1:7-8—"For a bishop must be...hospitable, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled...v12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always lairs, evil beasts, lazy gluttons..."
15. Paul left Titus in Crete (v5), that he would assist in ordaining elders in every church, he then gives qualifications for elders...
16. Among other things, he must be "self-controlled" (v8), which is contrast to Cretans, who are lazy gluttons...
17. That is—within the Cretans (which is a general truth), the sins of laziness and gluttony were rampant (they lacked self-control)...
18. [3] Emotional restraint—that is, the control or restraint of such emotions as fear, sorrow, and anger...
19. Tit.1:7-8—"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, nor self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled..."
20. Here "self-control" is the opposite of several sins—many of which are the result of lacking self-control...
21. Self-willed, quick-tempered, given to wine, violent, greedy for money—these betray the lack of self-control...
22. Prov.16:32—"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city..."
23. Gen.43:31—"Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, Serve the bread..."
24. Thus—let me suggest this simply application—though difficult, emotions can and should be controlled...
25. For example, when our girls were younger, at times they would start crying at the same time (for good reason)...
26. And, at times, I would say to them, unless you stop crying, you will be disciplined, and they would stop crying...
27. In other words—they were able to control their emotions—even as non-Christians they had self-control...

III. Promoted

1. Here I want to provide three simple and yet essential helps to promote or cultivate the fruit of self-control...
2. 2Pet.1:5-7—"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love..."
3. Here Peter provides various character trials that Christians must be "give all diligence" to increase...
4. Thus—consider four words that are essential to promoting self-control—alertness, starvation, imitation, and apprehension...
5. [1] Alertness—over and again, throughout the NT, we are exhorted to "watchfulness" and "sobriety..."
6. These are basically synonymous concepts—to be watchful is the same as being sober, or being alert...
7. They refer to spiritual and moral alertness—it presupposes the presence of danger and/or strong enemies...
8. 1Thess.5:6-8—"Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the

day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation (2Tim.4:5; 1Pet.1:13; 1Pet.5:8; Rev.3:2)..."

9. The idea is, the recognition of potential danger, that we are surrounded by enemies, and are very weak...
10. I've used this illustration before, but allow me to reuse it—though the heart (capital city) has been taken by grace, sin still dwells in smaller villages...
11. Thus, sin (or evil desires) wage war against the soul, we are in a fierce battle and must remain alert...
12. [2] Starvation—by this I mean, we must starve SELF or the flesh, from all that would feed or fuel it...
13. Rom.13:14—"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts..."
14. [3] Imitation—by this I mean, we must imitate Christ, who perfectly illustrated self-control and self-denial...
15. Lk.9:22-23—"The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then He said to *them* all, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me..."
16. [4] Apprehension—in older English this words means—"to apprehend, to lay hold of, or to grasp (not - to be fearful or hesitant)..."
17. And thus I use the word in this older and broad sense to mean, we must apprehend all that's in Christ...
18. Jn.15:5—"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing..."
19. The only way we can bear any fruit, including self-control, is that we abide in Christ, and He in us...
20. How does He abide in us—by His Spirit—in other words, abiding in Christ and walking in the Spirit are related...
21. Gal.5:16—"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" v25—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit..."
22. To "walk by the Spirit" at least means—we through the Spirit have intimate communion with Christ...
23. Yes, it means we walk by the power of the Spirit, but the Spirit strengthens us with grace from Christ (Eph.1:17-19)...
24. I want to end this series of sermons on the Fruit of the Spirit, by briefly examining the last phrase—"Against such there is no law..."
25. Now—some of you will remember, I explained this phrase in our first sermon, several months ago...
26. I think it simply means—a person characterized by this fruit, is not under the condemnation of the law...
27. "Against such"—that is, against a life characterized by this fruit—"there is no law (that condemns)..."
28. Martin Luther—"The law cannot accuse or condemn those that believe in Christ. Christ, apprehended by faith, vanquishes the law with all its terrors and threatenings...but those who perform the works or lusts of the flesh, the law does accuse and condemn both civilly and spiritually..."
29. It's basically another way of saying, Gal.5:18—"If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law..."
30. An unloving impatient, unkind, unfaithful person, who lacks self-control—remains under the law...