we can begin to say, as Jesus did, that the "prince of this world" (the devil) "has no hold on me" (John 14:30). Note that 1 Peter 5:8-9 says. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith." Self-control is necessary if we are to succeed in spiritual warfare.

When the flesh has power over us, we find ourselves in the position that Paul described in Romans 7:14-25, "What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do", "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out", I am "a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." What Paul describes is the opposite of self-control. As we become able, by the power of the Holy Spirit in us, to live by the Spirit and put to death the things of the flesh, we become self-controlled.

Romans 6:13-14 illustrates true self-control. "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

In a sense, self-control sums up all the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. To develop the fruit of the Spirit is to allow your spirit (in which the Holy Spirit dwells) to be in control of your soul and your body. To the extent that we achieve this we become mature and complete, we become single-minded, we achieve inner peace, and we become fully submitted to God.

A characteristic of all the acts of the sinful nature is a lack of self-control. As we develop self-control and learn the genuine satisfaction and joy of living a Spirit-led life, the power of these sinful impulses will decrease.

When we live by the Spirit, our lives will produce the “fruit of the Spirit.” Notice that Paul mentions love as the first “fruit of the Spirit,” perhaps because all other fruit of the Spirit is influenced by love. In this sense, love is the motivation behind ever good thought and deed of God’s children.

**Love**: the source of all spiritual fruit.

* **Joy** is love rejoicing.
* **Peace** is love trusting.
* **Patience** is love enduring.
* **Kindness** is love serving.
* **Goodness** is love extending.
* **Faithfulness** is love proving.
* **Gentleness** is love touching.
* **Self-control** is love restraining.

22

Jesus wants us to have the "full measure" of his joy (John 17:13). He wants our joy to be "complete" (John 15:11, 16:24). Paul desired that the joy of the Philippians would "overflow" (Philippians 1:26). Peter speaks of "inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8).

We find joy by being in the presence of the Father. "In thy presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11 KJV). "You have made him glad with the joy of your presence" (Psalm 21:6).

"Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). As we pray, we acknowledge our relationship with the Father and come into His presence. Giving thanks is crucial. In any situation we can decide whether to give thanks or to complain. Complaining brings misery, and giving thanks brings joy.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). If we lack joy, there is something lacking in our walk with the Lord, and we will not have the strength he wants us to have. Paul prayed that the Colossians would be "strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father" (Colossians 1:11-12).

Joy is directly related to several other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit: Love (Psalm 31:7), peace (Romans 14:17), faith (Philippians 1:25; see 1 Peter 1:8), and patience (Colossians 1:11-12).

After the disciples had been flogged by the Sanhedrin, they left "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41). When Paul and Barnabas were in Pisidian Antioch, the Jews "stirred up persecution" against them and expelled them from the region; "and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:50-52). "We rejoice in our sufferings" (Romans 5:3).

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2). We do not enjoy the trials, but we recognize that they are part of a process by which God is teaching us and shaping us to become the person he wants us to be, and we take joy in the fact that he cares enough about us to want to shape us. We can indeed rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances because we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

None of the acts of the sinful nature leads to true joy. The more we find the genuine joy of living the Spirit-led life, the less we will seek the false gratifications of the acts of the sinful nature.

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