

Jesus and the Fruit of the Spirit (9)

Ponder: Self-Control

Scripture: “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

President Harry Truman said, “In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves; self-discipline with all of them came first.” I don’t know if President Truman was familiar with the Bible or what he thought about Jesus. Regardless, Jesus exercised flawless self-control, just as He perfectly manifested all the rest of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Self-control is sometimes translated “temperance,” which usually means abstaining from alcoholic beverages. While self-control certainly includes that, it pertains to self-discipline and restraint all aspects of life, not just intoxicating drink. In the first century, this word focused on three areas: food/drink, sex, and speech.

Jesus was falsely accused of being a glutton and drunkard (Matthew 11:19). The same caliber of people also accused the apostles of being intoxicated (Acts 2:13). In fact, however, Jesus consistently and powerfully spoke against drunkenness, as did the Law of Moses, and as does the entire New Testament. Jesus and the apostles practiced what they preached.

Not even His worst enemies accused Jesus of not controlling Himself sexually. Only recently has material been produced portraying Jesus as a womanizer or a swinging homosexual. Virtually nobody takes such trash seriously. Our Lord consistently taught against all forms of fornication, not only the physical acts, but the corrupt hearts motivating the acts (Matthew 5:27, 28). Had he been immoral, His enemies undoubtedly would have pounced.

And Jesus certainly exercised self-control in his speech. Even in situation where others would have lost their tempers and said inappropriate things, Jesus controlled Himself. Think of His restraint when “the chief priests accused Him of many things” (Mark 15:3). The Sanhedrin even sought out false witnesses to lie about Him (Matthew 26:59)! Yet He did not lash out in anger, but fulfilled Isaiah 53:7 by holding his peace.

We who wear Christ’s name must be characterized by self-control (2 Peter 1:6). Nobody said it would be easy! But as we learn of Jesus and His way becomes ours, we will produce the fruit of the Spirit by nature, just as He did.

Song: “Angry Words”