

The Fruits of the Spirit Lesson 10 1Q 2010

The Fruit of the Spirit is Self-Control

SABBATH

What is the difference between “self-control” and “God control”? Those who pray, “God I don’t want to be in control, you take control” will He do it?

When we surrender the will to God what happens? Do we become puppets? Do we have our freedom removed? How is it that surrender results in greater freedom?

Read last paragraph, “Self-control may sound....” Thoughts?

How is it that surrendering self to God increases freedom? If we don’t surrender to God what happens?

- Is a person who is addicted to alcohol or drugs free?
- Is a person who is addicted to porn free?
- Is a person who is addicted to bingeing on food free?
- Is a person who is addicted to getting adoration, praise, attention or opinion of others free?
- If we indulge appetite and violate the laws of health what happens? And when we are sick do we have as much freedom? Do we get more freedom with self-discipline?
- Is a person who is consumed with fear and insecurity free?

How do we find freedom from such problems?

SUNDAY

Self – control – what impairs our ability to experience self-control? What is the greatest obstacle to self-governance?

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is

dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:13-15

The Bible is describing the greatest source of our temptation, that we have a terminal condition, a brain wiring problem that causes us to be tempted from within. At its root all temptations are based on fear and selfishness. The lesson asks us to examine three primary avenues that these temptations are express through.

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 1John 2:16

What is being described? Sensualism, materialism, egotism.

What is sensualism?

- Alcohol, drugs
- Food
- Sex
- Unhealthy relationships

What is materialism?

- Gambling
- Greed
- Pursuit of wealth
- Cheating
- Ponzi schemes
- Always needing more

What is egotism?

- Needing to be first
- Needing to be acknowledged
- Power over
- Despotism

- Dictatorship
- Unwillingness to repent
- Unwillingness to admit wrong
- Unwillingness to change an opinion or respond to evidence
- The need to stand out, dressing overly humble and plain to demonstrate one's chastity and virtue

What happens in the mind when we allow our feelings to overrule our judgment?

- Temptation of premarital sex – feelings are powerful, judgment is saying no – what happens in the person?
- What about when you want to do something are prevented, by parents, circumstances – might feelings of frustrations arise? How might such feelings tempt you to act? And if you do what happens?

What happens in the brain when we allow feelings to overrule our judgment? We condemn ourselves in our own minds and results in:

- Lower self-esteem
- Lower self-worth
- Guilt, feelings of inadequacy
- Fear of rejection
- Activation of the fear centers with increased release of stress hormones, inflammatory factors and over time increased risk of physical and mental illness

If we find ourselves in such circumstances what can we do? What options do we have?

- First – we must admit our helplessness, that we are sick and can't fix ourselves
- Second we must recognize help exists only in God
- Third we must come to know God well enough that we can actually trust Him
- Fourth we must open our hearts and invite Him in

What is the greatest obstacle to our wellness, here and now and for eternity? Self!

God's promise is, "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13. {SC 43.1}

The **whole heart** must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. **By nature we are alienated from God.** The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" "no soundness in it." We are held fast in the snare of Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 2 Timothy 2:26. **God desires to heal us**, to set us free. But since **this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature**, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. {SC 43.2}

The **warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought.** The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness. {SC 43.3}

The government of God **is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control.** It appeals to the **intellect** and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. **God does not force the will of His creatures.** He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. **A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character;** it would make man a mere automaton. Such **is not the purpose of the Creator.** He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. **It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin**, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

Thoughts?

- What does this mean?
- How do you understand God's kingdom?
- Why is it better to surrender to Christ?
- What about surrendering to Christ your future?
- Can God be saying, "Love me, trust me, surrender to me – or else I will inflict torment and suffering upon you and kill you"? Why not?
- Why is it so important to see God as Jesus revealed Him to be? Because only the truth about God destroys the lies and wins us to genuine trust. And it is only in genuine trust that we are willing to surrender self to God and thereby experience transformation!

The lesson asks us to read Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Why is this important? Because by beholding we are changed, but how are we changed?

- Neurologically – the brain changes by what we behold. TV watching in childhood alters the developing brain.
- Genetically, what we watch or behold impacts the beliefs we form and our beliefs result in change in brain function, stress response and ultimately gene expression
- Characterlogicoally we are changed by what we behold.

What we watch, think about, behold activates neural circuits which can either calm or inflame our passions and desires. Our choices, both in what we think and in what we do, change the wiring of our brains. We literally change.

Read last paragraph "He's talking about..." thoughts?

How do we overcome?

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a **supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature.** The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. **We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world.** It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end. {DA 324.1}

Thoughts? What is being described? Why do we not have to choose Satan to be under his power? What is the natural state of our hearts? What do our own desires lead us to?

Do we have a role to play? Do we have the power in our own strength to overcome our own desires? But do we have to make the choice? What is the relationship between our choice and God's power?

In the work of redemption there is **no compulsion. No external force is employed.** Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left **free** to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the **highest sense of freedom.** The expulsion of sin is the **act of the soul itself.** True, **we have no power** to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are **imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit,** and they obey the dictates of **the will** in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

The Holy Spirit convicts, enlightens, draws, but leaves each person free to choose for themselves. When we do make the choice, then the Holy Spirit infuses with divine power to strengthen, cleanse, ennoble and sustain – but we don't get the power until we make the choice!

What about the idea of no longer being condemned? What does it mean to be condemned? In what way are we condemned?

How do we understand condemnation? What or who condemns?

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰ And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!

³³ “You snakes! You brood of vipers! **How will you escape being condemned to hell?** ³⁴ Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵ And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom

you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ Matt 23:29-39

Where does the condemnation arise for these hard hearted people? Do you hear in Jesus voice condemnation or pity, longing to heal and save? Some would have us believe that condemnation arises from the heart of God, but what did Jesus say?

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For **God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world**, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is **not condemned**, but whoever **does not believe stands condemned already** because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. John 3:16-18

What does this mean? Is Jesus suggesting that the Pharisees will not be condemned by Him, yet they will still be condemned or not escape condemnation? What is the source of their condemnation?

²⁴ “I tell you the truth, whoever **hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned**; he has crossed over **from death to life**. ²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸ “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, **and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned**.

Condemned by whom? What or who condemns?

³³ “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the **evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.** ³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by **your words you will be condemned.**” Matthew 12:33-37

What did Jesus say condemns us? What does this mean? But won't Jesus judge and condemn us?

⁴⁷ “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, **I do not judge him.** For **I did not come to judge** the world, but to save it. ⁴⁸ **There is a judge** for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; **that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.** ⁴⁹ For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰ **I know that his command leads to eternal life.** So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” John 12:47-50

What will judge? The truth! What condemns us is our very condition! We are either restored to trust and experience renewal by the Holy Spirit and are recreated in love or we are settled into selfishness and lies.

Have you heard the phrase “condemnation of the law”? What does it mean? What law? What does the law condemn? How does the law condemn?

The law of love is the law of life, if you deviate from it what does the law say will happen? If you deviate from the law of respiration and tie a bag over your head what does the law of respiration say will

happen? Does the law of respiration condemn those who tie plastic bags over their heads? Yes, can the law be changed to meet the person with a bag over his head in that state so they can remain healthy? Can God's law be changed to meet the sinner?

What if a person was suffocating with a plastic bag over their head and they had a loving brother who tied a bag over his head in order to pay the legal penalty of the broken law of respiration which cannot be changed? Would that action result in saving the other? What is the only option for salvation? That the sinner must be changed to be in harmony with the law, the plastic bag must be removed.

Likewise, God sent Christ to remedy sin, to actually destroy all that Satan and sin had done to humanity (Heb 2:14, 1John 3:8, 2Tim 1:10). And having done this Christ becomes the source of salvation for all who obey Him (Heb 5:8).

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; **it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health.** It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

"In assuming human nature, that he might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery and lift man up, Christ has shown what estimate he places upon the human race. In this work everything was at stake. Satan claimed to be the lawful owner of the fallen race; and with what persistent effort did he seek to overthrow Christ through his subtilty! It was only by the most desperate conflict with the powers of Satan that Christ could accomplish **his purpose of restoring the almost obliterated image of God in man, and place his own signature upon his forehead.** It was a desperate battle; for Satan had so long worked in league with human intelligencies as to almost completely intercept every ray of light shining from the throne of God upon the human mind. **The cross of Calvary alone could destroy the works of the devil.** In that

wondrous sacrifice all eyes were called to 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' The love of Christ kindles in the heart of all who continue to behold him. {General Conference Daily Bulletin, March 2, 1897 par. 17}

In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. **Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost.** GC 645

Weakened through sin, we can not of ourselves keep the law of God. **But Christ came to our world to restore the moral image of God in men,** and to bring them back from the path of disobedience to a path of obedience. **His mission to the world was to reveal the character of God by living the law, which is the foundation of his government;** and those who will accept him as their personal Saviour will grow in grace, and in his strength will be enabled to obey the law of God. {ST, February 11, 1897 par. 15}

Thoughts?

MONDAY

Read bottom green section – thoughts? From where do we reap destruction? From the carnal nature, is God the source of destruction or the source of life?

If you believe God is the source of pain suffering and death what attitude toward God will you develop?

There are several lies Lucifer told in heaven that has caused this continued distortion. Here are two, which one of the founders of our church wrote about:

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, **it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned.**

Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761

Many [angels] were disposed to heed this counsel, to repent of their disaffection, and seek to be again received into favor with the Father and His Son. But **Lucifer had another deception ready.** The mighty revolter now declared that the angels who had united with him had gone too far to return; that he was acquainted with the divine law, and **knew that God would not forgive.** He declared that all who should submit to the authority of Heaven would be stripped of their honor, degraded from their position. For himself, he was determined never again to acknowledge the authority of Christ. The only course remaining for him and his followers, he said, was to assert their liberty, and gain by force the rights which had not been willingly accorded them. {PP 40.3}

From the beginning it has been **Satan's plan to lead men to forget God,** that he might secure them to himself. To do this he has **misrepresented the character of God,** and has led men to cherish **false ideas of him.** The **Creator has been presented to their minds as possessing the attributes of the prince of evil himself,--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,**--that he might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men...{SW, April 28, 1908 par. 1}

Christ came to reveal God to the world in his true character, as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to surround the throne of Deity was swept away, and the Father was again manifested to men as the Light of Life. {SW, April 28, 1908 par. 2}

God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love. Though all these evidences have been given, the **enemy of good blinded the minds of**

men, so that they looked upon God with fear; **they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,-- one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor.** He pictured the Creator as a being who is **watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow**, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. {SC 10.3}

What are Satan's lies? That every sin must be punished and that God is unforgiving and severe.

Do you ever hear these very lies of Satan taught today? That God must punish sin and that God cannot forgive without a legal payment of the blood of His Son?

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. **Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.** More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Repeat to them the precious assurance which God Himself has given to them: I am "**The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**" (Ex. 34:6, 7). What a precious declaration is this! What can be too hard for Him, what sin too great for Him to pardon? He is gracious, not working according to our merit, but in His boundless goodness healing our

backslidings, forgiving our iniquities, and loving us freely while we were yet sinners. {19MR 303.3}

God is a forgiving God – Satan lied when He said God would not forgive – but check out this amazing statement:

God, in his great mercy, bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, **nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels.** [this would be sin, bearing false witness] Long was he retained in Heaven. **Again and again he was offered pardon, on condition of repentance and submission.** Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise, were made to convince him of his error... **Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office.** GC 495

Does “pardon” need to be granted if no wrong is done, if no sin occurred? What is the condition upon which pardon and reinstatement would be granted? What about every sin being punished? Don’t some ideas about salvation today say that every sin must be punished?

Let’s imagine that concept in the scenario just read:

Lucifer repents and the penal model was enforced in heaven. Christ, comes in the form of an angel, is taken to center stage by God and the universe is told that Lucifer had sinned, had broken God’s law and has repented, but that every sin must be punished. They are told that Christ loves Lucifer and therefore would accept the punishment for Lucifer’s sin and then they watch as the Father executes His Son to satisfy His wrath against sin and enforce “divine justice.” What do you think would happen? Instantly fear and horror of God spreads throughout the universe. No longer do heavenly beings love and trust God but instead are terrified of Him. Sin is not eliminated but spreads rapidly throughout the universe

and after that God cannot restore harmony to His universe as beings serve Him out of fear rather than love.

Have I over stated it? Have I misunderstood the evidence? Are there ideas, evidences that we are not including which would shed further light on this topic?

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to consider Samson – what led to Samson’s downfall? Did Samson struggle with intense human emotions, desires, lusts? Did he struggle with self-governance? Yet, where do we find Samson in the New Testament? Did this undermine Samson’s usefulness? Did it change the course of Samson’s life? Did Samson suffer terribly here on earth because of his indulgence and lack of self-control? Yet, where do we find Samson in the New Testament? Heb 12, the hall of faith, and what does this tell us?

WEDNESDAY

The long race – what do we learn about Paul’s use of the idea of running the long race?

From the cross to the crown there is earnest work to be done. There is wrestling against inbred sin; there is warfare against outward wrong. But we shall triumph at last, if we do not become weary in well-doing. Heaven's portals will be opened for every one who does his best for God and his fellow-men.
ST, December 17, 1885 par. 14}

THURSDAY

What can we do to strengthen our self-control? Exercise, diet, fasting, homework, chores, all of these activities require the development of self-mastery, the ability to push self beyond what merely feels good in the moment. Also, meditation, prayer.

FRIDAY

Questions 1 and 2 read and discuss