Clementi Methodist Youth Fellowship Series on Fruit of the Spirit Rick Griffith

February 19, 1994 Single Message

NIV 45 Minutes

# Self-Control Instead of Anger

*1 Corinthians 9*

**Subject:** The self-controlled believer controls his anger

**Complement:** by yielding his rights to the Lord.

**Purpose:** The listeners will realize that self-control is hindered by anger which stems from claiming personal rights, and will give these rights over to the Lord.

**Attribute:** We worship our Self-Controlled God

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 9

**Introduction**

1. (Hold up an apple stem.) I am holding up part of a tree here. Actually, it's just a small twig from a certain tree. It's brown, fairly straight, roughly broken on one end and kinda ripped off on the other end. It smells O.K., too. But can you guess what kind of tree this little twig comes from?

That's probably not a very fair question since there are thousands of kinds of trees to choose from, which makes it anybody's guess. What if I give you a little hint?

Attached to this part of the tree was something else that might look a little more familiar--in fact, when I show it to you, you're going to know for sure what kind of tree the twig comes from.

O.K., here's what was attached to the twig (hold up apple). Can you guess what kind of tree the twig came from? Of course, an apple tree.

Why was it so difficult to determine the tree based only upon the stem? Because it looks pretty much like most other stems or twigs.

Why was it so easy to determine the tree based only upon the fruit? Obviously, because the apple looks quite different from all other fruits and therefore is easy to distinguish.

2. Now here's the rub: When other people look at your life, how easy is it for them to be able to tell that you are a Christian?

a. Is it as difficult to determine you're a believer as it is to determine the apple tree only from the stem?

b. Or have you made it easy for others to know you're a follower of Christ by the kind of fruit that results in your life?

3. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

a. How easy it is for others to tell you're a believer in Jesus Christ is directly proportionate to how much fruit is shown in your life!

b. If a tree had only one apple on it, it would be fairly difficult to identify it as an apple tree—unless that apple happened to be on the side of the tree at which you're looking.

c. But if the apple tree had hundreds of apples all over it, none of us would have difficulty determining what kind of tree we were looking at.

d. What applies to apple trees applies to you and me.

1) If someone looks at our life and sees no fruit then they have a tough time determining whether we have trusted Christ.

2) But what if someone sees fruit all over the place in our life? It won't be hard to see that we live under the control of the Spirit since, as Jesus said, we can't bear fruit apart from Him!

2. What I mean by fruit is what we find in Galatians 5:22-23. This passage lists nine "fruit" in the life of the Christian who lives under God's control.

3. The past weeks you have been hearing about these "fruit" which tell what our lives look like when we live under the control of the Holy Spirit.

#1 **Love**: Unconditional, sacrificial commitment towards others

#2 **Joy**: Quiet contentment results from submission to the Spirit

#3 **Peace**: Calm in the storms of life

#4 **Patience**: Long-suffering attitude towards people

#5 **Kindness**: Upright life leads to compassion for "the least of these"

#6 **Goodness**:

#7 **Faithfulness**: Reliability

#8 **Gentleness**: a meek attitude

#9 Today, the last of these messages on the fruit of the Spirit, will address the final quality: **self-control.**

4. Notice what’s after these qualities in verse 23: "Against such things there is no law."

a. The idea is that there no prohibitions against these virtues.

b. In a classic understatement, Paul says that no-one would ever make laws against people who habitually practice love, joy, etc. Imagine a policeman throwing someone in jail for showing too much patience! It won't happen!

5. But the trait of "self-control" is our subject for today—the last of the Galatians 5:22-23 qualities produced by the Holy Spirit. Interesting, isn’t it? *The Spirit produces self-control*! Shouldn’t it be *Spirit*-control? No, it’s God’s Spirit controlling our spirit.

a. Someone said that self-control is having the power to break a piece of chocolate into four pieces—and then to eat only one piece! (SELF-CONTROL)

b. Another says that self-control is when your conscience tells you something and you don’t talk back. (DISCIPLINE se

6. As I thought about how we can apply this concept of self-control to our lives I realized how huge a subject this could be. This fruit of the Spirit refers to self-control in what area?

a. Self-Control in what we say?

b. Self-Control in how we spend our money?

c. Self-Control as it relates to our eating habits?

d. The subject is so vast I didn't know where to begin in sharing about self-control!

1) Some scholars feel that the Greek word (ejgkravteia BAGD 216c) refers to self-control in the sexual area (Bruce, 25; NIDNTT, 1:496). Is this correct? Well…

2) Forms of this word are used six times in the NT, but only one time (1 Cor. 7:9) does it clearly refer to sexual control (cf. Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 7:9; 9:25; Gal. 5:23; Tit. 1:8; 2 Pet. 2:6).

3) Therefore, I feel it can mean self-control generally.

7. But lately my own self-control has been challenged in one particular area: self-control over anger. In fact, the last person I counseled said to me, "If there's one area I want self-control in my life it's the area of anger."

8. So this is what I have chosen to address this morning: How can we control anger so that we can have a gentle, self-controlled spirit? What does it take to keep anger in check?

**I. There are many theories of how to control anger.**

A. Some teach that the best way to control anger is to count to ten.

1. How many of you have tried this? Has it worked?

2. Oftentimes all this does is *postpone* anger ten seconds!

B. Others say that anger is best controlled when we make sure it doesn't turn into resentment (Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, pp. 201-208).

1. This basically says that anger is O.K. on the spur of the moment but not when it lasts on and turns into resentment!

2. How can this be reconciled with the Scripture?

a. While it is true that Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be angry and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath" this verse is not teaching that only prolonged anger is sinful!

b. Five verses later it says, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger…" (Eph 4:31)

c. Be "slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:19b-20).

d. Being quick-tempered is sinful (not a disease), for this is why Titus 1:7 says that a man being considered for elder must not be quick-tempered.

(A third way to control anger is expressed by Dr. Thurman Fleet, founder of one of the New Age cults…)

C. Anger is controlled by being patient (*Rays of the Dawn*, p. 57 bottom).

(Dozens of other strategies and even gimmicks to conquer anger can be given, but the one I have found to be most effective I learned at the Institute in Basic Life Principles [IBLP Manual, "Personal Rights," pp. 22-30]. Here's the best way I know to control anger so that gentleness and self-control can be the Spirit's fruit in our lives…)

**II. The way to conquer anger is by yielding personal rights.**

**[We can show self-control over anger when we don't cling to our own way.]**

A. Bill Gothard shares a story about the importance of yielding rights (develop p. 24).

1. Identifying anger

2. Listing personal rights

3. Seeing how rights cause anger

(If the way to conquer anger is to yield personal rights, how do we do this?)

B. Four Steps in Yielding Personal Rights are suggested (adapted from pp. 25-27).

1. Identify a situation makes you angry.

2. Identify a personal right being violated.

3. Transfer ownership of this right to God.

4. Thank God whatever happens.

(But is this “yielding rights approach” to preventing anger scriptural? The answer is yes!)

**III. Paul prevented anger and resentment in ministry areas by yielding his personal rights (1 Cor. 9).**

**[Paul didn’t insist on practices that he could legally do—and this prevented him from anger and a poor witness.]**

A. This issue of rights is actually the subject of three entire chapters: 1 Corinthians 8—10.

1. The problem there was what to do with meat sacrificed to idols—could it be eaten?

2. Paul says earlier that there’s nothing inherently wrong with the meat—but that alone doesn’t mean one has the right to eat it.

B. In chapter 9 Paul uses himself as an example of one who forgoes his rights. It follows that by doing so he prevented himself from being angry and resentful.

1. First, Paul acknowledged that he had several rights relating to his ministry (1-12a).

a. He was free to eat any kind of meat—sacrificed to idols or meat not sacrificed (1-4).

b. He had to right to get married and bring his wife with him in ministry (5).

c. He had a right to get paid for his ministry (6-12).

2. But Paul willingly gave up these rights rather than get angry (12b-18).

3. Paul gave up his rights to remove obstacles others have to accept the gospel (19-27).

**Conclusion**

1. So what have I been trying to say this morning? *The self-controlled believer controls his anger by yielding his rights to the Lord* [main idea].

2. Four Steps in Yielding Personal Rights are suggested by Bill Gothard (pp. 25-27):

#1 Identify a situation makes you angry.

a. Take out a piece of paper.

b. Write down the situation in which you have the most difficult time controlling anger (hard to be gentle and self-controlled)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **Right** |
| Roommate’s habit | Right not to have roommate do this |
| People saying something about/to you | Right to be spoken about/to nicely |
| Being taken advantage of | Right not to be walked all over |

#2 Identify a personal right being violated. (Now write down the personal right that is being violated in this situation that causes you to get angry.)

#3 Transfer ownership of this right to God.

a. Envision placing these rights on a table up here in the front.

b. Are your rights up here now?

c. Pray right now and give God these rights, objects, or possessions.

d. "Father, right now I dedicate to You the object I have placed on this altar. No longer does this belong to me but to you. You can do whatever You want with it, but help me to be responsible to take care of it for my part."

#4 Thank God whatever happens.

a. Thank God for giving you a gentle and self-controlled spirit by not clinging to rights.

b. Even if others may abuse your giving ownership to God, view this as an opportunity to prove you really did give God ownership.

2. If you want self-mastery over your situations the key is to yield all personal rights to God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. When people look at how well you control your temper do they see this (hold up twig) or this (hold up fruit)? Let the luscious fruit of the Spirit be evident in your life!

4. Prayer

"Lord God, we are humbled to think that You bought us with a price at Calvary—the greatest price ever paid in the world. Thank you for Jesus, who demonstrated a meek and humble spirit—one who did not demand his own rights. In our day when everyone is craving for their rights, help us to be meek people who do not demand our own way. For Christ's sake and to advance His holy name, Amen."