

# **The Fruit of the Spirit: Self Control and the Taming of Our Tongue**

by Mary L. Dubler

## **The Fruit of the Spirit**

**If we are led by the Spirit, we have the Fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:16-26)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

The “But” operates to contrast this list to the works of the flesh mentioned in verses 19-21. The work of the Spirit in the life of the believer is to conquer—to crucify—the flesh (vs. 24).

The word “fruit” in the Greek is *karpos* and metaphorically is equivalent to “work, act or deed” and its result. Thus we can say that the [work] of the Spirit [results in] love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.

**This is not a fruit stand where you can choose which fruit you like and discard those you don’t like.**

There is one fruit and it has many parts—these are all developing in us as the Holy Spirit does His work to make us more like Christ. So we are really choosing between Christ and the world—the things of the Spirit versus the things of the flesh. When we choose Christ He places within us all nine parts—the whole fruit—and these continue to be refined in us as we grow in Christ.

While the fruit of the Spirit at times does not seem to develop equally in us, they are intertwined. For example, if you exercise self control and keep yourself from speaking a harsh word to your husband, you are also using love, kindness, goodness, exercising faithfulness toward your husband, showing peace as a wife, gentleness, patience with what might be a fault in your husband, and joy in what God has brought together and that He is continuing a good work in you.

## **Self Control and the Taming of our Tongue**

**Jesus as our example of control of the tongue.**

In examining the fruit of the Spirit Jesus is the perfect example of how that fruit was displayed. What does his example He teach us regarding control of the tongue?

*Read Matthew 26:57-68, 27:11-14; Luke 23:8-11; Isaiah 53:7*

“The high priest stood up and said to Him, ‘Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?’ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him,

‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” (Matthew 26:62-64)

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)

In all of these examples the only time Jesus speaks is to affirm His kingship, being the Son of God, and His authority.

Jesus was falsely accused, called a blasphemer, mocked, spat upon, and yet at these times He remained silent. Why?

Would you have remained silent? I think it would have been extremely difficult to remain silent under such circumstances. How was Jesus able to remain silent?

### **Jesus was listening for and speaking His Father’s words.**

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.” (John 14:10)

He spoke when the Father said, “Speak.”, and He remained silent when God said, “Don’t speak.”

### **Why is the tongue such a problem?**

*Read Proverbs 12:18, 15:1-2 and 4, 18:21; James 3:5-6*

“There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Proverbs 12:18)

“A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.” (Proverbs 15:4)

James 3:6 says the tongue defiles the whole body. Proverbs 18:21 says that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” Words are extremely powerful.

The “wisdom” of the world says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” This is so untrue! A broken bone can heal, but sometimes the wounds made by words fester for a lifetime. Many of you can to this day remember hurtful words spoken to you years ago, but you cannot remember how you got a certain scar.

## **How can we tame our tongue?**

James 3:8 says that “no one can tame the tongue.” When reading this we might be tempted to throw up our hands and say, “Well, there’s no hope! I’ll just be saying stupid things and continuing to get myself in trouble and hurting people.” Ah, but wait, **there is hope!** While we can do nothing in our own strength, we can with Christ’s help tame the tongue. (Philippians 4:13)

*Read 2 Peter 1:1-8*

“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Because we are grafted into the vine we become partakers of the divine nature—we become more like Christ as we walk with Him. So, as we are diligent in our faith these things are added to us: moral excellence, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.

There it is again—self control—and with it includes the ability to control the tongue!

## **What specific things can we do to be diligent in our faith so that self control and control of the tongue are possible?**

- TEACH our mouth

“The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.” (Proverbs 16:23)

How can we instruct our mouth?

1. By reading and studying the Word, especially Proverbs which has much to say about the tongue and mouth and speaking.
2. Learning from experience.
3. Being open to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

- PONDER how to answer

“The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.” (Proverbs 15:28)

Pause a few seconds before speaking to allow the Holy Spirit to talk to you and direct your words. It’s amazing how a few seconds can save us from blurting out something we shouldn’t. Just as Jesus heard the Father, we can hear Him. He may tell you to be silent,

He may tell you to speak and give you the words to say. Can you hear the still small voice of God? If you feel you can't hear God or rarely hear Him, then spend time listening to God.

- PRAY

“Let the words of my mouth and the medication of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14)

“Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;  
Keep watch over the door of my lips. (Psalm 141:3)

1. Pray for your words.
2. Pray for God to set a guard over your mouth.
3. Pray for a change of heart. “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” (Matthew 12:34)

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