# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control”**

**1 Peter 1:13-16**

 **November 21, 2021**

As we have been proclaiming throughout our current sermon series, the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to transform us into people who are more and more becoming like Christ, that is, whose lives are more and more becoming like the life of God. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived the life of God among us, sharing with us the character of God, and as followers of Christ, we are called to have that same godly character developed in us. Thankfully, it is not solely up to us for that to be accomplished. Indeed, that would be quite impossible. But, with the Spirit living in us, we have been given what is needed for the task.

It is sadly the case that many believers seem to view their Christian life as a Cinderella story. A fairy godmother has waved her magic wand, so they think, and suddenly they are transformed. But the problem is that when midnight comes, the whole thing falls apart. They find themselves far from being the kind of person they know God desires them to be.

No, the Christian life is not immediate transformation; it is, rather, a lifelong process. And, if you give the Holy Spirit the control of your life, and if you allow him to correct you when you have become too enamored by the lifestyles of the world, God’s life will grow in you. The particular fruit of the Spirit, that God-like character that the Spirit seeks to cultivate in us, we will explore this morning is self-control. I invite you to turn with me to 1 Peter 1:13-16

So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”

Summarizing these four verses into three phrases, this is what Paul is saying: “Preparing your minds . . . exercising self-control . . . you are becoming holy.” First, prepare your mind. What prepares the Christian mind for living the Christian life? The foundation of all thought in the Christian life is the Word of God. Before we do anything else we must be aware of what the Word says. That is what keeps us stable and on track as we navigate living by the Spirit of God in a world that lives according to its own desires and is obedient to its own rules. To live as God’s obedient children, we must know what to obey. This we learn in Scripture.

“Prepare your mind,” then, “exercise self-control.” A mind fixed on the Word of God makes self-control possible. It is not living to satisfy its own desires but, having learned what God desires through the study of God’s Word, the mind is giving the Spirit control of the self. We control our self, especially its tendencies to satisfy its own desires, by giving our self to God. Such is the Holy Spirit developed fruit of self-control.

“Preparing your minds and exercising self-control, you are becoming holy.” Learn what he asks of you through his Word, decide that your very self belongs to him, and you will be travelling the path of becoming holy. Holiness is conformity to the character of God. In the character of God we see everything that makes life worth living. There is love, compassion, grace, and justice. There is strength, courage, mercy, and power. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to transform our life so it takes on the character of God’s life.

It is a work in progress, one that will not be perfected this side of heaven. But, if you give the Spirit the freedom to be producing his fruit in your life, and to show you your error where you are living too much according to worldly rather than godly desires, God’s life will become manifest in yours, and you will be becoming holy. Along the way, you will experience failures of all sorts. You will periodically neglect God’s Word and you will occasionally take control of your own life, resulting in unholy thoughts, words and actions. But, God’s attention will not be focused on your failures. His focus will be on the attitude of your heart. If your heart belongs to him, if you love him with all your heart and if you’ve given him the control of your self, God will cultivate holiness in you through his Spirit, and your life will reflect the holy life of God.