

*“Growing into the Personality of Jesus”*

A Sermon Delivered by The Rev. Dr. Ernest L. Vermont

At Brewster Baptist Church - September 1, 2019

Text: Galatians 5:16-25; Proverbs 25:4 ESV

Proposition: Allow the personality of Jesus to be refined & forged into the mold of YOUR life experience!

- Quote: "Untested faith does not qualify as faith." –Eugene Peterson

Illustration: When Abraham Lincoln was a (1860) candidate for the Presidency, someone asked him what he thought of (his rival candidates). With characteristic humor he answered, "I do not fear Breckinridge, for he is of the South, and the North will not support him; I do not much fear Stephen Douglas, for the South is against him. But, there is a man named Lincoln I see in the papers, of whom I am very much afraid. If I am defeated, it will be by that man."—*Gospel Herald*.

Context:

- For the last 8 weeks Pastor Doug with Nate Ryan has been highlighting the critical importance in the believers' life of the "Fruit of the Spirit" listed in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatian Church.
- There can be no Fruit of the Spirit without a new-birth imprinting!

Illustration: The Beautiful "Imprinting" on Baby Ducks on their mother.

Consider this recent real-life picture of what my wife & I witnessed in Seattle on July 31st.

- Finishing eating at a restaurant across from our hotel, Audrey and I carefully & hastily jaywalked (NO cross walk anywhere) across the busy street to the Doubletree Hotel where we were staying.
  - As we quickly leaped across the sidewalk into the hotel driveway THIS is what we almost stumbled on: A MOMA DUCK AND HER OBEDIENT 5 BABIES waddling in a line to avoid cars waiting to enter the hotel driveway.
  - Immediately the Holy Spirit impressed upon me that these new-born ducks had already imprinted on this adult duck who had given them birth!
- IF you by faith have trusted in Jesus as your Savior, you have been "imprinted" upon Christ who has given NEW BIRTH to you. THEN you MUST ask and expect God the Holy Spirit (who indwells) in you to develop (i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control) in order to be sincere followers of Christ.

- Notice that I said you must ask God the Holy Spirit to develop the personality of Jesus in you. You have the choice to allow this refining & forging work to continue or to STOP!

Question: Why should we ask the Holy Spirit to forge these personality traits of Jesus in us?

The answer is found I Peter 1:7- Peter says, “*So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

- Did you get that? The hard compressions of God’s fiery forging process must “be found to result in praise & glory & honor” at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ!

In addition, the Apostle Paul chimes in and adds in Philippians 1:6- “*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*”

Quotation: “If you are ever worried that you have lost your salvation, you have not. Legalists think they can save themselves. Antinomians (those who disregard law) don't care. If you're concerned, it's your growing sensitivity to your sin because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. It's designed to lead us to repentance”. - Pete Alwinson

- As we will see this morning, God reserves the right to do some serious refining & forging work in us to produce the Fruit of the Spirit. It is a 3- step process of (1) Initial (new birth) imprinting; (2) Refining sinful impurities out of our lives; (3) Forging us into Christ’s likeness.
- By using YOUR personal collection of life- long experiences, the mirror image of Jesus’ personality is hammered & shaped & polished into your life!
- In theological terms this forging, reshaping process is called “Sanctification.”

Definition: The generic meaning of sanctification is "the state of proper functioning." To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer. A pen is "sanctified" when used to write. Eyeglasses are "sanctified" when used to improve sight. In the theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends. A human being is sanctified, therefore, when he or she lives according to God's design and (holy)purpose. (Source: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/sanctification>, accessed 8/3/19)

- This “sanctification” process is actually akin to a smith’s hot-forging. (Audrey and I enjoy the History Channel’s TV show: “Forged in Fire.” Have you seen it?)

What exactly is “forging?”

Forging is a manufacturing process involving the shaping of metal using localized compressive forces. The blows are delivered with a hammer (often a power hammer) or a die. Forging is often classified according to the temperature at which it is performed: cold forging (a type of cold working), warm or hot forging. The metal is heated, usually in a forge... Forging has been done by smiths for millennia; the traditional products were kitchenware, hardware, hand tools, edged

weapons, cymbals, and jewelry. (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forging#History>, accessed 6/21/19).

Here are several Scriptures illustrating God's preference for refining/forging a people for Himself:

- Isaiah 48:10 "*Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.*"
- Job 23:10 "*But He knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.*"
- Isaiah 1:25 (Because of Israel's rebellion) "*I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.*"
- 1 Peter 4:12 "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*"

In Paul's list of the 9 "fruit of the Spirit" is SELF CONTROL. God's forging of this personality trait of Jesus for most of us results in significant "fiery trials." We ALL need more self-control. Let's look at what the New Testament Greek word actually means.

- The English transliteration of the Greek term is the feminine noun "egkrateia"; Phonetic Spelling: (eng-krat'-i-ah)
- From the word *krátos*, "dominion, mastery") – proceeding out from within oneself, but not BY oneself.
- In late Latin the term is *contra-rotu-lare* < Latin *contra-* (against) + *rotulus* (registry, list, manifest, roll). The idea was to keep control over the theft or loss of goods on a manifest, or of listing errors, by comparing it with a second listing.

Definition in practical terms: Controlling yourself means the ability to direct one's own behavior and harness one's energies, to assert power over or management of one's own actions, or over one's desires, lusts, thoughts, emotions, and feelings by way of one's determination or will. It's the ability to tell yourself "no" and make it stick. Source: <http://www.spirithome.com/self-control.html>, accessed 5/2/19

- But there is a BIG problem!
- We cannot by ourselves tell ourselves NO and make it stick!
- Self-control therefore is a FRUIT of the Holy Spirit requiring God's power to attain.

#### I. Self-control- An Unrelenting Strenuous Challenge to a Christian:

Does the name A. W. Tozer resonate with anyone here?

Brief biography: Aiden Wilson Tozer was born April 21, 1897, on a small farm among the spiny ridges of Western Pennsylvania. Within a few short years, Tozer, as he preferred to be called, would earn the reputation and title of a "20th-century prophet."

Able to express his thoughts in a simple but forceful manner, Tozer combined the power of God and the power of words to nourish hungry souls, pierce human hearts, and draw earthbound minds toward God.

When he was 15 years old, Tozer's family moved to Akron, Ohio. One afternoon as he walked home from his job at Goodyear, he overheard a street preacher say, "If you don't know how to be saved . . . just call on God." When he got home, he climbed the narrow stairs to the attic where, heeding the preacher's advice, Tozer was launched into a lifelong pursuit of God.

In 1919, without formal education, Tozer was called to pastor a small storefront church in West Virginia. That humble beginning thrust him and his new wife into a 44-year ministry with The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

For almost 50 years, A.W. Tozer walked with God. Even though he is gone, he continues to speak, ministering to those who are eager to experience God. As someone put it, "This man makes you want to know and feel God." (Source: <http://articles.ochristian.com/article150.shtml>, accessed 8/3/19)

Illustration: The Athlete & a Ball (by A.W. Tozer), Excerpts quoted from "In Word Or In Power" By A.W. Tozer

"As an athlete uses a ball, so do many of us use words: words spoken and words sung, words written, and words uttered in prayer. We throw them swiftly across the field; we learn to handle them with dexterity and grace; we build reputations upon our word skill and gain as our reward the applause of those who have enjoyed the game. But the emptiness of it is apparent from the fact that after the pleasant "religious game" no one is basically any different from what they had been before. The basis of life remains unchanged; the same old principles govern, the same old Adam rules."

A. We Need an External Power Source

1. By ourselves we fail miserably to produce the fruit of the Spirit & thus, the personality of Jesus!
2. Even the Christian experiences a woeful lack of self-control because a spiritual battle rages in us as old as time itself!

B. The Power Outlet of the Holy Spirit MUST be Plugged Into

1. Daily but in reality, MINUTE BY MINUTE!
2. If you are a Christian in more than name only A.W. Tozer says this to you:

"A new and different Spirit enters the personality and makes the believing man/woman new in every department of (their) being... Interests shift from things external to things internal, from things on earth to things in heaven. (One) loses faith in the soundness of external values, (men & women) see clearly the deceptiveness of outward appearances, and (one's) love for and

confidence in the unseen and eternal world become stronger as his experience widens.” Excerpts quoted from “In Word Or In Power” By A.W. Tozer

### C. The Enemy’s Strategies & Tactics are Well-Defined

1. The opposite English word for self-control is self-indulgence.
2. 1 Corinthians 7:5 says people need to be careful lest Satan tempt them because of their “lack of self control.”

Quotation: “The devil wouldn’t be attacking you so hard if there wasn’t something valuable inside of you.” (God the Holy Spirit is inside of you!)

Contrary to most people’s awareness, new Christians are IMMEDIATELY deployed on a spiritual war’s front lines!

3. 2 Timothy 3:3 uses a closely related word when it says that in the last times people will be “without self control.”
4. When people do not exercise godly self-control or restraint, they engage in what the Greek text calls behavior that is completely lacking in moral restraint, and this commonly refers to or includes ungodly sexual behavior.

Illustration: A traveler in (what was Burma) tells the following story: "As I was dining in a home, I was startled to hear the hostess ask her servant to place a bowl of milk on the deer skin beside her chair. I knew at once that there was a cobra in the room, for they prefer milk to anything else. We also knew that a hasty movement meant death, so we sat like statues. Soon, to our amazement, a cobra uncoiled from my hostess' ankle and swiftly glided toward the milk, where it was quickly killed." What a triumph of self-control over the external!

But if we use the same quiet trust in Christ as this woman did in the bowl of milk, when the serpent of all evil approaches us, internal triumphs over him would be more numerous than they are now.—*Record of Christian Work*.

Quote: Satan loves to take what is beautiful and ruin it. God loves to take what is ruined and make it beautiful! Source: @GetThroughtheWeek

As one grows & matures as a Christian, God the Holy Spirit produces the personality of Jesus in us! But there is a cost. The cost is a series of what the New Testament calls “trials” or “testings” that you will experience! I believe for each fruit of the Spirit developing in you & me there is a particular trial or series of trials that God allows in order to refine & forge Jesus’ identity in each Christian. Your trial(s) may be unique and may not be mine.

- BUT we can be sure of one thing: Philippians 1:6- *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*

Pay attention to James 1: 2-8 (Phillips translation)

“When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence. And if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God—who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty—and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God’s help or not.”

II. The Key to Spiritual Fruit Production:

- A. Welcome Trials as Your Friend
- B. Welcome the (Trial/Temptation) Process in Your Life
- C. Don’t Hesitate to Ask God for His Solutions to Problems
- D. Make Sure You Ask Him in “Sincere Faith” without doubting.

Application: Allow the personality of Jesus to be refined & forged into the mold of YOUR life experience!

- If you have sincerely imprinted on Jesus as your Savior allow Him as your Lord to Refine sinful impurities out of your life; (3) Forge you into Christ’s likeness and then polish your spiritual personality in His mirror-like image so that others will see Christ in you and be decidedly drawn to Him.

Remember the words of Abraham Lincoln: “But there is a man/woman named (fill in YOUR name) I see..., of whom I am very much afraid. If I am defeated, it will be by that (person).”—*Gospel Herald.*

AMEN