

## **The Fruit of the Spirit – Self Control (Galatians 5:22-23)**

Let this MIND be in you! - Philippians 2:5-11

### INTRODUCTION

1. Finally we come to the last virtue listed by Paul that is found in a person one who is walking in the Spirit, thereby producing the fruit of the Spirit: "self-control" ("temperance", KJV)
2. In some ways, one might consider this virtue the most important...
  - a. For without self-control, the "works of the flesh" cannot be overcome
  - b. For without self-control, the other elements of the "fruit of the Spirit" will not be evident
3. But what exactly is "self-control"? And how can one develop this virtue?

[These are questions I will attempt to answer in this final study in this series.]

### I. DEFINING SELF-CONTROL

#### A. THE GREEK WORD IS "EGKRATEIA" {eng-krat'-i-ah}

1. It comes from the word "kratos" (strength), and means "one holding himself in" (ROBERTSON)
2. THAYER defines it as: "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites"
3. MACKNIGHT adds the thought: "Where this virtue subsists, temptation can have little influence."  
-- Immediately, then, we can see why this virtue is so necessary in overcoming the "works of the flesh" (such as fornication and outbursts of wrath, Ga 5:19,20)

#### B. IT IS FOUND ONLY THREE TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. Once in Ac 24:25
  - a. Where it is included along with "righteousness" and "judgment"
  - b. "the word follows 'righteousness', which represents God's claims; therefore, self-control is to be man's response to such claims" (VINE)
2. Once in Ga 5:23, where we see it is evidence of one walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit
3. And in 2 Pe 1:6
  - a. Here we learn that it is to be added to "knowledge"
  - b. "it follows 'knowledge', suggesting that what is learned requires to be put into practice" (VINE)

[Self-control, then, is being in control of one's self; in the context of the Scriptures, the control of self so as to be in harmony with the will of God. But it is a whole lot easier to define than it is to develop...]

## II. DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL

### A. THE SCRIPTURES DESCRIBE THE DIFFICULTY OF SELF-CONTROL...

1. The wisdom of Solomon declared it is easier to capture a city than to be in control of our spirit - Pr 16:32; cf. 25:28
2. Just controlling the tongue, is a difficult challenge...
  - a. Failure to bridle the tongue renders our religion useless - Ja 1:26
  - b. It is easier to tame wild animals! - Ja 3:7-10

### B. HOWEVER, IN CHRIST THERE IS STRENGTH TO CONTROL SELF...

1. Consider the dilemma described by Paul in Ro 7:14-24
  - a. A dilemma experienced by one trying to do the will of God outside of Christ, having only the Law
  - b. A dilemma that leads to...
    - 1) The inability to perform as one wish, despite the will to do - Ro 7:18
    - 2) The state of captivity to the law of sin - Ro 7:23
    - 3) The condition of despair - Ro 7:24
  - c. However, in Ro 7:25 we see a glimpse of hope, a hint of the answer to this dilemma (i.e., Jesus Christ!)
2. The answer is stated very clearly in our text - cf. Ga 5:24
  - a. "...those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"
    - 1) This does not deny the fact there is still a battle going on - cf. Ga 5:17
    - 2) But those in Christ have undergone a fundamental change
    - 3) In a way difficult to comprehend, they have "crucified the flesh" - Ga 5:24
  - b. This took place when they were united with Christ in His death, in baptism...
    - 1) In baptism, our body of sin is put to death, crucified with Christ - Ro 6:3-6
    - 2) When we are raised from that watery grave, we rise to walk in newness of life, free to live for God! - Ro 6:7, 12-13
  - c. This does not mean we are no longer tempted to sin, but in some significant way we are free from the "dominion" (absolute rule) of sin! - cf. Ro 6:14
3. For those in Christ, there is added strength as they "walk according to the Spirit!"
  - a. Yes, we enjoy freedom from the "condemnation" of sin - cf. Ro 8:1
  - b. But there is more, freedom also from the "power" of sin, freedom from "the law (principle) of sin and death" - Ro 8:2
    - 1) The "law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ" provides this freedom!
    - 2) The context suggests that this refers to the aid of the Spirit to help us overcome the "deeds of the body" - cf. Ro 8:11-14; Ep 3:16,20
  - c. Isn't this what Paul was talking about in Ga 5:16-18,25?
    - 1) If you walk in the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body by the help of the Spirit, will you not defeat the lust of the flesh?
    - 2) Since you have been made alive in the Spirit (cf. Jn 3:5; Ti 3:5), should you not also walk in the Spirit (that is, utilize the help that is there)?

### C. WHAT THEN IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY?

1. First, trust in God's Word that by His grace...
  - a. Our old man of sin was indeed crucified with Christ in our baptism - Ro 6:6
  - b. We did indeed crucify the flesh with its passions and desires - Ga 5:24
  - c. That God can indeed strengthen us by His Spirit in the inner man - Ep 3:16
  - d. That with God's help we can do all things according to His will - Ph 4:13
2. And then, with such faith, continue the process begun in our baptism...
  - a. Put to death the deeds of the body - Ro 8:13
  - b. Put to death our members here on the earth - Co 3:5,8-9
  - c. Put ON the new man...
    - 1) A process which also began in baptism, when we put on Christ - Ga 3:27
    - 2) A process which continues as we grow daily - cf. Co 3:10-14
  - d. Work as though it all depended upon you - Ph 2:12
  - e. But remember that you are not alone, that God is at work in you too! - Ph 2:13

## CONCLUSION

1. As one cooperates with God in the doing of His Will, self-control will be a natural by-product (i.e., evidence that one is walking in the Spirit)
2. We cannot overestimate the importance of developing "self-control" in our lives...
  - a. Without it, we cannot defeat the temptations that come our way
  - b. Without it, we cannot overcome the works of the flesh
  - c. Without it, we cannot grow as we should in Christ
  - d. Without it, we cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit!
3. Yet in Christ we have every reason, every motivation, to develop the virtue of "self-control"
  - a. We have been set free from the dominion of sin
  - b. We have the aid of God through His indwelling Spirit
  - c. We even have the assurance of forgiveness when we fall (1 Jn 1:9), knowing that as long as we are willing to repent and try again, there is help from God!
    - The key question is, "Do we trust the Lord to help us, enough so to walk by faith and do His Will?"

This brings to an end our study. I hope that in some small way I have encouraged you to "walk in the Spirit", and NOT to "fulfill the lust of the flesh". The over-riding reason for doing so is found in Paul's own words:

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Ga 5:25)

In truth, by the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit" (Ti 3:5) God saved us and caused us to be "born again of the water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5). Since in our baptism God has made us alive by the Spirit of God, shouldn't we seek to walk in such a way so as to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives?