

SELF-CONTROL IS FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-25

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Without self-control it is just impossible to overcome the old human nature, the impulse to sin and without self-control the Fruit of the Spirit just will not be seen in the Christian's life. So many people do not or can not exercise self-control and "off they go" on a tangent or a fit of rage. Just what is "self-control?" Is it the same for every person? How hard is it to develop? Where can one find help in gaining "self-control" over his/her actions? Every Christian should be "in control" of his/her actions at all times. Where can the Christian find out about gaining "self-control?"

I. EXACTLY WHAT IS SELF-CONTROL?

1. Different definitions of "self-control:"
 - From the Greek, it means "one holding him/herself."
 - Others say it is "the virtue of one who masters his/her desires and passions, especially the sensual appetites."
 - It is said that where self-control exists, temptation can have little influence.
 - It is easy to see why of all people who exercise self-control, it should be the Christian.
2. "Self-control" is mentioned just a few times in the New Testament:
 - Acts 24:25
 - It is included along with "righteousness" and "judgment."
 - It follows "righteousness" which represents God's claims, therefore self-control is to be a person's response to God's claims.
 - Galatians 5:23
 - It is evidence of one walking in the Spirit, thus being led by the Holy Spirit
 - 2 Peter 1:6
 - It is added to "knowledge"
 - It follows "knowledge," pointing out that what is learned requires to be put into practice.
3. Self-control is being in control of one's self, according to God's Word, the control of self so as to be in harmony with the will of God.

II. DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL IS NOT AN EASY THING TO DO

1. God's Word describes the difficulty of self-control:
 - Solomon's wisdom declared it is easier to capture a city than to be in control of one's spirit - Proverbs 16:23; 25:28
 - Just controlling one's tongue is a difficult thing to do.
 - Not controlling one's tongue renders one's testimony useless - James 1:26
 - It's easier to tame wild animals, some say, than to control one's tongue - James 3:7-10
2. The Christian can find strength for self-control in Jesus Christ:
 - Paul was in a dilemma - Romans 7:14-24
 - He was trying to do the will of God without Jesus, using only the Law.
 - That dilemma led to:
 - His inability to perform as he wanted, despite his determination - Romans 7:18
 - The position of being a captive to the law of sin - Romans 7:23

- The condition of despair - Romans 7:24
- Romans 7:25 gives a small glimmer of hope, a hint of the answer to his predicament.
- Galatians 5:24 gives the answer needed:
 - **"...those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires..."**
 - There will still be battles - Galatians 5:17
 - Those in Christ have undergone a fundamental change.
 - Believers have "crucified the flesh" (old sin nature, sin) - Galatians 5:24
 - Believers are united with Jesus Christ in His death upon their belief in Him.
 - One's body of sin is put to death, crucified with Christ as symbolized in baptism.
 - Romans 6:3-6
 - Raised up out of the water of baptism, symbolized a new life, free to live for God -
 - Romans 6:7, 12-13
 - The believer is free from sin's domination, its rule, but he/she can still sin - Romans 6:14
- For those in Christ, there is added strength as they **"...walk according to the Spirit..."**
 - Christians enjoy freedom from the "condemnation" of sin - Romans 8:2
 - Christians have more freedom from the "power" of sin, freedom from the "law (principle) of sin and death" o- Romans 8:2
 - The "law of the Spirit of life in Christ" provides the Christian's freedom.
 - The Holy Spirit aids the Christian in overcoming the "deeds of the body" o-
 - Romans 8:11-14; Ephesians 3:16, 20
 - Paul said in Galatians 5:16-18, 25 that:
 - if one walks in the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body by the help of the Holy Spirit, one defeats the lust of the flesh.
 - since one has been made alive in the Spirit, he/she should also walk in the Spirit -
 - John 3:5; Titus 3-5

3. What is the responsibility of the Christian?

- The Christian is first to trust God's Word by His grace:
 - The old man/woman of sin was indeed crucified with Christ upon belief in Him - Romans 6:6
 - One's flesh was indeed crucified with all its passions and desires - Galatians 5:24
 - God can indeed strengthen the Christian by His Holy Spirit in the inner man/woman -
 - Ephesians 3:16
 - With God's help one the Christian can do all things according to His will - Philippians 4:13
- The Christian can then continue the process of living for Jesus which began upon his/her belief in Jesus:
 - By putting to death the deeds of the body - Romans 8:13
 - By putting to death the earthly flesh while here on earth - Colossians 3:5, 8-9
 - By putting on the new man/woman:
 - It began upon one's belief in Jesus, when he/she put on Christ - Galatians 3:27
 - Which will continue daily as one grows in Christ - Colossians 3:10-14
 - By working as though everything depended upon him/herself - Philippians 2:12
 - By remembering that no Christian is ever alone, that God is at work within him/her.
 - Philippians 2:13

CONCLUSION:

1. When a Christian is cooperating with God in doing God's will, "self-control" will be a natural by-product, proof that that person is indeed walking in the Spirit of God.
2. Self-control is absolutely necessary for the Christian:
 - without it, one cannot defeat the temptations that come his/her way.
 - without it one cannot overcome the works, desires of the flesh.
 - without it, one cannot grow in Christ as he/she should.
 - without it one cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit.
3. The Christian has every reason and motivation to develop his/her self-control, found in Jesus Christ:
 - He/she has been set free from sin and its dominion.
 - He/she has the aid of almighty God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - He/she has the assurance of forgiveness when he/she falls, knowing that as long as he/she is willing to repent and try again, there will be help from God.
4. Christian! How much do YOU trust the Lord to help you walk by faith and do His will?
5. *"...If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit..."* - Galatians 5:25