

The Evidence of Spiritual Life, Part 5 | Self-Control

I. The Curious Concept that is Self-Control

- II Peter 1:5-6; Acts 24:25; Galatians 5:22-23
- Unlike the words “faith” and “knowledge,” the Greek word translated “self-control” in verse 6 is not used that often in Scripture. In fact, it only shows up *two* other times.
- **The English Words**
 - When the Bible was originally translated into English, the word found in II Peter was “temperancy” or “temperance.” Temperance refers to moderation which refers to being neither over- nor under-indulgent.
 - However, 100 years after the King James Version was first printed, the English word “self-control” was coined. And the original idea of self-control referred to the “restraint of one’s desires.” This word quickly became the favored translation for the Greek text.
- **The Greek Word**
 - Unfortunately, neither of these English terms truly do the Greek justice. The original word penned by the Apostle Peter referred to having mastery over something. But there are two key issues that must be addressed when handling this word: (1) who decides what passions need to be mastered, and (2) who or what is having the mastery over who or what?
 - Ephesians 5:18; II Peter 1:5-7
 - Don’t allow alcohol to control you, instead be so completely filled with the Holy Spirit that He controls all you do.
 - We have to grapple with the reality that Christians do not exercise the self-control of the world; Christians are commanded to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit. Our self-control is less about controlling ourselves and more about submitting ourselves to another’s control.
 - In addition, God alone gets to decide what passions are to be moderated, and God alone has the power necessary to truly reign-in sinful impulses, immoderate behavior, and inappropriate thoughts. Therefore, Christians are to bend their self-control to the over-mastering hand of God.
 - So, though it’s not technically inaccurate to use words like *temperance* or *self-control*, Christians must be careful to understand that they will never be able to control their flesh outside of the power of God. Furthermore, He will only enable us to fulfill that which He expects.

II. The Goal of Self-Control

- Proverbs 16:32, 25:28; James 3; I Corinthians 6:19-20
- If we are incapable of controlling something as small as our tongues, how can we ever hope to control every other sinful desire and action in our lives?
- A person who says they love God, are born again, read their Bibles and pray every day, go to church at least twice a week, and yet who—in their daily lives—are indistinguishable from unbelievers in how they communicate about their lives, their choices, and the circumstances in which they find themselves can’t possibly love God and His Word as much as they let on.
- Submitting to the rule of God in our lives results in God being glorified in our bodies. Having access to the Holy Spirit absolutely changes everything! Only by His power can we hope to glorify God.

- Romans 8:1-17

- It's amazing how submitting to Spirit-control is described here—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free.
- What does it mean to walk according to the Spirit?
- The Greek word translated “walk” refers to how we behave, conduct ourselves, lead our lives, and occupy ourselves. Vines Expository Dictionary says this word is used figuratively to signify “the whole round of the activities of the individual life, whether of the unregenerate or of the believer.”
- The word translated “according” can be translated “after the manner” or “in accordance with,” or “after the manner of.”
- Therefore, to walk according to the Spirit is to conduct our lives in accordance with the Spirit—His expectations and empowerment.
- We will never be able to grow in our Spirit-filled self-control if we don't set our mind on the things of the Spirit.
- To set our minds on the things of the Spirit requires an intentionality and a premeditated purpose of making the truth of God the object of our thoughts.
- An individual who claims to love God but who doesn't communicate in line with God's revealed Word does so because what comes from our lips started first in our hearts.
- We need to continually set our minds on the things of the Spirit if we ever hope for our communication to run in line with the Spirit.
- Biblical self-control has absolutely nothing to do with my being able to make myself do anything.
- In order to walk by the Spirit and set my mind on the things of the Spirit, I am going to need divine enablement. And praise God that the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in His people.
- This is why Spirit-control is an evidence and a requirement of spiritual life.
- And what are some “deeds of the body” that Spirit-filled self-control will put to death in your life?
- That's a really good question you need to ask of yourself. If the deeds of the body, like the ones listed in Galatians 5 and so many other places in the Bible are a regular part of your daily existence, it's safe to say that they're not being put to death.
- If the idea of Spirit-filled self-control scares you the way it scared Felix, it's probably because the idea of submitting yourself completely to the will of God is distasteful to you. And I would add that not wanting to let go of the reigns of your life is in fact evidence of the reality that you do not have spiritual life.
- It's also an evidence of the fact that you're delusional enough to believe you ever had the reigns in the first place.
- But if you recognize the fact that there is no person in the entire cosmos more trustworthy and magnificent than God, and you are willing (though maybe hesitant) to submit yourself to His will, then that is an exciting stage of spiritual maturity.