

September 10, 2006

Extreme Makeover: Spirit Edition- SELF-CONTROL (conclusion of series - Part 10)

Galatians 5:16-26

Based on messages by: Dr. Stanley W. Reeder, Westminster Church of the Nazarene, Westminster, Colorado

[Click here for the notes in the bulletin](#)

INTRODUCTION:

Turn to Galatians 5 as we complete this series on the Fruit of the Spirit that we started several months ago. Let's start reading at verse 16 so that we can contrast the difference between the person that reveals the fruit of the one living according to the flesh and the fruit of the person that is living according to the Spirit.

READ SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:16-26 NLT

16 So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. 18 But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law.

19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, 20 idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

22 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. 26 Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.

The first part of the scripture we just read describes the person that is "out of control" as opposed to the fruit of the Spirit that is "self-control."

Although this is the last fruit of the spirit it is the first thing that God must do in our lives if He is going to grow the rest of the fruit out of our lives. Think about that. Before we can have the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, there needs to be

an element of self-control. The first victory that we need to get is the victory over the self.

Definition of the Greek word *ἐγκρατης*: egkrateia (eng-krat'-i-ah)
STRONG, Stout, the power and mastery of SELF.

In the setting of Galatians 5: 23 it speaks of the strength to get a hold on our lives; getting them in control.

It is sometimes translated *continence* which means to exercise self-restraint over our desires, or *temperance* which means habitual moderation.

Throughout Scripture, self-control is continually viewed as protection for the Christian (2 Peter 1:6 lists self-control as an important quality and then promises that it...

...will keep you from being INEFFECTIVE and UNPRODUCTIVE...
-2 Peter 1:6, 8

A little later in the passage Peter notes:

For if you do these things, you will never FALL.
-2 Peter 1:10

The Proverbs teach the importance of self-control:

Like a city whose WALLS are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.
-Proverbs 25:28

The city depended on its walls for its security. The moment the wall was compromised, the city was exposed to danger. The moment we lose self-control we lose our protection. We leave ourselves vulnerable to falling. We risk ineffectiveness and unproductiveness.

Any area in your life that is not subject to self control . . . whether it is anger, lust, spending, drinking, ambition . . . any one of these areas will leave us wide open to Satan's attack.

I could easily take the balance of the time we have today . . . and if I were to lose self-control . . . well into the afternoon to speak to you about the ample evidence in our society today of lives that are out of control.

From spending too much time on the Internet to spending too much money; from eating too much to not saying no to sexual lust; from not taking time for exercise to neglecting time for the Word; from forfeiting self-control to control of a habit like smoking or drinking or drugs . . . we are a compulsive society that wants to play first and pay later. I want to encourage you today as we study self-control, if you'll pay first you will be able to play later.

FIVE STEPS TO SELF-CONTROL:

John Miller is author of the book: "QBQ: The Question Behind the Question". When he consults with large corporations he gets the staff together and asks:

"What's the one thing you would change to improve the effectiveness of your organization?"

People start listing all the “P’s”: Products, Promotions, Policies, Processes, Procedures, Pricing, and People. More people, fewer people, different people. One guy even said Pepsi... “if only we’d switch the soda machine in the break room from Coke to Pepsi.”

We could do the same thing with the church. *What could we do to improve the church?* You’ll probably stay with the “P’s”: The Pastor, the Preaching, the Pray-er, the Piano Player!

People’s minds fill with all kinds of ideas when asked what they could change to improve things. But guess what? Nobody ever says “ME!” “I would change me to make our church better!” Someone suggested that it’s a trick question, but I don’t think it is. Our minds simply don’t go there. Our thoughts almost always focus elsewhere first. When it comes to this matter of self control...

1. Start with yourself .

Don’t allow your mind to wander, even for a moment to someone else today. Don’t be thinking: “If only so-and-so could hear this message, would take this to heart.” Don’t be thinking about your wife, your husband, your brother, your sister, your children, your boss, your employees, your friend, your kids, your neighbor . . . think about yourself.

D. L. Moody, the great evangelist of the last century was asked: *Of all the people that have given you trouble, who gave you the most trouble?* His response was classic:

The person who has given me the most trouble is D. L. MOODY.
-D. L. Moody

If you could kick the person who has been responsible for most of your troubles . . . you wouldn’t be able to sit down for weeks.

Lots of us could use this drawing for our family coat of arms [SCAN DIAGRAM FROM PAGE 44 OF QBQ AND CALL IT: “MY FAMILY COAT OF ARMS”]

You’ve heard the saying:

The poor sailor blames the WIND

Help me complete some of these:

The poor student blames the _____
The poor teacher blames the _____
The poor coach blames the _____
The poor player blames the _____
The poor worker blames the _____
The poor boss blames the _____

And we could go on all day playing the blame game.

Don’t fix the BLAME, fix the PROBLEM

Don't worry about your wife or your boss or your Great Aunt Mildred today... I can't change them...

I can only change ME!

2. Start EARLY .

Self-discipline is the first lesson that is needed, but is often the last one learned.

Work hard on the front end and you will reap the rewards on the back end. There is no such thing as an investment that is not done on the front end. It is ludicrous for the farmer to say: "If I have a good harvest, I'll then plant the seed." Or for the businessman to say, "When I receive 100 percent of the lease payments for a ten-year period, I'll build the apartment building." Don't delude yourself into thinking "When my ship comes in I'll start getting control over my money, or I'll start giving to the Lord's work." Invest on the front end and start early. The earlier you start the greater will be the reward.

3. Start SMALL .

So many times we think we need to start with something big. Just start by control in some small area. Did you know in any area of your life 1% improvement every day for 365 days - yields a 3,300% improvement. If you started tomorrow by spending one minute in prayer increased by 1% every day by two days you'd be praying 1 minute and 1 second.

If you continued to improve by 1% every day...

After 72 days or 2 months and a bit, you'd be spending 2 minutes in prayer

After 144 days or almost 5 months, you'd be spending 4 minutes in prayer

After one year . . . you'd be up over 34 minutes in prayer!

After 15 months: one hour plus/day in prayer.

After 2 years: over 18 hours/day

After 26 months – 36 hours per day in prayer!

All from 1% increase every day.

SMALL increases in self-control make a BIG difference.

Great saints are not made over night. Great marriages don't happen all at once . . . saints are built on little steps of obedience all the way along. Marriages are built on little promises kept, little trusts upheld, little dates all the way along.

4. Start STRATEGICALLY .

*What is one thing that you could begin doing today
that would make the biggest difference in your life FIVE years from now?
-Bobb Biehl*

List your three weakest areas.
Which one hurts you the most?

Work on that area daily.
Have someone hold you accountable.
Chart your progress

5. Start NOW .

*All worthwhile men have good thoughts, good ideas, and good intentions,
but precious few ever translate those into ACTIONS.
-John Hancock Field*

APPLICATION:

Make a resolution of the will. You know, the Lord demands that first we resolve and then He works. Think of John 5:1-18. Jesus learns that a certain man has been lying lame beside the Bethesda pool everyday for the last 38 years. Jesus went to him and asked:

*Art thou willing to be made whole? -John 5:6
[NIV: "Do you want to get well?"]*

Some people are not willing. Take for example Felix (Governor of Judea under Nero) in Acts 24. When Paul spoke to him about Jesus Christ and how he could help with self-control the scripture says: *Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."* (Acts 24:25)

When we say: *I am willing*, our faith opens the door to the energies of God. Grace flows in the channels of the determined will.

The great preacher John Henry Jowett wrote:

And here is the gracious law of the kingdom, that every time I exercise my will I add to its power. Every difficulty overcome adds its strength to my resources. Every enemy conquered marches henceforth in my own ranks. I go from strength to strength (Ps. 84:7). For it is God that worketh in you to will to do of his good pleasure (Phil 2:13). The gracious Lord ever strengthens the will that is willing. He transforms the frail reed into an iron pillar, and makes trembling timidity bold as a lion.

*Mighty Spirit, dwell with me,
I myself would mighty be.*