

Additions to Faith "Self-Control"

2 Peter 1:6

Introduction

The Apostle Peter's second letter begins by telling us how important faith is to our Christian life. Then he tells us that we also need to add to our faith. He says that God has given us every provision needed to live a godly life through the knowledge of Jesus, but that we must avail ourselves of it. The promises of God are great and precious, but we must appropriate and absorb them because we partake of the divine nature through them. Jesus secured our redemption on the Cross, but the depth of our relationship is linked to how deeply we partake of His divine nature.

Last week we looked at the second rung on the ladder of Peter's seven additions to faith. First is virtue, and second is knowledge; knowledge of scripture and the Holy Spirit breathed inspiration that helps us live a victorious Christian life. Now we'll look at adding self-control to our life in faith.

In 2 Peter Chapter 1 verse 5, Peter writes, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8)

We give diligence to adding these seven things to our faith because we will be fruitful in the knowledge of Christ. A lack of these things causes us to be shortsighted, even to the point of blindness, tempting us to return to our old worldly ways. Verse 10 says, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;" (2 Peter 1:10)

The third rung after virtue and knowledge is "self-control" or what the King James Version calls "temperance" (KJV). The Greek noun means "restraint of one's emotions, impulses, or desires." Self-control is to master your desires and passions, especially sensual appetites. The ancient Greeks considered self-control a virtue, and no wonder. It is the basis of all achievement in any field of endeavor. Self-control inspires self-discipline.

Good parents usually try to instill self-discipline in their children by giving them chores to do, expecting them to keep a schedule by developing routines. They also teach self-control by monitoring their kid's interactions and relationships with other family members and friends. Sadly, many parents today have not developed self-discipline, something that affects our whole society.

Some parents yell uncontrollably at the refs at little Johnny's games. They berate people for their driving habits. They overindulge themselves in a myriad of areas and bad habits and then expect Johnny to behave himself.

Much of our society is entirely out of control. News agencies consistently report the outbursts of anger and violence and a rush to judgment upon others. Even many Christians today are spiritually lite. They attend church when they feel like it and skip when they don't. They don't think they have time for devotions, so they rationalize that reading the Bible and prayer are over-rated.

However, it remains a fact; that we must learn to control ourselves. No one else can do it for you. You must be your own taskmaster and discipline yourself if you want to grow to maturity and be the person God created you to be.

Developing character is a must, and it isn't all up to Jesus. God can supply the self-control part through the Holy Spirit, but we provide the self-discipline part. In Galatians 5:22, the Apostle Paul names self-control as fruit of the Spirit. King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 16:32, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his own spirit than he who takes a city.

Alexander the Great is a historical case in point. Alexander was a great general. He conquered not just a city but the entire known world of his day. Unfortunately, in a drunken rage, he killed his own best friend. When he died, he left behind this epitaph, "He conquered the world; himself he could not conquer." Few people have the capacity or opportunity for greatness that Alexander had. Yet even he could not escape the destructive effect of a lack of self-control.

Without self-control, your chances of bad experiences are dramatically increased! The Apostle Paul recognized how critical self-control is to lasting success. He placed it above natural talent or even great power. In 1 Corinthians 9:25, he compared his life to that of an athlete who must embrace rigorous training and discipline if he genuinely wants to be complete. He wrote, "And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown.*" (1 Corinthians 9:25) In verse 27, he says, "I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Why is self-control so vital? Is it because God doesn't want you to have any fun? Does God frown on spontaneity and doing something on a whim? Of course not. Self-control is necessary because the pressures in any situation can become harmful if they are not properly directed. When things are out of control, there is a potential for a hugely destructive effect. Have you ever been out of control? How did that turn out?

Millions of people rely upon the automobile as an invaluable part of their daily routine. But each year, cars wreak untold property damage, not to mention maiming or killing thousands of people every year. When you read the vehicle

accident reports, one phrase continually pops up; the vehicle went out of control, or the driver lost control of the car. That pretty much says it all!

God knows we live in a world filled with destructive forces. That is true not only of machines but of humans as well! That is why the Bible not only commands us to add self-control to our faith but also tells us how to do it! God wants you to direct your energy and power into practical service.

The very expression of self-control is interesting. It raises the question of who is controlling whom? If you say to someone upset, "Get control of yourself," what are you actually recommending? It probably seems clear to you that the person can analyze their actions and take charge of themselves even though they may not be doing it.

Self-control involves establishing and strengthening the authority of your own inner guidance system. It's the ability to take charge of how you will respond to a situation based on the inner character strengths that define you as a person. Self-control is positive and liberating. It puts you in control of your own life. There are always those who try to convince you that self-control means a boring lifestyle with no freedom to do what you want.

Self-control makes it possible to do and achieve what you want in life. Self-control keeps you from being driven by your passions and causes you to be motivated by your inner goals. In Galatians 5:17, the apostle Paul writes, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." ([Galatians 5:17](#))

Without self-control, your desires go unchecked, and you work against yourself and your inner goals. As a Christian, self-control strengthens you to overcome sin and live a righteous life. Being set free in Christ is a very liberating thing. It allows you to become everything God created you to be.

The Apostle Peter suggests that we can and must add this self-control to our faith in Christ!

I. Choose Your Environment

One simple way you can learn to take control of yourself is to take inventory of your environment. When you feel the pressure mounting from a situation and realize it's putting you in a very uncomfortable or compromising position, you might consider changing your environment.

Get up, move around, go to another room, or leave the area altogether. It just might keep you from losing self-control. To keep from adding additional stress to the other people involved, you might want to let them know you need some space for a minute instead of just running out of the room. Knowing the dynamics of your environment can be critical to maintaining self-control. If you cannot control

yourself, maybe you should consider making yourself accountable to someone who can help you grow in that area.

Your circumstances and background are no excuse for a short fuse or an explosive temper. You can't even blame it on being Irish or having red hair! When you lose your temper and composure, you lose respect and credibility with others. It takes time to learn skills, perform meaningful actions, achieve goals, and fulfill plans. But it only takes a few minutes of out-of-control behavior to inflict incredible destruction and damage.

Often a mismanaged life is the result of mismanaged time. Time is the stuff that life is made of, and it doesn't take long for wasted time to become a wasted life. The Bible also says that holding your tongue is part of self-control. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." ([Colossians 4:6](#))

Every day brings new opportunities to control your tongue. Be gracious in your speech and try to bring out the best in others with your words. Don't put people down or belittle them. You learn to control your temper, your time, and your tongue by yielding to the Holy Spirit.

We also tend to fall to distraction and temptation when we're under-challenged. Don't always take the easy road and make excuses for yourself. Sometimes if the class we're taking or the job we do is too easy, we find ourselves coasting through life. Maybe you need to take a more challenging class or more difficult work assignment. Don't just coast through life! Make your life count! This world should be just a better place because you were here!

Don't be a part of the problem, be a part of the solution. Take control of yourself and do something valuable with your life! Proverbs 13:20 says "He who walks with wise *men* will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed." ([Proverbs 13:20](#))

Prisons are filled with people who cannot control themselves. Their sinful and destructive behavior requires their environment to be controlled by someone else. Solomon says, "Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul." ([Proverbs 22:24-25](#))

Peter says to add self-control to your faith. Determine to make an impact on your environment rather than letting it make an impact upon you.

II. Practice Positive Faith

Another way to learn self-control is by practicing positive faith by learning to do the right things! Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." ([Romans 12:21](#))

The grit your teeth and do it if it kills you approach to self-control usually ends in failure. The reason it fails is that it focuses your attention on the problem rather than on the solution.

Why does Paul say we should practice being good? Because you can't be good and bad at the same time! You can't talk about how much you admire someone and gossip about them at the same time. You can't say how thankful you are and complain simultaneously. You can't compliment someone and criticize them at the same time. You can't praise God with swear words, and you can't encourage others by talking about yourself.

What you think about people does affect how you act around them. Sometimes a greater struggle than dealing with the details of situations is the mental struggle. How you handle your thought life is crucial to building character. The Bible explicitly singles out our thoughts as an area we need to bring under control. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we must "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Your thought life is the seedbed of your actions and character. Sow a thought; reap an action. Sow an action; reap a habit. Sow a habit; reap a character. Sow a character; reap a destiny. It all begins with a single thought.

Your mind is always occupied with something. That's why substituting good thoughts for wrong thoughts is an effective technique for learning self-control. Remind yourself that God is with you and has not given you a spirit of fear but the spirit of love and power and sound judgment. That's far better than trying to convince yourself you're not worried or afraid.

The best approach is to put your hand in the hand of God and face each situation, knowing that God is good and will see you through it. You'll get excellent results.

III. Always be Honest with Yourself

Finally, self-control is about being honest with yourself and meeting legitimate needs in legitimate ways. It is a principle that applies to all forms of behavior. When we try to satisfy needs the wrong way, we usually wind up in out-of-control action that can be very destructive.

When you're tired, don't push yourself to exhaustion; get some rest! If you're bored and feel you're wasting time, get involved in a hobby or a productive service project. If you're feeling burned out, plan a vacation!

But, whatever you do, don't turn to illegitimate or sinful ways. Practice self-control and meet legitimate needs in legitimate ways. Be honest with yourself and always do the right thing!

Conclusion

There's always a place for developing and using willpower to strengthen self-control! But it also requires a motivation. Willpower and motivation go hand in hand. How many people have you known who have quit smoking hundreds of times only to start again – until one day the doctor says quit or else! Suddenly they find that missing motivation to put their willpower into action.

God has promised to supply whatever we need to be successful overcomers. In Philippians 4:13, the apostle Paul says, " I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." ([Philippians 4:13](#))

If you say you can't do it, aren't you really speaking against God who says you can! God will always give us the power to do what he deems fit for our benefit. Don't think in terms of hard or easy, dull or exciting, dreary or interesting. Think in terms of achieving God's highest glory and your greatest benefit.

Remember we have the promise from scripture that, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#))

Add to your faith, virtue and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control!