

The Apostolic Woman: Winning the Battle of Self-Control

I. What Is Self-Control?

Self-control is the controlling power of the will under operation of the Spirit of God. It is literally a holding in of one's self with a firm hand by means of the Spirit. In simple terms, self-control is the ability to keep one's self in check.

There are two common denominations in the definition of self-control. One is the control of the SELF – *self-restraint, self-government, self-command*. The second common thread is the object of control – our passions, appetites, pleasures, desires, and impulses, all that is physical, sensual, and sexual. This includes everything we *see, hear, touch, think about, and hunger for*. The Apostle Paul listed the works of the flesh in Galatians 5 – *immorality, impurity, sensuality, drunkenness, and carousing* (to go on a drinking spree). Surely, no child of God would want to live a life marked by these deeds! But, only the Spirit's control can help us avoid them.

Why do we need self-control? Because within every believer a tremendous struggle goes on between the flesh and the spirit. This "tug of war" between the flesh and the Holy Spirit is a spiritual duel: The flesh and the Spirit "are lined up in conflict, face to face." So, to win the battle of self-control, we have to recognize the conflict and rely totally upon God's help and grace.

II. When Is Self-Control Needed?

We need God's self-control every minute of every day in every area of life where we find ourselves facing temptation. We need the Spirit's help in the battle to resist fleshly urges in the common areas of life – like food, and drink, purchasing and possessions, in all matters that are sensual and sexual in nature, and in self-indulgence of any kind.

Because self-control so often relates to the body (which is the temple of the Holy Spirit – I Corinthians 6:19), we need to keep our bodies in subjection to the Lord.

The reasoning of self-control goes like this: If the body is the temple, then the soul is the priest of the temple and should govern what the body does. When the body is tempted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, the soul *must* say no! That is self-control. That body is disciplined by the soul to glorify God in ALL OF ITS ACTIONS!!!

So, we clearly need to be alert to our need for self-control in controlling our BODY. Then we will be able to see the Spirit's grace of self-control in our lives.

III. What Does Self-Control Do?

- Controls and checks the self
- Restrains the self
- Disciplines and masters the self
- Holds in and commands the self
- Says "NO" to self

IV. What Does Self-Control NOT Do?

- Self-Control **DOES NOT** yield to temptation
- Self-Control **DOES NOT** give in to desires
- Self-Control **DOES NOT** participate in sin
- Self-Control **DOES NOT** indulge itself
- Self-Control **DOES NOT** satisfy itself

Always remember, self-control is a fruit of strength! By God's grace, how strong can we be? Strong enough not to do these things.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT – When dealing with the issue of spiritual fruit, *faithfulness* means – “**DO IT!**” *gentleness* means – “**TAKE IT!**” and *self-control* means “**DON'T DO IT!**” In times of temptation we need to call on God for His strength, and then **DON'T DO IT!** In other words, don't give in to *emotions*, *cravings*, and *urges*. Remember, don't think or do what you know is against God's Word. Don't pamper yourself. Don't rationalize. And a thousand other “don't do its.”

The word self control means “the ability to say “**NO.**” It is an evidence of will power that sometimes expresses itself in ‘won't power.’ It is the ability to say “**YES**” at the right time; “**YES**” to certain things, and “**NO**” to others. It is that kind of *inward strength* that takes all the circumstances and experiences of life and subjects them to evaluation and then decides, ‘*This is right, this is in the will of God,*’ or ‘*this is wrong, I will put it aside.*’ That is, don't do what you could – do what you should!

V. Struggling With Self-Control

How many of us struggle with self-control? For some of us it is:

- 1). Our thoughts
- 2). Food
- 3). Money
- 4). Sexual Deliverance

The battle over each allurements is won the same way – *by calling upon God and relying on the gift of His self-control; by asking Him for strength to say “Don’t do it” one more time.*

Depending upon God’s strength is the **KEY** to cultivating His self-control in our life.

VI. Nurturing Self-Control

Throughout the Bible we constantly see people who exhibited self-control and those who didn’t. This is what the Bible teaches us about self-control:

- A. Begin With Christ.** Is He your Lord and Master? The beginning of self-control mastery is to be mastered by Christ, to yield to His lordship.
- B. Monitor Your Input.** What was David’s problem? He looked *too* long at the wrong things.
- C. Stay Busy.** Both David and Potiphar’s wives failed because they had nothing to do. Do whatever you can to stay busy. By doing so, you will **REFUSE** to eat “the bread of idleness” and you will find yourself with less time to be tempted.
- D. Say “No!”** The word **NO** forms the armor and protective walls of the spiritual city... Sometimes **NO** can be a hard word to say, but it is the **KEY** to self-control, the word that the Lord blesses.
- E. Pray.** David was a man committed to the reality of prayer. Learn to pray about every aspect of your life.

Here is the good news. We can claim His power, walk by His Spirit, exercise self-control, and win the battle over fleshly temptation. What a wonderful God we have who makes the storehouse of His grace – **His self-control available to us.**