

Fruit of Self-Control

1Tim.4:1-11

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Gal.5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

What is your position Spiritually? Are you saved or unsaved, redeemed or condemned, going to Heaven or someplace other? This may be a sobering question to ask but one that needs an honest answer. For all who are children of God, for all you who have been redeemed, not only has God taken away your sin but He has also given you His Spirit to dwell within you. These are facts of truth.

These truths are what make the above scripture relevant and true in your life also; the war between the Spirit and the flesh. Our choices made in honor of Life and Spirit are not destructive to the flesh but healthful even though our flesh may desire otherwise. (See James 4:5ff; 1Pet.2:11) Since we are in a war for mastery over this body that we inhabit it would seem good to know what weapons are at our disposal. The weapon of self-control.

This last Fruit of the Spirit's characteristic is the weapon of self-control. Self-control is the inner strength to limit or restrain and in some respects too abstain. As Christians there are some things that we are to abstain from. These are things that God has declared wrong for people to do, period. Moderation is not the answer abstinence is. The works of the sinful nature listed in Gal.5:19-21 are acts of defiance against God's rule over our lives as His children.

There are plenty of "Thou Shall Not's" were we are commanded to not do something because it is absolutely contrary to God's will. Where Self control is most valuable

is in limiting our use or involvement in things permissible but in limited or restricted quantity or involvement. There are many areas where restraint is prudent.

Being servants of truth like our older brother Paul, we too must weigh our choices including what we accept as true. Notice Paul's warnings in the following passages: 1Tim.4:1-11; Col.2:20-23 (Paul continues his argument in Col.3:1-17) There has been times that Christianity has fallen prey to abuses against truth which like the Jews did in there attempt to define the Law proved to be impossible burdens.

Paul preached against these abuses in truth but he also preached about self control as he did to Felix. (Acts 24:25) Most of us also are guilty of some form of over-indulgence like Felix likely was and we too do not always want to hear about moderation or abstinence. Paul's solution for one area is to adjust the situation so that the act of weakness has legitimacy in its expression. (1Cor.7:9)

Paul's greatest argument for self-control is found in 1Cor.9:24-27 where we are called to "exercise" self control. As Christians we are called to strive (exercise) for mastery over our flesh and its appetites. Those men who have done well in this arena gain a qualification for another honor: leadership. (Titus 1:8 (6-9))

Self-control is an attribute of the Spirit that helps us succeed in dominating and bringing under subjection the desires and appetites of our flesh to the will and sovereign reign of our Lord and God, Jesus the Christ. We are called to strive for victory in the war for supremacy.

You who are not yet redeemed, even if you force your body by sheer willpower to walk under the rules of Christianity and succeed, you still loose because you do not have the mark of ownership: The Spirit of God in-dwelling. This is curable by submitting to Jesus' Lordship today.