

KOKOMO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

January 2020 Monthly Newsletter

Clearing the Deck

Regarding So-Called Self-Control

Adapted from Sunday Sermon 12/29/19 by Nicky Farmer

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be...self-controlled, ... Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to... train the young women to...be self-controlled,...Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. (Tit 2:1-6 ESV)

Here we find the Spirit of God through Paul telling a younger pastor what he needs to be teaching and what is to be constantly affirmed and kept at the center of Christian instruction as to our lifestyle. As we read above, Titus was to teach the older men to be self-controlled, the older women to have self-controlled lifestyles (not given to much wine) and to teach self-control to younger women, and the younger men were to be, you guessed it, self-controlled! In fact, the only category of people to whom the necessity of constantly teaching self-control was not here noted, was slaves. I wonder why? Maybe it was because those who have had their liberties removed, who live under constant imposed authority, who do what they are told and have to ask permission for everything, are blessed in that they are being controlled from the outside and therefore have less of a need to control themselves. How much greater would it be if we made ourselves slaves to Jesus every second of the day! Do you remember when you were a child, and your parents fed you at set times, and any other desire for food could only be acted on with the permission of your mother? What a blessing! But then came the fateful day, when you were expected to feed yourself. You reached into the refrigerator with consultation to nobody. You became a slave of whatever whim entered your mind or twinge tickled your belly, whether it was true hunger or not? You were entrusted with the responsibility to discern and regulate your own food intake. Most of us have never recovered since.

Whether I want to preach this, or you want to hear it, the inescapable fact of the Word of God is that self-control is to be one of the defining marks of the Christian life. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22-25 ESV.)

Why do I even need to speak this way, or apologize for bringing up such a subject? Partly, I believe, it is because we are deceived. Negativity about self-control is a lie from the pit of hell, from whence comes the satanic mantra, "Do what thou wilt." In truth, holiness is happiness and self-control is freedom. Who wouldn't want to talk about that! Another possible reason for the reluctance to talk about self-control is because we may have some misconceptions about self-control, which I'd like to "clear the deck of" in a few moments. Yet another reason may be that ALL of us have failed in this area, and come under guilt and condemnation in the process. But in the name of Jesus, we are not to fear failure. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, even if they fail in their attempts to do so! Each of us are learners. We are in the process of learning the walk of the Spirit of God.

God Almighty is our most competent teacher. He is the one who calls himself the LORD who sanctifies. He is the one doing the work. We need not fear or be condemned. Self-control, I believe, is a PhD degree in the school of the Spirit. It's a high level class. It's no shame to have to retake the class seven times seventy times.

Despite these remarks, there may be some who relish the message of self-control in an inappropriate way. They relish it because they think they can do it pretty well. They are self-confident and self-reliant. They may lack sensitivity and discernment concerning their own failures. They may be liberal with themselves: inadvertently thinking themselves successful because they have lowered the standard from the shininess, radiance, and beauty of God to some set of man made rules or a limited number of biblical precepts. Anyone belonging to a group of this kind is also deceived, but can you blame them? After all, the very word, self-control is somewhat of a misnomer.

The term, "self-control" implies that you can control yourself by yourself. This is false. Even the champions of the world who have exerted control over certain departments of their lives in order to succeed in a given endeavor (be it business, or sports, or education) have not brought their whole being under control. "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice." (James 3:16 ESV.) In other words, though one may exert control over certain departments of life to achieve a result, if it is not done through the Spirit of God, SELF actually ends up being more out of control. Being disciplined in a few departments, only to become self-reliant, self-confident, judgmental, impatient, or proud is not the kind of "self-control" God is looking for.

In Christianity, we must understand self-control to mean the control of SELF and all its manifestations with and through the Spirit of Almighty God. SO whether we are trying to tame the tongue, the belly God, or our information lust, some practical steps may be useful to a degree, but unless the desired result is God himself, and the main tool of deliverance is seeking Him and his presence, what use is it? At the root of every desire that leads us into something dead and unedifying is deception, and the only way to break deception is through Jesus Christ. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:14-17 ESV.)

I hope that this clearing of the deck from wrong attitudes and misconceptions about the nature of self-control encourages us to pursue a life of poise and control that can only be found as we seek His Spirit in every moment and situation of the day.



January 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Church 7pm	3	4
5 Church 10 & 6:00 Testimony Night	6 Mayor's Prayer Breakfast 6:30am	7	8	9 Lisa Kilmer Sherri Hale Church 7pm	10 Wayne Free	11
12 Church 10 5pm Home-groups	13 Ann Godsil	14	15 Sam Farmer	16 Church 7pm Parents Group 7:15	17	18 6pm Board Dinner
19 Church 10 6:30 KRM	20 <i>Pastor & Marcia Schultze</i>	21	22	23 Church 7pm	24 <i>Bill & Ann Godsil</i> 6:30pm Hang Out	25
26 Church 10 5:30pm Northwoods Building Fund	27	28	29 Laurie Sullivan	30 Doris Lechner Church 7pm	31	