



The Harvest

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Confident and Controlled

*“For the grace of God has appeared,
bringing salvation to all men, training us to deny
ungodliness and worldly desires
and to live in a manner that is self-controlled and righteous
and godly in the present age.”
~ Titus 2:11-12 ~*

Self-control, the last fruit of the spirit, is God’s final challenge to us in Galatians 5:22-23. The world is full of distractions – both things that are bad for us as followers of the Lord and things that may seem good but are not what God has for us. Temptation comes in many forms, and when we follow through with our immediate desires to gratify what we want in the moment, we distance ourselves from God and place ourselves on the throne where God should reside in our hearts.

This is why Paul speaks so strongly of the idea of self-control. This result of the Holy Spirit’s guiding illuminates our path towards living a life of righteousness. The “self” has to be controlled. We live in a fallen world and, as such, will always struggle with temptation and sin creeping into our hearts and lives. Yeshua Himself knew and even experienced this (*read 4:1-11*). The Messiah felt temptation and resisted! The Bible further says, “*He [God] made the One who knew no sin [Yeshua] to become a sin offering on our behalf*” (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). From this, we learn a very important lesson: temptation and sin are not one in the same. Temptation is common to all mankind. It is only when we give into temptation that we sin, thereby pulling ourselves away from the heart of the Father. The good news here is that God has promised us a way out! Scripture says, “*No temptation has taken hold of you except what is common to mankind. But God is faithful – He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can handle. But with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it*” (*1 Corinthians 10:13*). What a promise!! We are not alone in this battle for self-control. And the word “battle” here is not thrown around lightly. We are truly in a war for righteousness. Our hearts are being fought over between the forces of good and evil. Engage actively in the battle, and you will see God fight on your behalf.

Pause: Take some time to examine your heart. Find a quiet place you can pray and ask the Lord in what areas of your life you have not exercised self-control. Be honest with yourself. Condemnation creates an environment where growth can’t flourish. So be kind and forgiving towards yourself. Allow yourself to admit where you struggle. Write it down. Write down some reasons why you might struggle with this particular area.

Yeshua talks frequently about self-control. Perhaps the most common reference of this is in Luke (*read Luke 9:23-25*). The “self” has to be controlled. We have the command as followers of Yeshua to live lives that are not self-centered but rather sacrificed to the One who has all authority and control. In order to truly submit to Him, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We can’t do it on our own. We must allow our hearts to be moved by the prompting of the Spirit and not merely by our own thoughts, emotions, and desires. When we live lives of self-control, we are submitted to the will of God. We are living according to His commands – outlined in the Torah and throughout the rest of Scripture – and by the leading of Holy Spirit on a moment by moment basis. If we aren’t allowing the Lord to guide us, we are controlled by the world. In addition, we won’t experience the rest of the fruit of the spirit if we aren’t practicing self-control. Without self-control, we are only concerned about our wants, our desires, and our needs. Thus, we leave no space for the sacrificial **love** of those around us. We experience only short-term fulfillment and never experience true **joy**. We won’t find **peace** in the world or in fulfilling our own desires. We don’t exercise **patience** in seeking immediate gratification. We are neither **kind** nor **good** to those around us. We do not remain **faithful** to God and His commands, breaking our covenant with Him. We ignore **gentleness** towards others in favor of ourselves. A lack of self-control affects every other fruit of the spirit in a negative way. This is why Yeshua refers to self-control as a “denying of self.”

When we deny ourselves, we proclaim trust in the Lord. We believe that His promises for us are greater than the promises of sin. When we live this out, temptation – though it still exists – holds no power. Temptation cannot win. So, friend, walk in the victory God has promised you!! Exercise self-control and watch how freedom and all of the fruit of the spirit increase in your life.

Based on what you wrote earlier, take some time to make a game plan for moments when you are tempted in that area. Be specific. Don’t leave yourself any room for the enemy to convince you to ignore God’s leading. Equip yourself with Scripture and strategies. Then put it into action. Be merciful towards yourself when you stumble, and walk forward in the victory you have been given.

Worship: Spend some time in worship, asking God to change your heart and move you towards a place of laying down your desires before Him in sacrifice.

- ~ New Wine by Hillsong United
- ~ New Heart by Mosaic Worship
- ~ Spirit and the Bride by Joshua Aaron
