Spiritual Growth: Add Self-Control

Once we know what is right, the next challenge is doing it consistently. That is why Peter says to "add…to knowledge self-control" (**2 Pet. 1:6**). Self-control is the ability to govern oneself—to master desires, impulses and appetites rather than be mastered by them. The Greek word carries the idea of "holding oneself in," having power over one's passions. It is strength that is directed inward.

This quality is essential because knowledge alone is not enough. It is possible to know what is right and still fail to do it. Without self-control, knowledge becomes little more than unused information—which is useless. Self-control is what enables us to put knowledge into practice.

Jesus made self-denial a requirement for being His disciple: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself" (**Luke 9:23**). Paul recognized the same necessity, when he compared the Christian life to an athlete who disciplines his body in order to win (**1 Cor. 9:24-27**). Without self-control, spiritual failure is inevitable.

The struggle for self-control is real. Scripture describes the conflict between the flesh and the spirit (**Gal. 5:16-17**). Even Paul spoke of the internal battle between knowing what is right and struggling to do it (**Rom. 7:15-19**). Left to ourselves, we are often overpowered by our own desires.

But there is hope. Self-control begins with a transformed life in Christ. In baptism, we are set free from the dominion of sin and raised to walk a new life (**Rom. 6:3-6**, **12-14**). While temptation remains, sin no longer has to rule over us.

From there, self-control grows as we are guided by the Word of God. When we fill our minds with Scripture and walk according to its truth, we are able to resist the desires of the flesh (**Gal. 5:16**; **Psa. 119:11**). God's Word reshapes our thinking and strengthens our resolve. It also grows as we rely on God's strength. We are not left to fight alone—God works in us and strengthens us (**Phil. 2:12-13**; **4:13**). Through prayer and dependence on Him, we gain the strength to overcome. We cannot do it without HIM!

Self-control is demonstrated in everyday decisions—controlling the body, the tongue and even the ego. It is choosing holiness over indulgence, humility over pride, and service over selfishness. It also involves proper balance. True self-control is not based on human rules or outward restrictions that appear spiritual but lack real power (**Col. 2:20-23**). It is a heart-driven discipline that is rooted in God's truth.

If we are to grow as Christians, we must learn to master ourselves. Faith begins the process. Knowledge directs it. But self-control makes it real in daily life.

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