

Thoughts for Consideration



From Grace Christian Ministries

Topics

Topic One – The Subject of Self Control	3
Topic Two – Stay Close to God	9
Topic Three – What is the Meaning of Life?	14

Topic One

The Subject of Self-Control

Introduction:

One of the most overlooked qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is the fruit of temperance or self-control. This characteristic doesn't spring up simply because we have the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit on the inside of us. It becomes an endearing manifestation as we yield to His superintending power and authority in our lives through the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit endows, leads, guides, reinforces, comforts, and brings conviction. The aim is to allow Him to perform all of these practices in our lives, if we are to manifest any one of the nine qualities in Galatians 22-23. There are three considerations we will examine as they pertain to the characteristic of temperance in the Holy Spirit.

1. **It Starts with a Temperate Attitude** – This is not occasional or circumstantial thinking and behavior — where we display it based on the situation. This is a mindset chosen and developed as a result of daily interaction with God through dependence, submission, and humility.

Philippians 2:1-11

Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being

like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* ⁴ *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.* ⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* ⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2. It is Chosen and Developed behind daily interaction with God through dependence, submission, and humility.

- a. **Dependence** – A reliance on God for help with spiritual and physical needs due to an awareness of human helplessness.

 - b. **Submission** – (Greek) *Hupotasso* - To arrange in order under. It is actually a military term. In the military, there is a strong sense of submitting to someone of higher rank. A soldier must arrange himself in order under his sergeant. A sergeant arranges himself in order under the master sergeants. A master sergeant arranges himself in order under the lieutenants; the lieutenants under the captain, the
-

captain under the major, and the major under the general, who himself must submit to the Commander-in-Chief. Everything is arranged “in order under.” Its bare bones meaning is that one has to arrange himself systematically in order under another. In context with God, it denotes a daily practice of surrendering or staying in one’s place.

- c. **Humility** – One of the foremost tests of Christian character. It is an attitude of meekness that requires one to acknowledge that, in the flesh, there are many inadequacies. This, in turn, renounces prideful or arrogant thinking and behavior.

Reference: 1st Peter chapter two. The author, Peter, starts off with admonishing his audience to lay aside behaviors that are not consistent with their spiritual lives and to desire the pure milk of the word as a newborn babe desires milk for sustenance and growth.

Then he declares that they are a chosen generation and have been brought out of darkness into the marvelous light. He encourages them by sharing how they are God’s own special people, employing the word “peculiar”. He then explains how they are to live before the world and are to have an attitude of harmless submission. He closes this chapter with steadfastness and patient endurance of Jesus Christ in verses 21-25,

²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²²“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit

found in His mouth”; ²³ *who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;* ²⁴ *who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.* ²⁵ *For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer^[2] of your souls.*

3. **The Response to Our Interaction with God** – In First Corinthians chapter Nine, the apostle Paul starts off with vindicating his fidelity to the work of God and the commitment of his labor. He then moves on to share the importance of serving and reaching others by displaying the example of Christ. He concludes with the reward of an imperishable crown by using the example of bringing order to his body anything within him that would interfere with his course). He wasn’t referring to things outside of himself. Let’s take a look at how he described his response to what was needful in his own body and life in verses 24-27.

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

- a. We don't have a problem interacting with God and sharing deeply intimate moments. Our challenge is in our response to the encounters we have with Him. Refer back to the passage from Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians — *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things.* This is the attitude of a competitor. He or she does not display situational or circumstantial self-control, but keeps the disposition of discipline in mind as daily practice.

 - b. There is aim in discipline and self-control. *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air.* ²⁷ *But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.* The writer (apostle Paul) is doing this to put himself in the best position to overcome temptation. One cannot war off urges and enticements without discipline (bringing order to the body and life). Urges don't merely fall off because a person goes to church, reads their bible, or even spends quality time with God. Those are the resources needed to train our lives however, we must still respond by going out into the competition. We can look good on the practice field; but how we perform when we get under the lights is the real test to see if we will take what we have learned and
-

use it to put ourselves in the best possible position to achieve.

- c. There is a consequence for not bringing order to the body (life) – *lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*. The apostle declares that without a response that is consistent with his daily practice, he becomes ineligible, which weakens his chances at achievement. When we don't bring the things that take place in our encounters with God over into our practical lives, it weakens our chances at growing in the fruit of Jesus Christ.

Review the three areas of consideration related to temperance (Self-Control) in the Holy Spirit.

- (1.) It starts with a temperate attitude.
 - (2.) It is chosen and developed behind daily interaction with God through dependence, submission, and humility.
 - (3.) The response to our interaction with God.
-

Topic Two

Stay Close to God

Introduction

The safest and securest place to find rest for our souls is in our Heavenly Father. He is Father God! King David referred to Him as a shepherd in Psalm 23. He refers to green pastures, still waters, paths of righteousness, and rod and staff to depict the dependence for life on God. The objective of this lesson is to help the child of God understand the importance of a complete and total dependence on his/her Heavenly Father.

Point #1 - He has brought us into a new covenant through His Own Son, Jesus Christ. God is Spirit. He is all-knowing, all encompassing, and all-wise. All that we need to live this earthly life with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding is in our Heavenly Father through Christ.

We have found meaning, hope, and significance through our relationship with God in the New Covenant (Heb. 8:8). It is a covenant of unconditional blessing based upon the finished redemption of Christ. It secures blessing for the church and is unconditional, final, and irreversible.

Point #2 - The position of dependence is what we come away with when we stay close to God. This is developed as we continue to reach

to Him, seek Him, and pour our hearts into Him. This transcends any religious act or duty and places us in a close and personal relationship with our Heavenly Father, *Romans 8:14-17*. Staying Close to God gives birth to a dependence that projects and immerses one's entire being in Him. The most intimate and detailed places in the heart are open and released to God, as Abba Father.

Point #3 - Stay close to God and depend on Him if you fall. In Psalm 51 King David makes his appeal to God for mercy, deliverance, and restoration after committing some very serious sins. Yet in his appeal is his deepest need for help through a crying out for his God (his Heavenly Father). He came to realize that the most precious and valuable thing he had was his fellowship with God. He did not seek to have his kingship, status, or position restored — only his fellowship and closeness with His God. There were consequences that King David had to face; however, restoration of his soul would be his consolation. When we find ourselves in dark places that yield sin, it is time to turn to God. The consequences of the fall will create a brokenness and humility, and will cause the child of God to reach for Him with great fervor. Transgression can cause feelings of worthlessness, despair, and shame however, that is the precise time to depend on God as King David did.

Point #4 - Stay close to God and depend on Him if you are feeling lonely. There are moments in life when we all feel disconnected and

deflated by the blows dealt to us; but, we are never left alone to deal with painful emotions. God is right there in those moments of loneliness He is extending His arms of hope. There is nothing that we are currently facing that God did not know about beforehand. Here is the perfect opportunity to draw you closer to Himself. We cling to people and situations for a sense of safety, belonging, security, and comfort; but, when those areas are affected or not in place, where or to whom do we turn? Do we attempt to fill the emptiness on our own or do we reach for our Heavenly Father? He knows there are times when we feel as if no one truly understands, which causes us to shut off the most vulnerable emotions of our hearts. He sees when we are abandoned and forsaken, leaving a hole in our hearts. These are extremely difficult experiences, which can cause bitterness, resentment, and anger to take root. In these moments, look to your Heavenly Father and reach for his hand of comfort. Matthew 11:28-30 declares, *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.* God is speaking not merely of a physical weight but a mental and emotional one. He said that He would give us rest — He did not say that he would remove the hurtful feelings, as these are not cured instantaneously. But, allowing Him in, with time and healing, will give us rest for our souls.

Point #5 - Stay Close to God and Depend on Him if you need direction in life. The dry spells can happen to the best of us as children of God. There are times in life when we experience a lack of fulfillment and energy which causes stagnation in our passion. We cannot always figure it out but we know that there is more that we desire. It is in those moments that our Heavenly Father has all of the answers. The lack of fulfillment we feel could be God making an appeal to us to come closer to Him. It could mean that he wants us to go to a new level in our relationship with Him. It could mean that God sees us attempting to go at some things in our own strength and ways and He wants us to be obedient to his instructions. Lack of fulfillment begins inwardly, but God's children often look outwardly attempting to change their routines to find meaning and purpose. The key is to look to God and depend on Him to fill our voids. We need His wisdom for life to light our pathways. Whenever we try to make our own changes that we think will bring us fulfillment, if we have not satisfied the inward need and longing for God, the feelings of discontentment will resurface (Proverbs 3:1-8; 13-24). The words of the passage speak loud and clear that we need to depend on our Heavenly Father for direction in life. There are benefits to living in His wisdom.

Review:

(1.) He brought us into a new covenant through His Own Son, Jesus Christ.

- (2.) The position of dependence is what we come away with when we stay close to God.
 - (3.) Stay close to God and depend on Him if you fall.
 - (4.) Stay close to God and depend on Him if you are feeling lonely.
 - (5.) Stay close to God and depend on Him if you need direction in life.
-

Topic Three

What is the Meaning of Life?

What is the meaning of life? Many Philosophers have tried to answer this question. Some have reasoned that it means to do good in one's life. Others have concluded it is what you make of it? Most people would subscribe to the latter – life is what you make it? For the follower of Jesus Christ, we don't have to make it; IT was made for us.

John chapter 14:1-6 states, *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

What way should we take? What or whom should we believe? And what is the meaning of life? Verse six answers all three questions.

There are times when we all struggle with perspective about life and concentrate more on the physical, temporal life; however, Jesus provides a strong perspective about Life in Luke chapter twelve. He teaches on subjects such as being wary of hypocrisy, fearing God, and confessing Him before others. He also cautions against coveting, which

is the attitude of overconsumption with a temporal, materialistic, and superficial life. Is this not the mindset of western thought? While Jesus never forbids the pursuit of success in one's life, He does caution his followers against coveting, (Luke 12:13-21).

¹³ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. ¹⁴ And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? ¹⁵ And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

There is much insight to be gained this parable. Most will come away with a perspective. As His followers, we know how to approach life while experiencing temporal achievements and accomplishments. But, there are moments when even the followers of Jesus Christ can become consumed with a western philosophy about the meaning of life. Brothers and Sisters, we have found life! In the first 13 verses of I John chapter five, John testifies of God's witness in Christ and the assurance

of life to those who believe in Him. He focuses on the life that we inherited based on believing God's witness and the record of His Son.

¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

This is eternal life (forever, without ending, uninterrupted and uninhibited). What does this provide for us as we are living in a physical, material world? It provides the three things that every human being desires in their lives: *Peace, Purpose, and Promise*. When we live life apart from Christ there is an absence of peace, so people attempt to fill their lives with material things and pleasure to give them a sense of comfort — which is a false sense of peace. Secondly, when life is lived apart from Christ there is a constant search for meaning and purpose; and third, life apart from Christ can provide no guarantees or promises — only temporal satisfaction. On the other hand, life for the follower of Jesus Christ is lived from the heart. The right things are in the heart, which is a prerequisite for a life of peace, purpose, and promise.

Let's discuss the three things that every human wants, which we have received as a result of a life in which Jesus Christ is at the center.

1. Peace – to be sound and complete as a result of inward fulfillment. True Biblical peace does not mean the absence of disturbance, trials, or earthly challenges. It means that we are held together (sound) behind the covenant relationship we have with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ. He holds and keeps our hearts, (Philippians 4:6-8). Isaiah 26 speaks of the triumphant power of God throughout the land of Judah and declares, *You will keep him in perfect peace Whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.* (Verse 3).

2. Purpose – The word is used biblically to declare meaning, intent, and by design.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.¹¹In Him also we have obtained an

inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who¹ is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:3-13).

Paul starts off his writing to the Ephesians addressing their redemption in Christ. This solidifies that our lives are in Him and whatever we do in this physical existence will be to serve a higher meaning in Him! Christ lived in the earth and those He taught, healed, and built relationships with served a higher purpose and meaning with respect to God's will. Whatever professions we choose, whatever we learn academically, whatever relationships we have, and whoever we share God's message with, our lives serve a higher meaning than the temporal gratification we gain from those things. God unveils it little by little that our lives and activity in Him are part of a much larger picture.

3. Promise – To have hope, assurance, and confidence surrounding a life that's filled with the two aforementioned benefits of life in Christ — peace and purpose. Promise seals the deal! We live with an attitude of transcendence, that is, we know there is more beyond what's temporal because that promise is made from God. Therefore, we rejoice in hope.

In Peter's remarkable evangelistic message on the day of Pentecost, he bears witness of God's promise,

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39)

Paul reinforces the inheritance that God's people received through Jesus Christ in his prayer for the Ephesians.

¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. ²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:15-23).
