

Self-Control: “Add to Your Faith... Self-Control”

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27; 2 PETER 1:3-7

Personal freedom is a wonderful aspect of living in a free society and being a child of God. But personal freedom can be like a highway with a ditch on either side. One ditch is called legalism and the other licentiousness. Legalism limits freedom with carefully defined structures and restrictions; licentiousness celebrates freedom and encourages the enjoyment of it to the point of excess, which eventually destroys the very thing it celebrates.

In a sense, self-control involves handling this freedom properly and not falling into either ditch. The Greek word for *self-control* literally means “self-mastery.” Our goal should be to master those things that would mar our lives in such a way that we can be liberated to serve God and others in glorious freedom.

1. Which of the following motivations for personal discipline or self-control did you grow up with? Discuss.

"Remember: God sees everything."

"What will the neighbors think?"

"Christians don't do that."

"Use your own judgment."

"Anything goes!"

READ I CORINTHIANS 9:19-27.

2. What was Paul's motivation and ultimate purpose for limiting and adapting his own freedom?

3. What dangers are there in being all things to all people?

How does self-control limit these dangers and free the Christian?

4. Why is the analogy of an athlete a good one for the Christian walk?

5. What aspects of your own Christian walk require more self-control and discipline?

READ 2 PETER 1:3-7.

6. What has God provided to help us live godly lives (verses 3-4)?

7. Which of the areas in verses 5-7 are most important to you right now? Why?
8. How are self-control and perseverance related?
9. Compare and contrast this list with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.
10. How do you balance making "every effort" with depending on the Holy Spirit to bring forth these qualities in your life?

11. Think back over the topics and passages we have studied. How do you now define what the fruit of the Spirit is?

12. What in these studies has challenged you in a new way?

Pray for renewed vigor in living the Spirit life.