

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



The Battle for Self-Control

KEY PASSAGE: Galatians 5:22-23 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7

► SUMMARY

Is there any area of your life that is out of control? Perhaps it's finances, moral issues, relationships, attitudes, habits, gossip, or laziness.

A lack of self-control in any part of our lives does not fit who we are in Christ. His desire is that we live in full surrender to Him so that His Spirit can produce in us the fruit of self-control.

► SERMON POINTS

If we are in a tug of war with God for control over our lives, we'll experience tension, stress, and unhappiness because we are at odds with Him. Anytime we let our desires and impulses rule our lives, there will be no rest, peace, or joy.

Do you struggle with any of these desires?

- **Acceptance by others.** How powerful is the need for acceptance in your life?
- **Being loved by others.** Is this a motivating factor in your decisions?
- **Pleasure.** Are you dominated by whatever is fun or makes you feel good at the moment?
- **Sex.** Do you have desires for sexual pleasure outside the boundaries of God's will?
- **Wealth and security.** Are these a priority in your life?
- **Achievement.** Has a healthy desire to excel become competitive and out of control?
- **Notoriety or fame.** Do you seek prestige without considering the cost?
- **Happiness.** What will you do or become in the pursuit of happiness?

- **Personal attractiveness.** Are you consumed with a desire to look better than others?
- **Control.** Do you long to control other people or be in positions of power and authority?
- **Self-acceptance.** Are you discontent with yourself and how God made you?

The Flesh Versus the Spirit

Self-control is thinking before acting and seriously considering the possible results. It is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit that stands in contrast to the deeds of the flesh.

- **The Deeds of the Flesh.** "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

This is a list of actions that are not from the Spirit but from the fleshly sin nature. The warning is given that those who practice these sins will not see heaven. This isn't talking about having committed them in the past or occasionally failing to resist temptation in one of these areas.

The word *practice* is the key to an accurate understanding of this passage. To practice means to make it a consistent habit, a lifestyle, or an identity. Those who do this are most likely not true Christians because no one who still lives continually in sin is really saved.

■ **The Fruit of the Spirit.** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). These are attitudes that result from the Holy Spirit’s work within those who have trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord. The people with these characteristics stand in stark contrast to the society around them because these are Christlike attributes. There are places they will not go, activities in which they will not participate, and things they won’t watch because to do so would not fit who they are in Christ.

All who have genuinely been saved turn their backs on sin. Although this doesn’t mean they will never sin, their old lifestyle has been renounced. They are now committed to being obedient to the Lord and walking in His ways, not in the deeds of the flesh. As they yield to the Holy Spirit within them, He produces His fruit that is a reflection of Christ and a blessing to them.

The battle comes when those of us who are believers want to do what’s right but feel something pulling us in the other direction. The only way to break this tension is to surrender to the Lord by confessing and turning from sin and yielding control of our lives to God. If we refuse to do this, we’ll become more enslaved to that sin and miss out on the blessings and rewards of obedience.

It may seem impossible to give up an enslaving sin, but it’s not if we have the Holy Spirit within us. He empowers us to turn away from it and surrender ourselves to God. When the Spirit has control of our thoughts and actions, then we’ll be able to think before we act and have the willingness and strength to follow God’s will for our lives.

The Key to Self-Control

- **Self-control requires that we think before we act.** If we fail to do this, we will regret it later.
- **We must have a strong desire to obey God.** If we don’t, we are not going to overcome the inner battle with sin or live a godly lifestyle.

■ **We must believe in our hearts that the Holy Spirit who lives within us will enable us.** The evil condition of our society need not overpower us because we do not fight this battle alone. The Spirit will provide the enablement so we can renounce sin and live in submission to Him.

When we are tempted to yield to sin, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- How will this affect me spiritually?
- How will this affect me financially?
- How will this affect my health?
- How is it going to affect how others see me? Will they see someone who is truly committed to the Lord or someone who claims to be a Christian but doesn’t live like one? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in my life all day, every day?
- Is this better than having God’s best for my life?

Don’t be deceived.

A life spent walking in the Spirit and bearing His fruit is not always easy, but it’s God’s best plan for us. Furthermore, serious and painful consequences await us if we yield to sin. Paul warns us about this in Galatians 6:7: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.” To claim Christ as Savior and then live as we please mocks God and results in a future painful harvest of what we’ve sown. But to live in obedience to the Lord produces a great crop of righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit in us.

► RESPONSE

- In what part of life do you lack self-control? Why is it so difficult for you to surrender this to the Lord?
- Think about the areas in which you have already relinquished control to God. What has been the result? How would remembering God’s faithfulness in the past help you yield even more of your life to Him today?

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