

Self Control

What is the value of self-control? Self-control is that which enables us to hold our tongues when we are tempted to viciously put someone in his place once and for all; or when we know a juicy bit of gossip that would be entertaining to the group and would turn us into the "life of the party"; or when an occasion almost demands that we betray a confidence that must not be betrayed under any circumstances.

Self-control is that which enables us to control our passions when another is provoking us to anger; that keeps the clinched fists in the pockets when the agitator is only half our size; that keeps the lips sealed when another is railing and swearing at us. Self-control is that which enables us to be like our Lord "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" (I Peter 2:23).

Self-control is that which enables us to maintain purity of heart and to thrust out evil thoughts before they can take root; that enables us to place the best possible construction on another person's actions when unproven rumors could easily destroy our confidence in him; that helps us to maintain a cheerful disposition when everything around us has turned sour. Self-control is that which enables us to love the unlovable and to hate that which the world loves.

Self-control is that which enables us to rule our appetites; to say "no" when our lusts would lead us to sin or when that which is harmful to our health is placed before us. Self-control is that which enables the smoker to put down his cigarettes and the alcoholic to put down his drink and never return to it. Self-control is that which enables us to rule rather than to be enslaved.

The Bible does not glorify the indifferent and impassive. It is not our goal to be uncaring. To be like Paul, we must be able to have our spirit stirred within us when we are surrounded by evil (Acts 17:16). To be like our Lord, we must sometimes feel anger when surrounded by hypocritical self-righteousness (Mark 3:5); we must even react with occasional outbursts of goodness on occasions, as when the Lord cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17). But, all such outbursts must be tempered with self-control, that in our anger we "do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).

God does not view our uncontrolled actions with amusement. Our temper tantrums and harsh, unbridled words are soul threatening, a potential bar to the abundant entrance into the Lord's everlasting kingdom (II Peter 1:5-11). We must not minimize the danger. We must not surrender to this evil.

What is the value of self-control? It is one of the qualities that enable us to go to heaven. The possessor of it is rich indeed.

- by Bill Hall

What's in it for Me?

The Lord described one of the shortcomings of the ancient Israelites as follows: "Everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them" (Isaiah 1:23). Like many today, the people of Israel were not much interested in helping those who could not help them in return. The prevailing way of determining whether or not to be charitable and kind was apparently to ask oneself, "What's in it for me?" and "What am I going to get out of it?" And so it is today. Unless there is some prospect of being rewarded with pleasure, financial gain or praise, few will show much concern for the welfare of the needy and lowly.

It has been said that you can learn a lot about a man's character by observing how he treats someone who can do nothing for him. A person of quality will be kind to those who are in positions "lower" than his (e.g. waiters, cashiers, clerks, employees at work, underclassmen at school, etc.). He will go out of his way to be helpful to those who cannot pay him back.

Jesus expects His disciples to "condescend to men of low estate" (Romans 12:16). He explicitly commands us to do good to those who cannot or will not repay us. In Luke 14:13-14 Jesus said, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just". And in Luke 6:35 He commands us to love our "enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for

nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High" (Luke 6:35).

Note that in both of the preceding passages, the reward for doing good to others is not material, financial, or even emotional -- it's spiritual and eternal. Let not our love and kindness be sold cheaply for the temporary rewards of this life. Rather, store up eternal treasures in heaven by showing courtesy and compassion to all. Make it your task today to do something for someone who cannot pay you back.

- by *Steve Klein*

No Authority for Church Buildings!?!

"We all do lots of things that we don't have authority for." That's a response some of our brethren use when we challenge them to produce authority for the innovations that they have introduced into the work and worship of the church. (For instance, we might ask them for "book, chapter, and verse" for their fellowship halls, church kitchens, and gymnasiums. Or, we may request a scriptural explanation for their support of human institutions, the sponsoring church arrangement, or other "missionary society" type organizations.) "What about church buildings," they will continue, "there's no authority for church buildings, but we have them anyway."

Let us try, once again, to put an end to this fruitless line of argumentation. First of all, do not forget that we **MUST** have Bible authority for everything we say and do. Paul commanded that "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). To act without scriptural authority is a sin.

Therefore, if there truly is no authority for church buildings, then the right thing to do is to get rid of the buildings and repent that we ever had them. We definitely should **NOT** use one wrong thing to justify doing other wrong things. Would you tell the thief that, since he's already a sinner, he might as well go out and commit murder? Of course not! But that is exactly the perverted "logic" of those who use this church building argument.

In truth, there **IS** authority for church buildings. The authority is inherent in the command to worship (Hebrews 10:25). Since we are told to assemble, there must be a place for such assembly. Since the Word does not specify where to meet, we must employ sound judgment and good stewardship in making an expedient decision about a meeting place (1 Cor. 10:23). This is much like the command to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mk. 16:15). We **MUST** "go" but the Lord did not specify **HOW** to go. Therefore we might choose to drive, fly, use the radio, etc. Expedient judgments are inherent in general (non-specific) commands.

Our brethren have simply missed it when they make this "no authority for church buildings" argument. By using it they are, in fact, admitting the sinfulness of their practices. Think!

- by *Greg Gwin*