

IMPACT

I **M**ust **P**ersonally **A**cknowledge **C**hrist **T**oday
Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own under-
standing; in *all your ways acknowledge Him* and He shall direct your path.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Passage: II Peter 1:2-6a “...But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control...”

Quote: “When I hear of anybody losing his temper, I always pray that he may not find it again. Such tempers are best lost.” Charles Spurgeon

With God’s enabling, Christians are to add to their faith self-control which is the mastery of natural appetites or desires.¹ It is “the exercise of inner strength under the direction of sound judgment that enables us to do, think, and say the things that are pleasing to God.”² For many people, self-control, or the lack thereof, is best measured by how they manage their thoughts, temper and speech. We addressed controlling our thought life in IMPACT 18. Solomon emphasized the undeniable value of keeping our emotions in check. “He who is *slow to wrath* has great understanding, but he who is *impulsive* exalts folly.” “Whoever has no *rule over his own spirit* is like a city broken down, without walls.”³ Likewise, James writes, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, *slow to speak, slow to wrath*; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” “If anyone does not *stumble in word*, he is a perfect (fully mature) man, able also to bridle the whole body.”⁴ While our thoughts, temper and speech are perhaps the greatest litmus tests of personal self-control, there are at least three other areas that bear our consideration when it comes to adding this important virtue to our faith.

Relationships: Like athletes who want to excel, a Christian must discipline himself or herself in a variety of areas, including the mandate to love.⁵ It is love for God and for others that is the greatest motivator of self-control. Christ, Who made Himself a servant and suffered untold shame and agony on behalf of His own, personified self-control motivated by love. Biblical love involves consistently making decisions that place the welfare of others ahead of our own desires and agendas.⁶ Mark it down! If you desire to reflect Christ’s love, you must practice the discipline of natural desires that can damage or destroy relationships if unchecked.

Redemptive Living: Like Christ, Paul’s ambition was to serve others for the welfare of their eternal soul and for the glory of God. “For though I am free from all men, *I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more....* I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. *Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.*”⁷ Although salvation is solely by the enabling grace of God granting repentant faith,⁸ Paul made himself a servant to others so that he might point them to Christ. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”⁹ Like Paul, *we must live redemptively*—with the eternal welfare of all men as a frontlet before our eyes. This requires self-control.

Rewards: Paul also speaks of controlling temporal desires so that he might win eternal rewards. “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.* And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate (self-controlled) in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But *I discipline my body and bring it into subjection*, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”¹⁰ For Christians, there is no better way to spend life than to invest it in things eternal! All else perishes!

Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and yet it is also an aspect of our character that God expects us to refine.¹¹ Without it, adding the other virtues that Peter mentions will be next to impossible.

1 Galatians 5:22-23 **2** Jerry Bridges **3** Proverbs 14:29; 25:28 See 15:18; 16:32; 19:11 **4** James 1:19-20; 3:2 **5** 1 Timothy 4:7-8; John 13:34-35; 15:12; Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:13; I Peter 1:22; I John 4:7-12 **6** Philippians 2:1-16 **7** I Corinthians 9:19 **8** Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8-9 **9** I Corinthians 10:31-33 **10** I Corinthians 9:22-27 **11** Galatians 5:22-25