

Self Control

The key to self-control is identifying what it is that needs to be controlled. Self control is the fruit of the Spirit. If you have no self-control, it means you don't have the Spirit. Mt 7:13 is concerned with what road disciples are on. Mt 6:31 speaks about the nations, and Eph 4:17 is how we used to be, how we used to walk. No professing disciple can practice what our Master commands here unless he has finished with self: with his right to his time, his right to determine what he shall do — all the rights of self. That is what we are saved from, the sins of self. If we are not saved from self, we are not saved. You can't even live in the community.

We must not be concerned about ourselves at all. The whole trouble is the concern about self. Self-regard makes communal living very hard. We must rid ourselves from the self. If we don't, we will find out on that Day that we have sidestepped the cross. 1 Cor 1:17 — Persuasive speech makes void the cross (like talking ourselves out of facing and dealing with the evil in our hearts, saying that it is “just accusation”).

The call to life in the Kingdom is Mt 16:24. If anyone wishes to come after Messiah, he must take up his cross, deny himself. Self is the first thing we must deal with (by the cross). We must rid ourselves of this constant tendency to be watching the interests of self, to be always on the lookout for insults, attacks, injuries, always in this defensive attitude. He is not telling the unregenerate to do this; He is telling disciples. All this must disappear; we must cease to be sensitive about self — this morbid sensitivity, the whole condition in which self is on the edge, and so delicately and sensitively poised and balanced that anything — the slightest disturbance — can upset that balance. It must be gotten rid of. We cannot let ourselves be offended. We must be better than the Pharisees.

So how can we find this kind of life? We must face the trouble squarely and honestly. Whenever we notice ourselves reacting or acting in self defense or when we

sense an annoyance or a grievance or a feeling that we have been wronged or hurt and are suffering an injustice — whenever we feel this defensive mechanism coming into play, we must face ourselves and ask the following questions:

1) Why does this thing upset me? Why am I grieved about it? What is my real concern at this point?

2) Am I really concerned about some general principle of justice and righteousness? Am I disturbed because I have some true cause? Or,

3) Is it just myself? Is it just this horrible self-centeredness and self-concern, this morbid condition into which I have gotten? Is it nothing but an unhealthy and unpleasant pride? (*Morbid* means characteristic of disease, abnormally susceptible to gloomy or unwholesome feelings.)

Judging ourselves now means we will be able to stand in that day (Mt 7:22-23; 1 Cor 11:31-32; 1 Jn 3:19; 4:17; Heb 10:38; 4:1; Lk 21:36; Rev 2:11; 3:10; 20:6,15; Mt 25:12,30).

Rev 3:21 says we must overcome in this matter if we are to have dominion.

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

This ruling of self is restoration from the Fall. It is having dominion over the flesh. We no longer give ourselves to Satan for his food. He can't even accuse. He feeds on our flesh. If we listen closely enough we will know that it is our flesh, our horrid pride, that is concerned about self, our reputation, our own greatness, and this we must reject and confess. It will be extremely painful, but "can we plead for painless progress with plastic smiles on our faces?" We must rise to our Master's commands. This is redemption and restoration (Tit 2:14). This is undoing the work of Satan (1 Jn 3:8).

Rev 3:21 — Overcoming is submission to our Father. This is how Messiah overcame — for our Father's benefit. If we do not overcome this way God does not benefit. We must pass through such a process to enter into the rule of Messiah on earth.

Those who care nothing for our Father's purpose, His cause on earth, His commands — and still less about His Kingdom or entering it — surely won't enter that Kingdom.

This process of overcoming we must pass through is the denial and control of self. But how can we come to have such self control as our Master has? It is through the judgment in the Body that we realize to what extent we have self-control or to what extent self controls us. It is amazing to what extent self controls us. Even in preaching and teaching the Good News it is a horrible discovery that we are concerned about doing it well, about how we sounded — and why? For our Master's glory, or for ours? Impressions, what others think, how I look: it is amazing to what extent self still pervades.

Have we ever realized the extent to which all the misery, unhappiness, failure, and trouble in our lives is due to only one thing, namely self? Consider in your mind last week, the moments of unhappiness, stress, strain, irritability, temper, things you have said that you were ashamed of or that put you off balance. Look at them one by one and you will see that self was behind them all. Self-sensitivity — watching self... Self is the cause of all life's unhappiness. We may say in self-defense, "It wasn't my fault; it was what someone else did to me." But the reason that they did it was self, and the reason you felt it was the same.

In the light of the scriptures, self was responsible for the Fall, so the first step in redemption (the inward work) is to deny self. Denying self is negating the Fall and walking in fellowship with our Maker as if we had never left the Garden. Had it not been for self, sin would never have entered the world. Satan's own sin was self-exaltation, and he put his temptation in terms of self, injecting his poison into the woman's veins:

God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. (Gen 3:5)

The lure of self-improvement, discontent with one's own circumstances, the accusation that God is unfair — this was the cause of the Fall.

There would be no arms negotiations except for the Fall, nor trucking strikes, nor inflation, nor greed, nor domestic or international crises. The trouble is self — self-assertion, defiance toward God, putting oneself on the throne of God — all of which separates us from Him. All moments of unhappiness in life are ultimately due to this separation. A person in real communion with God is happy (1 Jn 1:7). It does not matter where he is (Acts 16:19-25), he is happy if he is in communion with God.

It is important, in light of the fact that we are our brother's keeper, that we understand this fact: the ultimate cause of any misery and lack of joy is separation from God, which is caused by self. So if our brother is downcast and "suffering," our task is not to counsel him or to try to change his circumstances but to restore him to that proper relationship. Whenever we are unhappy it is because we are thinking about ourselves. According to our Father's word, man was meant to live entirely for His glory. He was meant to love his Creator with all his heart, soul, and strength — with all his energies. Our God should be the object of all affections and endeavors. The whole man is meant to glorify God. Therefore, any desire to glorify self is robbing God, and safeguarding the interest of self is sin. Self is the very thing in man that God condemns. It is under the curse of God and wrath of God.

1 Jn 3:18-21 — We need to let God condemn our hearts if we are not loving. The fruit of the spirit is love... which controls self (Gal 5:22-23). Mt 12:33 — The world is always trying to make the tree look good by prettying up the fruit. The cross makes the tree good and thereby makes the fruit good.

Rom 5:8-11; 8:1-10 — If we understand the scriptures, holiness means eventually this: Eph 5:1-5. Holiness means deliverance from self-centered life. This is undoing the works of Satan, which is redemption. Holiness is expressed in the death of self, not in what we don't do. Some do not do sinful deeds but are full of pride and self. (Dead men's bones!) Why did our Master come to earth? He came to deliver mankind from self.

Denying self is the first and last thing we do (Mt 16:24; Rev 12:11) if we are to follow Yahshua, our Redeemer. We see this selfless life in our Master Yahshua perfectly.

Phil 2:5 — He did not consider Himself. There would never have been redemption if He had not denied self. His selfless life on earth was in accord with our Father's will. In the likeness of man He made Himself entirely dependent upon our Father. Verse 8 tells to what extent He humbled (emptied) Himself. He did not live for or by Himself in any measure. This is how He fulfilled the Law.

Phil 2:5 is a command for us to obey. 1 Pet 2:23 — He entrusted Himself to Him who judges fairly. Our Master didn't complain about how people were treating Him. The cross of Messiah is the supreme illustration of self control, and the argument of the New Covenant is this: if we believe in the Sovereign Yahshua and His death for our sins, our greatest desire will be to deny ourselves.

Rev 20:6; Phil 3:11 — This is redemption. God's purpose can only be achieved if we see that our Master's death was not merely so that we could be forgiven. It was that a new people might be formed (Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 2:5), a new humanity, a new creation, a Kingdom set up consisting of people who have overcome like Himself.

Rev 2:11 — Those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death. They will be like Him. He is the pattern; we are His workmanship. We are to be conformed to the image of His Son, the first born among many brethren. While we live on earth we must be made like Him, freed from the life of self, independence, lawlessness. He did nothing on His own; this is the only way we can overcome like Him. 1 Jn 2:6 — Our Master walked under covering, under authority, in God's order (1 Cor 11:3). Mt 7:21; 16:24 — The only way God will allow His will to be done on earth is in His order.

2 Cor 5:14-15 — He died for all for this reason. This is the life to which we are called. Not the life of self-defense or self-sensitivity, but such a life that even if we are insulted we do not retaliate. If we receive a blow, we will turn the other cheek. We can

no longer say, “This is mine.” We have died to self. Our only possession, our only concern, is our Sovereign, His glory, His concern.

- This is the life our Master called us to.
- He died that we might be able to live it.
- He has put into His people His Spirit to help us do it. We deny the power of the Holy Spirit who energizes us for this purpose if we try to do it in our own strength (2 Tim 3:5).
- When we cry out as a kingdom of people, our Father will answer our prayer.
- God has made it live-able and possible.