

Be Christ Controlled

A flight instructor was sitting next to his student in their single-engine plane, when he said, "Well, I think it's time to take her in for a landing. Are you ready to go down?" The student said, "No problem, let's do it." As they approached the runway, the instructor looked at his student and noticed how calm he was. Normally, students coming in for their first landing are nervous, wide-eyed, and sweating bullets. But this young man was cool and relaxed. The instructor thought, "I cannot believe how calm this young man is. He will make a great pilot." But then the plane hit the runway with a thud, bounced fifty feet into the air, hit and bounced again, ran off the runway and landed upside down in a cornfield. The instructor, still strapped in his seat upside down, looked at his student and said, "Son, that was the worst first landing any student of mine has ever made." The student said, "Me? I thought you were landing the plane." Friend, who is piloting your life? Who has control of you? That is the essence of the fruit of the Spirit called "self-control."

Self-control is when you are in control when everything else is not. Sadly, we are living in an increasingly out-of-control society. We are financially out of control. Americans are the most indebted people on earth, with household debt averaging \$71,500, twice that of Great Britain, and eighty-nine times that of Switzerland. We are physically out of control. Pathologist, Thomas J. Bassier, says that of autopsies he has performed, two out of every three deaths are premature and are related to what he calls "loafer's heart," "smoker's lung," and "drinker's liver." The word exercise, like the word discipline, really irritates some people. One man said, "Whenever I think about exercising, I just sit down and rest until the feeling goes away." We are emotionally out of control. Our highways have become battlegrounds with road rage and our schoolyards have become shooting fields. Children are now shooting children, as well as teachers, for seemingly no reason whatsoever. Surely you know that our society is morally out of control. Our values and morals are at an all-time low. Our society rightfully protects endangered animals and deplorably celebrates the slaughter of unborn humans and calls it choice. The most recent democratic national convention allowed a planned parenthood abortion mobile to be set up outside its convention and provide murder on demand. Our moral walls are crumbling, and our society is sin-sick. Proverbs 25:28 says, "Like a city whose walls are broken down, is one who lacks self-control." The Bible says without the walls of self-control, an individual, a city, a state, or a nation is defenseless and easy prey for the enemy. This decay is from the relentless exaltation of self.

There is a danger to what is called self. There is no middle ground. Either you control yourself, or self will control you. We are living in a society that is saturated with the celebration of self no matter how it impacts others. Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts are now promoting a movement known as "selfism," which elevates self to the level of god and seeks to avoid anything that would lower someone's self-esteem. Over the last couple of decades, the lexicon of self-words has been purged of all terms that regard self-centeredness as negative. No longer are we to use words such as self-criticism, self-denial, self-discipline, self-control or self-sacrifice. They say the only words we should use are self-confidence, self-contentment, self-expression, self-assertion, self-indulgence, self-realization, self-approval, self-actualization, and even self-worship. Selfism has one commandment which says, "I am the lord, my god." In our out-of-control self-centeredness, we pursue every immoral and indecent act. Our only eternal hope and salvation is to die to self and allow Christ to be Lord of all and to fill us with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul says, "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." In Galatians 2:20 Paul declares the key to our being Christ-controlled, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Notice Paul says in verse 25: "If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit." You see, self-control is not a work, it is a walk. Self cannot be controlled from without. It can only be controlled from within. The way to self-control is to surrender to the spirit's control.

My friend, when Christ comes into your heart, and the Holy Spirit takes control of your life, then you will bear the fruit of the spirit, which is self-control. When the spirit is in control, self is in control and you will be so filled with, and led by, the holy spirit that the way you act, or react in any given situation, glorifies God and edifies others. When self-surrendering to Christ we realize that God mightily uses Christians who stay cool in a hot place, sweet in a sour place, and little in a big place. Let go of sin today and let God take control of you. Let God heal and forgive your past, fill you and guide you by His Holy Spirit today and direct your path as you live in such a way that brings honor and glory to Him.