



E7. Q.4. Pt.4. Gentleness, Self-Control

Continuing Question 4. What does it mean to be “*in the loins of,*” or “*of the seed of*” another? If man inherits more than just biological genes from their parents that affect our appearances, but something that affects our nature as well, is there also a kind of *spiritual* inheritance that also affects our nature_ that determines who we are?

Core scriptures: 1 Jn. 3.9 “*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*”

Today’s focus: Gal. 5.22 “*22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control.*”

Today we are considering the last two fruit of the Spirit and their opposites, or vices: they are *gentleness and self-control*. These are godly virtues, character traits of high moral standards. The cultivation and refinement of which will lead to very positive spiritual maturity.

The Fruit of Gentleness

The fruit of *gentleness*, or often translated *humility*, is singled out by both our Father and Lord Jesus Christ as the single-most virtue of desired Godly character. Consider the spiritual importance and significance of *humility* as used in the following scriptures:

Is. 57.15 “*For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and **humble** spirit, To revive the spirit of the **humble**, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*”

Mt. 11.28-29 “*28Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** (**humble**) and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*”

So do you see that this virtue is foremost desired to share in fellowship with God. It is a chief virtue in the nature of Christ, a virtue He wishes to share with the believer_ meaning you and me. In learning this virtue we will find “*rest for our souls,*” a spiritual and emotional rest offered to us now, as well as the eternal rest promised to all believers.

The fruit of *gentleness*, or *humility*, is characterized as having a calm demeanor. It is not a weakness as perceived by many, but rather it is having power, but under control; it reflects a spirit of submission to God’s will and a sincere consideration for others. Gentleness is slow

to react and always prefers a Christ-like response to people and situations. To bear this godly fruit demands sincere prayer, and faith in the power of the inward working Spirit of Christ. True humility recognizes one's strengths and weaknesses but does not flaunt them or downplay them to draw attention to ourselves. False humility is a twisted form of pride or self-centeredness disguised as humility. It is about manipulating others to gain attention and admiration while insincerely appearing humble.

The Opposite of Humility is its Vice Pride

Pride or vanity denotes a very self-centered ambition that seeks personal recognition and honor, most often without any substance or true merit. The New Testament cautions against this self-promotion and the pursuit of superficial accolades or acknowledgements for one's self. The word *vanity* seems to take the meaning of pride up a notch meaning excessive pride or admiration in one's appearance or achievements. The focus here is entirely upon "self," self-exaltation, self-promotion, and self-admiration.

Satan's fall from heaven is symbolically described in Is. 14.12-15 and Ez. 28.12-18. Because of the sin of pride, Satan, then called *Lucifer*, didn't just fall from heaven, he was pushed out of heaven to the earth. Notice the many "*I will*" statements made in those scriptures. Satan is described here as an exceedingly beautiful angel; he was presumably the highest-ranking angel, the anointed cherub. However, he allowed himself to become full of pride and no longer content with his heavenly position. Satan desired to exalt himself above God, to be God sitting on His throne; and to assume being the supreme ruler over the universe.

After his "fall" Satan continued his quest to be as God with his successful attempt to deceive and lure Adam and Eve to eat of that same bitter fruit, thereby gaining control in their lives, (Gn. 3.1-5) and usurping the authority God gave to them on the earth. Today, with the exception of the Church, all the earth is under the power of Satan, 1 Jn. 5.19 concludes, "*We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*" And this very hour he is further described as ambitious "*man of sin, the son of perdition*" still seeking to displace God from His throne, 2 Thes. 2.3-4 reads, "*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*"

Pride is not a simple misdemeanor, a stumbling stone; it is sinful, alienating, and with severe consequences. It is a form of unacceptable arrogance, a negative trait that is condemned as it leads individuals away from God as the only source of the Tree of Life, and towards the forbidden fruit of self-reliance and self-exaltation. 1 Jn. 2.16 cautions seeking the very short-term gains in this world, "*the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life*", as they are only temporary pleasures, but God is eternal. It should be noted that the word "*life*" in this verse is not "*zoe*" life which is spiritual and eternal, but "*bios*" life referring to

physical life, encompassing one's manner of life, including his appearance, livelihood, possessions, and resources.

Certainly pride is a vice that must be acknowledged and repented of, to humbly ask forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ, and to seek after true humility in our relationship with God and others. In speaking of others, we should conclude by reading Phil. 2.3, which reads,

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

"Let each esteem others better than himself," perhaps, simply meaning, instead of fixing our eyes upon ourselves, and those points we want to excel and build up, like becoming more humble, and instead fix our eyes on others and the points in their lives to build them up instead. True humility before God is not in berating ourselves for our lack of humility as much as simply exalting Him above our own selves as we worship Him for who He truly is and honor Him with praise and thanksgiving. So too it is good to show similar humility to others, not with a false humility and praise, which I have seen too much of, but with an honest encouragement to build them up spiritually and in relationship with our Lord and God.

The Fruit of Self Control

The old time Gospel preachers would often preach about the importance of *temperance*, referring to it mainly as abstinence from intoxicating drinks. But the word as used in scripture, more often interpreted as *self-control*, has a much larger meaning. It includes having personal control over evil influences and temptations, for example, Eph. 6.11 *"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."* It also denotes having self-restraint from being impulsive in action and decision making, in refraining from inordinate sexual activity, of having moderation in regards to all kinds of physical and emotional indulgences_ including feel good foods, drugs, and, of course, intoxicating drink.

Self-control includes the ability to consider the physical and moral "consequences" before acting on an impulse. When you come to think about it, everything we do physically, spiritually, morally, emotionally, or intellectually has a consequence, whether good or bad, positive or negative, reward or punishment. Self-control weighs the possible aftermath of our actions from a Godly or righteous perspective. It is essential for the believer to have self-control formed in us, to become a part of our nature.

2 Peter 1 begins by mentioning the *"exceedingly great and precious promises"* of God to the believer. And, that it is through these promises that *"you may be partakers of the divine nature,"* (2 Pet.1.4) not a partaker of the divine essence of God, but a sharer of His nature. Heb. 12.10 describes it as, *"that we may be partakers of His holiness."* Peter goes on to write a stern instruction, 2 Pet. 1.5-9,

*“giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ~~to~~ knowledge **self-control**, to **self-control** perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ~~to~~ godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”*

I would, given the time and space, spend much time on this passage of scripture but for now only parcel out a few thoughts, but with the encouragement that in your hour of prayer and meditation take time to reflect on the powerful impact of this word of God upon your soul. Surrender yourself to this passage, giving yourself to it with an open heart full of anticipation that the word of God *“will effectively work in you.”*

More specifically in this passage Peter is elevating *“self-control”* to the highest virtue, as an admirable Godly trait. Here, Peter is emphasizing the fact that the sheer *“knowledge”* of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, that is coming to know them in intimate fellowship, works in us mightily to His good pleasure, as reinforced by Eph. 3.20,

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”

And so, in our pursuit of God’s highest, we can anticipate Divine enablement for *self-control*. The enabling power is resident in the *living word of God*, and in the indwelling *Holy Spirit* to the transforming of our souls. No religion on the face of the earth has such interplay between man and God. What religion cannot offer, falling short in belief in a god with a focus on legalism of good works and/or the dangerous pursuit of spiritualism, the singleness of faith in Christ accomplishes. The old maxim, *“Go not after thy lusts, but refrain thyself from thine appetites,”* is fulfilled in Jesus’ own words, Jn. 15.5,

*“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, **bears much fruit**; for **without Me you can do nothing.**”* _ that is nothing of true eternal spiritual value, weightier things that reflect the fruit of the spirit in true holiness and righteousness.

Opposite the Fruit of Self-control

Of course the opposite of self-control is the **lack of self-control** which includes behavior that is **unrestrained** and **undisciplined**. These words are often interchanged in the Bible, and especially with various translations. And so, I will take some liberty here in the Biblical use of these words to describe the vice of being unrestrained and undisciplined, therefore lacking self-control.

Note that Gal. 5.23 after stating the fruit of *“self-control,”* the verse ends with *“Against such there is no law.”* The importance of this short clause is extremely significant. Why is it so significant? Because it brings to the surface the distinction between the Law of the Old Testament written on

scrolls used to **restrain** the people, with the moral law of the Spirit written on the hearts of New Testament believers to become a part of their nature. For example, comparing two scriptures: first,

Prov. 29.18 *"Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law."*

This scripture clearly shows the legalism of the Old Testament and how it "**restrains**" the people, serving as a covenant between God and Israel, *revealing* God's character and standards, but also *revealing* man's sinfulness and what man has to do. So it established a legalistic framework of how to worship, how to practice certain rituals, of proper social behavior, and the establishment of strict moral standards. Without this revelation, it is written that "*the people cast off restraints,*" they become **undisciplined**, and their behavior breaks the covenant and is unacceptable to God. The disciplinary component of the covenant is then Divinely applied.

Secondly, consider the "covenant" of the New Testament as revealed in Rm. 8.1-6,

"1There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

This most powerful passage clearly shows that the **restraint** in moral behavior does not come from keeping the outward O.T. "*Law of sin and death,*" but comes by the "*law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*" The believer is freed from the legalism of the Law because the Lord said in Heb.8.10, "*I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*" and continuing in verse 13, "*A new covenant,*" He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

And so all focus is now placed on the manifestation of that New Covenant in Christ, and away from the Old Covenant of the Law, away from the fruit of obedience to a Law but towards the fruit of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as the *fruit of the Spirit* cited in Gal 5.22-25,

*22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control. **Against such there is no law.** 24And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

The *fruit of the Spirit* is seen culminating in the fruit of "*self-control.*" The lack of self-control is a vice, a significant stumbling for a believer and must be acknowledged and prayerfully repented of. Why? Because the lack of self-control often gives in to impulsive behavior and

impulsive behavior leads to errors in judgment and immediate emotional reactions. This means they may make poor choices in life that can harm themselves or others, as well as damaging relationships with God and the brethren. Prov. 25.28 writes,

“Like a city that is broken into and without walls so is a person who has no self-control over his spirit.”

The walls of a city are but for one purpose, the protection and safety of those who dwell within. When without walls, the inhabitants are exposed to the assault from without. To the believer with little self-control this means attacks by both real and imaginary temptations and easily being led astray by smooth-talking false prophets and teachers and fleshly urges. He is subject to his own passions, anger, and lusts and is exposed to the intrusion of evil thoughts and temptations.

The Vice of the "Lacking Self-control"

The real danger of “lacking self-control,” is that it is deep rooted and requires much focus, prayer and repentance. It is a vice. The believer who lacks self-control, who is unable to concentrate and stay focused, who has difficulty controlling emotions, and/or is impulsive in decision making also has difficulty *“living in the Spirit”* but tends more to live in the flesh.

These are often given to making or receiving prophecies out of the flesh lacking discernment. Some may start or suggest songs of worship contrary to the flow of the Spirit. All too often people are into ministries based upon natural talents, age, and personality rather than spiritual preparedness and maturity. Prayers are more often than not generally focused in the natural, like healing someone’s cold rather than weightier prayers regarding such things as: the spiritual state of the people, for the edification of the Church, dealing with persecutions and temptations, spiritual warfare, the coming of the Kingdom of God into our lives and church, the proper functioning of the Body of Christ for the maturing of its believers, and of *living in the spirit, walking in the spirit, and of crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires*.

If we are to do any self-examination of our self-will or weakness thereof, it should be done along some key areas, such as dealing with our emotions, ability of concentration, and impulse decision making.

Concentration/Attention Control: This involves the inability to stay focused and maintain concentration in worship and prayer, the inability to meditate on scriptures, or not being able to stay focused during a sermon or teaching. It may also involve losing sight of important goals and settling for what is readily at hand. People often quickly abandon long-term visions of the upward call of God for instant gratification doctrines promising blessings.

Emotional Control: Of course this involves the inability to regulate and manage your emotions, of wanting to experience emotional feeling in worship or prayer, of being easily

influenced by motivational speakers, of responding to critical situations emotionally and not with spiritual discernment, of being fooled by likeable and charismatic personalities without noticing deeper flaws in their character, and of quickly flipping to extreme emotions such as joy/sadness, anger/peace, love/hate, soberness/silliness.

Impulse Control: This is the tendency to act on sudden desires or inclinations without careful thought or consideration of the short-term or long-term consequences. It is characterized by decisions that are poorly conceived, excessively risky, premature, or inappropriate for the situation at hand. Occasional impulsive actions are common, but frequent or severe impulsive actions can negatively impact relationships, worship services, the course taken of a church, or undermine the calling upon lives.

I'm going to conclude with 4 things to consider to overcome the lack of self-control:

1. Set the spiritual focus for your life, for your activities, for gathering together as the Church, the body of Christ, and for your family. Determine what you believe to be God's purpose and the grand objective for each. Determine how the high call of God in Christ Jesus, spiritual maturity, and conformity to the image of His Son fits into all of these. Remember, *without a vision my people perish, they are without restraints*.
2. Make a clear distinction between the two environments in which you live: the natural environment of the natural senses, emotional feelings, and the intellect, and the invisible spiritual environment of the Kingdom of God. The first is governed by intellectual preparedness, logic, the physical senses, and emotions. The latter is governed first and foremost by faith in things not seen yet anticipated to come, by trust in the word of God truly being the word of God, of being led of the Spirit and not the flesh, and that we are currently co-inhabitants with Christ of this Kingdom, being seated with Christ in heavenly places.
3. Practice Setting your focus in worship service. Resist being impulsive, set your focus on things above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, contemplate on every word of worship, whether it be every word, clause, or refrain of a worship song or prayers voiced, resist mind drift. There is one objective at this point, and that is to *draw near to God and He will draw near to you*; and that in this immediate presence of God His Spirit is at work in you to be, to will, and to do of His good pleasure.
4. In time of prayer and communion let there be a time of examination, reflection and repentance of these vices, these stumblings, these opposites of the fruit of the Spirit, and fully anticipate a cleansing of the dust on your feet by the blood of Christ and a renewed life and fresh walk in the Spirit.

Next time we will draw to a conclusion and tie together this discussion on sin, the seed of Christ, major and minor sins, and spiritual fruit and vices.

S5.E7. Questions for Discussion

- How do you define humility? How would you describe false humility? What would it take to become more humble?
- What is the opposite of humility, its vice? How is pride seen in man like that seen in Satan. Why is this important?
- What is self-control? What is its opposite? Why is this so bad in the life of the believer?
- Explain self-control in light of concentration control; emotional control, impulse control. Have you ever seen these surfacing in your life?
- What are some important factors to consider to overcome the lack of self-control.