

Lesson 2

God Demands Self-Denial

Self-denial is not just a suggestion for a better life. It is a command of the Lord. The requirement for self-denial is found in more texts than we may think on the surface. Self-denial is affirmed on nearly every page of the Bible.

Passages That Require Self-Denial

1. Passages that specifically mention self-denial or self-control. Jesus said that those desiring to be his disciple must deny self (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Paul preached to Felix about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). Peter lists “temperance” as one of the “Christian graces” which we are to add to our faith (2 Pet. 1:6). The fruit of the Spirit includes self-control (Gal. 5:23). Those who run the race and compete for the crown must be temperate in all things (1 Cor. 9:25). The comparison in this text is that we are to be self-controlled and self-disciplined just as athletes are. (Athletes have will-power and persistence, keep their minds focused, and make themselves do what they may not want to do.) Elders are to have self-control (Titus 1:8) and aged men should be temperate (Titus 2:2).

2. Passages which deal with self-denial and self-control in principle. Paul urged the Romans not to continue in sin (cf. Rom. 6:1) by telling them not to let sin reign in their bodies (Rom. 6:12ff). That requires self-control. The same writer said that it was no longer himself, but Christ who lived in him (Gal. 2:20). He had said “No!” to himself. Those who are God’s people willingly submit to Christ in everything (Eph. 5:24). That implies self-denial.

The greatest battle you will ever fight is fought within yourself.

3. Any passages that forbid the following requires self-control: lust (2 Tim. 2:22; Matt. 5:28), lying (Eph. 4:25), immorality (1 Cor. 6:18), covetousness (Col. 3:5), retaliation (Rom. 12:17-21), laziness (Rom. 12:11; 2 Thess. 3:10), being self-willed (Titus 1:7), and hatred (Gal. 5:20).

4. Any passage that commands the following requires self-control: meekness (Matt. 5:3), gentleness (2 Tim. 2:24), patience (2 Tim. 2:24), soberness (1 Pet. 1:13), contentment (Heb. 13:5), and chastity (Titus 2:5).

In fact, any passage that forbids anything and any passage that commands anything teaches self-denial.

This Is an Area in Which We Need to Grow

The Christian life is a continual growing process. We should always be growing in grace and in knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:18). Each day and each year we should be gaining more and more spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:14).

Self-control is a relative matter. That is, there are varying degrees of temperance (self-



control) just as there are with all of the “Christian graces” found in 2 Peter 1:5-10. None is perfect (without a flaw—who cannot grow any more) in temperance. Furthermore, one never will be. The key to being acceptable to God is to work on self-control with “all diligence” (2 Pet. 1:5).

There are some areas of life where this quality is more easily practiced than in others. Easy or not, we must grow in self-control.

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Questions

1. List some passages that specifically require self-control or self-discipline. _____

2. List some passages (and the concepts) that require or deal with self-control in principle.

3. How do passages that forbid something deal with self-control?

4. How do passages that command something deal with self-control? _____

5. What is meant by self-control being a “relative matter.” _____

NOTES	_____

Find the Passage

1. "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." _____
2. "Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.'" _____
3. " But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness" _____
4. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." _____
5. List any practical lessons you have learned from this study.
