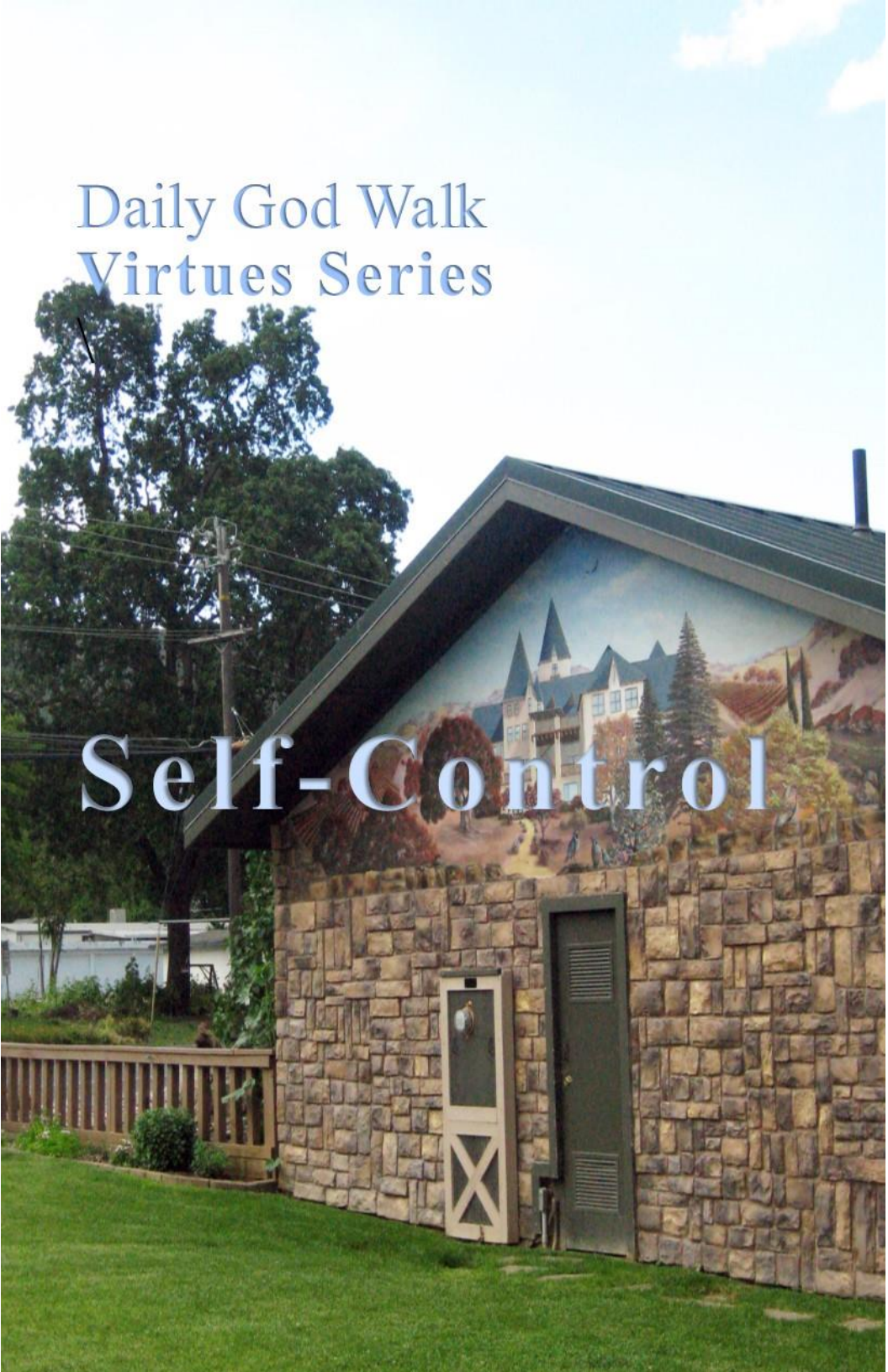


Daily God Walk
Virtues Series

Self-Control



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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International
Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited
using these abbreviations:
(KJV) – King James Version
(NKJV) – New King James Version
(TLB) – The Living Bible
(TM) – The Message

Features of the Daily God Walk

Daily God Walk Online

We are now offering internet access to the Daily God Walk. We are posting the Daily God Walk as an e-book and giving our readers an opportunity to register to receive it monthly. At present we are only offering it in a format for the computer, but we will soon have it available for mobile devices.

Small Group Study Guide for Daily God Walk

So many people are responding to the messages in our devotional that we are now tips to help those who want to use the Daily God Walk for discussions in small groups. If you are interested in leading a small group go to:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups.html

Small Group Coaching Online

For many years a focus of our ministry has been small group meetings. We have found that spiritual growth takes place when small groups of believers gather to discuss the Scripture, pray together, share the issues of life and fellowship together.

That is our motivation for expanding our ministry to include small group coaching. If you lead a small group, sometimes called cell group, or if you would like to be a leader, I encourage you to check out our small group site:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups.html

Our hope is that the entire Daily God Walk program will be a blessing to you, a help for spiritual growth and an asset to your ministry.

Where I Am Positionally in Christ:

The following Scriptures are teaching us who we are in Christ positionally. They tell us where we have been positioned in Christ when we have fully embraced him. When we come to Christ we become the Father's favored children and as we follow him he positions us to receive his glory.

These verses can be used for memorization and meditation. As we meditate on them we begin to make them a part of our belief system and we begin to live in the truth they speak to us about God's plan for us.

I am saved by His grace

- Ephesians 2:8 - It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.
- Acts 16:31 - Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

I am eternally chosen

- Ephesians 1:4 - He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

I am secure

- Hebrews 13:5 - God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."
- John 6:37 - All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

I am received into God's family

- John 1:12 - To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.
- John 17:9 - I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

I am protected from the evil one

- John 17:15 - My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

I am crucified with Him

- Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- Romans 6:3 - Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

I am buried with Him and

I am raised to walk in newness of life

- Romans 6:4 - We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

I am Free from the law of sin and death

- Romans 8:2 - Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

I am enthroned in heavenly places

- Colossians 3:1 - Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

- Ephesians 2:6 - And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

I am delivered from the domain of darkness

- Colossians 1:13 - He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

I am reconciled to God

- Colossians 1:22 - Now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

- 2 Corinthians 6:18 - All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

I am provided for according to His riches

- Philippians 4:19 - My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise

- Ephesians 1:13 - You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

I am bought with the Highest Price

- I Corinthians 6:20 - You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

I am inseparable from God's love

- Romans 8:35-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Day One

Fruit of Spirit: Self Control

The fruit of the Spirit is... self-control. Against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. - Galatians 5:22-24

Have you ever felt that you were being controlled by a force stronger than yourself? It begins with the cookie jar when you are small. Mom says, "Don't touch the cookies," and something is born in you that says, "Grab a cookie." At that moment we begin the life-long battle of self-control.

Many of us have lost that battle on many occasions, but we have not yet lost the war. I have known people who have lost that war and have fully surrendered to the desires that rage inside them. That is not a pretty sight. Paul writes about such people in the verses just before our passage today.

Paul writes, "The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want... The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (verses 17-21).

He contrasts natural desires with the Spirit, and in verse 18 he gives us hope as he writes, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." What he seems to mean is that if you are still doing the things on the list above you are being led by your natural desires, and not the Spirit, but through the work of the Holy Spirit we are given the ability to have self-control.

The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. When we are living under the influence of the Spirit of God we are not controlled by the desires of our sinful nature. Self-control comes through submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, my nature is contrary to your nature. Grant me the grace to be submitted to the work of your Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Two

Add To Your Faith Self-Control

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him... Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises... For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith... self-control... If you possess these qualities... they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive. – 2 Peter 1:3-8

We all want to be effective and productive in our walk of faith, but all too often we fall short of that objective. That's why Peter gives this list of virtues to add to our faith. The gift of salvation which comes from faith in Christ is not something to be minimized, but salvation is just the beginning of the process faith works in us. As we add these virtues to our faith we become more consistent and effective.

Faith is a gift from God, but the fruit of effective faith requires our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. We are told in Galatians that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and Peter tells us to add self-control to our faith. If it is a fruit of the Spirit, then how do we add it to our faith? Wouldn't it be the work of the Holy Spirit to add it to our faith walk?

The answer to that question is a "Yes and no." Yes, it is a fruit of the Spirit, but no, it doesn't just automatically become a part of our faith walk. The reason Peter instructs us to add self-control is that he is reminding us that we still live in a body of flesh and this body of flesh keeps resurrecting the desires which are natural to it. The virtue of controlling these desires requires us to submit to the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit.

The reason so many of us lack self-control is that we are not willing to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit. We can only live out the virtues of Galatians five and 2 Peter one by submitting to the Holy Spirit so that he can produce the fruit of self-control in us.

It sounds like a contradiction in terms but the only way to have self-control is to surrender control to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, I am trying to add the virtue of self-control to my faith, but I am not always successful. Holy Spirit be in control of my life. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Three

Self-Control is the Result of Living By the Spirit

I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.

- Galatians 5:16-17

People often ask prayer for a more consistent walk with the Lord. They will say things like, "It's so hard to keep from sinning," or, "I have to fight temptation all the time." Sometimes people express frustration by blaming the devil, "The enemy has been after me all day long." Those are sincere statements, but they are usually symptoms of another issue.

Some time ago we were counseling with one of our friends and she said, "I don't know what's wrong with me. It just seems to be getting harder and harder to resist temptation." I asked her how her prayer life and Bible reading had been going and she said she hadn't been able to really pray or read her Bible for a few weeks.

Can you see a correlation there? Can you see how no prayer and no Bible study leads to strong temptations? I read a slogan once that is appropriate: A week without prayer makes one weak. Think about that one.

The real issue is the one Paul mentions in this passage, "Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." When we are living by, or in, the Spirit we will not face those strong desires of our sinful nature because a fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control. Walking in the Spirit means we have already made the choice to surrender our will to God.

According to James 1:14 we are tempted when we are drawn away by our own sinful desires. If we don't have the desire we won't have the temptation. How do we keep from having the desire if it is our nature to have them? By surrendering our nature to God and living in the Spirit.

Self-control comes through surrendering our will to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to have control in our lives.

Prayer: Lord, self-control is a great goal, but it is very difficult attain. If fact, I can't do it on my own. Grant me the spiritual fruit of self-control. Amen.

Day Four

Self-Control Reveals the Life of Christ In Us

We who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

- 2 Corinthians 4:11

Paul often refers to the contrast between the death that was in our body before Christ and the life that is in us through Christ. In the old body of death we were slaves to sin doing whatever sin demanded that we do. Now, in the life that Christ has given us, the Christ himself lives through us.

A paradox of human existence is that when we are pursuing life with gusto, participating in all of the pleasures we can find, and fulfilling all of our desires, we are actually draining life from our body. Jesus said that if we pursue life we will actually lose our life, but if we surrender our life to him we will have life.

In Colossians Paul writes that our life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). What a concept. There is a place we can be in Christ where we are protected from the assault of sin. We are literally hidden with Christ in God. David understood this when he wrote in Psalm 31, "In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe."

In Colossians Paul is explaining that we have died to our old life and it is now the life of Christ that is in us. Therefore, we are to, "set your hearts on things above" and, "Set your minds on things above." When we have our heart and mind submitted to God and set upon spiritual things then the life that is revealed in us is the life of Christ.

When the Christ-life is revealed in us there is no struggle for self-control because the Holy Spirit does that for us. The work we do is keeping our mind and heart set upon Christ and the work that the Holy Spirit does is place his control in us. The result is that we become the manifestation of the life of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

Prayer: Lord, I understand this concept, but it is not easy to keep my mind and heart set on you so that the Christ can live through me. Grant me the grace to submit my will, mind and heart to you. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Five

Self-Control Is Desiring God's Law

I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

- Psalm 40:8

Throughout the Old Testament there are admonitions to follow God's law. There are a number of places that speak of the law of God being written on the heart. Here are a few of them:

Psalm 37:31 - The law of his God is in his heart.

Jeremiah 31:33 - I will put my law in ... their hearts.

Ezekiel 26:26-27 - I will give you a new heart... and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

The will of God is clear; his will is that the desire of our heart would be to do whatever he commands. It is human to desire to do good, but it is divine to be able to pull it off. All of us can do well once in a while, but few of us have grown to the place that our life is consistently fulfilling God's law.

David seems to have been at the place of desiring God's will above all else when he wrote this passage, but that is not the whole story of his life. There are times when he was following his own desires rather than the will of God and those times led him to make disastrous choices.

How does a person keep the law of God within their heart? David gives us a hint in another passage. In Psalm 101:3 he writes, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (KJV). What we see can easily enter our heart and if we willingly expose ourselves to sin then the desire for sin can easily enter our heart.

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses"(verses 6-8).

When our focus is on God's law there is little room for anything else to get into our heart. By following the instruction of David and Moses we will have the law of God written on our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a heart to seek you and your will. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Six

Self-Control Sets Us Apart For Service

Then Moses said, “You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day.” - Exodus 32:29

It had been an exciting time. God, through many miracles, had brought Israel out of Egypt. They had crossed the Red Sea on dry ground as a great wind rolled back the waters then they had watched as the waters closed around the Egyptian army and drowned them all.

Not long after that Moses had gone to the mountain of the Lord and there received divine revelation. He was gone so long that the people thought he had perished on the mountain. They became fearful and talked Aaron into creating a god for them. When Moses returned from the mountain the first thing he saw was Israel drunkenly dancing before a golden calf.

Verse 25 records, “Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so had become a laughingstock to their enemies.” Many today who claim the name of Christ have traded his peace for the false promises of the world and have become a laughingstock to the people of this world.

God calls us to separation, just like he did those who responded to Moses that day and stood beside him. The kind of separation God calls us to can only come through committing ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit and allowing him to be in control in our life.

Many who begin this walk of faith are not able to separate themselves from the world and before long they too begin to dance before the false hope this world offers. Because they never submit to the Holy Spirit their lament becomes, “This walk is too hard.” They have lost control and are in need of Holy Spirit to place the fruit of self-control in their life.

Separation from the world requires self-control, but it brings great blessing.

Prayer: Lord, It is so easy dance with the world and its false hopes, but grant me the grace to separate from the world and dance with you. Amen.

Day Seven

God's Perfect Law Inspires Self-Control

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does. – James 1:25

There aren't many things scarier than looking in the mirror when you first get up. Hair going every which way, morning stuff in our eyes and for us men there's these prickly whiskers sticking out all over our face. Not a pretty sight.

What do you do when you see that face looking back at you in the mirror? That's right; you fix it with a washcloth, a razor and a comb. When finished you again examine yourself in the mirror and you feel presentable to the world.

James is using this example to help us see what it is like to look into God's word. If we will look into God's word the way we look into the mirror and see our reflection in it, we will do what is necessary to make ourselves presentable. We all know that we can't fix it ourselves, but the Lord can.

The perfect law, God's word, not only points out our flaws, but it also shows us how to remedy them. The scriptures teach that we are reconciled to God through faith in Christ. When we are reconciled, or as Paul writes in Romans, "justified," the image of ourselves which we saw reflected in the word of God has been fixed and we have gained new freedom.

What I saw in the mirror yesterday, or last week, is not a good representation of my appearance now. I must continue to go back to the mirror to see what I have to do to stay presentable. Looking into God's word on a regular basis does the same thing. By continuing to look into God's word and doing what it says we continue to be presentable to him. There is a promised blessing when we do that. We are inspired to self-control when we look into the law of freedom.

Prayer: Lord, I didn't like what I saw about myself when I looked into your word, But through Christ I am free – grant me the grace to stay free. In Christ's name, amen.

Day Eight

Following Christ Requires Self-Control

Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

– Matthew 16:24-25

We have made coming to Christ so easy that many have felt that receiving Jesus into their heart was all that was asked of them. I think what has happened is that we got so excited about starting our journey of faith that we forgot that this is a life-long journey not just a once in a lifetime thing.

The disciples had walked with Jesus for some time, but they did not yet understand the purpose for which he came, neither did they understand the road that lay before him. As Jesus was trying to explain to them what he was going to have to go through Peter became indignant and said, “Never Lord! This will never happen to you.”

It was at this time that Jesus not only revealed the cross he was to bear but he also explained that all who followed him must be willing to accept whatever cross was given them. Responding to the call for salvation obligates us to accept the challenge of the cross.

It is true that becoming a believer and committing our life to Christ is the starting point of our walk with God. It is also true that no race is finished at the starting line. The race has just begun when we accept Christ and to stay in the race we are going to have to exercise self-control and submit to the cross.

History and tradition tell us that all of the disciples except John died martyrs of the faith. For them the cross that Jesus spoke of was very literal. Today there are many around the world who bear the same cross of martyrdom, but that is not what the majority of us are called to do. Our cross, in some ways, is more difficult; we are called to lives marked by sacrifice for the kingdom of God.

The test of whether we are true followers of Christ is whether we are not only willing to pick up our cross, but have we taken on a cross of self sacrifice?

Prayer: Lord, you have called believers to lives marked by sacrifice. Grant me a heart willing to accept that cross. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Nine

Putting Christ Above All Others Requires Self-Control

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. – Luke 14:26-27

There was never a shortage of people who wanted to follow Jesus. In fact the verse just preceding our passage today reports, “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus.” People in the days that Christ walked the earth were no different than people today; people gather to see the spectacular.

Jesus had been traveling, teaching and healing many. The crowds were attracted by the miracles and many had pledged to follow him to the end. Looking at the crowd Jesus saw that it was time to see who was serious about following him.

He began to explain the cost of following him. They had to be willing to give up parents, their own spouse and children, brothers and sisters, and even their own life. That was enough to give them pause, but then he added, “Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

Heaven is a great prize to gain, but it will cost all that we have on earth. There can be no possession or relationship that stands between the believer and his God. In this same chapter of Luke 14 Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet. The host of the banquet sent out many invitations. One person responded that they had to look over some property they had bought; another person had just bought some new oxen and wanted to try them out; another one said he had gotten married and could not come. All of those seemed to be legitimate excuses, yet the bottom line was that their perceived obligations kept them from the blessing of the Lord.

What about you – is there anything that keeps you from full commitment to Christ? I remember a line from an old song, “All he wants is all of you; nothing else will do.” Have you given him your all?

Prayer: Lord, help me to surrender all to you. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Ten

Self-Control Is A Way Of Life

If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

- Romans 8:13

Have you ever wondered why Adam and Eve ever listened to the serpent in the garden? They had everything they could possibly want including a daily visit with God, so why did they listen to the seductive talk of the tempter?

We may never know the whole answer, but some believe that it had to do with the concept of free moral agency. Because God created man as an expression of love he wanted man to have the choice of whether to follow him or to choose his own way. The reason he had to instruct Adam and Eve to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was because he had created them with the ability to make free will choices.

They chose to eat the fruit. Of course, there are consequences to our choices. Adam and Eve found that out shortly after their sin when God put them out of the garden. Since that time mankind has struggled with this issue of free will.

We are given the freedom to choose our own way, but because we are ruled by our sinful nature, we tend to consistently make choices that lead us away from God and life. That's why Paul wrote in this passage that we are to put to death the misdeeds of the body and we will live. That takes self-control.

Most of us struggle with self-control on a regular basis. Some call it self-discipline. We'll say things like, "I wish I had the discipline to do that." Or we might say, "I just don't have the discipline to complete a project like that." We are really talking about the ability to control the impulse to gratify our flesh and to be committed to something that is greater than ourselves.

If we don't control the impulse to gratify our fleshly desires we will not be able to fully appreciate the life that God is offering.

Prayer: Lord, I recognize the consequences of following my fleshly desires. Give me a heart to allow the Holy Spirit to live through me. Amen.

Day Eleven

Self-Control Is Crucifying Our Old Nature

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. – Galatians 5:24-25

Crucifixion seems a little radical. I mean, we're only human and as humans we are due a little freedom. That seems to be the prevailing attitude among many who call themselves Christian today. There are some, it seems, who have reduced Christianity to a doctrine and salvation has been reduced to reciting a particular formula. One makes a profession of faith, thus securing a birth in heaven, and then one goes about one's life.

Throughout the writings of Paul we get a different picture than that. In this particular passage he is saying that if we are going to consider ourselves as belonging to Christ then we are going to have to do something about the nature we have as humans which is committed to our own passions and desires. He is saying that we have to crucify the nature which leads us to sin.

What are we being asked to crucify? Our passion and desire for sin and the things of this world. Paul has just given a list of those things in verses 19-21. They range from sexual sin to witchcraft and include such things as rage, jealousy, selfish ambition, envy, and more. What is the driver behind these behaviors? It is self; self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-aggrandizement,

We can't belong to Christ and be committed to our own passions and desires at the same time. Paul is calling us to put aside all those things that have the purpose of fulfilling our flesh.

When we have surrendered our lives to Christ we have made an eternal covenant. It is no longer we ourselves who live but it is Christ who lives through us. Oh, I know that we still breathe air, eat food and have our own blood running through our bodies, but I'm not talking about Christ living in our bodies – I'm talking about Christ living in our spirit. We live by his Spirit.

Prayer: Father, I have a difficult time crucifying my flesh. Grant me a heart to surrender to you and allow the Holy Spirit to work in me. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twelve

Self-Control Keeps The Old Nature Buried

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

- Romans 6:6

The only way to be freed from the slavery of sin is to die. Our only redemption is through death. Sin will quit reigning in our body when we die, but if it is still our master when we die physically then our death is eternal; but when we die to sin then our physical death is but a gateway to eternal life.

In this chapter of Romans Paul draws an analogy between the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and our death to sin, the burial of our dead nature of sin, and our resurrection to a new life. The release of the new life in us depends upon our ability to keep our old nature buried.

When I was just a child I remember watching a film made by a missionary of a Voodoo ceremony in Haiti. The film captured people worshipping the demon gods of Voodoo at a graveside. All at once the body buried in the grave rose up and began to dance. That scene scared me badly. I still shudder when I think of it.

Our old nature is very similar to that Voodoo Zombie. It is dead and buried, but when we mess around with evil that old nature begins to come alive again. The power of sin is resurrected when we begin to listen to the voice of our own sin desire that draws us away from the life of God.

How do we keep our old nature buried? By continuing to surrender control of our life to the Holy Spirit. We may call it self-control but in reality it is surrendering to Holy Spirit control. Keep the old nature buried; stay away from the graveyard of the past daily surrender your life to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit working in you.

Prayer: Lord, I need your grace to help me keep the old nature buried. I surrender to the control of your Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Thirteen

Clothe Yourselves With Self-Control

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. – Romans 13:14

There are two points Paul seems to be making in this short verse; the effort to clothe ourselves with Christ, and taking control of our thought life.

In the verses just preceding our text passage today Paul was addressing the deeds of darkness that believers used to practice and he was admonishing them to lay those things aside. He was telling them to take off the old garments stained with sin and become clothed with the pure nature of Christ.

When a person wanted to convert to Judaism in ancient times a part of the ritual they went through was to burn their old clothes. They would take off their old clothes, go into the pool of baptism, renounce their old life as they were buried in the waters of baptism, then when they emerged they put on the clothes of the new life. That is the picture Paul is drawing in this passage.

Our transition from the old life to the new life is more spiritual than physical, yet there are very important physical aspects involved. There are places we do not go anymore and there are things we do not do anymore. In contrast; there are new places we go now and there are new things that we do.

Many of the changes that are to take place in our new life do not come automatically. We must make the effort to cause them to happen. If these changes were automatic then Paul would not have had to instruct the people to put on the new ways of Christ because the new ways would have just happened.

How do we clothe ourselves with Christ? It starts with what we don't do. We don't think about how we used to gratify the desires of our sinful nature - we must take control of our thought process. We must exert self-control over what we think.

Prayer: Lord, I can see how the old ways lead to being controlled by sin, and I don't want that. Grant me the grace to allow the Holy Spirit to clothe me with the characteristics of Christ. Amen.

Day Fourteen

Being A Living Sacrifice Requires Self-Control

I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. – Romans 12:1-2

There ought to be an easier way to be spiritual than presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. It is one thing to be taken as a sacrifice and go out in a moment of glory, and it is quite another thing to be on the altar of sacrifice every day for life, yet that is what this passage calls us to do.

It is the pattern of this world to live for ourselves, and Paul says that we should not live after the pattern of this world any longer. Most people live for themselves. They aren't evil, or sinister about it, they want what is good for others too, but their efforts are directed toward benefiting themselves.

Even religious people live like that. Most religious people I know are religious because of the benefit they feel they will receive from it. I recently heard from a person who made a list and asked if he did all of those things would he go to heaven. They were all good things, but the motivation was to get something for himself.

Paul is telling us that if we are going to have spiritual worship we are going to have to be transformed in the way we think about being religious. If the way of the world is to focus on what benefits ourselves, then the transformation that needs to happen is that our focus becomes benefitting others.

Being a believer is not about doing the things that we feel will bring blessing to us. Being a believer is about living out the will of God because it is the will of God without consideration of how it will affect us. It is to that end we are to serve.

Being a living sacrifice requires the kind of self-control that can only come through learning to surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Prayer: Lord, it is difficult to continually sacrifice my will for yours. Grant me the grace to willingly lay my life on your altar. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Fifteen

Resigned To The Will Of God

Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said; “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. – Job 1:20-21

I don’t know if I could do it. In one day Job, who was a wealthy man in his community, lost everything. Enemy bands stole his livestock and killed his servants; fire destroyed what the enemy left; a wind came and destroyed a building where his sons and daughters were feasting killing them all. In one afternoon Job received all of this news.

In the middle of all this bad news Job fell on the ground and worshipped. This faithful man realized what many of us seem to forget. He knew that life and happiness was about more than possessions. He knew that whatever acclaim and wealth he had on earth would be short lived so he was resigned to the will of God. His attitude was that he came into this world with nothing and he would leave this world the same way.

The Lord has given each of us many blessings to enjoy on this earth, but he has not given them to us as an eternal inheritance. We must not forget that the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, but in every circumstance we must be prepared to declare with Job, “The name of the Lord be praised.”

It takes self-control to hold the things of this world loosely. More than once I have received a blessing from the Lord and embraced it as a permanent fixture in my life, only to have it taken away. You may remember a job that you felt that way about, or maybe it was a home you loved, or a relationship. Regardless of what you had to give up, if you were to continue your walk of faith, you had to be resigned to the will of God.

I have lost much in this life and you may have lost more, but if we are to have a healthy faith we are going to have to let it go and agree with Job.

Prayer: Lord, I need your help to exercise self-control in the way I feel about my possessions. Help me to see it is all yours anyway. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Sixteen

Living For The Will Of God

Since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. - 1 Peter 4:1-2

US Senator John McCain is a remarkable man. Politics aside, this man has shown incredible character in the face of torture by a ruthless enemy. He carries in his body the marks of torture suffered in a prisoner of war camp. Men of lesser character might have given in to the demands of those who tortured him, but not this man. The experiences that Senator McCain suffered in a POW camp served to strengthen his resolve to stand strong for freedom.

That is similar to what Peter is writing about. When we have suffered with Christ, for the same purposes as Christ, we not only bear the marks of suffering, but we are committed to live out our life for the will of God.

We have learned that the path of faith and discipleship is not an easy road. The sacrifices that we must make along the way require self-control and commitment to a cause greater than ourselves.

When I was a young man a close relative commented about my commitment to ministry. He said, "What a waste for a young man with such potential." To those who do not see the cause of Christ, people of faith are wasting their lives, but to those who have taken up the cause of Christ there is no sacrifice too great.

The suffering of Senator McCain drove him to a life of service to our country. He has been committed to the freedoms that many have suffered and died for. We have a rich heritage of such men and women; both as a nation and as a people of faith. Our faith is under constant attack, both as a movement and as individuals. We must not surrender to the onslaught of evil that would defeat the very purposes of Christ. Rather, we must be self-controlled and vigilant in defense of the Gospel.

Prayer: Father, help me to keep a focus on the goal and not to be influenced by the cost of serving you. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Seventeen

Desiring The Will Of God Inspires Self-Control

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul... Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. – Psalm 143:8-10

How often does the night bring a shudder to the soul as the coldness of a desperate time leads us to long for the light. In the night we cry with David, “Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.” Morning will come and our trust will be rewarded.

We live in unsettled times and we need to have a refuge, a place where we can relax and just rest in the one in whom we have placed our trust for the future. I can remember a time when my wife and I were in such trial that when we went to bed at night sleep would be far from us. We would hold hands and let the tears drop upon our pillows as we cried out, “How long O God will we have to wait for this night to be over” Then the morning would come.

As we walk with the Lord our faith grows and we are able to trust him to be the God he has promised to be. That is why David could look for the unfailing love of God to be showered upon him. He realized the value of having God’s favor so he desired to do what pleased the Lord so that God could release favor upon him.

It is the desire to know the Lord and to dwell in the safety of his presence which prompts us to walk in obedience to him. We want to do the will of God because we know his desire is to release blessing upon us and all those who do his will. That is why we exert the discipline of self-control.

When we seek him, as David sought the Lord, he will lead us on level ground; but in order to walk on level ground we must follow where he leads. The disciplined effort of self-control is rewarded by walking on the level ground of God’s favor.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to trust you when the night is dark, my hope is low and the thing I fear looms before me. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Eighteen

God Reveals His Heart To Those Who Seek Him

Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." – John 7:16-17

The challenge Jesus is putting before those who were listening to him was not to just believe him but to believe that he had come from God and spoke the words of God. The test of whether they believed him was if they truly desired the will of God, or did they value tradition above the will of God. It is the same today.

Most of us in the faith value the tradition of our fathers. Some will say "I was raised in this denomination," and some will say, "I wasn't raised to believe that." If we have a heritage of faith in our family we tend to carry those traditions into our personal faith. There is nothing wrong with that, unless our tradition limits what God wants to do in our lives today.

The concept Jesus was introducing was to choose God's will above the traditions of men. Choose to seek God rather than to please men. There is a great price attached to following God, but the reward of being in the will of God and doing what he has ordained for this moment in time far outweighs the cost.

When we have chosen to do the will of God tests will come. Some people will not understand and even our own family may not understand what we are doing. But when we pursue his will above all else we will find out if his promises are really true. There seems to be a thousand things pulling us away from our commitment to pursue the will of God; tradition, family, and sometimes even common sense. That is why we must exert self-control in our pursuit of God.

A man once said, "When we seek the face of God he reveals his heart." The treasure of knowing and doing his will can only be found as we learn to seek his face. The treasure of his will is the revelation of his heart. Knowing the heart of God is the reward of committing ourselves to his will.

Prayer: Lord, I desire to know your will. Grant me the discipline to seek your face and the self-control to do your will. Amen.

Maintain A Regimen Of Spiritual Discipline

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?... Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

– Romans 6:2, 12

In recent years I have lost about 70 pounds. In the first round of dieting I lost about 40 pounds. In the second round of dieting I lost about 30 pounds. My problem is that after I lost 40 pounds I gained back 45 and after I lost 30 pounds I have gained back about 25 and I'm about back where I started.

During my diet I “died” to the foods that were not good for me, but after I resumed a normal eating regimen I began to add the bad foods bit by bit until my cravings for the bad stuff took over again and I just keep giving in to those cravings.

That is what Paul is writing about here in Romans. As long as we maintain a regimen of spiritual discipline, or self-control, sin does not reign in our bodies; but once we begin to give in to sin's desire, even just a little bit, we begin to slide back into a pattern where sin is in control.

The message in this chapter is simply this: Don't let sin reign in your bodies. The question is, “How do we keep sin from influencing our life?” There are about three things that you must do to keep sin from ruling your life.

The first is take control of your thought life. Memorize 2 Corinthians 10:5 and meditate upon it every day. How do we tear down strongholds? How do we destroy thought patterns that draw us away from God? Meditate on this passage because the answer is in there.

The second thing is to wholeheartedly obey the teaching you have received (Romans 5:17). Don't hold anything in reserve; go all out for God. When we have given ourselves completely to God there is nothing left for sin .

The final thing is to remember, “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (verse 18). Serve your new master well.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to keep my mind focused upon you and your righteousness so that I will not be influenced by sin. Amen.

Day Twenty

Self-Control Is Turning Lose of Yesterday

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize.

– Philippians 3:13-14

Yesterday will kill you if you let it. Much of what causes people to have emotional problems today is the baggage they carry from yesterday. Far too many of us were abused by those who should have protected us; others of us never received the nurturing care we should have; still others have been through one badly ending relationship after another. This list is endless.

The good thing about yesterday is that it was yesterday – it is gone. The only effect that yesterday can have on us is what we allow it to have. One of the things that made Paul a great apostle was that he was able to turn loose of his yesterdays.

God is a forward moving God; he is not a looking over his shoulder kind of God. All of those who follow him well become forward moving followers. The Bible is full of promises for a better day and all that is required to open those promises for us today is to lay aside our yesterdays and move forward in faith.

Dwelling in yesterday will destroy you in two ways. First, if your yesterday is filled with successes you will tend to develop pride and confidence in yourself. You will begin to feel that you don't need God. If your yesterday is filled with failure you'll remember your failures and feel that you can't do any better today.

Let yesterday go. Paul is revealing a secret to growth in this passage. There are two phrases in this passage that changed my life many years ago. The first is, "forgetting what is behind." The second

is, "I press toward the goal." When I got over my yesterdays I could look forward with a hope for the future. My future hope is not based in my past experience but in the proven word of God.

Prayer: Lord, for far too long I have let my experiences of the past affect my life today. Grant me freedom from yesterday. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty One

Self-Control Will Keep Your Heart Right

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

- Proverbs 4:23

It has been said that the heart is the seat of the emotions, and that is true. It is also true that the desires which drive us come from our heart. That is why we must be very careful about those things we allow to influence our heart.

The writer of proverbs is trying to impress upon his son the importance of keeping his heart free of the things that would be destructive to him. He gives some good advice to his son and I offer these verses in this devotion as material for prayer and meditation:

Verse 24 - Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

Verse 25 - Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.

Verse 26 - Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.

Verse 27 - Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

I challenge you to take time to meditate on these verses in Proverbs every day for the next week. Pray over them and ask God to give you understanding of how to apply each verse to your own life.

Meditate on and pray these things:

- ✓ The meaning of your heart being the wellspring of life.
- ✓ What is corrupt talk and how do I avoid it?
- ✓ Why must I be careful about looking left and right?
- ✓ What are firm paths? What are level paths?
- ✓ What would be swerving to the left or right?

As you pray and meditate on these things God will give you greater insight into your faith walk. You will also discover that as he give insight into the value of being careful about what you allow into your heart he will also give you the ability to exercise self-control in your life.

Prayer: Lord, help me to guard my heart to that nothing can become a desire of my heart except those things that are good. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Two

Self-Control Helps Guard Your Appetite

When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive. – Proverbs 23:1-3

Have you ever thought about how you develop an appetite for certain things? I love ice cream. I know that isn't unusual, but I mean I really love ice cream. When I was a child at times when I was sick I remember my mom bringing a bowl of ice cream to help me feel better. Ice cream is truly a comfort food to me. Besides being a normal thing to like, ice cream holds that special place in my heart as being a comfort food.

Our passage in Proverbs is warning us to be careful of the things for which we develop an appetite. In ancient days only people of prestige ate delicacies like sweet rolls and special desserts. Most people only had the necessities of grains and some meats.

The warning being given was to be careful not to develop an appetite for those things because once an appetite is developed it becomes a driving force within us. Appetites can only be developed after we have tasted something. If we have never tasted it we will not have an appetite for it.

Perhaps that is the reason God told Adam and Eve not to partake of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He knew that once they tasted they would not have the self-control to handle their new appetite.

We tend to spend a lot of time and effort resisting the temptation to indulge our appetite for things we shouldn't have tasted in the first place. Once we have an appetite for something that is potentially harmful to our walk of faith we must learn to submit that appetite to the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit for power to be self-controlled in that behavior.

Do you have appetite for things that are harmful to you and detrimental to your walk of faith? It may be time to make an inventory of our appetites to see what we need to submit to God.

Prayer: Lord, Grant me the grace to have self-control in the things I have tasted and should have left alone. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Three

Temperance Requires Self-Control

Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path. Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags. – Proverbs 23:19-21

Some people can never get enough of whatever it is they are doing. If they drink they drink to excess; if they gamble they risk their family's security, and yes, for some, their lives are in jeopardy because of their excesses in eating. Whatever we do to excess tends to cause us grief at some point.

There is nothing wrong with many activities when done in moderation, but even those things when done to excess produce negative results.

Many years ago I met a man who drove a moving van for a national company. He told me that he was away from on average six weeks at a time. I asked him if he was married and he told me he was divorced. I didn't ask, but I guess he caught my look, because he followed with, "But my job didn't have anything to do with it. She just found somebody else." The chances are that she found somebody who wasn't on the road six weeks at a time.

We must exercise self-control, especially over the activities that we really enjoy. I had a friend in college who gained nearly one hundred pounds while he was there. He died of a massive heart attack at the age of 38. No one knows for sure whether he would have had the heart attack even if he wasn't carrying excessive weight, but it certainly didn't contribute to being healthy.

The cost of excess in any area of our life is more than any of us want to pay so we should go to work on developing self-control now. The way we do that is first to submit our ways to the Lord and appeal to the Holy Spirit to be strong in us. Then we have to take captive every thought that keeps us from the discipline of self-control. Seek the Holy Spirit for control in every area of your life and he will grow that fruit in you.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace of being temperate in all that I do and to exercise self-control as I submit to the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Four

Trusting God Takes Self-Control

Jesus said to the disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens:... God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds?” - Luke 12:22-24

We had just gotten married and were on our honeymoon and we still were trying to get to know each other. I didn't know that Jane was terrified by high bridges and those concrete dividers that separate lanes in construction zones. Neither did I know that she has challenges with depth perception in her vision. Each of those things alone do not pose any major problems, but on our honey-moon all three converged and nearly caused a catastrophe.

I had a cup of very hot coffee in one hand and was steering with the other hand as we approached a high bridge which was under construction and had those concrete lane dividers and our lane was narrowing quickly. I was making the adjustments, but with Jane's depth perception problem she thought I was running into the concrete wall. She reached over to grab the steering wheel and hit the coffee cup spilling hot coffee all over my leg which nearly caused me to hit the concrete divider she was trying to avoid.

In the scripture passage Jesus is trying to convince his followers that God has everything under control. We see life through the prism of our own experience and our reality does not always match reality from God's perspective. The disciples had very real concerns about food, shelter and clothing; but Jesus was telling them to relax and consider the birds that trust God to provide all they needed to survive.

Just as Jane and I had to gain more experience with each other before our trust level developed, so it is with our relationship with God. Many times we have to exert self-control to keep from responding out of our own experience rather than trust God, but the longer we serve him the more we trust him.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to trust you for the necessities of life. And not only for the necessities but you can throw in a few niceties as well. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Five

Staying Free Takes Self-Control

Be careful, or your hearts will be weighted down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap... Be always on the watch. - Luke 21:34,36

The term, “Be careful” occurs over 50 times in the Bible. Most of the time the Lord was instructing Israel to be careful to follow all of the commands. He was also telling them to be careful about making treaty with the nations they would conquer.

Beginning with Jesus the instruction was similar, but it carried a different tone to it. The warnings become more about lifestyle and less about the particulars of the law. Here Jesus is warning about being overcome by excesses.

We are instructed to do good works, but we are warned about doing those works to impress others (Matthew 5:1). Apostle Paul preaches freedom in Christ then warns that we should not use freedom as an excuse for living in an ungodly manner (1 Corinthians 8:9).

Be careful that you live as wise (Ephesians 5:15) so that you don't fall short (Hebrews 4:1) and stumble (1 Corinthians 10:12). How is one careful about these things? Paul writes in Titus 3:8, “I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

We live in a permissive society, one that defines freedom as being free to do anything we choose. Janice Joplin used to sing, “Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.” The unfortunate reality is that when given the freedom to choose mankind will typically choose a path that leads to bondage.

Jesus is warning about allowing our freedom to become license to indulge pleasures to excess and thereby find ourselves trapped on the day of reckoning. Our appeal today is the same as Jesus made, “Be careful... be always on the watch.” Our freedom in Christ is freedom from sin not freedom to sin.

Prayer: Lord, save me from myself. Grant me the grace to live a self-controlled life so that I do not become victim of ungodly living. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Six

Training For Service Requires Self-Control

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore... I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. – 1 Corinthians 9:25-27

Many years ago we lived near the place where the San Francisco 49'ers did their spring training. It was inspiring to watch those men working so hard to reach a goal. As their training progressed more was expected of them. It would be over 100 degrees and they were out there running with full gear on.

Every man out on the field had a picture in their mind of the prize. They all could see that Super Bowl ring being slipped on their finger and they could hear the announcement that they had won the game that showed them to be the best team in the league.

The season hadn't even begun yet. They were just practicing. Why work so hard when there isn't even another team in front of them? Because if they didn't train now they wouldn't be fit to play when the season started and there would certainly not be a prize at the end of the season.

We who are believers in Jesus as our Lord must have the same vigilance. We must realize that when we accept Christ we are just entering the arena of spiritual warfare and we must train ourselves so that we are ready when we face the enemy of our souls.

There are many around us who meet failure after failure in their journey of faith, and there are some who have given up. Far too many of those folks never realized that they were in a contest and the prize was eternal glory. They didn't realize that they would have to stand strong against the enemy's assault.

Paul was encouraging believers to deny themselves the pleasures that others indulge in freely so that they would be ready to fight the good fight of faith. Discipline and self-control are primary ingredients to spiritual victory.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see the value of spiritual discipline and self-control as I enter the arena of spiritual warfare. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Seven

Peace And Holiness Produce Unity

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. – Colossians 3:5

Paul is often contrasting the way we were with the way we are and he does that in this third chapter of Colossians. He seems to be trying to get people to understand that when they receive Christ as Lord they are not just performing a religious exercise but they are actually accepting his invitation to a new world.

In our old world living was about our own desires and ambitions. For some of us those desires led us into a life of shame, for others of us it was simply self-reliance and achieving through performance. Our life was about the physical world and our success was measured by material things.

Whether our life was filled with sins of sexual indulgence, or it was filled with pride and self-confidence, we were all in the same world and that world revolved around what we desired.

Then we found Jesus and he invited us into a new world. In this new world our motivation is agape love rather than self-love. Agape love motivates us to surrender our life to a cause greater than ourselves and to serve others.

When we put on our new self (verse 10) we become a part of the universal order of believers in Christ, and that is a new world. In this new world we are called to consider others and their needs first; we are called to surrender our will. Our human nature that craves fulfillment must be submitted to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul is reminding the church at Colossae, and all believers, that we must continue to surrender our old life and we must continually be putting on the new life. One phrase in verse 10 of Colossians 3 is , “being renewed.” If we are to become what God is calling us to become we must be self-controlled regarding our old life and submitted to the Holy Spirit in our new life.

Prayer: Lord, It is a daily grind to keep my old life buried and to continue walking in the newness of life in this Spirit. Grant me your grace. Amen.

Day Twenty Eight

Self-Control Gives Us Power Over Our Tongue

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep the whole body in check.

– James 3:2

I don't often use long quotes from the Scripture, but the teaching of James on taming the tongue is so appropriate to where we are in these devotions that I felt to give you his entire teaching on the subject.

James begins this teaching with verse two and declares that a perfect man is able to keep his whole body in check, from there he proceeds to give a lecture on the part of the body that is most difficult to control. The following is from James 3:3-12:

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Without the Holy Spirit working in us we will not have control over our tongue.

Prayer: Lord, I agree with James that the tongue is the most unruly member of our body. Grant me the grace to allow the Holy Spirit to control my tongue. In Jesus name, amen.

Day Twenty Nine

We Are Strangers In The World

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the World, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

- 1 Peter 2:11

In the early days of the church when the early leaders would write letters to the church they would address them to “My fellow sojourners,” or “To the sojourners at Corinth.” They truly believed that they had become citizens of a kingdom that was not of this world.

A song written in the early 20th Century had this line, “This world is not my home I’m just passing through.” That seemed to be the attitude of the early church. From the beginning you read where they sold everything and had all things in common (Acts 2:44-45).

Today we are more like the church at Laodicea. The Lord said, “You say, I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:4-22). They were wealthy with this world’s goods, but measured by the standard of the eternal kingdom they were not acceptable.

Many have become obsessed with achieving security in this world. We seek stable employment, a secure retirement, good healthcare, sick leave and vacations. Those things are not bad, they are just of this world. Far too many of us have been lulled into complacency by the comforts and pleasures that this world has to offer.

If we are to affect the world as the representatives of Christ then we are going to have to become self-controlled concerning the desires of this world. Peter says the desires of this world are at war with our souls, and my observation is that this world is winning in far too many people.

We should not hide from the comforts this world offers, but we must learn to accept them as incidental to our journey. Paul told us that he was content with whatever his circumstances. Whether he had plenty or found himself in need he knew he could endure it all by the grace of God.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to live for your kingdom not for the desires I often feel for the things of this world. In Jesus name.

Day Thirty

Remember The Value Of Others

So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his **love** for her. – Genesis 29:20

Sometimes we need to remember what we know about our loved ones. A big part of self-control is controlling the impulse we have to jump to conclusions about the people we live with.

I remember looking at the trash that was scattered around the floor near a waste basket my husband had just emptied. “This is what he always scolded the boys about, and he is doing the same thing,” I thought.

It would have been easy to go from there to making a mental list of observances; a list that had the full potential of becoming an invitation list to a critical spirit party.

Then I remembered what I know, about my husband, that he is a selfless, dedicated and hardworking man. That memory was followed by a fleeting picture of the catch in his back that had been plaguing him, yet he hadn’t complained. Suddenly the distance from my eyes to the floor behind the waste basket seemed painfully long, for someone whose back is hurting.

A few moments later I watched him quietly move the little stack of papers I had left on his desk. Was there a hint of irritation there, or was that a gleam in his eye? - Jane.

There may have been a little irritation there, but there was also a gleam in my eye because I knew the value of those papers on my desk. They weren’t just carelessly scattered pieces of paper waiting to be thrown away. That stack of papers represented a commitment she had made and they were an investment of her life. I gladly moved them to her desk.

My initial impulse might be to become irritated, but then I remember the value that Jane brings into my life and I am able to control the negative impulse. Because I know her value I control my responses to her. – Paul.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see the value in others rather than the things that I would change. Grant me the grace of self-control. In Jesus name, amen.

Tips On Leading A Small Group

One of the purposes of the Study Guide Edition of the Daily God Walk is to provide a tool for leading small groups.

At the end of each day's devotion there are four additional sections: Principle, Affirmation, Reflection, and My Thoughts. below is an explanation of how to use each of them in a small group discussion.

Message: This is the message of the devotion for the day. Ask the group to express how they can see this principle in the devotion then use that to kick off the discussion.

Affirmation: The affirmation is an example of how we can begin to internalize the principle of the devotion. We can repeat the affirmation in a prayer making it personal. We can also just repeat it throughout the day while giving thought to the principle.

Reflection: These statements and questions are designed to help guide discussion and make application of the devotion in the daily life of the participant.

My Thoughts: This section is just blank lines. Encourage your group to "Journal" their thoughts on the devotion each day. By writing out the thoughts that come from the devotion and the discussion on the devotion the individuals will find that their walk of faith is enhanced.

My experience is that we usually only make it through one or two of the daily devotions at one group setting, but it is good to encourage the group to work through the principle, affirmation, reflection and my thoughts section for each daily devotion at home.

For more information on using the Daily God Walk for small groups, go online at: www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups.html

We value your comments on the Daily God Walk. It would be a blessing if you sent us an email with your comments about our program. Email us at: paul@nhmresources.org