Self-Control

Looking at the world around us, we see a society that has seemingly lost the ability to exercise self-control. Restraint is a word seldom used or employed in the lives of so many. Anything, at anytime, with anyone, without limitation, is how many do and live as they please with little to no regard for others, and most certainly for God. The instruction from Jesus to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33) is being ignored by most men, and even some religions. This sad reality, however, is not new. Since the beginning of the time of man, when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, man has struggled with self-control.

Clearly, the self-control we are addressing in context here is self-control in relation to participating in sinful activities. Paul lists self-control as one of the fruits of the spirit as he writes to the churches in Galatia. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22). Of the characteristics Paul lists, self-control is likely the driver of that which allows the other characteristics to develop. Without self-control, can the other characteristics Paul lists even exist?

Solomon declares, "Whoever has no rule over his own sprit is like a city broken down, without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). Meaning, no laws, no boundaries, just complete chaos. Our human body houses our spirit. Without self-control, our body walls (like a city with broken walls) become weak, fall down, and can be overtaken. Remember, the devil is crafty and smart. He will convince us, if we allow, that the sin we get involved with is, OK - no big deal - nothing to fret about. The devil wants us to give control over to him and he will do all within his control to lure us to give in. However, he can only go so far. Regarding what the devil is able to do Paul states, "No temptation have overtake you, except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). God makes it so that we can maintain self-control.

Self-control is a characteristic we have to develop and continue to work on. Writing to Titus, Paul says, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly

lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12). Self-control is a learned and practiced skill. We learn self-control and grow our ability to self-control by consciously avoiding situations that may garner temptations and by recognizing when God makes a pathway of escape for us. Solomon again provides godly advice stating, "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his paths" (Proverbs 16:9).

When we allow God to direct our path, success will be our result.