

# Add to Your Knowledge Self-control

## INTRODUCTION.

- A. Temperance is defined as “Self-Control.” The word here refers to the mastery over all our evil inclinations and appetites. We are to allow none of them to obtain control over us. This would include, of course, abstinence from intoxicating drinks; but it would also embrace all evil passions and propensities. Everything is to be confined within proper limits, and to no propensity of our nature are we to give indulgence beyond the limits which the law of God allows.
- B. “Self-control” is an indispensable part of a Christian character.
- C. We do not need “Self-control.” With respect to the same things because our temperaments differ. However, none of us have reached the point where “Self-control” is not needed.

## I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CONTROL.

- A. In one's spiritual growth, self-control is essential. (2 Peter 1:5-6)
- B. The apostle Paul also talked about the need for “self-control.”
  - 1. Paul told Titus that one of the qualifications of an elder is “self-control.” (Titus 1:7-8)
  - 2. We find however that Paul did not limit “self-control” to only the elders. He also included aged men and women. (Titus 2:1-3)
  - 3. Paul goes on to include all Christians in the need for “self-control.” (Titus 2:11-12) Sober is another word for temperance or “self-control” and means: Having every temper, appetite, and desire, under the government of reason, and reason itself under the government of the Spirit of God.

## II. THE GREAT NEED FOR SELF-CONTROL.

- A. Let's look at where temperance or “self-control” is needed in our lives. We have come up with ten areas where we feel it is important to have self-control. Our audience may think of a few more areas as well.
  - 1. **We need “self-control” when it comes to strong drink or alcohol.**

- a. Drunkenness is forbidden in the Scriptures. (Proverbs 20:1; Romans 13:13; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8)
  - b. Daniel totally abstained from the king's drink. (Daniel 1:8, 12)
  - c. Some folks might argue that Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. (1 Timothy 5:23)
    - 1) Many have quoted this instruction of Paul to justify the use of wine as a beverage.
    - 2) It does no such thing, but the reverse. Timothy, a model and true Christian, a young man trained from childhood in the knowledge of the Scriptures, refuses to use wine at all, even in sickness. Paul tells him to use a little wine for his illness. He encourages its use for no other purpose.
    - 3) This whole passage is one of great value to the cause of temperance (self-control). Timothy was undoubtedly in the habit of abstaining wholly from the use of wine. Paul knew this, and he did not reprove him for it. He manifestly favored the general habit, and only asked him to depart in some small degree from it, in order that he might restore and preserve his health. So far, and no farther, is it right to apply this language in regard to the use of wine.
2. **We need Self-control with respect to our opinion.** (Romans 14:22)
  3. **We need to have "self-control" with respect to language.**
    - a. Often we cultivate "by-words" that are worse than useless. These words serve no purpose in our language and are useless words used in place of the foul language they are meant to replace.
    - b. We are commanded to bridle the tongue. (James 3:3-10; James 1:26)
    - c. If filthy jokes tempt you, you must refrain from participating in them. This means no laughing or even listening to them. (Ephesians 4:29; 5:3b-4; Colossians 3:8)
    - d. David is a good example of a man who controlled his tongue. (Psalms

39:1)

4. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to tattling or gossiping.**
  - a. It is so easy to talk about someone. We will say something like this:  
“Don’t tell anyone but . . .” or “Did you hear about . . .?”
  - b. The apostle Paul told Timothy some because they were idle, gossips, and busybodies. (1 Timothy 5:11-13)
  - c. Self-control is required to avoid gossiping or tattling. (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12; 1 Peter 4:15)
5. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to pride.**
  - a. “A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring: there shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again.” (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 1709)
  - b. The apostle Paul wrote, “. . . *We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.*” (1 Corinthians 8:1)
  - c. It is easy to become self-infatuated. (Galatians 6:3)
  - d. A little honor may be our ruin. When the apostles Paul gave Timothy the qualifications necessary to be an elder, he said: “*not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*” (1 Timothy 3:6)
  - e. We must therefore humble ourselves. (James 4:10)
  - f. Daniel is a good example of self-control in respect to pride. (Daniel 2:30)
6. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to covetousness.**
  - a. We are usually dissatisfied with our own state. We always want more. Our neighbor buys a new car and we covet it. We want a bigger house. We want a better job so we can make more money. The list goes on and on.
  - b. Covetousness is strictly forbidden in the scriptures. (Romans 13:9; Ephesians 5:3)
  - c. The desire for wealth often leads to ruin. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

- d. The apostles Paul is a good example of “self-control” in respect to covetousness. (Acts 20:33-34)
7. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to fleshly desires.**
- a. All human beings have passions of various kinds.
  - b. Many people have lost their careers and their marriages over acting on their fleshly desires.
  - c. These desires must be restrained. (Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:16)
  - d. Let’s look at some Biblical examples of self-control.
    - 1) Joseph in Potipher’s house. (Genesis 39:7-9)
    - 2) Paul kept his body in subjection. (1 Corinthians 9:27)
8. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to anger.**
- a. “No one loses his temper unless he has too much.”
  - b. The more we lose our temper, the more we have.
  - c. Naaman almost made a fatal mistake here. He was a commander in the army. He had leprosy. The prophet told him to go and immerse in the river Jordan seven times and he would be cleansed. This was not good enough for Naaman so he became angry: *“Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage.*” (2 Kings 5:12)
  - d. Anger must be restrained if we are to receive the “precious promises.” (Proverbs 16:32; 19:11; Matthew 5:22; Ephesians 4:26; Psalms 4:4; James 1:19-20)
9. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to revenge.**
- a. Uncontrolled anger leads to revenge.
  - b. God forbids revenge. (Proverbs 24:29; Romans 12:17-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:15)
  - c. The teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles do not authorize “an eye for

an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Jesus said, “*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*” (Matthew 5:38-39)

10. **We need to have “self-control” with respect to all things.** (1 Corinthians 9:25)

**CONCLUSION.**

- A. Temperance is a fruit of the spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- B. Temperance or self-control must be cultivated. It does not come naturally but must be developed and, in the words of Peter, “Giving all diligence.” (2 Peter 1:5)
- C. Felix trembled over this proposition. (Acts 24:25)
- D. Self-control will mean much to us at the judgment. Therefore, it is not by chance that Peter lists it as one of eight Christian graces.