**Growing in Grace – Self-Control**

*2 Peter 3:18; 1:5-7*

**Introduction**

1. **2 Peter 3:18** – we are commanded to grow in God’s grace.
2. **2 Peter 1:2** – He is seeking to multiply grace to us through the knowledge of Jesus.
	1. Ultimately, that we share in the divine nature **(v. 4).**
	2. This connected with the glory and virtue of Christ that we are called TO **(v. 3).**
	3. Attained through the knowledge of Christ which instructs us in the way of life and godliness **(v. 2).**
	4. Knowledge increased to the bearing of fruit when we supply diligence, and add to our faith the list of virtues **(vv. 5-8).**
3. Virtue – the goal of moral excellence like Christ, and the courage to reach that goal.
4. Knowledge – the comprehension and grasp of God’s will for us necessary to achieve the goal of virtue.
5. Self-control is to be added to knowledge.
6. Self-Control – *egkrateia*
7. self-control (especially continence): — temperance. (STRONG)
8. restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, or desires, self-control (BDAG)
9. self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites) (THAYER)
10. from *kratos*, “strength,” occurs in Acts 24:25; Gal. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:6 (twice), in all of which it is rendered “temperance”; the RV marg., “self-control” is the preferable rendering, as “temperance” is now limited to one form of self-control; the various powers bestowed by God upon man are capable of abuse; the right use demands the controlling power of the will under the operation of the Spirit of God; in Acts 24:25 the word follows “righteousness,” which represents God’s claims, self-control being man’s response thereto; in 2 Pet. 1:6, it follows “knowledge,” suggesting that what is learned requires to be put into practice. (VINE)
11. The Natural Man
12. Man Has an Animal Nature
	1. As far as the eye can see, man and beast are no different – **Ecclesiastes 3:18-21**
	2. Man is made in the image of God – **Genesis 1:26**
		1. However, his physical nature is not different than that of animals – **Genesis 1:24; 2:7** – earth bring forth, formed of the dust of ground.
	3. With the physical nature comes physical inclinations:
		1. Sustenance – food, water
		2. Reproduction – sexual
		3. Etc.
	4. The dual nature God created us with is unique, and the “image of God” nature completely changes the way we are supposed to live:
		1. Image of God – **John 4:24** – Spirit, i.e. NOT physical.
		2. Such is the greater nature and is supposed to dominate the physical.
		3. See in the first command – **Genesis 2:15-17** – the spiritual nature is to control the natural inclination to eat, at least from that particular tree.
13. The Natural Man is Only Concerned with the Physical
	1. There are those who conduct themselves merely as physical creatures, or animals – **Philippians 3:18-19** – only concerned with the physical.
	2. Such are the false teachers Peter addressed – **2 Peter 2:12-14**
		1. **(v. 12)** – recklessly conduct themselves like animals, even running foolishly into a trap **(v. 19).**
			1. Brute – *alogos*; irrational (STRONG) (unreasonable)
		2. **(v. 14)** – they have given themselves over to the animal life to the extent that they can’t stop sinning.
	3. Such is a life without the virtue of self-control.
14. The Role of the Spirit’s Revelation
15. The Spirit Reveals God’s Will to Regulate Man’s Living
	1. **Galatians 5:16-17** – the Spirit’s direction in the gospel is meant to restrain our living.
		1. Negative – **(vv. 19-21)** – abstaining from works of flesh.
		2. Positive – **(vv. 22-23)** – exercising fruit of Spirit.
			1. Self-control included in list.
			2. **(vv. 24-25)** – put away passions and desires, under control of Spirit.
16. The Natural Man Does Not Receive the Spirit’s Revelation
	1. Speaking of revelation of God’s wisdom – **1 Corinthians 2:13-16**
		1. **(v. 14)** – natural man is the man who has his mind on the physical.
		2. Reason he does not receive – ***“they are foolishness to him”*** – not because he is incapable, but that he does not desire them.
	2. The mind set on the flesh cannot be subject to God’s law – **Romans 8:5-8** – it is not aiming for the higher life in Christ Jesus but is preoccupied with the fleshly existence.
		1. There is no desire to please God.
		2. Therefore, there is no self-control.
17. The Response of Self-Control
18. Self-Control Springs from the Aim of Fellowship with the Divine Nature, and the Direction of Spiritual Knowledge
	1. **2 Peter 1:4-6** – the promise to partake in the divine nature, the goal of virtue, knowledge to reach that goal, self-control to practice what is known.
	2. The world does not understand why anyone would ever want to restrict themselves from enjoying matters which are only “natural”:
		1. **Romans 1:24-25** – they have pursued their lusts, and God has let them.
		2. **1 Peter 4:3-4** – they think it strange that Christians don’t participate.
	3. Christians realize the temporal nature of these lusts, and the eternal nature of heavenly treasure – **1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 1:4**
	4. Having the desire to be in fellowship with God for eternity, the Christian exercises self-control when faced with the temptations of the flesh and lets the Spirit guide him by God’s word.
19. Self-Control is a God-given Ability which Must be Decided Upon, and Developed
	1. God has given us the ability of self-control:
		1. It is a logical implication of free-will.
		2. **Genesis 2:15-17** – the command presupposes free-will, and the ability of self-control. (God does not require anything of us that we do not have the ability to accomplish.)
	2. Self-control must be developed. It is something that must be decided upon, and then exercised through intense focus.
	3. Self-control requires humility:
		1. To recognize our individual illicit desires – **James 1:13-15**
		2. To recognize our need to submit to the will of God – **James 1:21; 4:7-10, 15**
	4. Self-control requires self-denial – **Matthew 16:21-24**
		1. **(v. 23)** – Peter wasn’t thinking of the things of God.
		2. **(v. 24)** – discipleship requires a denial of self with intent of following God.
		3. Deny – *aparneomai* – to forget one’s self, lose sight of one’s self and one’s own interests. (THAYER)
			1. Your interests are to be God’s interests.
			2. **Matthew 26:39** – demonstrated by Jesus in the garden prayers.
	5. Self-control requires self-discipline – **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
		1. **(vv. 24-25)** – motivated by the focus of life’s goal – no self-control without aim.
		2. **(v. 26)** – established by priority or focus on the goal.
		3. **(v. 27)** – accomplished through a mastery of the body by the spirit.
			1. Discipline – *hypōpiazō* – lit., “to strike under the eye” (from hupopion, “the part of the face below the eye”; hupo, “under,” ops, “an eye”), hence, to beat the face black and blue (to give a black eye), is used metaphorically, and translated “buffet” in 1 Cor. 9:27 (KJV, “keep under”), of Paul’s suppressive treatment of his body, in order to keep himself spiritually fit (RV marg., “bruise”) (VINE)
			2. Subjection – *doulagōgeō* – to be a slave-driver, i.e. to enslave (figuratively, subdue) (STRONG)
			3. Paul did whatever it took to keep his body under control with the spiritual goal in mind – HE MADE HIS BODY HIS SLAVE TO DO WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO WIN THE RACE, NOT FULFILL ITS DESIRES.
				1. **Romans 6:13** – presented body to righteousness.
		4. NOTE: ***(V. 25) – “Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things.”*** (NASB)
			1. Context – liberties – **1 Corinthians 10:23**
			2. **Hebrews 12:1-2** – lay aside sin, but in distinction from sin, WEIGHTS.
			3. If something is not helpful to get us to heaven, self-control will put that away for the sake of the goal.
	6. Self-control is saying “no” to self when something is against God’s law, or is not advantageous in your spiritual race.
	7. Self-control is a massive challenge – **Proverbs 16:32** – but is necessary in Christian growth and getting to heaven.

**Conclusion**

1. Self-control is to be added to knowledge if that knowledge is going to be effective.
2. The goal of virtue is as far away as what self-control will allow the knowledge of God’s will to accomplish in the life of an individual.
3. If we are to partake in the divine nature, and gain entrance into the everlasting kingdom we must learn to control ourselves according to the will of God.