

## CHARACTERISTIC FOUR: SELF-CONTROL

### Lesson 9: Am I the Only One That Struggles?

I believe one of the biggest challenges for men in general is self-control. Historically, more people have fallen sexually, financially or otherwise because of a lack of self-control than any other reason. I believe a big reason for this is that many men feel they're the only ones that ever struggle with certain areas of self-control. This is exactly how the enemy holds many men hostage in areas of lust, money, power or even addiction. Further, it's very difficult for most men to admit that they ever struggle with self-control. The reality is that every person has struggled with something in their life; whether it's a person who seems to have it all together that is dealing with being controlling or having anger issues, to someone that has an eating disorder or another that is struggling with alcohol or drug abuse. Every person has dealt with some kind of weakness because we live in a fallen sinful world.

If we look back at many of the great patriarchs of the Bible, we can see that even they had issues with self-control. Think about it, Noah got drunk after God used him to build the ark and save his family and the animals from the flood. David committed both, adultery and murder, after God used him to bring deliverance to the Israelites from the Philistines, yet he was still considered a man after God's own heart. Solomon was one of the wisest and richest kings, but his lack of self-control is greatly documented with his many wives and concubines.

Even the Apostle Paul talks about his struggle by giving us this example in Romans 7:21-8:2, when he says:

"I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."<sup>1</sup>

Does Paul excuse his sin or lack of self-control? No, but he says that the battle is real, our spirit man and our flesh are constantly warring with one another. But he ends by saying the only one that can free him is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same for all of us! It is only as we completely surrender our will, our sins, and our desires to Jesus and then begin to make different choices by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we are truly

able to have self-control and power over sin. In other words, Jesus has already given us the victory by defeating sin through the cross and rising from the dead, but we must appropriate that victory over our lives and then walk it out every day.

Let me give you an example from my own life. I've never been secret about early addiction to pornography. I was introduced to porn by a cousin at the age of 12 and it led to a very promiscuous lifestyle through my teenage and early adulthood years. I literally lived the typical life of a sailor for my first year and half in the Navy. Even after I got saved at 19 years old, I struggled to keep both my thought life and physical body pure for a couple of years. It wasn't until I heard my Pastor preaching from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, where Paul talks about "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" that things began to change. Further, they spoke of when David sinned with Bathsheba, and my Pastor said, "David couldn't help but see Bathsheba the first time, it was the second look that cost him." It was at that point that I began to take every lustful thought captive and vowed not to take a second look, even when my flesh wanted to.

Does that mean I haven't been tempted since or the enemy has never brought back images from my past back to my mind? Absolutely not! I've just learned how to take those thoughts captive, rebuke them and then fill my mind with God's Word. One verse I have memorized and used whenever tempted is 1 Corinthians 10:13 which states, "No temptation has overtaken 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."<sup>2</sup>

As men of God, we can't fall into the isolation trap of the enemy that tells us that we are the only one that struggles with sin or self-control, thus keeping us from sharing those faults with others and perpetuating a continuing cycle of failing. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."<sup>3</sup> This doesn't mean you need to share all your struggles with everyone. However, I want to encourage you to find some trusted Godly brothers who will not only pray for you but also help hold you accountable in your personal life.

### **Lesson 9 Questions**

1. What are some of the greatest areas of self-control that men struggle with?

2. How does the enemy keep us in the trap of isolation and the cycle of continued sinning?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why is it important to confess our faults to God and others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Do you have at least one or two Godly men that you can confide in that will pray for you and help hold you accountable?

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<sup>1</sup> Ro 7:21–8:2. (NASB).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Co 10:13. (NKJV).

<sup>3</sup> Jas 5:16. (NASB).