



Self-Control

Willing hands had worked the morning hours through, tossing rocks and stones from the farmer's fields. New crops could not be planted until the soil was cleared and prepared. About mid-day the workers stopped to survey their work. The stones easily picked up by one or two strong men had been removed. Yet, the field was still unusable. The plow could not do its work, turning up fresh, soft dirt. Underneath the topsoil, unseen for the most part, were huge boulders. Only tips and small areas of these massive stones could be seen above ground, much like an iceberg floating in icy seas. No amount of pushing, shoveling, digging, or straining was going to move those rocks from their place; the boulders were staying.

While his young workers could not remove the bulk of the hidden boulders, the farmer was far from quitting. He was not discouraged, nor was he giving up. He knew it was time to bring in the heavy equipment!

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN AND SELF-CONTROL

Key Verse: *“A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing”* (Ecclesiastes 3:5).

A Time to Cast Away Stones

Have you successfully removed the stones of unkindness, rudeness, gossip, and maybe emotional fits of anger, only to run into boulders of hate, fear, doubt, malice, and disobedience? With a little self-control, you have handled rebuffs and returned kindness. Have you refrained from participating in gossip? Good! You are clearing your fields, and you have had a measure of success in casting stones from your life. But self-reformation will not give you lasting results. Bother-some stones will continue to show, crippling any hope of living a life committed to the Savior. You are left wondering if you will ever have the self-control necessary to remove all the boulders of sin and disobedience from your mind and heart.

The answer to that question is a resounding no! The task is not ours alone. Only through the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God are we able to have any measure of success. Our resource lies in Him! The Bible states in Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV): “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” The ability to exercise self-control comes only through the power of the Holy Spirit, not by self-effort. Then and only then are stones successfully cast from our lives.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. List the fruit of the Spirit and define each one. Consider whether these fruits are working in your life. What can you do to ensure that they are?

Like the farmer, you are not without heavy equipment! There is no need to despair. There is no need to give in or give up. The greatest power in heaven and earth hovers near to remove deep rooted obstacles from your path. Stones of discouragement, doubt, fear, and sin, in all its forms, are easily removed when we exercise the fruit of the Spirit listed for us in Galatians 5:22-23.

The Word of God is our heavy equipment! With one Word, worlds were spoken into existence. With His written Word the devil and his demons are defeated! We have the written Word, ladies! Can't hold your tongue? Speak the Word: "I can do all things through Christ which gives me strength!" Struggling with an immense emotional boulder? Speak the Word: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

The Word says you are loved. Emotions of self-loathing, self-hate, and unworthiness can be removed from your life with just a few words from the Lord's heavy equipment that gets the job done! The Word is powerful. God says through the writer of Hebrews that His Word is quick, powerful, and sharper, than any two-edged sword. It pierces, divides, and discerns. Simple, powerful Words cleanse, forgive, and heal. When we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, stones are cleared away, leaving a fertile land from which lush fruit will abound. In God's economy, there is a time for everything. This is the time "to cast away stones."

Read Ephesians 6:10-18. In what ways are the pieces of God's armor invaluable in gaining self-control in our lives?

1. Belt of Truth:
2. Breastplate of Righteousness:
3. Shoes of Peace:
4. Shield of Faith:
5. Helmet of Salvation:
6. Sword of the Spirit (Word of God):
7. Never-ceasing Prayer

Ephesians 6:10 commands the brethren to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The control of self is a life-long process of submission to the authority of God's Word. Standing firm against what the devil throws at us requires, among other fruits, self-control.

Without self-control in the face of temptation, we lose. We are no match for the devil and his evil ways, but we are not defenseless. In the battle for self-control, the Lord has provided a mighty arsenal: the whole armor of God.

Read Ephesians 3:16; 4:30-32. Rewrite these verses in your own words. How do these verses apply to the fruit of the Spirit and to the whole armor of God? What is the significance of these two aspects of the Christian's life—fruit of the Spirit and the armor of God?

The Holy Spirit, who gives us strength, can be grieved. How can we please, not grieve, the Holy Spirit? (verse 30-32).

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? What effect would living a life demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit prevent one from committing this sin? How does self-control enter into the picture?

By the power of the Holy Spirit we CAN remove unwanted stones from the fields of our lives and live godly, self-controlled lives, at peace with ourselves and one another.

A Time to Embrace

The cross changes everything. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ on a rough, wooden cross was the point of change for all time and eternity. Death had come to rule and reign on this earth. Christ on the cross broke death's power. Death has been swallowed up in victory! Not only has Christ broken the power of death, but He has paid the sin debt that was brought into the world via the Garden of Eden. No one must ever again fear death or fear condemnation because of sin.

Life became death for all mankind through disobedience. Death became life for all mankind through the obedience of Christ. We can experience new life in Christ. The cross transforms us from the old to the new and brings peace and joy in our Christian walk. Embrace the cross.

Provision of the Cross. The death of Jesus bridged the gap for all men to have eternal redemption. Believers are privileged to come into the presence of almighty God. Believers can enter the throne room of grace boldly and find help in time of need. The death, burial, and resurrection has provided new life to all believers. We have redemption. We have forgiveness of sins. We have riches in His grace. We have wisdom. We have understanding that unbelievers do not possess. Glory of glory, we can know the purpose of His will for our lives here in this present age. We have the provision of His Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. We have all this because of the cross.

Power of the Cross. Because there was power in the blood that was shed on the cross of Calvary, we can experience this working of His mighty power in our lives, today. We can be confident that the power that made forgiveness of sins possible is the same power available to us in answered prayer. We have a hope, an inheritance among the saints, that the mighty power of the cross is mighty to work in our lives today.

Read Romans 5:1-21. Most times when we embrace someone, we have to let go of something or someone else. Have you encountered, as you read these verses of the cross, anything you think you should immediately release in your life? Whatever you hold on to, instead of embracing the cross, is less than God's best for you.

Do you think the fruit of the Spirit, particularly self-control, would enable you to release whatever you are holding on to and embrace the cross?

Read the following passages and make your own observations of what the cross has done for you, and how the cross makes a difference in your life today.

Read about the provision: Ephesians 1:7-12; 2:4-10;
Hebrews 9:12.

Read about the power: Ephesians 1:15-23; 2 Peter 1:2-4;
1 Corinthians 1:17-18.

Meet the Writer: Tammy Miller lives in Phil Campbell, Alabama, where her husband Terry pastors Shady Grove Free Will Baptist Church.