

SELF CONTROL AND THE BIBLE

By Mark Hatfield

Introduction and Lesson 1

Introduction

One night I found myself very uncomfortable as I lay in my bed. My stomach had that guilty, sick feeling, my heart felt empty, and I couldn't sleep. My mind was so focused on something that I had been struggling with for a very long time and I needed to deal with it. I had no alternative but to seek the help of God. I had been trying very hard to find a balance in everything that I was doing in my life. From church work, family time, personal recreation and hobbies etc, I was overwhelmed with activities to the point that I could not accomplish what was most important. I thought to myself... "I have made personal schedules, 'things to do' lists, we even started a family calendar (that filled up way too fast). What could I do to help myself in this situation? I informed my wife that I needed some time to think and I rolled out of bed and made my way downstairs for a place where I could meditate and study. With my Bible in one hand and a pen and a pad of paper in the other, I began a study on the subject that I could see, was the real matter that I was facing... an issue with self-control.

It is amazing what I was able to find in such a short amount of time to help me resolve my problem (all praise be to God for His powerful word). In this material, I wanted to share some of what I found to be helpful with you. I know that many of us find ourselves engulfed by the unbalance in our schedules and really desire to find some answers. I hope I can provide some advice here as we make the effort to learn how to control ourselves.

LESSON 1 : Discussing Self-Control (Acts 24:25)

Self is defined as, "The total, essential, or particular being of a person; the individual". Control is defined as, "To exercise authoritative or dominating influence over; direct; to adjust to a requirement; regulate; to hold in restraint; check". Self-control then, can be summed up as, "Control of one's emotions, desires, or actions by one's own will", or we might say in a spiritual sense that self-control is, "Each individual exercising authority to influence and direct their person to adjust to what is required by God, which includes restraining our emotions, desires, and actions by our own will as regulated by His will."

In Acts 24, the apostle Paul was talking with a man named Felix, about some important matters. Starting in verse 24, the text states, "But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him {speak} about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." I found it interesting that when Paul was talking with Felix about the gospel (vs. 24 "faith in Christ Jesus"), that he was discussing self-control with him. Maybe if we spent more time teaching others about self-control when they are coming to the Lord, they would have already faced this battle with self-control, and would have decided how they are going to succeed in keeping their desires in check

during times of temptation. As we studied the definitions and discussed self-control above, how would you say that you are doing in this area of your faith? Are you like Felix? Do you seek to put off obedience to the gospel for a better time because of the fear that righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come bring to your heart? There is no better time than right now to get your life under control. One of Satan's greatest tools is to get us to postpone what is urgent in our daily lives, while making us believe that there will be a more appropriate time. No matter whether you are a Christian or not, self-control is a vital aspect of your life. Those who have no control over their lives, lose their lives. And those who never gain control of their lives lose their souls. It is no wonder why Paul was discussing self-control with Felix as he was leading him in obedience to the gospel. Without self-control, we cannot submit to the will of God. In this outline I want us to examine self-control from a spiritual perspective. In other words, what does God say about self-control in His word that will help us to bring ourselves under His control?