

Self-Control #4, Self-Deception/Delusion

Review of series:

- Lesson #1, Self-Control is the control of *all* of self: our *thoughts, emotions, passions/desires*, and *actions* rather than just our *behavior*; in some ways, getting a handle on self-control “unlocks” or *enables* the other *Christian Graces*.
- Lesson #2, Self-Control, like discipleship more generally, requires *Self-Denial*; we must *deny ourselves* the thoughts, emotions, passions/desires, and activities that the world indulges; and,
- Lesson #3, If *self-denial* is the “negative” side of Self-Control, then *self-discipline* is the equally important “positive” side; we must not only *deny* ourselves the thoughts, emotions, passions/desires, and actions of worldliness, but we must also *control* and “steer” ourselves in the proper paths regarding these same areas.

Now then, **what else is included in Self-Control?**

A. Avoiding Self-Deception/Delusion.

What a great tragedy to arrive at the Day of Judgment only learn that how you had lived your life- in fact the whole purpose with and for which you lived, was a lie, cf. Matt.7:22-23! The *great deceiver* got you! But do you know what would be an even greater heartbreak? Coming to that great day having lived your life under a delusion that was **self-inflicted, Jas.1:22!** (Note that although Jas.1:12-18 speaks of both being *tempted* and *deceived*, neither come from God, but both can come from *self!*)

We can be self-deceived in many ways. Which ones are of special importance to self-control?

1. **Exactly who the enemy is.** Despite what we might tell ourselves, it is not God, Jas.1:13. How or when would we possibly *deceive ourselves* in this way? “God is *not fair*” or perhaps, “God *wants or expects too much of me/my life,*” or even “After all, it’s *my life!*” Not only is God **not the enemy**, He is the only *real friend* and *real hope* you have, cf. vv.17-18.
2. **That “I am not the problem.”** Perhaps not in some areas, but when it comes to *temptation* and the lack of *self-control*, **exactly who else is to blame, Jas.1:14-16?** We are talking about “SELF” control, and yet how often- even if it is not God, do we find *someone else* to blame, cf. Gen.3:12! Read Jas.1:14 again, slowly and deliberately.
3. **“I can stop (in this case, *sin* or especially a *sinful habit*) anytime I want to.”** It may surprise you, and many psychoanalysts and therapists may disagree, but I believe that in the main this statement is basically true! Let’s face it: psychoanalysts and therapists have a *vested interest* in you NOT being able to “stop anytime you want to”... at least not *on your own*. Don’t get me wrong, (good) analysts and therapists *can* serve an important role, and I have even recommended a select few to brethren over the years. But these things notwithstanding, I still say that we **can** stop a sinful habit **if** want to, cf. 1Cor.10:13. So where’s the *self-deception* come in? We must **want to enough...**

- a. It (stopping a *sinful habit*) may be the most difficult, gut-wrenching thing you've ever done in your life if "it" (whatever "it" is) has been tolerated so long as to become ingrained in your "self" to the degree that it has become *second nature* for you, cf. Eph.2:3 In this case, "*nature*" is established by **choice**- by *indulging* "*the lusts of our flesh*" and "*the desires of the flesh and of the mind*" in walking "*according to the course of this world,*" cf. vv.2-3, rather than by *genetics* (no one is *born* a sinner, Ezk.18:20).
- b. I believe (through what God has told me about Himself and humanity whom He created) that:
 - 1) God has given us *free moral agency*; that is, the *right of self-government*, and therefore *self-determination*. Otherwise, God is not only *unjust*, but also *unfair* (to *judge* and *condemn* us for things that are truly "beyond my/our ability to control").
 - 2) We *may* abdicate that right by blaming others (or everyone else!), or claiming *inability*, but it is nonetheless our *right* and *ability*, by the grace of God, **to control ourselves**. Satan and society (as his willing accomplices) are just plain wrong. You *can* "help" and "control" yourself!
 - 3) Therefore, we do not **have to** sin; we **choose to sin**, cp. Luke 22:3, where "*Satan entered*" Judas, but He did so *by invitation*, John 12:4,6!
 - 4) And if we *choose to sin*, **we can choose NOT to sin**, cf. 1Cor.15:34; 1Pet.1:15-16. Therefore,
- c. We must stop *deceiving ourselves* into thinking and believing that when we fail it is either "not my fault," or that "I couldn't help myself." You (and that certainly includes *me*) **could have NOT sinned**, but you (again, including *me*) **chose to sin**. Stop being *deceived*, or even worse, *deceiving yourself* about this! Self-control is impossible as long as we suffer under and with this delusion.

Conclusions:

- In order to muster and master **Self-Control**, we must stop *deceiving* and/or *deluding* ourselves.
- We don't **have to** sin; we **choose to sin**. And, we can and must choose NOT to sin.
- To do so, we must **want NOT to sin** more than we want to *indulge* our *desires of the flesh* (body) and *mind* (intellect, emotion, desires).
- If we **choose to sin**, Satan will help us in every way possible. If we **choose NOT to sin**, God will help us in every way possible. Satan will tell you that "You can't help yourself" or that "It's not your fault." God will tell you the truth: "You *chose* to sin, but you *can* choose to do what is right."
- Stop being *deceived*, especially if you're *deluding yourself*!