

Self-Control #5, *Self-Righteousness*

Introduction/Review

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.

Lesson 4- There is no deception quite like **Self-Delusion**. While all the aspects of self-control that we’ve covered involve at least some mental element, this one is entirely “in your head,” though it certainly influences our actions.

And now, for our concluding lesson in the series, let’s consider **Self-Righteousness**. While self-righteousness is surely a form of self-delusion, it seems to merit its own treatment owing to its far-reaching effects and consequences. So...

How is *Self-Righteousness* related to, or how does it inhibit, **Self-Control**? It:

- **Supports self-delusion, 1John 1:8,10.** Though *self-righteousness* doesn’t usually manifest itself to this degree (where one says they have “*no sin*”), it often causes us to *minimize* or *justify* “my” sins while *maximizing* those of others.
- **Fosters an *above the Law* mentality, Matt.23:1-4.** The *self-righteous* individual loves to *legislate* to/for others, v.2, but rarely applies the rules to themselves to the same degree, vv.3-4.
- **Encourages a “*to be seen as righteous*” way of life, Matt.23:5ff; 6:1ff.** Though the *self-righteous* person carves out all kinds of exemptions or exclusions for themselves, this isn’t to say that they aren’t concerned with how they are perceived by others. In fact, they are all about “image” and how they are viewed- which is why they go to great lengths “*to be noticed by men*” as being righteous...even if it is only a *self-appointed* righteousness.
- **All of these contribute to the undermining of *self-control* by insinuating that there is no need for it:**
 - **Because we’re already “righteous,” obviously;**
 - **Because the “rules” aren’t really *for us* or *don’t apply to us*- becoming a “*law unto themselves*” in their own minds (hence, *self-deluded*);**
 - **Because *the ends justifies the means*; after all, “it” is all about *image*.**

Further problems with *self-control* created or enhanced by *self-righteousness* from Luke 18:9-14:

- **Misplaced trust, v.9a.** Though modern society trumpets the benefits of trusting self in regards to everything, *spiritual course* and *direction* shouldn't be among them, cf. Prov.3:5. God alone is *righteous*, and *trusting self* in regard to righteousness is in effect making yourself your own god. Such is surely an *over-estimate* of our own importance, cf. Phil.2:3-8!
- **Improper view of or attitude toward others, v.9b.** One can rarely *over-estimate* their own importance (or righteousness!) without *under-estimating* the importance (and righteousness!) of others. Briefly consider Matt.9:10-13, where the *contempt* of others is clearly demonstrated to go hand-in-hand with *self-righteousness*, cf. Rom.14:3,10.
- **Self-worship, v.11a.** The *self-righteous* Pharisee was "*praying thus to himself*," indicating yet again that for such individuals (or YOU or ME!) it really is all about "me," cf. Col.2:23 regarding "*self-made religion*" and Phil.3:19 regarding "*whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is their shame, who set their minds on earthly things*."
- **Failure to see self-deception regarding sin, v.11b.** It is easy to "see" sins of which we are not guilty, but requires much more humility and self-examination to "find" (and admit) those of which we are guilty.
- **Obviously, self-importance, v.12.** Just as it is "easy" to the other's *sins* rather than your own, it is also "easy" to see your *righteousness* while remaining blind to that of others. This, again, links *self-righteousness* to *self-delusion/deception*, and is part of the "*deceitfulness of sin*," Heb.3:13.
- **All of which ultimately leads to eternal defeat and destruction, v.14.** It's not just a case of "too much personality" or "self-confidence." Self-righteousness or any other form of self-deception (failing to see ourselves as God does- either manifesting as *self-importance* and *self-righteousness*, or *self-loathing* and *unworthy* of His love and forgiveness) is **self-destructive**!

Conclusions:

1. **Self-Control is vital to our spiritual well-being and eternal destiny.** If we cannot *muster* and *master* self-control, we are doomed.
2. **To do so, we must have the proper view of self (not a *deluded* or *deceived* perspective, and not *self-important* or *self-righteous* one), through the practice of *self-denial* (saying "No" to self) and *self-discipline* (taking the wheel and steering in the right(eous) direction).**
3. **And we must always remember that *self-control* includes ALL of self- our *thoughts, emotions, desires, and actions*.**