**A Roman Governor Trembles at Self-Control**

Acts 24:24-25 tells us that the apostle Paul had the opportunity to speak with Felix, the Governor in Caesarea about faith in Christ Jesus. When he discussed righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened. As we noticed in our last article, God, as the creator of the universe, has the inherent right to define righteousness and He expects us to live by His rules. When a man like Felix decides to live according to his own rules despite the displeasure of his creator, fear is a natural reaction.

We now turn our attention to Scriptural teaching regarding self-control. The Greek word translated self-control in Acts 24 is used only two other times in the New Testament. In both passages, we get a glimpse of the righteous nature of God as it would appear in our own lives. Galatians 5:22-23 says that the “fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Peter says that we can “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Then in verses 5-7 he tells us how: “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.”

There are two important dimensions to self-control that Felix needed to know and that we need to understand.

**Self-Control is not external control.** When children are very young, they simply don’t have the capacity for understanding right from wrong. They are under the control of their mom and dad. But as parents, we have the responsibility to train them and teach them respect for the authority of God so that, as they mature, they develop their own desire to please Him by living according to His righteousness. When a young person’s convictions are founded in the teachings of the inspired Scriptures, they desire to do right, not because mom and dad are watching, but because they love God as He first loved them (1 John 4:19). External control has been supplanted by self-control.

**Self-Control takes diligence.** Peter said as much in the passage above. And the reason is simple: The right choice is not always the easiest choice. God has prohibited certain behaviors and He has required others, not as an arbitrary show of ego, but because He knows what is best for us and has our best interest at heart (Deuteronomy 6:24). Frankly, doing wrong is enjoyable in the short run and doing right often requires sacrifice. Doing just what I feel like at the time takes no effort at all, but doing things God’s way is always best in the long run. Doing what is right instead of what I feel like doing takes character; self-control.

Felix trembled at the thought that Jehovah God had defined righteousness and that, to comply, he would have to make sacrifices in his life. In our next study, we will see the source of Felix’s terror: the consequences of judgment that he would inevitably face because he knew he was unwilling to submit to the will of God.

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