

**The Danger of  
Confusing  
Self-Discipline  
With  
Self-Control**



## **Self-discipline:**

the fruit of our flesh... of our efforts  
to save ourselves, perfect ourselves

## **Self-control:**

a fruit of the Spirit. (Gal 5:22, 23)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,  
peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness,  
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...

Gal 5:22, 23

## Galatians 2

15-16 We Jews know that we have no advantage of birth over “non-Jewish sinners.” We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it—and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen!

## Galatians 2

15-16 Convinced that no human being can please God by **self-improvement**, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, **not by trying to be good.** (self-discipline)

## Galatians 2

<sup>17-18</sup> Have some of you noticed that **we are not yet perfect?** (No great surprise, right?) and are you ready to make the accusation that since people like me, who go through Christ in order to get things right with God, aren't perfectly virtuous, Christ must therefore be an accessory to sin?

## Galatians 2

The accusation is frivolous. If I was “trying to be good,” I would be rebuilding the same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a pretender.

## Galatians 2

**19-21** What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work.



## Galatians 2

So I quit being a “law man”

so that I could be *God's* man...

...My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God.

So I quit being a “law man”

so that I could be *God's* man...

...My **ego** is no longer central. It is no longer important that I **appear** righteous before you or have **your good opinion**, and I am no longer **driven to impress God**.

Christ lives in me...Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God?

Galatians 2:19-21

## Galatians 3

2-4 Let me put this question to you: How did your new life **begin?** Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could **complete by their own efforts** (*self-discipline*) what was begun by God.

## Galatians 3

2-4 If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it (*with self-discipline*)? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!

## Galatians 3

<sup>5-6</sup> Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with **his own presence**, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives **you could never do for yourselves**, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving (*self-discipline*) or because you trust him to do them in you (faith)?

## Galatians 5

**1** Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.

**2-3** I am emphatic about this. The moment any one of you submits to circumcision or **any other rule-keeping system**, at that same moment Christ's hard-won gift of freedom is squandered.

## Galatians 5

13-15 It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do (including devoting yourself to a religious system of self-discipline!) and destroy your freedom.



## Galatians 5

13-15 Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself.

## **Self-discipline:**

- not about love but self-salvation

## **Self-control:**

- celebration / expression of who and whose we are
- congruence, alignment

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us...

like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

**C. S. Lewis**



When I become aware of  
the poverty of my love  
what do I resort to?

Self-discipline

Self-control

Success

Failure

- Arrogance
- Pride

- Discouragement
- Cynicism

- Springboard into Arms of grace
- Where I am known, loved,  
delighted in, forgiven
- Where love fills... spills

## Self-Discipline

## Self-Control

Temptation :

“No!”

Containing the bad

“Not who I am!”

Pursuing the good

Conviction of sin:

1. “I blew it!...again.”  
Try harder.  
I’ll work on that!”

2. Crash into despair

3. Annoyed

“Come feast on Me!”

- Invitation
- Liberation

## Self-Discipline

## Self-Control

Evidences of  
Christ's life  
within

- Pride
- Arrogance

- Worship
- Gratitude
- Awe