

Intro: Self-control in Galatians 5:23 should really be translated “mastery.” It has the idea of strength, the inner power to restrain one’s desires, to master oneself, not acting upon evil covetousness. It is an important aspect of our redemption. Often we take the grace of God and use it to excuse sin, to make light of it under the phrasing, “we all sin.” To a degree this is surely true, but though it sounds humble, I fear that we may be acting like children who just opened a chemistry set for Christmas and are mixing together what should not be mixed. According to Paul’s letter to Titus, we were saved to live righteously, in purity and holiness (2:14). Romans 6:1-14 is Paul’s answer to the moral attitudes and actions that the gospel calls forth from us. We are not saved and freed *to* sin, but rather we were set free *from* sin, so that it is no longer master over us. In fact, Paul presents this case to Felix when he is telling him the gospel in Acts 24:25, “...and he reasoned about righteousness and self-mastery and the coming judgment...” Peter lists mastery as the growth of the Spirit that, when growing, make us effective and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:6-8).

Romans 8:13 and context

1. Self-Mastery is for All Believers
 - a. Believers (v1)
 - i. Not under condemnation b/c of Christ
 - ii. Brought to life by the Spirit (10-11)
 - b. Only a regenerated person has the resource (the Holy Spirit) to kill the deeds of sin in his person
 - c. Note, too that Paul uses the term “brothers” to emphasize his participation with them as a loving family member, not merely a distant prophet (v12)
2. Self-Mastery is a Violent Killing of Self-Dependence
 - a. Put to death the deeds of the body
 - i. Mastery is violent: forceful, battle, kill, strive, deny, taking up crosses, fight
 - ii. The actions of sin in one’s life (deeds)
 1. Paul’s point in chapter 6 of Romans up to this point is that we have already died to sin.
 2. Because we have died to sin, we are freed from it, no longer to serve it because it is dead to us. Therefore, we need to kill its effects upon us, the deeds of sin.
 - iii. Body: the corrupted and self-serving center of a person, the root of all sin comes from an idolatrous heart
 - b. To truly kill the actions, one must kill the motive, the idolatry in the heart
 - i. “Living *according to* the flesh”, i.e. “in line with” (v12)
 - ii. We can hide from temptation by avoidance, but we have not killed the affection to sin, but have merely covered the symptom...like allergies, we have avoided the allergen, but are not healed
 - iii. To appear to succeed in a diet we remove all the temptations from the house. Will we ultimately succeed in eating better?
 - c. The Desire of the flesh:
 - i. To take away its power, life, determination, its strength, in order that its produce (fruit) will not grow by the power of the Spirit
 - ii. Our responsibility and calling to kill sin in our lives by recognizing it as sin (dangerous, idolatrous, rebellious, ungodly), repenting of it (turning from it, confessing it, hating it, admitting that it is not to be in my life), and putting our faith in Christ (depending on his forgiveness, begging for it, loving it, loving him, being grateful, etc.)
3. We Kill the Deeds of the Flesh by the Spirit
 - a. The power to kill sin and the authority therein lies only with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit
 - i. He is promised of God to do this work
 - ii. It is the gift of God

1. John 15:5, “Without Me you can do nothing.”
- iii. Galatians 6:8 – sowing to the flesh reaps corruption, sow to the Spirit reaps eternal life
- iv. Romans 8:6 – To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.
- b. Dwells in us (v9)
 - i. Causes our hearts to abound in grace and to bear fruit of His making (Gal 5) which are contrary to the deeds of the body and will consume those sinful works of indwelling sin
 - ii. Brings judgment to our eyes so that sin is revealed and can be brought inline with the Spirit and consumed, for He is a “Spirit of judgment and burning” (Is 4:4). He is the fire that consumes our lusts.
- c. Gives life (v11)
- d. Holy Spirit or Spirit of Holiness
 - i. Why are we exhorted to obey if it’s His work?
 1. He is changing us, so that we obey righteously from a changed heart.
 2. John Owen, “He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures; He works in us and with us, not against us or without us; so that His assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself.”
 - ii. Galatians 6:8 – sowing to the flesh reaps corruption, sow to the Spirit reaps eternal life
- e. Spirit of adoption (v15)
 - i. Brings the cross of Christ to the forefront of our attention by faith, gives us fellowship with Christ and intimacy in His presence, as well as a sharing in His suffering.
 - ii. The reality that we have been given the Spirit of adoption produces in us affection for our Father and His desires
 1. We cry out, “Abba! Father!”
 2. Like Father, like sons
- f. Makes intercession for us (v26)
- g. All others ways of killing the deeds of the flesh come from a self-strength, by self-invention, lead only to self-righteousness. This is the epitome of all idolatry and is therefore inadequate and devoid of the Spirit.
 - i. In Galatians 5:16,18 the “desire of the flesh” (singular), is literally the “over-desire” or “lust” of the flesh. It is to make good desires too important, making them idols of which we must have, using them to attempt to control our own salvation, placing them in the position of God.
 - ii. It is interesting that this “desire of the flesh” is equated with “being under the law” in vss. 16 and 18. To be under the law is to use the law to control our salvation: our righteousness is won by living according to our strength. We use the law to become self-saviors, and we push out Jesus Christ b/c we do not see a need for Him.
 1. Walking in the Spirit, or being led by the Spirit, is the loosing of over-desire of self-righteousness and self-salvation and coming to Jesus alone as our righteousness and salvation, with a heart to please and honor Him
 2. Using any law to earn position before God is not walking by the Spirit, but by the flesh (the self-righteous attainment of law), and we end up fulfilling only the desire of the flesh, which never pleases God.
 3. The Law, as opposed to being a Savior, is our Tutor that leads us to Jesus (Gal 3), who is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30-31)
4. Having Eternal Life is Incoherent with Living in Sin
 - a. The Spirit of God dwells in you with power in order for you to live righteously
 - i. Verse 11 – The Spirit of God dwells in you
 - ii. Verse 12 – SO THEN, we don’t owe the flesh anything, we are not to offer our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness but as instruments of righteousness to God (6:13)

- b. If...Then You Will Live
 - i. Only by the Holy Spirit, but if the Holy Spirit is not there and the deeds of the body are not being killed, there is no life (see Romans 8:9)
 - ii. This is a warning to evaluate oneself
- c. Conditionality of Coherence: If you take this medicine, you will get well; NOT, It is possible or uncertain whether one will choose this way or that, because of v1, “There is now no condemnation.”
 - i. There is a connection, and an inseparable one at that, between the killing of the deeds of the flesh and life in Christ. All who have put on Christ, through the power of the Spirit, will and do kill the deeds of the flesh, and this is the life of the Spirit.
 - ii. Rom 6:14 – sin shall no longer master you, for you are under grace
 - 1. What the law could not, God did by sending His Son!!! (8:3-4)
 - 2. “Grace dethrones sin. It destroys sin’s lordship and enables the believer to offer himself, and whatever pertains to him, in loving service to God!” -William Hendricksen
 - iii. Rom 6:22-23 – “Having been freed from sin and made servants of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the outcome is life everlasting, for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 - 1. Note that the free gift that gives life everlasting is one that also leads to holiness in the freedom *from* sin!
 - 2. From bondage to freedom, wages to free gift, servants of sin to servants of God, death to life, through the holiness that comes by the Spirit.
- d. This is what makes this a good litmus test for whether or not one’s faith is genuine and real: Is sin being killed in my life?
 - i. Don’t forget the cycle of repentance and faith
 - ii. Repentance is true repentance, not merely acknowledgement
- e. There is no more desperate and miserable place to be then knowing the power of conviction and so led to fight against sin, and yet being powerless against it. Here there is guilt beyond measure and yet no sense or satisfaction of freedom or forgiveness. There is no intimacy with God, no sense of joy, no deep admiration or enjoyment of Jesus. There is no victory, only defeat and a self-deceived heart. There is simply the miserable existence of walking on the precipice of condemnation.
 - i. 2 Cor 4:16, without killing sin we aren’t being renewed day by day and we only see the perishing of the old...depressing!
 - ii. Without humility and the willingness to call sin “sin” there will be no killing of it. Instead we will cleave to it, for sin breeds more sin and quickly envelopes and deceives us into exalting something other than Jesus.

5. How Do We Master Our Passions, or Kill the Deeds of the Body? (Col 3:1-4)

- a. Recognize sin (since you have died, it took a death)
 - i. Confront your deeds honestly
 - ii. Evaluate your heart completely
 - iii. Humble yourself before God
 - iv. Call Sin Sin
 - v. See Sin as Dangerous and as Serious as God sees it
- b. Recognize what Christ has done (died and raised, glorified)
 - i. Bore the condemnation due you because of your sins
 - 1. Completely
 - 2. Lovingly
 - 3. Willingly
 - ii. Sent you His Spirit
 - 1. Indwells you

2. Prays for you
 3. Works in you
 4. gives you power to kill sin
- c. The only way to remove a sinful desire is to introduce a greater desire in its place. (Since...set your mind, seek out God's presence)
- i. Notice in verse 18 that Paul has a Christ-centered focus: the glory that is to be revealed to us outweighs the immediate pleasures of sin's promises
 - ii. God created us to desire, we cannot be desireless
 - iii. We cannot merely hide from temptation ultimately, we must kill the motivation to sin
 - iv. We do this by introducing a greater passion, a greater desire
 1. Until an addict desires to be free more than he desires the object of his addiction, he will not be free
 2. Diets
 3. Charlotte and the hike
 4. Colossians 3:1-5
 - a. Set your mind on greater things...the things of Christ
 - b. Imbibe yourself on the promises of God and the beauty of His person
 - c. Don't merely run from the bad, but run toward the good
 - d. See the glory of being in Him

Conclusion:

The irony of sin is that it promises great freedom and large life, but really enslaves us and shrinks our boundaries. What the earth promises it cannot deliver, and what we really deeply desire (love, acceptance, safety, hope, worth) is only found in obedience to Christ through the power of His Spirit and the hope of the Gospel.

Maybe you sit here today and you've struggled for too long to overcome sin and have become tired of failure. You want to be free. You need to be free. Come to Jesus, for He is gentle and humble in spirit. He will give you rest and a much lighter burden to carry.

Maybe you realize today that you've been trying to overcome sin on your own, and you really don't think that you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. You may realize today that you're not sure you're saved. Come to Jesus right now. Repent not only of those sins, but also of your effort to save yourself from them, to live according to your own strength. Rely upon His atoning work on the cross. He offers you life. Take it.

Here is a great promise: Those who are in Christ have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them to victory. There is no doubt that God will bring about complete and final perfection for you are His, fellow heirs with Jesus Himself. Take heart and do not be discouraged in your struggle. Continue to walk according to the grace of God shown to us by His Spirit. Trust Him and Him alone for your righteousness and your glory, and leave none to your over-desire to build your own righteousness or your own glory. Since you live by the grace of God in Jesus, then walk in line with the grace of God in Jesus.

While we must be careful that we do not let our deeds become the basis for our salvation (then they would be deeds of the flesh, we must also beware neglecting holy living and the self-mastery that rejects sinful desires and actions and strives for the holiness without which nobody will see the Lord (see Heb 12:14). When you place your trust in Jesus for your salvation and are given the gift of the Holy Spirit within you, you are indeed sons and daughters of God. There is no more wrath, no more condemnation, the consequences and payment for sin has been made and you are right with God. Now live like God is your Father: like Father, like son. Live like you are holy, righteous, and belong to God. Live like Heaven is your home. Learn to master your desires, not letting sin which crouches at your door, master you. Rather, make every effort to displace the evil self-centered desires of your hearts with the expulsive power of affection for the God who has been infinitely gracious to you. As we daily reflect on the Lordship of Christ, His substitutionary death that filled in the terrifying chasm of our guilt, and His powerful life lived in us through His Holy Spirit, we will push out the self-centered desires with a deep, affectionate, obedient love for Him and for His glory. When we do this, we learn to master our evil desires and live for the glory of God, which is what we are all called to do first and foremost.