TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Bobby Rader
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#549 There Is Sunshine In My Soul
#731 Take time to Be Holy

Scripture Reading by: Braylen Butler
#387 Tell Me the Story of Jesus

Communion Devotional by: Robert Ward
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#470 Victory in Jesus
Sermon: "Steadfast Love, Not Sacrifice"
Isaiah 1:11-20

#605 Send the Light
#704 Bind Us Together
Closing Prayer by: Ken Coleman

Our small groups will meet tonight.
Don Taylor's group will meet at 5:00 p.m.
at the building.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Sept. 22, 2024

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

On Self-Control

We have all heard of the Great Wall of China. In reality, that's a bit of a misnomer; there are actually several different fortifications on the northern frontier, constructed by multiple dynasties over centuries. But what we think of today as The Great Wall dates from the Ming Dynasty, in the 15th and 16th centuries. Brick and stone replaced the previous tamped earth, and the walls were augmented with fortresses, beacon towers, artillery, and other assorted defenses. It was a formidable system and did a pretty good job of keeping out northern nomadic tribes—at least until a northern general defected to the Manchu people outside the wall. He simply opened the gates and allowed them to pass through, and the great wall-building Ming dynasty fell.

This reminds me very much of what the wise man says in **Proverbs 25:28**: *Losing self-control leaves you as helpless as a city without a wall* (CEV). A person without self-control is like a defenseless city. It's only a matter of time before our enemies invade. And, much like with that traitorous Chinese general, the cause of our defeat comes from within.

Self-control is "restraint exercised over one's impulses, emotions, or desires." That's an uncommon quality. In fact, generally, we are out of control in our society. We have lost the concept of temperance, of moderation of passions and appetites. Most of the time, we fail to realize the struggle that is fought for our desires. We'd spend more if we had it. We'd eat more if we could stuff it. We live our lives only limited by our income, our physical appearance, our current 'situation' and by a ticking clock. How often have we chosen short term enjoyment over waiting, only to regret it later on? I think of the famous Stanford Marshmallow Experiment, where 600 children were promised a second treat if they could wait 15 minutes to eat the first. Only about a third succeeded.

But a lack of self-control has all sorts of negative consequences, far beyond losing out on a marshmallow. Think of the damage that results when we give our consciences a vacation and lose our self-control: drug and alcohol addictions, domestic violence, all forms of abuse, broken homes, bullying, sexual immorality of every kind, greed, gluttony, corruption, and the list goes on. Get to the bottom of most of the worst stories and you will find someone who acted out of control.

Look at what the Apostle Paul has to say about self-control: *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* **(1 Cor 9:24-27)**

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Rickey Lucas is having pain throughout his body. The Dr. will be trying some form of blocker to reduce/control his pain.

Joe Edd Stifflemire was in the hospital last week and is at home now.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Veronica Valant, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Yalonda Jackson, Cassandra Valent, Linda Frank, Scott Overton

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting, Monday, Sept. 23rd at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Oct. 1st at 8:-00 a.m.

Homecoming is Sunday, Oct. 27th

Food Bank

We served 148 families on Thursday, Sept. 19th at our food bank. That equals to 460 individuals. We had 20 volunteers.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

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Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;
Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737
Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ

A Self-Controlled Life Has Positive Goals

Paul says everyone runs the race but only one wins the prize. The winners win because they have the motivation and discipline that causes them to succeed. Motivation alone isn't enough; without self-control, you lose because you make too many mistakes. We might want to have more money, but we don't stick to a spending and savings plan, a budget—so we fail to reach that goal. We want to lose weight, but we don't stick to the diet and exercise plan. We want to be more spiritual , but we don't stick to our plan of reading and prayer.

We need to ask ourselves how important these things really are to us. Goals are nothing more than dreams if we don't know the steps to get there and have the discipline to follow the plan.

A Self-Controlled Life is Disciplined

In v. 25 Paul says *every athlete exercises self-control in all things.* I remember in high school, for instance, running 5 miles a day, 3 times a week in addition to the regular workouts we did. I hate running, but I wanted to be successful.

In that same way, the Christian practices self-control to gain the imperishable prize of eternal life. The word disciple means a learner or a follower. Discipline means learning and following the instructions in order to accomplish something. We often think of discipline in terms of punishment, but it is much more comprehensive than that. This is the discipline that makes things happen in our lives. Christian disciplines like reading the Bible and praying are the things we do to cultivate our relationship with God.

A Self-Controlled Life Demands Focus

We all think we can multi-task, but there are only so many things we can do at the same time. Paul has blinders on in his running, as it were. Focus in the Christian life means we will not be distracted. We have a singular goal. That means we say no to things that don't help us reach that goal.

But remaining focused on the goal in the midst of temptation and the desire for instant gratification is very difficult. It is easy to get sidetracked from our spiritual disciplines. Do you find sometimes that you lose that focus? Do you find that you start a lot of things but finish few? Do you hear yourself saying often, "I had good intentions." Do you allow unimportant things to interfere with important ones? We have to make sure our priorities are in order.

A Self-Controlled Life is Submissive

This is somewhat counterintuitive, but God has to control our lives for self-control to fully make itself known. Using the analogy Paul uses of a race, God is our coach. We cannot control ourselves without a coach. Even professional athletes need coaches. They observe, teach, train, correct, and encourage us just like God does.

The kind of control we need is not just pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps. It is made possible through the power of the Spirit of God. The paradox is that we cannot attain self-control alone. We must seek to keep in step with the spirit—that is why self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit! **(Gal 5:22-26).** Ultimately, self-control comes down to surrendering ourselves to Jesus. It is making Jesus the Lord and Master of our lives, all of our life. In order to have self-control, we must give up complete control. When we allow God to control our lives, then we will be in control of self.

Bryant Perkins