

Episode 4

Self-Control

Practice self-control. The Father's will for us is that we ever advance in our control of self and all that pertains to the desires of the flesh. *No one can do this for us*; it is wholly up to us to learn to be in control of ourselves. The Father's loyal children, those who have been born of the spirit, are always masters of the self and its bodily desires. Our part is to continuously practice self-control and its associated virtues such as self-restraint temperance, and moderation.

Jesus as our ideal of self-control. In developing our self-control we may look to Jesus as our ideal. He was a perfected specimen of self-control. When he suffered he uttered no threats against his tormentors; when he was crucified he even prayed for the forgiveness of the soldiers who nailed him to the cross, "for they know not what they do." (Lk. 23:34) Our manifestation of greatness on the earth is our exhibition of self-control. A rugged self-control is the acme of all human virtues. It has been well said that "He who rules his own self is greater than he who takes a city."

Self-control, kingdom advancement, and liberty. Self-control is also essential to our advancement in the kingdom. The fruits of the spirit all depend upon our exercise of self-control and are not possible without it. Sincere prayer is a powerful force for increasing our self-control, and emotional maturity is essential

to the growth of self-control. Our growth in self-control brings us enhanced liberty and leads to altruistic service. We must be ever vigilant to assure that we maintain a proper balance between self-liberty and self-control. Liberty without the ever-increasing conquest of self is a figment of the egoistic mortal imagination.

Self-mastery. The spontaneous bearing of the fruits of the spirit in our daily lives leads to the highest type of enjoyable and ennobling self-control--true self-mastery. In attaining self-mastery we reach the heights of earthly mortal attainment. Jesus, in his life on earth, demonstrated the secret of self-mastery--faith in the Father's indwelling spirit. Self-mastery is the measure of our moral nature and the *indicator of our spiritual development*. If I am to live as a child of God I will ever seek to grow in self-control and eventually attain true self-mastery.

Spiritual Progress

Make Spiritual Progress. Although the Father is happy for his children's success in all material endeavors that do not violate his will, our truly important work lies in the spiritual realm. "God is spirit" (Jn. 4:24) and God's will for us is that we grow in spiritual achievement, *make spiritual progress throughout our lives*. This progress occurs primarily through gradual growth, and through our response to specific crises. Our spiritual growth is predicated on humility, our consciousness of being "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3), combined with perfection hunger, our "hunger and thirst after righteousness." (Mt. 5:6) Spirituality is the measure of

our closeness to God and is proportional to the elimination of selfishness in our love for others. We grow in spirituality by maintaining our connection with God and continuously bearing spiritual fruit. By increasingly and spontaneously showing forth the fruit of the spirit in our daily lives we guarantee that we are making spiritual progress. Our highest happiness is linked to our spiritual progress and achievement.

Lack of spiritual progress. Lack of spiritual progress is a problem not only for individuals, but also for civilizations. The higher a civilization ascends the greater the need for spiritual direction, seeking first the ways of Heaven. At the present time in world history Western civilization is at a *standstill in spiritual development*. We are *not making spiritual progress*. We have left the religions of fear and superstition without replacing them with the revelatory religion of love, the religion of Jesus.

The secular threat. The greatest barrier we face in renewing our spiritual progress is modern secularism. It dominates Western civilization and blights the spiritual experience of millions. For more than 300 years the thinking of both Europe and America has been progressively secularized. Even a majority of professed believers in Jesus are unwittingly actual secularists. The secular way of life ignores God and lives as if he does not exist, or does not matter. It discards ethics and religion in favor of politics and power. It brings totalitarianism in its

wake and betrays man into political and economic slavery. Without a shared belief in God to unite us, our secularistic human society is slowly *disintegrating*.

What is to be done? What is to be done to overcome this great secular threat? What is now needed is a *new and more exclusive focus* on Jesus and his original gospel of the kingdom, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. It is only this return to Jesus and his actual teachings that has the power to overcome our present state of *spiritual stagnation* and renew our spiritual progress. The great hope of our civilization is for a spiritual renaissance, a spiritual rebirth of Jesus' kingdom of God in the hearts of individual believers. In this great conflict between secularism and the teachings of Jesus, the way of Jesus will eventually triumph.