

Self-Control

Sir Walter Raleigh was a distinguished soldier and explorer. One day he was publicly challenged by a hot-headed young man. When he refused, the young man spit in his face. Raleigh did not become enraged but calmly took out his handkerchief and wiped the spit off his face. He said, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe your blood from my conscience as I can this injury from my face, I would at this moment take away your life." The young man then fell to his knees and begged forgiveness.

"Self-control" is the restraint of passions and impulses. It refers to one who masters his appetites, emotions, inclinations, and urges. This involves not only abstinence from that which is prohibited, but moderation in that which is permissible.

Self-control is a vital virtue. Just as an athlete must discipline his mind and body to win the physical race, a Christian must discipline his mind and body to win the spiritual race (1 Corinthians 9:25). It is no wonder then that self-control is listed as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23) and as a Christian grace (2 Peter 1:6).

Self-control is not easy. It is a constant internal struggle. As Aristotle once said, "I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is over self." It can be obtained, however, with prayer, persistence, and proper positioning (not putting yourself in compromising situations — 1 Corinthians 15:33). May God help us to be free from being a slave to self!



Aaron Erhardt Village church of Christ