**Self-Control**

Text: 1 Samuel 26

1. What do you learn about the character of each of the key people—David, Saul and Abishai—in this passage?

2. Put yourself in David’s position (vv. 1-4). How might you feel toward someone who was trying in every way possible to kill you?

3. Describe the tension and dangers involved in David’s plan (vv. 5-7).

4. Abishai tells David to seize this golden opportunity to kill Saul (v. 8). Why would this be a tempting suggestion?

5. Why does David resist the temptation to take matters into his own hands (vv. 9-11)?

6. When we are tempted to sin, how can our attitude toward God’s will affect the outcome?

7. David and Abishai both attribute their actions to God. In the moment of temptation, how can we ensure that we clearly understand God’s will?

8. Notice how God helps David in verse 12. If we know God is present to help us in our struggle, how can it be easier to exercise self-control?

9. From a safe distance David calls out to Abner (vv. 13-16). How would his words to Abner make Saul more receptive to him?

10. What was Saul’s response (vv. 17-25)?

11. What does this passage teach about how God regards human life (vv. 21-24)?

12. In what ways can our commitment to maintaining self-control affect Christians and non-Christians as they observe us?

*Ask God’s Spirit to cultivate the fruit of self-control within you.*

32

**Introduction to the *Fruit of the Spirit***

**Flesh and Spirit**

The Context of Paul’s Teaching

Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches was addressed to Christians who had come largely from a pagan background (Gal. 4:8). The infant churches of Galatia were like tiny islands of faith in a vast sea of idolatry. Moreover, former Jews among them were teaching that they should keep the Law of Moses in addition to their Christian faith. Paul had visited many of these churches and had established several of them. He knew that it would be hard for the Christians in Galatia to maintain their faith in Christ under the pressure of Jewish teachers and idol worshipers (Gal. 4:8-11). He was alarmed that some had already followed false teaching and fallen from the faith (Gal. 1:6). Paul’s teaching in Galatians chapter five is presented to brethren who were trying to maintain their Christian commitment while living among people whose lifestyle could only be characterized as “works of the flesh.” Paul writes to admonish his brethren to be on guard against worldliness and to encourage them to live for Christ.

Paul tells the Galatians that Christ has made them free from the law (Gal. 5:1). But they are not to use this freedom to indulge in works of the flesh (Gal. 5:13). If they walk in the Spirit, they will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Then Paul describes the great conflict between flesh and Spirit and urges the brethren to be led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18).

The Battle for the Soul

Flesh and Spirit are in conflict with each other (Gal. 5:17) like two opponents fighting for the souls of Christians who must choose between two walks—according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. To help us make the correct choice, Paul points out several contrasts between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. 1) Flesh and Spirit are fundamentally opposed to one another and lead to different desires (Gal. 5:17). 2) Works of the flesh are accomplished with human strength to satisfy human desires; fruit of the Spirit is produced by those who are led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18) and results from our new identity in Christ. 3) Works of the flesh are accomplished through human nature, while fruit of the Spirit is an outgrowth of those who partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). 4) Those who do the works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21), whereas heaven is promised to those who walk in the Spirit by faith (Rev. 2:10).

God’s Plan for Us

Jesus said of His mission on earth: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). It is evident that Jesus was speaking of the benefits of Christian discipleship on earth and the ultimate blessing of eternal life in heaven. In His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus defines the nature of Christian character based on spiritual principles, includinghumility,

1