

I AM DEPENDENT ON GOD FOR SELF-CONTROL

Genesis 4:1-15; Proverbs 25:28

INTRODUCTION:

A. [During the early days of aviation, a stunt pilot was selling rides in his single engine airplane.

- One day he got into an argument with an old farmer who insisted upon taking his wife along on the ride - at no extra charge.
- "Look," said the pilot, "I'll take you both up for the price of one if you promise not to utter a sound throughout the entire trip. If you make one sound, the price is doubled."
- The deal was made & they all climbed aboard the plane.
- The pilot then proceeded to put the aircraft through maneuvers designed to make the bravest person tremble.
- But not a sound came from the back, where his passengers sat.
- Exhausted, he set the plane down.
- As the farmer climbed out, the pilot said, "I made moves up there that frightened even me, & yet you never said a word. You're a fearless man."
- "Well thank you," replied the farmer. "But I must admit that there was one time when you almost had me."
- "And when was that?" asked the pilot.
- The farmer replied, "That was about the time my wife fell out!"
- Talk about self-control!

B. How many of you would agree that many of the problems in our lives, many of the problems facing our society today, stem from a lack of self-control?

- We see all kinds of evidence of lack of self-control in:-- spending; greed; materialism; anger; rudeness; drug abuse; illicit sex; divorce; murder -- & on & on the list goes describing a society that lives w/a desire for immediate gratification -- We cannot control ourselves.

C. Not surprisingly, this lack of self-control goes back to the beginning of the human race.

- Last week we saw that Adam & Eve didn't have self-control when they rejected God's plan for their lives.
- And in today's text we find that their son Cain, also lacked self-control to a perhaps, greater extent than his parents.
- READ Genesis 4:1-15

Transition: Using Cain as our example, let's take a few moments to discover...

1. WHY WE LACK SELF-CONTROL

1) We Have A Selfish Attitude

- We notice that Cain brought a mediocre sacrifice to God.
- Some have mistakenly thought the issue was that Cain brought fruit as a sacrifice while his brother Abel brought an animal sacrifice.
- But that wasn't the problem -- the problem was that Cain was selfish & refused to bring God the best of what he had.
- Abel brought the firstborn of his flock because he wanted to give the finest that he could offer to the Lord.
- (Heb 11:4) By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.
- The whole issue here involves the attitude w/which our sacrifices are offered.
- When God didn't approve of Cain's offering, Cain got angry, & God told him he needed an attitude adjustment.
- READ vss. 6-7
- God warned Cain that sin "was crouching at (the) door".
- Perhaps this was what Peter was thinking of when he wrote, (1 Pet 5:8) "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."
- We need to do some self-examination in this area:
- Are we guilty of having an arrogant, selfish attitude?
- In our giving to God, in our church attendance, in our spiritual walk, are we giving God our best, or are we giving Him the leftovers?

- In our worship to God, are we striving for excellence, are we giving Him the best moments of our day, are we using our spiritual gifts for the furtherance of His Kingdom, or are we busy making excuses as to why we can't fully devote ourselves to Him and His Church?

- Now what does all this have to do w/self-control?

- The first step in losing control takes place when we place ourselves before our God in order of importance.

- When we begin to enthrone ourselves instead of bowing before God's throne we begin to lose proper perspective & the sin that is "crouching at our door" begins to invade our hearts.

2) We Give in to Impulsive Desires

- Cain resented his younger brother whose sacrifice God had approved.

- God had commanded him to master his emotions & learn to control himself.

- But in a moment of rage, Cain took his own brother's life.

- (Prov 29:11) A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

- When David sinned w/Bathsheba, he acted on an impulse of lust.

- When Peter denied Jesus as His Lord he acted on an impulse of fear.

- Like them, when you & I lose self-control it is usually because we are acting on an impulsive moment of lust, greed, anger, or something else that for that moment has us in its grasp.

3) We are Rebellious

- You would think that when Cain saw his dead brother he would have been heartbroken & repentant.

- But when God questioned Cain he flippantly replied "Am I my brother's keeper?"

- That sounds like a spoiled teenager who hasn't gotten his/her way.

- He is saying what we say every time we lose control -- by our actions & attitudes we are saying to God, "What gives you the right to question me?", "Who do you think you are?", "I'm in charge of my life".

- And in our rebellious moments we become very ugly people.

4) Our Defenses Have Been Weakened

- (Prov 25:28) Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

- In the ancient cities the walls that surrounded them was their protection against enemy forces, & thieves.

- If those walls were broken down the city could not longer defend itself.

- The proverb teaches us that when we lack self-control, our defenses are weakened, & we are not able to stand as people of faith, integrity, & honesty.

- Well those are some of the reasons we lack self-control.

- The good news is that there is something we can do about it.

2. STEPS FOR DEVELOPING SELF-CONTROL

- Perhaps it would be helpful if we considered a definition for self-control before we go any further.

- Someone has said that, "Self-control is the ability to break a chocolate bar in four pieces w/your bare hands & then just eat one of the pieces".

- The dictionary tells us that self-control is, "the control of one's own emotions, desires, & actions."

- The fact of the matter is, "Self-control" is a bit of an oxymoron.

- An oxymoron is a phrase containing conflicting terms, such as "jumbo-shrimp", or speaking of a "mild winter" in Minnesota.

- Biblically, "self-control" means self under control.

- In fact, instead of being in control of ourselves, it actually means allowing ourselves to be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

- Gal. 5:23 says that self-control is one aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit.

- Romans 8:9 says that we as Christians "are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit."

- It is a matter of giving our thoughts, emotions, actions, & reactions over to the control of God.

- Let me give you 5 practical ways that we can do that.

1. Admit you have a problem

- Take responsibility for your lack of self-control.

- James tells us (1:14) "...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away & enticed"

- Notice where the source of temptation comes from.