



# Berean Christian Fellowship

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## Fear, the Beginning of Wisdom—Part 4

**“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).**

There is no free society without self-control. Self-control restrains your passions, lusts, and desires from harming others. Self-control is an act of service to others. Where does self-control come from?

Self-control comes from the fear of the Lord, restraining the unbeliever’s harmful behavior for fear of the just consequences. For the Believer, self-control is service to others motivated by the Spirit of God.

Without self-control, there can be no freedom—if people didn’t cause harm to others, there would be no need for laws. The more harm that is done, the more laws will be passed and the more time, energy, and resources will be spent in enforcing those laws, which reduce the freedom of people by creating external restraints. A free society relies on people policing themselves (internal restraint).

Self-control comes from respect for authority—either through fear of that authority or love for that authority. If the only authority is man, the people will restrain their behavior to imitate man’s morality, even if that means stealing or murdering, as in Nazi Germany. Throughout history, the morality of societies has changed on the whim of the men ruling them. There is no evidence that man’s authority can inspire a morality that objectively maximizes good, benefits everyone, and encourages personal liberty.

For all of their flaws, the Founding Fathers of the United States understood this. They knew that respect for worldly authority would not bring the sort of self-control and virtue they knew would be necessary for a free government to work. They recognized that an objective, just, righteous, and ultimate authority had to be respected by the people in order for

self-control, morality, and virtue to flourish, maximizing liberty. And they were in unanimous agreement that the Gospel was just that. Even the agnostics and deists among them testified that Christianity was a necessary foundation for a free society to exist—because a free society is maintained by people who governed their own behavior towards their neighbors in the fear of the Lord.

To the wicked, the fear of the Lord is the fear of justice and judgement that instills restraint. In this way, when Paul discussed *“righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened”* (Acts 24:25a). Many wicked people restrain themselves in a just society for fear of the consequences from God and faithful authorities.

For the Believer, the fear of the Lord is acknowledging our flawed, inadequate nature; His perfect, sufficient nature; and His proper position as our righteous judge, ruler, and Heavenly Father. In obedience to Him, we practice self-control in our behavior, and we emulate His love towards others, which causes us to serve others rather than ourselves. But this is only possible because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Indeed, “self-control” is a bit of a misnomer as it is really the restraint of the Holy Spirit on our sin-nature. He produces His fruit of goodness to others in us, including *“self control; against such things there is no law”* (Gal. 5:23a). It is the Spirit that inspires our acts of self-less love to our neighbors rather than acts of selfish passions.

As such, the Gospel is essential to the success of a free society. As the fear of God lessens in the hearts and minds of people, love for others, self-control, restraint, and virtue will diminish. More and more harm will be committed and in response, the human authorities will reduce the freedoms and liberties of the people for fear of complete and total anarchy (unrestrained, lawlessness behavior). Truly it is written, *“the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”* (2 Cor. 3:17). Amen.