



[Galatians 5:17](#)

(17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

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Sometimes we seem to consist of a whole clamorous mob of desires, like week-old kittens, blind of eye with mouths wide open, mewling to be satisfied. It is as if two voices are in us, arguing, "You shall, you shall not. You ought, you ought not." Does not [God](#) want us to set a will above these appetites that cannot be bribed, a reason that cannot be deceived, and a conscience that will be true to God and His standards? We must either control ourselves using the courage, power, and [love](#) of God's Spirit, or we will fall to pieces.

[Adam and Eve](#) established the pattern for mankind in the [Garden of Eden](#). All of us have followed it, and then, conscience-smitten, we rankle under feelings of weakness. They were tempted by the subtle persuasions of [Satan](#) and the appeals of their own appetites for forbidden fruit that looked so good. To this they succumbed, and they sinned, bringing upon themselves the death penalty and much more evil besides. What is the use of appealing to men who cannot govern themselves, whose very disease is that they cannot, whose conscience cries out often both before and after they have done wrong, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" It is useless to tell a king whose subjects have overthrown him to rule his kingdom. His kingdom is in full revolt, and he has no soldiers behind him. He is a monarch with no power.

A certain Bishop Butler said, "If conscience had power, as it has authority, it would govern [the world](#)." Authority without power is nothing but vanity. Conscience has the authority to guide or accuse, but what good is it if the will is so enfeebled that the passions and desires get the bit between their teeth, trample the conscience, and gallop headlong to the inevitable collision with the ditch?

The solution to this lies in our relationship with Christ:

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Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own [salvation](#) with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. ([Philippians 2:12-13](#))

This is the only thing that will give us complete self-control, and it will not fail.

In [Luke 11:13](#), Jesus makes this wonderful promise of strength to those who trust Him:

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the [Holy Spirit](#) to those who ask Him!

Trust [Jesus Christ](#), and ask Him to govern. Ask Him for more of God's Holy Spirit, and He will help you to control yourself. Remember, [II Timothy 1:7](#) says this is a major reason that He gives us His Spirit. He will not fail in what He has promised because the request fits perfectly into God's purpose of creating sons in His image.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control](#)

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