

The point of these last few chapters is simply this: **The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of faith. People of faith turn away from self-reliance,** planting their roots deep into the grace of God, and as they feed on that rich soil the Spirit produces his fruit in their lives.

The faith we're speaking of isn't mere assent to formal doctrine, but faith—whole-hearted trust—in the faithfulness of the Son of God. **Faith trusts what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do.** It's as much pulled by the future as impelled by the past.

Such faith is rooted in history; it looks back to the cross, where the flesh was crucified. There, the deadly enemy lost its foothold and was cast down. Why? Because there sin was forgiven, the broken law atoned for, shame removed, and guilt washed away. And where there is no guilt, the flesh and the devil lose their power.

This is the doctrinal truth of the matter, but we're not yet singing on the summit of Mount Zion, free from all strife. The intensity of battle between the flesh and the Spirit cannot be overstated, nor can it be reduced to a phase of life. **It's a lifelong engagement in which final victory is delayed, though never in doubt.** We daily begin again in faith, rejecting the strength of the flesh. In the present, it's the way of the cross, not glory.

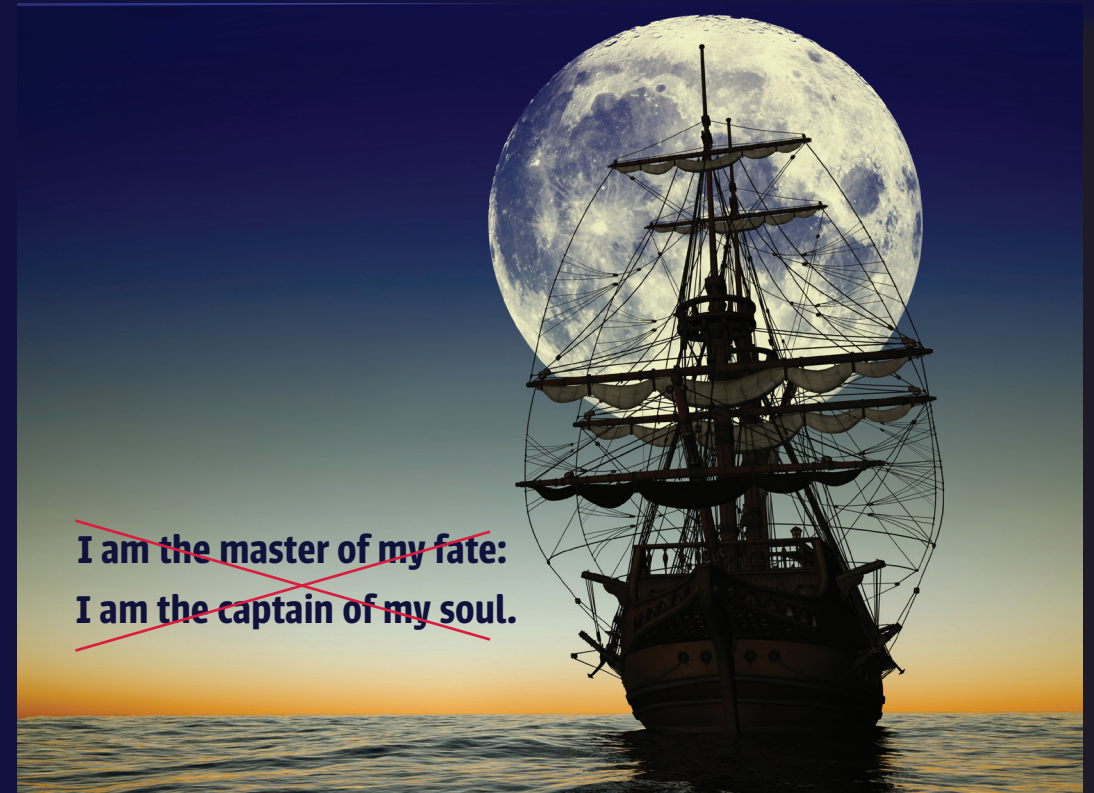
While Paul's gospel isn't a "positive thinking" program, it does change our thinking. **It asks us to think—hard—on the real situation, on who we are in Christ. Hence, it calls us to live by what is, not by what seems to be.** It demands that we turn from our assessment of ourselves and, even more so, from that of the devil. He will never tell you the truth of who you are in Jesus; he will never get you to dance to the beat of the Spirit's drum. Only the cross

keeps you in step. [Bush, D., & Due, N. (2015). *Live in Liberty: The Spiritual Message of Galatians* (pp. 198–199). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

Self-control (enkrateia). This word refers to the mastery over one's desires and passions. In 1 Cor 7:9 Paul used this expression in a context related to the control of sexual impulses and desires. That idea is certainly included here as well, although self-control as a Christian virtue cannot be restricted to matters of sexuality. Paul's athletic imagery for the Christian life helps us to interpret this word. In 1 Cor 9:24–27 he compared Christians to athletes who must undergo strict training in order to compete as a runner or boxer. A Christian without self-control, he intimates, is like a racer who runs aimlessly from one side of the course to the other or a boxer who merely pummels the air, never landing a blow. ... **The fact that self-control appears last in Paul's list may indicate its importance as a summation of the preceding virtues.** It would also have particular relevance for the Galatian setting: Antinomians veering out of control desperately needing the discipline of self-control reinforced by a new respect for God's moral law. [George, T. (1994). *Galatians* (Vol. 30, p. 404). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]

ἐγκράτεια, 'self-control', has something in common with παῖτις, but denotes control of more sensual passions than anger. According to Aristotle ... the man who is ἐγκρατής has powerful passions, but keeps them under control: the ἀκρατής does not deliberately choose the wrong, but he has no strength to resist temptation. [Bruce, F. F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 255). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.]

Invictus / William Ernest Henley / 1849-1903



Out of the night that covers me, Black as the Pit from pole to pole, I thank
whatever gods may be, For my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of
circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of
chance, My head is bloody, but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears,
Looms but the Horror of the shade, And yet the menace of the years, Finds, and
shall find, me unafraid. It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with
punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.