

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Get a Grip

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Stories have filled the air over the last two weeks relating to the donnybrook in Detroit between basketball players on the Indiana Pacers' and Detroit Pistons' teams and fans. An Indiana Pacer player, after being shoved while on the court by an opposing player, went up into the stands with fists flying when a fan threw a container partially filled with beer upon him. Other players joined in creating skirmishes resulting in multiple suspensions and pending lawsuits.

This melee is a sad reminder that something is lacking in many today: *self-control*. The fellow who threw a beer at the player manifested a lack of self-control. The player who quickly jumped into the stands in retaliation to fray away at a fan demonstrated a lack of self-control. Other fans and players spontaneously erupting into fisticuffs showed to the world that they have no self-control.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “*self-control*” has at its root the concept of “strength”. One has strength or power over one’s self. Having a

firm grip on one’s desires and passions is an accurate concept of the word.

The King James Version offers “*temperance*” as the translation of the Greek word ENGRATEIA. This conveys the idea of self-control, but emphasizes in most people’s minds self-control in a limited area: alcoholic beverages. In Detroit, the fan who threw the container of beer may have already consumed enough brew that he had failed in temperance by all standards. His actions are a sobering reminder of how true the Bible is: “*Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise*” (Proverbs 20:1).

God expects all men to manifest self-control, not just Christians. Paul reasoned with governor Felix and his wife Drusilla concerning “*righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come...*” (Acts 24:25). Restraining one’s passions and desires was just as necessary for this couple as doing righteousness before God. The judgment to come is ahead for both of these non-believers to answer for the lack of self-control and righteousness in

their lives.

Christians must manifest self-control. Self-control is one beautiful facet of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). As “knowledge” increases, it should be accompanied with a pervasive “self-control” regulating all our desires and proclivities. And such an inner grip should also be sustained with “patience”. (2 Peter 1:6).

Paul used athletics to illustrate the necessity for self-control. He said, “*But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected*” (1 Corinthians 9:27). The word “buffet” literally means to “strike under the eye”. It conveys the picture of a boxer training with a face beaten black and blue. What is ironic, is that Paul is speaking of striking himself under the eye to keep his body in check, not the eye of another which so many did in Detroit. Will you miss the incorruptible crown in heaven because you lacked self-control here on earth? (1 Corinthians 9:25). *May we all get a grip!*