

SELF CONTROL



Craig Rees

**Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but
blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.**

Proverbs 29:18

“There is no” • ayin
nothing, without, or
non-existence

“revelation” • hāzôn
vision, word of revelation

“restraint” • yippāra
to run wild, untie, unbraid,
get out of control.

Non-existent prophetic communication results in people running wild.

So, what's the solution?
More prophetic revelation?

**God intentionally withheld
prophetic revelation.**

“...I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.”

AMOS 8:11–12

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

1 SAMUEL 3:1

We are given no signs from God; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be.”

PSALM 74:9

God intentionally withheld prophetic revelation.

Even with it, people ran wild.

Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.” And all the Levites rallied to him.

Exodus 32:25–26

In contrast to the first line, the second provides the positive wording: there is a blessing for the one who keeps the law.

The solution was not external control over internal desires but to regulate one's life according to the Torah.

...but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.

Proverbs 29:18b

“blessed” • esher
happiness, blessedness

“heeds” • shamar
to keep, watch, preserve,
guard

“wisdom’s instruction” • torah
rule, law, decision,
direction, instruction

The blessed life was not experienced in legalistic observance but the willingness to heed the voice of God, whether through the hāzôn or the Torah.

In the Old Testament, the transition from knowledge to internalization demanded constant review and continuous reinforcement (Deut. 6:6-8; Ps. 119).

Hebrews 8:8–13

The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in

their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

Hebrews 8:8–13

The new covenant...establishes a relationship with God. In that relationship the laws of God are internalized and the forgiveness of sins is foundational.

G. Guthrie

Sin comes when we take a perfectly natural desire and seek to fulfill it without God. If we are tempted to do that we'll typically either restrain ourselves or reorient ourselves.

Self-control is the ability to regulate our personal life so that we are neither compelled nor controlled by sin.

If the best we can do is exert external pressure on a temptation to go against God's will, do it! The better way is to live out of the new creation we have become. This is self-control.

The most consistent is also the less spectacular. There's a temptation to seek the sensational rather than to live in the supernatural.