

# OpenTheo

## Self Control



### Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In his teachings, Steve Gregg emphasizes that self-control is a crucial trait in a Christian's life, and it is evidence of maturity in spiritual growth. He highlights that Christians must strive to keep their minds and bodies pure, resisting temptations in various areas, including sexual desire, substance addiction, and financial management. Through ruling their own spirits and exercising self-discipline, Christians can put on the new man and live a spiritual and godly life, fulfilling their purpose as slaves of Jesus Christ.

### Transcript

In a sense, one's spirituality can be measured on this barometer of how much do I desire self-control. Because, of course, the decision to become a disciple of Jesus is the decision to become like him and to do what he says and to please him. And the knowledge that that's not what happens naturally in my life.

When I let nature take its course, I do many things that don't resemble what Jesus said we should do or don't resemble Jesus himself. And so the real question is, do I really want to? Do I really want to be like Jesus? If I do, that's the first step. That's what happens when you become a true Christian.

You desire to be like Jesus. What happens the rest of your life is you exercise self-control in varying degrees. It's a fruit of the spirit.

And fruit, you know how fruit is. If you've seen fruit grow on a tree, it first appears in the bud. And then it takes shape as a fruit.

But then it's green for a while and it has to ripen. It has to mature. And our Christian lives are like the maturing of fruit.

And there are various fruits that God's spirit produces in our lives. And these have to become more mature. So, I mean, if I don't have a lot of self-control at a certain point in my life, that doesn't mean I'm not a Christian.

That might be a very undeveloped fruit. But it has to develop. If it does not develop, I will not be living to please God.

I will not be living to the glory of God. Now, I've given you in the notes a lot of scripture references. And we're not going to look all of them up for the simple reason that we don't have the time to look all of them up in the time we have here.

But I'd like to at least read from them or quote from them so that you'll know exactly what the scripture says on the various points I've put in the notes. First of all, of course, as I've been saying, self-control is absolutely necessary. Peter, in 2 Peter chapter 1, gives a description of maturing Christian life.

And the addition, one after another, of various virtues, various graces that your life should take on as characteristics of who you are. In 2 Peter chapter 1, beginning at verse 5, Peter said, For this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness agape, love. Now, early on in this adding process, he says add self-control.

Because if you don't have self-control, none of the other things will be under your direction either. If you don't decide the direction of your life, if you don't rule your own soul and your own spirit and your own body, then you're simply not going to have any of this growth take place because you'll only see where you should be going. You'll see what improvements should be made, but you won't make them.

Not that you don't want to. You just don't have any self-control. I can resist anything but temptation, I've heard people say.

Well, that is a problem because if you can't resist temptation, you can't walk with God. In fact, temptations come as tests to see if we will, in a given situation, obey God or not. If we'll walk with God or if we'll walk our own way.

Surrendering yourself to Christ, as Jesus said, if anyone comes after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, means that you've decided that you're not going to yield to the desires of your flesh and you're going to seek to live for God. When Paul was reasoning with Felix, the Roman governor, in Acts chapter 24 and verse 25, it says, as Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, go away for now, and when I have a convenient time, I'll call for you, which he never did. After that, Paul never saw Felix again.

What made Felix so uncomfortable? Paul was talking to him about God and man's duty before God. And Luke, in recording this, says it reduced down to three main subjects, righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come. Well, certainly the judgment to come is going to be a judgment based on righteousness.

Did we live and were we righteous or unrighteous? And those are the things that we judge. The Bible says everyone will be judged according to his works, of what kinds they were. And we want to be righteous, but the link between the demand for righteousness and the ultimate duty to stand before God in the final judgment is going to have to be in self-control.

Self-control is what will cause us to submit to the right goals, the right urges, the right priorities, as opposed to the wrong ones. It is self-control that will be the trait that will cause us to live a righteous life. Now, I don't want to make it sound like the Bible makes us the ones who are in power of our own development.

The Bible makes it very clear that this is God's work in us, but there is an obligation on our part. If you look at, this is not in your notes, by the way, but if you look at 1 Thessalonians 5, beginning at verse 16 and going on through verse 24, Paul says, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophecies, test all things, hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful who also will do it. Now there's two parts of what I just read.

The last two verses say that God will sanctify you wholly, body, spirit, and soul, and he is faithful and will do it. But that's not stated in a vacuum. That's stated after a list of directives.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, abstain from all kinds of evil, you know, don't quench the spirit. In other words, there's some obligations on our part. We're supposed to be governing our lives according to these directives and the promises, and God's going to sanctify you, body, soul, and spirit.

He's faithful to do it, but he doesn't do it without you participating. You see, Christianity is not unilateral. It's neither me putting out all the effort to somehow measure up to some standard so I don't get condemned in the final judgment, as religions usually are.

And it's not just God does it all, and I just sit around like a lump and wait for God to change everything. This is a human-slash-God interpersonal relationship, and in relationships, both parties have roles. Husbands and wives in a marriage have roles.

If they both fulfill their role, it's a great marriage. If only one does, eh, not so much. If neither of them do, it's terrible.

And likewise with our relationship with God. God's faithful. He'll do his part, but the relationship can't be what it's supposed to be unless we're doing something that he commands us to do.

There's reasons for commands in the Bible. We're supposed to obey them. The, you know, ink was expensive in the first century.

They didn't just write a bunch of commands just because they had extra ink and didn't know what to do with it all. There were commands because there are obligations. Now, obligations don't translate into obedience unless there's self-control because there is conflict in your own body, in your own person, between the desire to do what's right and the desire to do what's wrong.

And that's why it says in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 28, whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Now, a city broken down without walls, of course, is going to be invaded. In those days, the main defense against invading armies was to have walls around your city.

But when the walls are broken down, there's nothing to stop the invaders. They just come right in. And Solomon said, if you don't rule your own spirit, then you're like a city broken down without walls.

What? You'll be ruled by somebody else. Somebody's going to rule you. Are you going to be ruled by everyone in the environment, everyone in your world? They get to tell you what to do.

They're going to determine what you do. You're going to follow peer pressure. You're going to do what the culture says you should do.

Or are you going to decide that for yourself? You rule your own spirit or else you'll be invaded and ruled by hostile people and influences and educators and philosophies and so forth. That will direct you the wrong way. You have a responsibility to take charge for your own life.

Now, that responsibility includes the responsibility to yield to God, to receive his aid, to seek his aid, to be filled with the spirit, to walk in the spirit. Those are things that have to do with God sanctifying you. But you have a responsibility to have him do it.

You know, there's a reason not everybody is sanctified. It says in First Thessalonians chapter four, this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication, he says. Well, great.

God doesn't want anyone to fornicate. Do people fornicate? Some people unfortunately do. Why? Because God is not the only will involved.

God's will is that no one fornicates, but everyone is holy. Well, then how come everyone isn't holy? God's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Well, then how come everyone doesn't have repentance? What's up with that? I thought God's will is supposed to be done.

It is supposed to be done, but God has given man responsibility as well and woman. God has a will for our life, and he's entirely capable and faithful to bring it to pass as long as we're participating, as long as we're on the train. And we have to take the responsibility for governing our own spirit according to the leading of God's spirit so that other influences don't do so.

But if we don't rule our own spirit, we'll be invaded. We'll be controlled by others. You know, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6 when he's talking about eating meat, sacrifice idols, and not eating meat, you know, about what he's allowed to eat, what he's not allowed to eat.

1 Corinthians 6, 12, he said, all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Now, that's a resolve every Christian should have. I have liberty in Christ.

I'm not legalistic. I don't have to live by a whole bunch of meaningless rules or please other people or some religious system. I have a lot of liberty in Christ.

But one thing I know, he doesn't want me to become in bondage to anything. You know, Paul's talking about food in this case, and there's an area where a lot of Americans need a lot of, you know, self-control because we have access to more food and more pleasurable food than probably any generation in any part of the world ever has ever before. Except Japan, perhaps.

I don't know. Every culture has their favorite foods, of course, but let's face it. The Japanese are not as fat as we are in general.

They eat healthier good food. They eat healthy good food. That's the difference.

Okay. But the truth is, you know what, the Bible does not say it's wrong to be fat. It does not say it's a sin to be fat.

In fact, the Bible says the righteous will rejoice in fatness. But obesity is not necessarily a desirable thing. Frankly, if we don't mind being obese, then I guess the fact that we eat too much is not a lack of self-control because we don't mind.

But if we want to be something other than obese but we eat enough to be obese, that's lack of self-control because we have a different goal that we are not reaching. If a person doesn't make it their goal to be thin, then, of course, being heavy, the Bible doesn't say it's wrong to be heavy. But if it's one's goal to be thin and they can't keep from being heavy, there's a self-control issue there.

As with many other things, we're full of appetites that we have to make sure. It's lawful for me, but not everything. I don't want to be brought under the power of it.

I think about that, about coffee from time to time. I drink a lot of coffee, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that. But from time to time, I think, am I under the power of this or not? And the answer is yes most of the time.

I mean, truly, if I just decide I'm going to fast today and not drink any coffee, I know what I'll have, headaches, really uncomfortable, splitting headaches because I'll be withdrawing from the drug that I'm on. But if I know that I'm going to be fasting next weekend, I'll trail off the coffee, and then I'll be able to fast without the headaches. But the thing is, most days, I'm in bondage to coffee in the sense that I can't just stop it without suffering.

And from time to time in my life, several times, I've just gone off coffee for weeks just to make sure I'm not under the power of anything. I knew a friend who drank a lot of coffee before he was 40 years old. He said, when I'm 40 years old, I'm going to quit coffee.

Well, he did quit coffee when he was 40 years old. For six months, he had constant splitting headaches. He finally went back on coffee.

He's on it still. He's in his 60s, 70s now. But the truth is he tried really hard to stop drinking coffee, but he couldn't.

He's under the power of it. Now, there's no sin in drinking coffee. It's not like God says, shame on you for drinking so much coffee.

God doesn't care if you drink coffee or not. But I don't want to be under the power of anything. I don't want to lack the self-control.

That's why I've never understood people who take street drugs and stuff like that, or even, frankly, psychiatric drugs. I'm not saying people can't take psychiatric drugs. I guess all things are lawful.

But I wouldn't want to be brought under the power of anything. I don't want my mind to be compromised by anything I'm putting in my body. And I want to have control.

Not because I'm proud, but because to the degree I lose self-control, to that degree I'm controlled by something other than God. I'm more by taking the path of least resistance, which is usually cultural, or peer pressure, or simply lusts of the flesh. And those are the things that we have to war against.

It says in 1 Peter 2, and verse 11, Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. This is why self-control is difficult, because there's a war within us. There are our own fleshly desires which are at war with our own spiritual aspirations.

I hope you want to be like Jesus. It may be that some of you here don't care about being

like Jesus. That means you still need to be converted.

If you're converted, you have a new heart that God gave you that wants to be like Jesus. That's the evidence of being converted, really. Maybe you don't want it all the time equally strongly, because there's ebbs and flows in your spiritual life.

But if you have no desire to be like Jesus, I seriously doubt that you know what it means to be a Christian. But if you do want to be like Jesus, I would wager you've had some frustration in your life over the ways in which you are not already like him. Paul talks about frustration like that, of course, in Romans 7. And while there are controversies over what Paul's really talking about, I think everyone can relate with what he says in their own lives.

In Romans 7, verse 19, Paul said, For the good that I will to do I don't do, but the evil that I will not to do, that I practice. And he goes on in verses 22 and 23, For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members.

I've got a law in my members, meaning my flesh. I've got a law in my mind. And I know the mind, I have with my mind, I delight in the law of God.

So my inner desire is to be godly. But there's this other law, like the law of gravity. There's this other thing in me that draws me the other direction.

Now, what am I supposed to do? Just submit and say, oh, woe is me. Well, no, we have to fight a battle. We have to, as we mentioned in 1 Peter chapter 1, abstain, or chapter 2, abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

How do you do that? You don't. Unless you have self-control. You just don't do it.

You want to, but you don't. The things I want to do, I don't do, Paul says. The things I decide I don't do, I end up doing them anyway.

Paul says the same thing in Galatians, only with a little more hopeful twist. In Galatians 5, 16 and 17, he said, I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. 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 you wish. Now, generally speaking, because the flesh and the spirit are warning each other, you are in danger of not being able to do the things you wish, Paul says. But if you walk in the spirit, you will do what you wish in terms of following God.

You will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The suggestion is that every Christian wants to live a spiritual and godly life. It's the flesh that's presenting the alternative that we don't

want.

But the fact that we don't want it doesn't mean we don't submit to it. We will be in bondage if we don't walk in the spirit. Now, what's walking in the spirit? Well, that means we're submitting to God, we're trusting in His Holy Spirit, we're filled with the spirit, and we're, moment by moment, seeking to do what pleases the spirit of God and trusting Him to enable us to do it.

And the fruit of the spirit results, and the fruit of the spirit is self-control. Said Paul in Galatians 5, 22 and 23. So we've got this war between flesh and spirit, and if we don't fight the war, if we don't walk in the spirit as we should regularly, and we do not have the fruit of the spirit, which is self-control, then we will be in bondage.

We will remain in bondage, and we will not do what we want to do. And more importantly, what God wants us to do. If I don't do what I want to do, that's not the greatest tragedy.

If I don't do what God wants me to do, that's the ultimate tragedy. There can be no greater tragedy than to live your life in this world the one time you get a chance to do it, and to fail to do what God wants you to do. What could be more tragic than to waste your life? You've got one life in this world to live to do the will of God, to fulfill the purpose for which you are made.

And if you don't ever get it right, well, it doesn't mean you're going to go to hell necessarily, but what was the point? What was the point of even living? God didn't get his will in your life. Who did? Well, who knows? Maybe not even you did. Some people who don't do the will of God don't end up being happy with what they did anyway.

They are just doing what the most important influences in their life around them, their culture, their peer group, or whatever, or their inward lusts want them to do. They just do what comes easy. Now, this is the one thing that we have to understand when it comes to self-control.

Being a Christian is not the same thing as doing what comes easy. Yes, it's true. Jesus said, my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

This statement stands in apparent tension with him saying, enter at the narrow gate, for difficult is the way, and narrow is the way that leads to eternal life, and few there be that find it. Well, is it easy or is it difficult? Make up your mind. Well, it's a difficult way.

It is made an easier way when you're taking Christ's yoke upon you and learning from him. Jesus said there in Matthew 11, take my yoke upon you, learn from me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. It's easy on your conscience.

You know, the way of the transgressor is hard. It's a paradox, really, because the way of



the transgressor is the easier choice to make, but it's the harder life. It brings complications.

It brings troubles. It ruins relationships. It destroys your health.

It shortens your life. I mean, the way of the transgressor is hard. It's on the, you know, at the front end, it's the easy choice to make, is to transgress the law of God, because that's just doing what comes naturally.

But doing what comes naturally is, it's the easy choice, but it's the hard way. Whereas Jesus said there is a difficulty in choosing the narrow way, but when you have my yoke upon you, my burden is light, my yoke is easy. It becomes easy because, of course, you are now pulling with Jesus, with his spirit in you, doing what his spirit's guiding you to do.

And the Holy Spirit's stronger than you and stronger than the rest of the influences of the world, if you only exploit that resource and walk in the spirit. Now, let me talk just about, in Scripture, some of the areas where lack of self-control is a problem. We all have various, I say, special conflicts.

There are conflicts with sin that every Christian has, every human has. But different Christians have different conflicts that are more severe. For example, some people really struggle with alcohol and drugs.

I can't even imagine what would be attractive about drunkenness or drugs. It's never appealed to me in any way. You know, if somebody wants me to get high with them, I think, you know, could you torture me instead, please? You know? It's not a temptation to me.

For some people, it's a life struggle. I don't blame them. That's their struggle.

I've got different struggles. The things I struggle with may not be a problem to them. Some people are addicted to gambling.

I like what C.S. Lewis said about, he said, he says, gambling is probably the only vice he has no temptation toward. He said, if somebody wants me to play, you know, a card game with him, he says, how much do you hope to win? Take it and go. You know? Just let me pay you what you hope to win just to stay out of the game, please.

I mean, there are some things that are gods to some sinners. It's the sin that easily besets them, and another person has no problems with it at all. And then, you know, there's other issues that different people have that those people don't have.

It's just people are different. In Hebrews 12.1, the writer of Hebrews said, therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us. Each person, I think, has some sin in

particular that more easily than others ensnares them.

It has to do with temperament, has to do with upbringing probably, has to do with all kinds of things, and just whatever struggle it is that's been dished out to you. But everyone has some sin that more easily than others ensnares them. It's their weakness.

It's their demon, you know? And he says, let us lay aside the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your own souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed in striving against sin.

Now he's saying we need to lay aside sin so we can run the race without extra burdens on us. When people are, you know, runners in races or when they say, you know, like bicycle races, I've been amazed at how I don't, I've never been an athlete, but I've known people who were in bicycle races. They get the most lightweight bike they can, and they strip off, you know, the thing that holds the water bottle, and they strip off, you know, the rear reflector.

I mean, things that don't seem to add any weight at all. They just want to be totally without any extra weight, anything to hinder them because they want to win. And Christian life is compared with running a race.

And people, everyone knows what it is that the main weight and the main sin that easily ensnares them is. And the writer of Hebrews mentions that. Paul also talks about it, the running of the race in 1 Corinthians 9, which by the way is not in your notes.

But 1 Corinthians 9, verse 25 through 27, Paul says, and everyone who competes for the prize is self-controlled in all things. He's talking about Olympic runners. When they're in training, when you're in high school in sports, again, I only know this by hearsay.

I never was in high school sports. But, you know, when football season comes around, the football team, they're in training. They're supposed to not be partying that much, supposed to get more sleep.

They're supposed to, you know, not eat bad stuff because they're in training. They're getting ready for an athletic event. That's always been the case.

Paul said those people who compete in the Olympics, they are self-controlled in all things. They have to be in training or else they're not going to win the race. And he says, now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we do it for an imperishable crown.

Therefore, I run thus, not with uncertainty, thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. He

says, I discipline my body and bring it into subjection. Why, Paul? I mean, you must have a lot of crowns already waiting for you in heaven.

You've saved all, gotten all these people saved. You've planted all these churches. Paul, you seem to have a pretty good, you know, reward laid up for you.

Why bother? Why discipline yourself? Why bring yourself under subjection? It's because otherwise, when I have preached to others, I myself might be rejected. The word actually disqualified. In the Greek, it's the same word that Paul used in Romans 1 that means reprobate.

I discipline my body. I keep it under submission to me because otherwise, even though I've planted churches, even though there are thousands of people through the Mediterranean world who owe their salvation to me through my efforts, even though I've suffered for Christ, I've been imprisoned, I've been beaten, having done all of that, I could still become a reprobate if I'm careless about this. Now, how do you feel about your assurance of not being reprobate? Have you done enough good deeds to kind of give you assurance that no matter what you do from here on out, you're good? Paul wasn't so sure.

I got a feeling he had a lot more to have confidence in his salvation than many of us have to be about ours. And yet he thought, I need to discipline my body. I need to keep it under submission.

I've got to keep self-control. I've got to be like an athlete who's exercising self-control in all things. Is that how you see your life? Are you like an athlete in training, in a competition? Are you like a warrior at battle? Are you enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ? Or are you just kind of taking the easy way? I resist everything but temptation.

You know, I'm good until I'm tempted. I behave until I desire something that I shouldn't have, but then I'm not so good. Well, I wonder why Paul thought it was so important to exercise self-control when he was really so far ahead of us on the race than any of us are.

It seems like maybe he understood something we don't. Maybe our form of evangelical Christianity in America is pretty flabby, pretty lazy, and maybe not even real Christianity. It might be something that represents itself as that, but it may not be what Paul thought of Christianity as because he strove.

Even in Philippians 3, he says, you know, I don't consider that I have attained, but this one thing I do. Looking to that which is before and forgetting what's behind, I press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead.

Now, this is not legalism, but it is taking things seriously. Now, sometimes we're so, we just have such an easy idea of what it means to please God or live a Christian life, or maybe we don't even need to please God because we're under grace. So, you know, even if we don't please God, God doesn't care because we're under grace.

This is not, this is not biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity is total commitment to Jesus Christ, total. You've been bought with a price.

You're not your own. You're a slave. You've got one duty every single day, and that's to belong to Jesus and to act like it.

Now, of course, we all fall short. Paul himself did. But he said, that's why I discipline myself.

That's why I keep my body under subjection, because I have this tendency to, like everybody else, to not take this as seriously. Even sometimes as a runner in the Olympics takes his race, and he's only running for a temporary crown, a perishable crown. I'm working for an imperishable crown.

And I think it's going to be easier to get this imperishable crown than it is for an Olympic runner to get a perishable crown. Come on. What's your idea of reality here? We're in a war zone here.

There's earthly less than war against your soul. What is a war about? It's about winning or losing. If there's a war against your soul, there's two possibilities.

You'll win it or you'll lose it. What's going to determine? It's going to have a lot to do with whether you exercise self-control or not, whether that's important to you or not. Now, I don't want anyone here to leave here today because of anything I've said that makes them feel condemned.

Oh, I'm so imperfect. I fall so many times. We do.

We all succumb to temptation. But there's a world of difference between saying, I fell to this temptation despite my total determination in God to live a righteous life, between that and saying, I fell because I never really cared much about whether I fell or not. And I think there's an awful lot of Christians who don't really care that much if they fail or not.

They know what they want at the moment, and that usually has to do with some appetite or other, some temptation or other. I know what I want now. Well, what are those things, those battles that we have to fight against? One of them is temper.

Now, probably most of you don't have temper tantrums. We're Christians here. People who have been Christians for a long time, if they really walk with the Lord, usually get a handle on this.

But still, there's always temptations to lose your temper. And in Proverbs 16, 32, it says, He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit is better than whoever can conquer a city. Now, conquering a city is a pretty big accomplishment, but to rule your spirit is a bigger accomplishment than that.

Alexander the Great conquered many countries, but he couldn't rule his spirit. He died an alcoholic and a syphilitic. He couldn't control his lusts.

He could control armies. He could control kings. He could conquer the world, but he couldn't conquer himself.

He that rules his own spirit is more to be commended, is mightier than the person who can conquer a city. But, of course, Christians often don't realize or make it their goal to be mighty in that battle, to rule their own spirit. And in Proverbs 16, 32, which I just quoted, he talks about the person who rules his spirit is the person who is slow to anger.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. He who rules his spirit, that's parallel to being slow to anger, is greater than one who rules the city. To rule your spirit requires that you don't let anger rise up and overcome you.

Now, I'm not going to get into this in detail. Years ago, I taught here on refuse to be offended. I'm not going to get into that again now, but some of you who were here then might remember.

When you don't refuse to be offended, someone else is controlling you. If you refuse to be offended, you're ruling your own spirit. If you don't refuse to be offended when people offer you an offense, they are dictating your spiritual life, not you.

That's the last thing you want, is for something other than you to be dictating whether you're going to obey God or not, whether you're going to have a spiritual life or not. You don't yield that to other people. And anger is usually provoked.

Usually people get angry because someone did something provocative, something that angered you. What are you going to do about it? You control yourself. You control your anger.

You govern your spirit. That's an area of conflict that needs to be defeated. That's a sin that easily ensnares very many people.

James said in James 1:19, So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, slow to anger. Listen longer, speak later, and be slow to get angry. That takes self-control.

Now, of course, one thing that's a battle that many people fight, especially young men, but frankly everybody at some point in their life probably, is sexual desire. Now, sexual

desire is not a bad thing. God created it.

God likes it. God wouldn't have made it if he didn't like it. He likes it for what it's for.

It's for intimacy and fruitfulness in a marriage. But the problem is married people are not the only people who have sexual desire. And even when they are married and they have sexual desire, it's not always directed only toward the person it should be.

Because sexual desire is an animal instinct that God has put in even animals. And animals don't sin. It's not a moral issue with them.

Sex is a biological thing for reproduction. And it is made pleasurable so that people don't neglect to do it. Think if God didn't make it pleasurable.

Probably who would mess with it? I mean, women would never want it. And even their husbands wouldn't want it. So they wouldn't make their women want it.

So there'd be no kids. Things that are necessary for the human race's well-being God made pleasurable, like eating. Now, eating doesn't have to be pleasurable.

Eating can just be nutritious. That's what it's for. What food is for is to nourish your body.

But who would do it if they didn't like it? If it wasn't pleasant, I'd forget to eat. I like eating, but I still forget to eat. I get busy with things, and I just forget to eat.

I think, oh, I didn't eat enough today. And, you know, things... You don't have that problem? But really, things like a desire for sex, a desire for food, those are good things. They're necessary things because eating and reproduction are important things not to neglect.

And God made them pleasurable. He put a desire for it. But with the desire comes the obligation to say, okay, that's your fleshly desire.

It's got a legitimate and good avenue through which God intends to be glorified in it. But you need to govern it. You need to have something other than your physical desire.

You've got to have your spiritual convictions that govern when and how those desires are indulged. And, of course, sexual desire, more than eating probably, is one that gets into more trouble if you don't control it. For one thing, it destroys relationships.

It creates babies without families intact to raise them. I mean, horrible, horrible things happen when people do not govern their sexual desire according to God's principles. Less horrible, usually, things will happen if you don't govern your eating properly.

But both are appetites that need to be governed. When it comes to governing sexual desire, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7, 5, to married couples, talking about sex in marriage,

he says, do not deprive one another so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. Oh, self-control.

Lack of self-control is the great danger in marriage where sexual intimacy is denied. I mean, in a marriage, the man and the woman, it's very rare that they would both have equal desire sexually and at the same time and with the same frequency and so forth. But Paul is saying husbands and wives need to be mindful of the other one's need because otherwise Satan will tempt that person.

And self-control may be lacking. Paul is realistic. The Corinthian church had fornication going on in it, terrible cases, scandalous cases of fornication were going on in the Corinthian church.

He says, listen, you married people, don't let your mate be tempted by that. Don't deprive each other because self-control is much harder when a couple, by the way, when a couple are living together, the temptation for sexual intimacy is greater than when you live at the other end of town from each other. You know, physical contact, physical intimacy, that that creates a higher intensity of the drive.

And that's especially a time when no one wants to be depriving the other one and causing that person frustration. That's what Paul says in First Thessalonians four, three through five, which I mentioned earlier. Paul says, for this is the will of God, your sanctification that you should abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel or control your own body.

In sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God. Gentile religions, by the way, didn't have any restraints on sexual lust. The Roman world, the Greek world, the world that Paul and his readers were living in.

Fornication wasn't a vice. People went to the temples of the gods and goddesses and slept with prostitutes as part of their worship of the deities. The Roman men had wives for having children.

They had mistresses for pleasure and they had prostitutes for, I guess, variety. In fact, one of the Roman senators was on record quoting that we Roman men, we have our wives for, you know, children, our mistresses for pleasure and the prostitutes and so forth. They weren't even ashamed of it.

To them, everything we know about sexual morality, we owe to the fact that Christianity got to our culture before we were here. We just take it for granted. Doesn't everybody know they really shouldn't cheat on their wife? Doesn't everyone know they shouldn't just kind of sleep around like an alley cat? No, not everyone knows that.

People learn that from God's word. And until they have God's word, they're like the Gentiles who don't know God, who are governing their lives strictly by their lusts. And

Paul says, you need to learn to govern your body to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor.

That is holiness, an honorable and holy control of your sex drive. It's a high goal, but it's not unreachable because there's many Christians who have remained celibate, not with ease. I'm sure in this room there's many virgins because we've got a lot of young people here and godly ones.

That's great. It proves it can be done. It might not have even been all that difficult yet for you.

But the truth is, some people find great difficulty with it, but it can be done. But it requires self-control because everyone will be tempted in that area. In Genesis 39, verses 7 through 9, we have the story of Joseph in the house of Potiphar.

It says, it came to pass after these things that Potiphar's wife cast her longing eyes on Joseph. And she said, lie with me. Now, the guy was 17 years old, by the way.

He had no accountability. His family didn't know he was alive. They lived in another country.

He was in a pagan country where immorality was not frowned on. He was a guy in the prime of his adolescence, a hunk of a guy being pursued by his master's wife sexually. No accountability to anyone except God.

That's a recipe for failure. However, the cake didn't rise in that case. Because it says, she said, lie with me.

But he refused and said to his master's wife, look, my master does not know what is with me in the house. And he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater than me in his house.

Nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you're his wife. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? Now, interesting, he says all these nice things to Potiphar. And you'd think he'd say, how can I do this wickedness and sin against Potiphar? If I slept with Potiphar, that's a sin against my master.

He hasn't done anything wrong to me. He's been nice to me. Why should I sin against my master? He didn't do that.

Because any number of reasons might have been suggested to his mind why he could sin against Potiphar. Potiphar, after all, was not a perfect guy. He was, after all, keeping him a slave.

Maybe getting back at him would be a good idea. But one might argue, how could I sin against my master by sleeping with his wife? He said, no, how could I sin against God?



My life is lived before God. And my self-control has got to be with a mind that he is watching everything I do.

And he's going to be pleased or displeased with my choices. How can I violate God? That's what a Christian has to ask themselves when it comes to sexual temptation. I know sometimes parents maybe teach their teenage kids, don't have sex out of marriage because you can get your heart broken.

You might get venereal disease. You might get pregnant. I mean, all kinds of negative things can happen.

But the real reason is because your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And you defile God's temple. In other words, you sin against God, not just yourself.

The idea that, well, I might get pregnant, but I might not. I've got birth control. Well, I might get my heart broken, but I'm not.

I realize this isn't, you know, a committed relationship or whatever. I mean, you can make all kinds of excuses against all the reasons your parents tell you not to have sex outside of marriage. But the real reason is how can you sin against God? That's what a Christian has to ask.

And not just physically, but, of course, mentally and visually. Job said this in Job 31.1. He said, I've made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon a young maiden? I've made an agreement.

I've signed a contract with my eyes. I'm not going to look at women other than my wife. Wow.

And, of course, Jesus had that in mind when he said in Matthew 5, 28 and 29, I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. For it is more profitable for you for one of your members to perish than that your whole body be cast into hell.

Now, he said it's more profitable for you. Realize that when Christ gives instructions, he's not trying to rain on your parade. He's saying this is better for you.

It's better for you to get your eye plucked out and enter into life than to keep that eye intact and enter into Ghana. Trust me. Now, what's interesting, of course, people sometimes have taken him seriously and actually gouged out their eyes and thought that's what Jesus meant to do.

That doesn't work. If you have another eye, it's still working. And if you get them both out, then your brain still has mental pictures.

You're not going to get over lust by getting rid of your eye. And Jesus wasn't suggesting that you could. What he's saying is this.

To overcome worldly temptations, you may have to separate yourself from things that you'd rather not separate yourself, certain friends, a career of some sort, maybe some of your possessions. There are things that could prevent you from living a holy life. Get rid of them if you have to.

They probably aren't as valuable to you as your eyes are, and yet even if it was your eye, it'd be better to get rid of that than to enter into hell with your eyes intact. The point here is you don't want to be looking with lust at someone. Now, a lot of men today, probably not the people in this room, fortunately, but a lot of men have problems with pornography.

It's everywhere. It's on the Internet and so forth. And even pastors, I've heard, a very large percentage of pastors have secret problems with pornography.

It must be an extremely alluring thing to those who get caught up in it. But what do you do to get rid of it? I mean, people who have it say they have like an addiction. What do you do? Well, where are you seeing pornography? On my phone.

Well, get a different kind of phone that doesn't have a display like that. Get a flip phone. Well, it's on my computer.

Throw the computer out or give your wife a password that she has to open it for you every time you do it. You say, well, that's crazy. That'd be so intrusive.

Yes, it would. Hell is intrusive too. Better to get rid of those accesses to these things and go to heaven than to keep those things and go to hell.

That's what Jesus said. OK, you've got to master that temptation. If it masters you, it's Gehenna.

It's not life that you can look forward to. Now, another area of self-control is of the tongue. And James indicates that that's one of the hardest areas because things just slip out that shouldn't have slipped out.

I remember a friend of mine who slammed his finger in the door of his car accidentally. He was out in the woods. He was a butterfly collector.

He was out in some place where no one else was around. And he slammed the door of the car. Somehow his finger got caught in the door and he couldn't get it out.

It was throbbing. It was painful. The key to the door, because the door was locked, was in his pocket.

But it was not in the pocket of his free hand. It was in the pocket over there. And he had to kind of reach in there and get it out finally.

But he said he was so glad that happened in retrospect because he had no accountability there to anyone but God. No one knew he was there. And he said, when he slammed it, he said, praise the Lord.

And he could have said something else. But out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Times when you're not expecting something to have to come out and something comes out.

That's what's going to show what's in your heart. The Bible says, keep your heart with all diligence because out of it are the issues of life. Jesus said, it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him.

It's what's coming out of his mouth because that comes out of the heart. Now, to control your mouth is important. Now, you might say, but if there's evil in my heart, isn't it going to come out of my mouth? If you let it, it will.

Just because it's the tendency of the mouth to speak out whatever's in the heart, it doesn't mean that you should let it. It says in Proverbs 29, 11, a fool vents all his feelings. But a wise man holds them back.

I think the King James says a fool speaks his whole mind. Everything is on his mind, he speaks. Some people think of that as sort of like a virtue.

Well, I just call and I say it. I just say what I think. Well, maybe that's your problem.

Now, you shouldn't say something you don't think is true, but not everything you think is true needs to be said. You need to govern your speech. James said in James 3, verses 2 and 8, he says, For we all stumble in many things, but if anyone does not stumble in word, he's a perfect man, able to bridle his whole body.

No one can tame the tongue. It's an unruly evil full of deadly poison. Now, did you notice James said no one can tame the tongue, but he said if you don't bridle your tongue, your religion is empty.

What's the difference between taming and bridling? Well, think about it. If you break a wild horse, it's submissive. Its spirit is changed.

You can ride it bareback. You can even ride it without a harness on it if you want to, without a bridle, because it's trained. There are some animals, I'm told, that can't be trained.

Now, James said every kind can be, but I've been told by animal trainers that some animals will not tame down. They can be trained, but not tamed. I've heard that zebras

are like that, that, you know, you can put a harness and a bridle on a zebra and you can ride it.

But it's not going to tame down. It's going to be like a bronco that just never breaks. Some animals just don't tame.

You can control them against their will if you've got a strong enough arm and a good bridle. And James says you need to bridle your tongue. You're not going to be able to tame it.

No one can tame it. Your tongue is never going to be no threat to your holiness. It's never going to come over and just say, okay, I won't give you any more trouble.

It's not going to get tamed. You're going to have to bridle your tongue all your life, every moment of every day. But it's important that you do.

You know, an unbridled tongue is another thing that does incredible harm. I said that undisciplined sex drive does incredible harm. I don't know, but an unbridled tongue might even do more in the long run, spreading deception, spreading lies.

spreading gossip, destroying relationships. There are people who are bullied by people's tongues and end up hanging themselves or killing themselves. There's all kinds of horrible damage done by unbridled and ungodly tongues.

You think about it. Paul said in Ephesians chapter 4, it's not in your notes, but he said, Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but only what is good to the use of edifying, so it may minister grace to the hearers. Every time you speak, you should ask, Is this going to minister grace to somebody? Is this going to edify somebody? That's what Paul said the goal is, that everything you speak edifies.

Okay, so we need to control our tongues. There's another area the Bible speaks about, and we'll call it the belly. But when we talk about the belly, I'm not talking about the visible belly.

The belly means the appetite, the appetite for food. The scripture often talks about the person's belly in this respect. For example, in Philippians 3, verses 18 and 19, it says, For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose God and his destruction, whose God is their belly.

Now, it doesn't mean that they worship their big bulging belly. He's saying their belly or their appetite is the satisfaction of their belly, the satisfaction of their hunger, or not even hunger, just their palate really, is their God. He says these people are enemies of the cross of Christ.

You can't have your belly be your God and not be an enemy of the cross of Christ. God is God. You can't have other gods before him.

The cross of Christ involves self-discipline, involves denying yourself. But you're an enemy of the cross of Christ in your life if your God is your belly. He says these people's end is destruction.

He said their God is their belly. I remember hearing a preacher when I was young challenge us, I was in the audience, saying, you know, how much time every day do you spend praying, reading the word of God, doing something to cultivate worship, worshipping God? If you would count up all the minutes or hours of the day you spend doing that and then take the minutes and the hours of the day you spend preparing food, eating food, cleaning up after food, and simply the service of meals and eating of meals, which do you spend more time with? What are you giving priority to? Remember when Jesus came to Mary Martha's house, Martha was preparing the meals and trying to feed the disciples and Jesus, and Mary was just actually just listening to Jesus at his feet, and Martha was upset that Mary wasn't on the same course she was at, and she said, listen, you're bothered about too many things. Mary knows the right thing.

She's doing the right thing. Sometimes we think that preparing meals and all the cleanup and all that stuff, that that's the important thing, and it might be in some settings. I mean, that might be what God really wants you to do sometimes.

But it's possible to be so obsessed with eating and preparing and just the whole matter of satisfying the physical appetite of yourself and others, it becomes a priority that it's not with God, and especially if it's eating stuff that's not healthy, stuff that's more than you should eat, stuff that's ruining your body. It says in Proverbs 25, 16, have you found honey? Well, honey is in the Bible something that's obviously a junk food. Actually, honey is good for you, but you can eat too much.

And it says in Proverbs 25, 16, have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit it. Now, this isn't literally about avoiding nausea. This is about the fact that sometimes you get too much of a good thing.

If you find something you like, in this case, it's food. It could be something else, but in this case, it's something sweet. Well, eat the right amount.

Eat a moderate amount. Eat as much as you should. But if you get too far, it's going to have the opposite effect.

It's not going to be pleasure. It's not going to make you sick. It's going to have consequences.

Chocolate. Chocolate. Okay, now that's going to step on some toes here.

No one is getting upset about talking about honey, but when we talk about chocolate, we're going to make some enemies here. But the goal for the Christian is 1 Corinthians 10, 31. Whatsoever you do, whether you eat or drink, what? Do all to the glory of God.

Whatever you do, even what you eat and what you drink, there should be nothing in your life, including your eating habits, that are not disciplined by the goal of glorifying God in that activity. Now, I will say this. A lot of people, you know, you may eat wrong, and it doesn't glorify or un-glorify God.

I mean, you may not be able to tell what kind of bad eating habits I have because genetically I'm a reasonably thin person. My family is skinny. I just was born that way.

I can get a little paunchy for sure if I do it wrong too much. But, I mean, there are people who put on a lot of weight when they eat or even when they look at food. Other people, like me, can eat quite a bit without showing so much.

You can't always tell when somebody's got a problem eating, but you can sometimes. And, you know, I read somewhere that Christian pastors, as a profession, are the most obese and out-of-physical-shape profession out there. And, of course, we've all seen it.

We've all seen preachers on TV or elsewhere who, you know, they're huge, and you think, what is he telling us about himself? See, that's the thing. If he has a secret problem with pornography, we don't know it. If he's got a problem, if God is his belly, we can see it.

I mean, it's bad enough to have a secret sin. Worse yet, to have the name of Christ and wear your sin on the outside of your body. You need to say, am I glorifying God in what I say, what I eat, what I drink, my anger? Everything I do is to glorify God, and that includes eating.

Now, eating is definitely not an immoral thing to do. But, as Paul said, I won't be brought under bondage of anything. And he's talking about food in that case.

And certainly, there are ways to eat which do not glorify God. And most of us know what they are. Okay, I'm going to run through this really quick here.

Drugs and alcohol, we won't get into right now. It's probably not the problem with anyone in this room. But those are obviously things that people have to exercise self-control about.

Especially alcohol, because in the Bible, not only is there nothing wrong with drinking alcohol in moderation, but it's actually something everyone had to do. The water was not drinkable in the ancient world. This is true in the Roman world, the Greek world, Africa, the Middle East.

You name it. You've got the writings of people from the ancient period. All of them mention that when they drank water, they had to add wine to it to kill amoebas.

And it was just not possible to drink water without getting sick unless you had wine. That's why Paul wrote to Timothy and said, Stop drinking only water. Add a little wine to it for your stomach sick and your frequent infirmities.

Some people are just more spiritual than they needed to be. And they say, I'm not going to even put wine in my water. Wine serves a purpose.

It's disinfectant. It's something God made. Drinking wine in moderation is not something the Bible forbids in any place.

In fact, it encourages it in a few places. And I don't like alcohol. I don't like the taste of it.

I wouldn't walk across the street for an alcoholic drink, even though I don't have anything against them. I just don't like them. But there's nothing wrong with drinking in moderation, but there is definitely something wrong with drinking in moderately.

And it says in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians chapter five and also in 1st Corinthians 6 that drunkenness is something that the Bible says those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God. So obviously, if there's wine at the table and yet getting too much of it on a regular basis, you will not inherit the kingdom of God. But self-control is needed.

And same thing with any kind of drug. Now, of course, street drugs and recreational drugs, I think, should be out of the question for Christians anyway. There are some drugs, even medically prescribed drugs, opioids and such, which you've got to be careful about.

I know somebody who's got chronic pain, has been prescribed opioids. I think it's been told you can take them every six hours or something like that. She won't touch them more than once a week.

The pain has to be excruciating before she'll take them. She doesn't want anything to come under the power of anything. People become addicted to opioids.

Not everyone does, but a percentage of people do. Even lawful things, you need to make sure you don't abuse, you don't overuse, you don't become in bondage to it, and therefore self-control is needed. I'll tell you one other thing that is an area where people sometimes need more self-control, and that is in, I guess they need what we'd call sales resistance.

I won't ask people to show a hand if you've got credit card debt, because what I might say might make you feel embarrassed if you do. Credit card debt means you don't have

self-control in the area of sales resistance. You don't need your credit card to stay alive.

If you don't make enough money to put food on the table, then you should not go into credit because you don't have any money to pay off a credit card either. You don't need debt to stay alive. Paul said having food and clothing, we will with these be content.

Are you? Paul said he would be. I am. If I have only food and clothing, I've decided years ago, decades ago, I'm content with only that.

I don't need anything more. I've got a lot more than that, but I don't need anything more than that. And I've had only that many, many times in seasons of my life.

If you love God, you don't have anything, you don't have to desire anything more. But we do desire more, and it's not a sin to want something more than food and clothing, as long as God provides for it. But if you have to go into debt, he hasn't provided for it.

If you have to put on a credit card, God has not provided for that. And that means you're living beyond your means, which means you're living in bondage. That's what it says in Proverbs 22.7, the rich rules over the poor and the borrower is the servant to the lender.

The person who borrows is a slave of the person who lends to him. I've known very many people. I know somebody right now who would love to travel internationally but can't get a passport.

You know why? Because the American government won't give you a passport if you owe back taxes in the amount of \$50,000 more. He does. He can't travel outside the country.

He's in bondage to this debt. He didn't have to go into debt. It's just neglect, just lack of self-control.

Credit card debt is lack of self-control. Now, I didn't say the same thing about a mortgage for the simple reason that almost nobody can buy a house without a mortgage. I bought two houses without a mortgage, and I'm poor.

It's just that someone bought me my first house, and when I sold it for cash, I bought another one with cash. So I was pretty fortunate. I've got a mortgage I'm paying off right now, but in my past, I've had two mortgage-free houses even though I've been living in poverty much of that same time.

But the truth is I expect most people have to have a mortgage if they're going to buy a house. And in a sense, that's different than other kind of debt. It's not a lack of self-control to want to have a roof over your head.

That's a necessity. But apart from that which is really a necessity, going into debt simply to upgrade your standard of living, I mean, if you can do that without debt, more power to you. My standard of living right now is much higher than it has been at any other time



in my life, but I have no debt except for the mortgage.

But apart from that, I don't have any debt. I've lived without debt. I don't believe in debt.

And yet, why can't you be content with what you have? Well, because I saw that shiny thing in the store. I saw that shiny thing in the catalog. I saw that nicer car, that nicer whatever than what I already have.

I just couldn't resist, so I went into debt. You need more self-control about that. You don't want to be in bondage to any.

And if you borrow, you're in bondage. I will not be brought under the power of any, Paul said, and that should be your commitment to this. And that requires self-control.

Now, Daniel, remember, was a young man like Joseph in a foreign land without much accountability from godly family or friends. And yet, he was tempted with the kind of lavish lifestyle and table settings and food and so forth. And it says in Daniel 1.8, a verse I've always loved since I was a young man.

It's a very important young man verse. It says in Daniel 1.8, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with a portion of the king's delicacies nor with the wine which he drank. Daniel was in a foreign land where the food and wine was not kosher.

And as a Jew, he wouldn't defile himself with unkosher food. It says he determined in his heart. He purposed in his heart, so he would not do it.

And I've often thought this is really the main reason that I have sometimes fallen into sin that I didn't want to fall into. I hadn't really purposed in my heart not to. I kind of didn't want to.

I want to live a holy life. I kind of want to lose weight. I kind of want to get, you know, I want to improve my life in ways that I've wanted to for a long time.

But I've never purposed in my heart that I will not compromise on this. I've never purposed in my heart that I will control my desires in this matter. And therefore, I'm not a Daniel unless I have done that.

And by the way, Daniel lived in a pagan society which was a dangerous spiritual environment. So do you. If you kids were living two generations ago, I couldn't say it quite with the same emphasis.

Two generations ago, even the non-Christians in your neighborhood lived like Christians for the most part and thought Christians were good people. They probably even went to church, most of them, even if they weren't saved. That was then.

This is now. We live in an age where we're living in Babylon now. That's where Daniel

went.

He went into Babylon as a godly man in a totally ungodly society. And the only way he kept from compromising is he purposed in it. He knew he was in that situation.

He said, I'm going to purpose in my heart not to let this defile me. And that's what everyone who is going to walk with God successfully has got to do. They've got to say, this world is going to be pulling at me every direction.

My own desires, the opinions of other people, everything is going to be pulling me every direction except the right direction. Only God's word and only God's spirit pull me the right direction. And I've got a purpose in my heart.

I'm going to walk according to the word of God and the spirit of God. I'm not going to let the world have its way with me. And so this is what self-control means.

And I've used more time than I thought I would, so I'm going to have to quit. I've not used up my notes. I actually have more on there.

But in fact, I think your notes actually have a final point, putting on the new man. That takes too long for me to get into right now with the time I have left. But that's really a key, that you have to put on Christ.

And what that really amounts to, and I'll just put it really quickly, it means that you've purposed in your heart to please God, to glorify God in whatever you do, whether you eat or drink. Anything you do, you're going to do to the glory of God. That's your purpose of heart.

And now you're going to ask God to help your character go that way, but you're going to take action yourself. Suppose your problem is laziness. And you say, well, I wish God would just get me up earlier in the morning.

Well, you've got a thing called an alarm clock. Put the alarm clock across the room. Don't hit the snooze button.

Set the alarm clock even for earlier than you want to so you can get up and pray, get up and spend some time in devotions. And discipline yourself by that means. And now that doesn't mean you won't be a lazy person, but it's a step toward resisting a lazy lifestyle.

You see, you can't make yourself not be a lazy person or a sensuous person or a greedy person or something. You can't make yourself stop. Those are inward changes God has to do.

God works in you to willing to do is a good place, but you have to work out your salvation. You have two parts of your life, the outward behavior and the inward work. God does inward work.

You have to do the outward work. So if your problem is pornography, you need to make sure you don't go to places where there's pornography. You don't just go and say, I hope God will give me the victory.

Well, he will if you don't go there. If you go there, you're playing with it. You're playing with temptation.

And Jesus says, well, if you're going to play games, come back when you're ready to be a serious adult. When you get serious about going to heaven, when you get serious about pleasing God, then come and talk to me then. I'm not interested in game players.

And we do play games too much. You put on Christ by putting on those behaviors that are Christlike. And let me just show you this one passage.

I was good. I have several more on the list, but I'll only give this one. It's in Ephesians, Chapter four, verses 17 and following.

It says this. I say, then, therefore, and testify in the Lord that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart. OK, don't go the way the culture goes.

In other words, verse 19, who these people being past feeling have given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness and greed. Now, lewdness is something they've given themselves over to. That's what you don't do.

You control yourself. Lewdness is an option for you. Lewdness is a possible fork in the road you could take.

But don't the worldly people, they give them. They give themselves over to that. You take the other route.

You exercise self-control. Then he says this. But you have not so learned Christ.

If indeed you have heard him and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off concerning the former conduct, the old man, which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Now, he talks about being renewed in the spirit of your mind. That's the inward part.

But that's not the part you do. God renews your mind. You put off the old and put on the new man.

The old man is Adam and his ways. The new man is Christ and his ways. You put on, like you put on clothing in the morning deliberately, you put on the behavior that is like Christ.

Now, he gives examples of it in these verses that follow. And I want to close with these. Verse 25.

Therefore, putting away lying... Okay, you put off the old man, which includes lying. What do you do? You put on the new man. Let each of you speak truth with his neighbor.

Then, in verse 26, be angry, but do not sin. Don't let the sun go down in your wrath. Okay.

Putting on Christ means you put away anger. Putting on the old man would be putting on anger. But you put off anger by not being angry and not letting the sun go down.

You put that away. In verse 28, let him who stole steal no longer. That's putting off the old man's ways.

You don't steal anymore. But what do you do? You put on the new man. Rather, let him work with his hands, that he may have something to give to him that has need.

In other words, there's these old ways that are the old man. He then says, let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth. That's the old man's ways.

But put on the new man. Let only that which edifies, which ministers grace to the hearers. He goes on and says that in verse 29.

In other words, he's saying, you need to put off the old man and put on the new. And what it means is, did you lie? You stop lying and start telling the truth. Did you get angry? Stop staying angry.

Put it away. Did you steal? Stop doing that and start working for a living and giving to other people instead of stealing from people. Did you not govern your language? Well, govern it.

Don't let wrong things come in your mouth and make sure that you deliberately put on such speech as Christ would have you do. That you live your life as if Jesus was here in the room with you, because he is. And you know that if someone said, we have a special guest here at our meeting today.

Jesus just showed up and he's going to be here for our meeting today. Wouldn't you be on good behavior if Jesus was in the room? I would think so. And wouldn't you be careful about what you talk about, what you do and what you look at? Of course you would.

And that's simply reality. He is. And so we need to put on Christ.

That requires self-control. That means I stop doing the things I've habitually done. I have to purpose in my heart that I'll not do those things.

And I need to look to God day by day for strength. I need to ask him for that. I need to ask him every day, fill me with your spirit.

Lead me by your spirit. Empower me by your spirit. Remind me by your spirit when I'm about to do the wrong thing.

And be sensitive to the spirit so you're walking in the environment of the Holy Spirit and making the choices that are contrary to the way that you might naturally otherwise go. That's controlling yourself. That's self-mastery.

That's something that all Christians need and all Christians can have because it's a fruit of the spirit. But you have to walk in the spirit to have that.