

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Devotional



SELF- CONTROL

Monday, 18 – Sunday, 24 August 2025

August 2025

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St Wale

Minister of Christ & Truth-Explorer | Author of *The Paternoster Code*

Agape-Shaped Self-Control

Self-control is often misunderstood. Many think of it as sheer willpower—gritting your teeth and resisting temptation through discipline alone. But the Bible presents self-control differently. In Galatians 5:22-23, it is listed as the final flavour of the fruit of the Spirit, growing not from human effort alone but from the transformative work of God's love in us.



True self-control is not about restriction for its own sake; it is about freedom. When we surrender to the Holy Spirit, He shapes our desires, aligns our hearts with God's will, and empowers us to live with wisdom and restraint. This kind of self-control is not rooted in fear or legalism but in agape—the unconditional, sacrificial love of God.

Why Self-Control Matters

We live in a world of excess—endless distractions, instant gratification, and constant temptation. Without self-control, we are easily swayed by impulses that lead us away from God's best. Proverbs 25:28 warns, "*A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.*" In other words, lack of self-control leaves us vulnerable to spiritual, emotional, and even physical harm.

But when we allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate self-control in us, we experience:

- ❖ **Freedom from destructive habits** – Instead of being enslaved to sin, we walk in victory.
- ❖ **Greater focus on God's purpose** – We steward our time, resources, and passions wisely.
- ❖ **Stronger relationships** – Love, patience, and kindness flourish when we exercise restraint in our words and actions.

How Love Shapes Self-Control

The key to biblical self-control is not willpower but love. Jesus demonstrated this perfectly—He denied Himself, not out of obligation, but out of love for the Father and for us. When we are filled with God's love, our choices are guided by what honours Him and blesses others.

Over the next seven days, we will explore how self-control, empowered by the Spirit, transforms every area of our lives—our thoughts, words, desires, time, and relationships. Each devotional will include Scripture, reflection questions, and a prayer to help you grow in this vital agape-flavour.

A Prayer to Begin

Father, teach me to rely not on my own strength but on Your Spirit. Shape my heart with Your love so that self-control flows naturally from my relationship with You. Help me to live with wisdom, discipline, and freedom, for Your glory. Amen.

Are you ready to discover the power of agape-shaped self-control? Let's begin.

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The Gift of a Sound Mind

2 Timothy 1:7

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (NKJV)



We often treat self-control like a skill we have to build, a muscle we have to strengthen, or a trait we either naturally have or hopelessly lack. But Scripture gives us a radically different starting point: *Self-control is a gift from God.*

In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul is writing to his spiritual son, Timothy, who is likely feeling the weight of fear and pressure in his ministry. Paul doesn't tell Timothy to toughen up or try harder. Instead, he reminds him of what God has *already given*: a spirit not of fear, but of **power**, **love**, and a **sound mind** (or "self-discipline" in some translations).

Let that settle in—if you belong to Christ, you *already* have what you need. The Holy Spirit gives you the ability to walk in power, to act in love, and to think and live with self-control. This kind of self-discipline isn't rooted in fear of failure or punishment. It's rooted in the security of knowing you're empowered, loved, and guided by God Himself.

The phrase *sound mind* comes from the Greek word *sōphronismos*, which conveys ideas like sober thinking, wise restraint, and self-governance. It speaks to a life not ruled by impulse or fear, but by spiritual clarity and inner strength.

It's self-control that's not self-made, but Spirit-sourced.

And here's the key: this self-control flows from love and power. It's not about suppressing who you are; it's about becoming who God created you to be—someone who reflects His image by living intentionally, lovingly, and wisely.

As we begin this 7-day journey, don't focus on what you lack. Focus on what you've already been given in Christ. You don't need to manufacture strength. You need to lean into the Spirit who gives it.



(a) In what areas of your life do fear or impulse tend to override sound thinking? (b) *How does knowing self-control is a gift from God—not something you earn—change your perspective?* (c) Where in your life do you most need to invite the Spirit to bring power, love, and a sound mind?



Thank You Father for the realisation that the spirit of fear is not a gift from You. Thank You for the Spirit of power, love, and a sound mind. I must learn to receive Your beautiful gifts. I receive that today. Help me to walk in the truth that self-control is not something I have to create, but something You have already given. Teach me to live by Your Spirit—strong, loving, and clear-minded. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Love as the Motive for Self-Control

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

“Love... is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” verse 5 (NIV)



At the root of true self-control is not fear of consequences or a desire for perfection. It's *love*.

If we misunderstand self-control as simply managing behaviour or holding ourselves back, we'll miss the heart of it. The Spirit doesn't produce self-control in us so that we can look impressive or feel superior. He produces it so that we can love well—consistently, sacrificially, and wisely.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul paints a clear picture of what agape love looks like. One of its defining traits is that it is *not self-seeking*. This is crucial. Often, lack of self-control comes from self-centredness—a desire for immediate gratification. Anger, indulgence, or thoughtless words are usually driven by putting ourselves first.

But agape love redirects us. It compels us to consider others, to value relationships over impulses, to pursue what is good rather than what is easy. This kind of love makes self-control possible and meaningful. It says: “Because I love God and others, I will discipline myself. I will hold my tongue, guard my thoughts, set healthy boundaries, and respond with grace.”

Think of Jesus—the perfect example of self-control. He could have defended Himself, called down angels, or silenced His accusers. But He didn't. Why? Because of love. He wasn't driven by pride, fear, or impulse. He was driven by the Father's will and by His love for us.

Self-control, then, isn't just a spiritual discipline—it's an act of love. It's choosing what is best for others even when it costs us. It's saying “no” to self to say “yes” to something greater.



(1) Can you think of a recent moment when a lack of self-control hurt a relationship? (2) [How might viewing self-control as an expression of love change your motivation?](#) (3) What would agape-shaped self-control look like in your words, habits, or emotions today?



Lord, help me to love like You do. Remind me that self-control isn't just about managing myself—it's about honouring others. When I'm tempted to react, indulge, or speak without love, give me the strength to pause. Shape my heart so that my actions flow from love, not self. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Do You Think Prayer Is Trying To Convince A Hostile, Unwilling And High-handed God To Do Something He Doesn't Want To Do?

THEN YOU SHOULD READ

The Paternoster Code

A Novel On Prayer



"The book illustrates God's mysterious ways, like His ability to draw straight with crooked lines. It calls attention to all to appreciate that God is everywhere and meets us irrespective of time, space, or agency. A compelling read."

Bishop Matthew Kukah

The picture of God as a loving and caring Father, and not a hostile, unwilling and high-handed Judge, is well-painted in the book. A number of other fundamental matters about prayer have been succinctly captured and aptly illustrated.

Pastor Tony Akinyemi

"A succinctly written book on prayer that is one-of-a-kind.

"A great book with many revelations. I'd say it's more than a book on prayer; it's about developing a relationship with God."

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Training, Not Just Trying

1 Corinthians 9:25–27

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever... I discipline my body and keep it under control...” (ESV)



If we're honest, many of us approach self-control like a light switch: either we “have it” in the moment, or we don't. But the apostle Paul offers a different image—*not a switch, but a training ground*.

In 1 Corinthians 9, he compares the Christian life to that of an athlete preparing for competition. No champion stumbles into victory by accident. Victory requires discipline, repetition, and sacrifice. **It's about intentional, daily choices that shape the body, mind, and heart to respond rightly under pressure.**

Paul says, *“I discipline my body and keep it under control.”* He doesn't mean he's punishing himself or living in legalistic fear. He means he's submitting his whole life—desires, habits, impulses—to a greater purpose. That's self-control in action.

This is encouraging, because it tells us that **self-control grows with practice**. It's not just about sudden heroics in moments of temptation—it's about long obedience in the same direction. It's about learning, failing, confessing, and getting back up again with renewed focus.

But notice Paul's motivation: he's not striving for personal glory or temporary reward. He's running for a *crown that lasts forever*. That eternal mindset shapes his self-discipline. He's not motivated by fear or image—he's motivated by devotion to Christ.

You may not see instant change. Training rarely feels glamorous. But over time, the Spirit works through these small, surrendered steps to shape a life that reflects Jesus—a life of freedom, stability, and deep love.

So today, shift your mindset from *trying harder* to *training faithfully*. You're not doing this alone. The Spirit is your coach, your strength, and your constant companion.



(a) Where are you expecting instant change instead of committing to daily training? (b) **What spiritual “habits” (prayer, Scripture, community, etc.) help strengthen your self-control over time?** (c) What does it mean to you to live for “a crown that will last forever”?



God, thank You for Your patience as I grow. I confess that I often want instant results instead of committing to faithful training. Help me see each small act of obedience as part of Your greater work in me. Teach me to discipline my desires, not for perfection's sake, but out of love for You and others. Empower me to keep training by Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Saying No to Say Yes

Titus 2:11-12

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” (NIV)



Self-control is not just about saying “no” to bad things—it’s about saying “yes” to something better.

According to Titus 2, it’s *grace*, not guilt, that teaches us how to live self-controlled lives. The same grace that saves us is also the grace that *trains* us—teaching us to reject what pulls us away from God and embrace what draws us closer to Him.

This is countercultural. The world often sees self-control as restrictive, even oppressive. But in the kingdom of God, **self-control is the pathway to true freedom**. It’s not about denying ourselves for denial’s sake—it’s about clearing space in our lives for what matters most: Christ Himself.

Notice the order Paul gives: grace teaches us to say “no” *and* to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives *in this present age*. Not in some distant, easier future. Right now. That means God doesn’t call us to wait until we feel stronger or more mature—He calls us to begin practicing self-control today, relying on the grace that’s already been given.

And here’s the beauty: when we say “no” to sin, we’re also saying “yes” to peace, purpose, and intimacy with God. We’re saying “yes” to becoming more like Christ. Every Spirit-empowered “no” is actually a declaration of love—for God, for others, and for our future.

So where is grace calling you to say “no” today—not as a punishment, but as a path to something better? And what is Christ inviting you to say “yes” to in its place?



(a) How has God’s grace been teaching you lately—not just to be forgiven, but to be formed? (b) **What specific worldly passion or habit might the Spirit be asking you to say “no” to today?** (c) What greater “yes” is God offering you in exchange?



Lord, thank You that Your grace doesn’t just save me—it shapes me. Thank You for loving me enough to teach me to say “no” to what is harmful and “yes” to what is good. Help me to see self-control not as a burden but as a gift—a way to love You more fully and live more freely. Today, I choose to respond to Your grace with surrender. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Mastered by Nothing

1 Corinthians 6:12

¹² “I am allowed to do all things,” but not all things are good for me to do. “I am allowed to do all things,” but I will not let anything make me its slave. (NCV)



Freedom is one of the great promises of the Christian life—but how we use that freedom matters deeply.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul confronts a mindset that says, “I can do whatever I want.” And in one sense, that’s true. In Christ, we’re no longer bound by the law. We’re not trying to earn righteousness by rules or rituals. But freedom without self-control quickly leads to bondage. That’s the irony—when we use our freedom to indulge every craving, we eventually become slaves to the very things we thought we were free to choose.

That’s why Paul says, “*I will not be mastered by anything.*”

Self-control is what allows us to *own our choices* instead of being owned by them. It’s the ability, empowered by the Spirit, to choose what is beneficial—even when it’s not easy, popular, or instantly rewarding.

This doesn’t mean we live rigid or joyless lives. It means we live with purpose. We don’t let our appetites, emotions, or habits take the driver’s seat. We don’t confuse liberty with license. Instead, we walk in freedom *with boundaries*—the kind of boundaries that protect what matters most: our relationship with God and our ability to love others well.

Ask yourself today: Is anything quietly mastering you? It could be something obvious, like an addictive behavior or harmful habit. Or it could be subtler—overwork, attention-seeking, people-pleasing, or even digital distraction. The test is this: Can you lay it down? Can you walk away?

Self-control gives you that ability. Not through gritted teeth or fear of failure, but through the Spirit working in you to align your heart with God’s best.



(a) Is there anything in your life right now that is beginning to master your time, thoughts, or desires? (b) [How do you distinguish between what is “permissible” and what is truly beneficial?](#) (c) What step of surrender could you take today to walk in greater freedom?



Lord, thank You for the freedom I have in Christ. But I don’t want to use that freedom to indulge myself—I want to use it to serve You. Show me anything in my life that is mastering me instead of serving me. Give me the courage and grace to lay it down. Teach me to walk in true freedom—Spirit-led, love-shaped, and full of purpose. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



When Emotions Run High

Proverbs 25:28

“A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.” (NLT)



Have you ever said something in anger and immediately wished you could take it back? Or acted on a burst of emotion only to regret it hours later? We've all been there. Emotions aren't wrong—but without self-control, they can leave us defenceless.

Our text of today gives us a vivid image: a person without self-control is like a city with broken walls—exposed, vulnerable, and easily invaded. In biblical times, city walls were essential. They protected inhabitants from enemies and gave structure to daily life. Without them, a city was a target. The same is true of our emotional lives.

God created emotions. Jesus Himself felt grief, joy, anger, and compassion. But the Spirit teaches us not to be *ruled* by our emotions. Self-control acts like a wall—it doesn't prevent emotions, but it helps us respond with wisdom rather than react in impulse.

Consider how anger, fear, jealousy, or even excitement can push us to act before we pray, speak before we think, or decide without discernment. When self-control is absent, those emotions can do damage—both to us and to others. But when the Spirit governs our hearts, even intense emotions can become a channel for love, not harm.

This doesn't mean we suppress what we feel. Instead, we bring our emotions into the presence of God and invite the Spirit to guide our response. Self-control allows us to pause, reflect, and choose the path of love—even when we're under pressure.

If emotions have been running high in your life lately, take heart. You don't have to be overwhelmed. You have a Helper who strengthens you, calms your mind, and builds up your walls.



(a) What emotion tends to override your self-control most often—anger, fear, insecurity, something else? (b) [How can you invite the Holy Spirit to help you pause and respond, rather than react?](#) (c) Is there a recent situation where you need to go back and make peace because emotion overran wisdom?



Lord, You know the depths of my emotions. You made me to feel, but not to be ruled by feelings. Teach me to guard my heart—not by closing it off, but by letting Your Spirit guide it. When emotions rise, help me to pause, pray, and choose a loving, wise response. Strengthen the “walls” of my heart with Your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Kairos Reflection

Ephesians 5:15–16 – “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity [kairos], because the days are evil.” (NIV)

This week has not been about information, but transformation. Before we close, we must heed wisdom’s call to stop—to weigh what God has whispered in these days. The Greeks called this **kairos**: not just chronological time (*chronos*), but divine moments that demand response.

Revisit your journal. Reread the Scriptures. What has the Spirit highlighted? Then ask yourself three core questions:

- 1. What is God saying to me?**

Look for clarity, conviction, or comfort from the Spirit—what rose to the surface?

- 2. What will I do about it?**

What small, faithful step of obedience is He inviting you to take?

- 3. Who can walk with me?**

Growth rarely happens alone. Who can pray with you, encourage you, or keep you accountable?

Whether it’s in your time, your habits, your emotions, your relationships, or your thought life—where is God inviting you to walk in deeper self-control shaped by love?

Now is the time to pause and respond. Not perfectly—but honestly.

Reflection & Action Plan

- **What ministered to me most this week?**
(Write freely. Let the Spirit surface what matters most.)
- **What is God saying to me through this?**
(Be still. Don’t rush this part. Listen with expectancy.)
- **What is one thing I will do in response?**
(Think practical and specific—something you can begin today.)
- **Who can support me on this journey?**
(A friend, mentor, spouse, pastor, or small group.)

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank You for walking with me this week. Thank You for convicting me, comforting me, and calling me deeper. I don’t want this to end in reflection alone—I want to respond in faith. Show me clearly what You are saying and give me courage to obey. Shape in me a self-control that flows from love and leads to freedom. Help me walk in step with You—not just today, but in the days to come. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

About Elim Pentecostal Church Colchester

Welcome to Elim Colchester – a vibrant, welcoming church at the heart of the Greenstead community! Our distinctive pyramid-roofed building stands as a beacon of hope next to the Greenstead Centre shopping area.



Find Us:

Clematis Way, Greenstead, Colchester
CO4 3PY
(The building you can't miss – look for the pyramid roof!)

Sunday Services:

Join us every Sunday at 10:30am for:
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Established in 1930, we're part of the Elim Pentecostal movement – believing in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives today. Whether you're exploring faith or looking for a church home, you'll find a warm welcome at Elim Colchester

Honouring God Through Giving

At Elim Pentecostal Church Colchester, giving is more than an act—it's an expression of faith, gratitude, and partnership in God's mission. We believe everything we have comes from Him (1 Chronicles 29:14), and through generosity, we participate in His work to transform lives in Colchester and beyond.

Why We Give

- **To Honour God First** (Proverbs 3:9): We give not because we *must*, but because we *get to*—acknowledging God as the source of all we have.
- **To Fuel His Mission:** Our gifts empower our church to share the Gospel, serve our community, and care for those in need.
- **To Grow in Faith:** Generosity breaks the chains of materialism, reminding us that true life is found in Christ alone (Matthew 6:19-21).

How You Can Give



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- **Account Name:** Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance
- **Sort Code:** 60-05-16
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In-Person: During our services

- Use the offering box or ask a team member for help.

This is worship. This is trust. This is *honouring the Lord with our "first fruits"* (Proverbs 3:9). Thank you for partnering in God's work!