

Control Yourself!

Paul teaches us to exercise self-control in all things *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.*([1 Cor. 9:25](#)).

In this article, we examine the necessity of self-control, while exploring some things we can do to control ourselves by the grace of God, as we live in a sinful world.

Self-control has been defined as the ability to control one's emotions and behavior in the face of temptations and impulses. If it's truly "self" control that the Christian is attempting to do, then we're all in deep trouble because we can't even come to Christ without God's help (John 6:44). If I am depending on my own "self" in controlling the same, then I can never truly hope to live a holy life that is pleasing to God. King Solomon to write, *"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls"*(Prov 25:28). In the case of a person with no self-control, it's their sensual pleasures and gratifying [the flesh](#) that they only care about; even if it hurts others.

Self-control is not willing ourselves to be obedient and avoid sinful practices. We need a lot of help in fighting the three-fold enemy of the Devil, the world, and the flesh and we can't do this by ourselves. We can only by Jesus' strengthening us (Phil 4:13). We can't do anything without Christ's help and He even tells us, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5b) and nothing is not a little "something." Paul, in listing some of the [fruit of the Spirit](#), included *"gentleness [and] self-control; against such things there is no law"*(Gal 5:23) so this shows that our true source for self-control is not self...but God's Spirit. Don't you think God would honor the prayer request for self-control when we need it? Paul commanded Titus to *"urge the younger men to be self-controlled"*(Titus 2:6).

We Can't Avoid Every Sinful Influence

We can't always avoid exposure to sin. "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not **at all mean with the immoral people of this world**, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world" ([1 Cor. 5:9-10](#)). Since we can't avoid every sinful influence, we must learn to live in the world without allowing sin to have a negative impact on us.

When Possible, Avoid Temptation

It's important for us to avoid temptation, thereby decreasing the pressure to turn away from God.

- "Do not be deceived: **Bad company corrupts good morals**" ([1 Cor. 15:33](#)).
- "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; **abstain from every form of evil** ([1 Th. 5:21-22](#)).

We greatly decrease temptation by associating with good people. Unfortunately, it's impossible to avoid exposure to everything that's sinful. In such instances, we must be strong enough to control our thoughts, so we're not tempted.

You Are In Control

As Christians, we have the ability to control our thoughts, in obedience to God's commands.

- "**Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth" ([Col. 3:2](#)).
- "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **dwell on these things**" ([Phil. 4:8](#)).

The problem occurs when we don't control our thoughts.

- "But each one is **tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust**. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" ([Jas. 1:14-15](#)).

When we associate with worldly people and we're exposed to sinful behaviors, we must control our thoughts so we're not tempted.

Enslave Yourself to Righteousness

We make ourselves slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness.

- "Do you not know that when you **present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience**, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, **either of sin** resulting in death, **or of obedience resulting in righteousness**? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, **you became slaves of righteousness**" ([Rom. 6:16-18](#)).

As slaves of righteousness, we present ourselves to God for obedience. Thus, we make a conscious decision to focus our attention on God rather than sin.

Abhor Evil

As slaves of righteousness, we abhor sin and abstain from every form of it ([Rom. 12:9](#); [1 Th. 5:22](#)). We're not tempted by things we hate. We're so repulsed by them, we don't want anything to do with them.

For example:

- If you hate homosexuality, you won't be tempted to commit homosexual acts.
- If you hate murder, you won't be tempted to murder.
- If you hate stealing, you won't be tempted to steal.

If our attitude toward sin is proper, we'll control ourselves in respect to sin.

Set Your Mind on Things Above

As slaves of righteousness, we seek the things above, setting our minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth ([Col. 3:1-2](#)). Therefore we "consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" ([Col. 3:5](#)).

Since we consider ourselves dead to sin, we don't lust for sinful things. As a result, we control our thoughts and avoid temptation.

For example:

- A young lady and young man come to school dressed immodestly. When we see them, we ignore their immoral behavior rather than dwelling of sinful things. The way they dress has no impact upon us.

Conclusion

We should avoid sin whenever possible. But we live in the world, and it's impossible to avoid all exposure to sin.

As Christians, we control our thoughts and avoid temptation by enslaving ourselves to righteousness, abhorring evil, and setting our minds on things above, considering ourselves dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed.

Thankfully, God gives us His Spirit to *"equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen"* (Heb 13:21). If you are yielded to God's Spirit, abiding in His Word daily, being constant in prayer every day, and striving to live a life that is pleasing to God, then self-control should come much easier with God's help, Christ's strength, and much prayer.

*I have been **crucified with Christ** and I no longer live, but **Christ** lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)*

*Those who belong to **Christ** Jesus have **crucified** the flesh **with** its passions and desires (Gal 5:23)*