

# Self-Control

by Anton Bosch

---

*Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of self-control in the Christian life as essential for achieving spiritual goals and reflecting God's order.*

**Duration:** 40:13

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:19

**Topics:** "Self-Control"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of self-discipline in the face of societal challenges. He refers to 2 Timothy chapter 3, which describes the terrible times that will come in the end days, and relates them to the present society. The speaker highlights the lack of self-control in today's world, where people are driven by their desires and impulses. He urges listeners to take control of their bodies and every area of their lives, including eating habits, in order to live a disciplined and purposeful life.

---

## Transcript

Please turn with me to the book of Corinthians, the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 9, and from verse 19. 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, from verse 19. And we've begun a series on practical issues in the Christian walk, and we spoke about faithfulness last week.

We will break the series for the next two weeks as we speak about Christmas and New Year, and so this is the last one of the series until we begin again in the New Year. So 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, and I'm going to read from verse 19. 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, from verse 19.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews. To those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.

To those who are without law, as without law, not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ, that I might win those who are without the law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Do you not know that those who run in the race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you might obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. And so he speaks from verse 24 through 27 about those who run the race, and he compares that to the Christian. And he is saying that those who run in an earthly race, in a marathon or some kind of field event or track event, they run for a perishable crown.

And we know that those days it would be a laurel wreath that would be put around their head, and that would last for a while, and then it would dry up and you'd make fertilizer out of it. But he says that we are in the spiritual race for an imperishable crown, a crown of life. And we've been speaking from the book of Revelation, the chapter 2 and chapter 3 speaks about that crown, which the Lord is going to give to us.

And the acknowledgement that he will give before his father, we spoke about that this morning from Revelation chapter 3 and verse 5. And so there is a reward. But in order to gain that reward, he says what the athlete has to do is he has to be disciplined. And that's what I'm going to speak with you about this morning, self-control.

Verse 25, he says, and everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. That word temperate, temperate in all things. Now the old King James uses the word temperance throughout, the new King James uses two words, temperate and self-control in different places.

And so he's saying that those who run in an earthly race are temperate. They are self-controlled and noticed in all things. In other words, if you're running an earthly race or you're preparing for the, for the Olympic games or some kind of athletic event, these people are, have to be under absolute control.

They can't drink what they want. They can't eat what they want. They can't go to bed when they want to go to bed.

They can't do whatever they want to do. They have to live these absolutely disciplined lives in order to be ready to be able to run the race. Now he's comparing that to the Christian and he's saying that if the athletes in the world can live those kind of disciplined lives, absolutely temperate in all things, watching everything that they do, watching everything that they eat.

And they do that for a crown that fades away. He's saying we should be doing the same thing. In fact, we should be doing better than that because we're competing not against one another, but we are running in a race for an eternal crown.

Now it's, it's amazing when you look at the commitment and the dedication that people put into athletics, whether it's in running the race or whether it's playing a ball game, the way that their whole lives are geared towards that. And we've just been through a whole series of events in those last, in these last few months where sportsmen have been disqualified because of things which seem to be unrelated. And I don't want to stir up any kind of controversy, but what has fighting dogs got to do with playing football? You say, well, there is no connection between them.

But there is a connection. They have to be disciplined in all areas. And I want to go into all of that.

But if it is so important for an athlete to be sure that his whole life is under control in order to compete legitimately in an earthly game, how much more should we as Christians then not be absolutely disciplined

and under control in every area of our lives? Now, the problem here is that there are many preachers today who say, well, you know, this, this is irrelevant. This has got nothing to do with us as Christians because, you know, we're, we're, we're under God's control. And so if we, if we're controlling ourselves, this becomes a works religion, it becomes a man-made thing, and it all becomes law and all of those sorts of words.

And yet the scripture is very clear that self-control is one of the things that is expected of a Christian. I was going to read, and I decided against it because it may have been a little bit confusing, the story of the man who had a legion of demons. And you remember the things that characterized this man before Jesus cast the demon, the demons out of him.

He could not be controlled. He could not control his own actions. Neither could others control him.

They chained him and he would break the chains. He didn't wear clothes. He lived amongst the graves.

He would cut himself, mutilate himself. He would do all of these things. He had no, there was no control.

And yet when Jesus came and touched him, suddenly they found him in his right mind. And that word sober or in his right mind meant that he was in control of his faculties. Now I'm not suggesting that people who have no self-control are demon possessed, but it's the same kind of thing that happens, that when Jesus comes into our lives, suddenly that which is chaotic and uncontrolled and undisciplined and, and all over the place suddenly should come into, into order and our lives should reflect God.

Remember we spoke before about the fact that, that God is a God of order. God doesn't wake up, not that he ever wakes up, but doesn't one moment decide, well, and I'm a little bit tired today. I'm not going to let the sun shine today.

Can you imagine what would happen? But the sun rises on its appointed time and you can, you can go on the internet and you can get tables that will tell you in 20 years time, that's assuming that Jesus doesn't come back, that in 20 years time on any particular date, the exact minute that the sun will rise over Los Angeles. That is how predictable it is because God is that God who is everything works in the right place and the right way at the right time. And so he's saying we need to reflect him in that way.

And so let's have a look at some of these scriptures that deal with that. In Galatians chapter 5 and verse 23, and I'm not going to turn to all of these scriptures, you turn to them, and we have the list of the fruit of the spirit. And maybe you've guessed that I'm beginning to deal with that whole list.

I'm not going down the list in order. I'm just dealing with different ones, but I will eventually deal with every one of those nine fruit of the spirit. What is the fruit of the spirit? Well, that's a huge subject, but let me just give it to you in a nutshell.

The fruit of the spirit is simply the results of Christ living within us. The results of Christ living within us. And so if Christ is living within us, we will have love, joy, peace, and towards the end of the list you'll find self-control and faithfulness.

And so one of the things that signified that this man had met with Jesus was that suddenly he was controlled. And we live in a world where there is this emphasis on the You know, if you want to do this, then do it. Don't let anyone cramp your style.

Maybe that's the language of my generation, but don't let anyone cramp your style. Now, one of the signs of having met with Jesus is the fact that our lives are self-controlled. And that word self-control, we say, well, you know, I'm really waiting for God to bring order in my life.

But you know, it's interesting that the word self-control is self-control. It's not saying, I'm waiting for God to bring control. It's saying, I need to control myself.

Self-control. When you control your life because somebody else controls you. One of the things that happens when children live in the home with a family is that there are rules, or there ought to be rules anyway.

I think many of the times there aren't, but there ought to be rules about what time you go to bed, what time you get up, when you have dinner, washing your hands before you go to, before you eat and doing the chores and all of these things. There are rules. And one of the things that happens when children leave the home is sometimes those rules disappear.

They rebel against those rules and suddenly everything just goes. Now, you can live by God's rules because the church or because the leadership or because the preacher has, it requires you to live in a particular way. But you know, those rules need to become our rules.

And one of the things that needs to happen as children grow up and become adults is that they need to find their own rules. And when mother or father is no longer there to say, you have to go to bed at a reasonable time because you have to get up tomorrow to do a day's work, somewhere along the line we have to learn that you have to do things in an orderly way if you're going to be able to achieve anything in life, if you're going to be able to live in a particular way. When you're still at home, somebody's telling you, have you done your homework? Are you studying? Are you preparing for the exams? But when you leave home, you have to begin to set some kind of order in your program to make sure that you will be able to give an account when you come to the exams.

Right, Jenny? Yeah. No one's telling you to do it. You have to do it for yourself.

Now, if you don't have that, you really have a big problem. And yet the same thing happens as a Christian, is that we're so dependent sometimes on the rules of the church, and then suddenly when I go on vacation and the church is no longer there, everything falls apart. But those rules need to become my rules.

That order and that discipline and that structure and that control needs to be my control, self-control. And so one of the one of the qualifications for an elder or for a leader in Titus chapter 1 verse 8 is that they are self-controlled. And this is the sad thing, is that today we find that many leaders exhibit no self-control, and we wonder why this becomes a problem in the church.

Before we move away, let me just go back to this passage, 1 Corinthians chapter 9, where we were, where we read from. Because I started moving away before I finished it. 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 25, everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things.

They do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus, not uncertainly, thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest having preached to others I myself should become disqualified.

So Paul is saying we have a purpose. He says I'm not shadow boxing. I'm not just beating in the air.

I have a purpose. I'm heading somewhere. And because I'm heading somewhere, because I have a particular purpose and goal and calling upon my life, I live my life in an ordered way, a purposeful way.

And this is the problem, is that sometimes Christians have no clear understanding of their goal and of their purpose. And so they live their lives in a directionless way, being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by every circumstance, by every opportunity, by everything that comes their way. And they're just drifting because they don't know where they're going.

And so Paul says, no, he says, I know where I'm going. I know what God has called me to do. I know what my life is about.

And I think it's important, sometimes young people struggle and they say, well, I don't know what my life is about. I don't know what my purpose is. And that's fine.

It takes you a while. But you know, when you start growing up, you need to start having an idea as to what your direction in life is. What is your calling? What is your purpose? What is life all about? What is it that you want to achieve at the end of the day? And I'm not speaking about becoming a doctor or a lawyer or making two million dollars or whatever it is.

But what is life about? What did God put me here for? And when I begin to focus on that, I'll be able to say, well, this is what God has saved me for. This is what God brought me into the world for. And I begin to live my life in an orderly way.

An athlete who has no competition that he's preparing for. Really, it's very hard for him because he's just out there, he's running, he's preparing, he's going to gym, he's eating the right diet. But what for? There's no purpose to it.

But someone who has a game or who has a race on a particular day, and I don't know when the next Olympic Games is. When is it? Anyway, whenever it is in the next few years. There are thousands of athletes who are preparing for that day.

They know the day the race is going to be. And so they've been preparing not just for four years, but some of them for 10 years, some of them for 20 years for that particular day. That is their goal and their purpose in life, is to get that gold.

And folks, we have a purpose. And that purpose is to stand before Jesus. Remember last week? Well done, good and faithful servant.

But I'm not going to achieve that if I am going to live my life in a purposeless way. If I'm going to live my life in a directionless way. And if I'm going to be chasing every rabbit that comes down the trail.

But if I have my eyes fixed on that goal, and I say that's what God has called me to do. That's what I'm going to do with all my life. And with all my strength.

And I'm going to gear everything towards that. We will be able to achieve that. You know, one of the things that constantly impresses me about, and I'm not impressed by the success of people in the world, but by the commitment of those who do achieve in this world.

And you can take whatever name there is. You can look at, let's look at Bill Gates. He has to be probably one of the most successful in the world's terms.

What is his life about? Oh, he plays a little bit of football, and he plays a bit of pinball, and he does a little bit of lawyering, and he does a little bit of this. No, his life has one purpose. And from when he was in college, it was one thing.

And that was computers. His whole life, everything he thinks, everything he does, is focused on this one area. He's absolutely committed and dedicated to that one thing.

And when you look at people who have achieved, and who achieve great things in this world, the one thing that they all have in common is that absolute single-minded devotion to their purpose. Now, that's the world. And yet as Christians, we seem to be so all over the place.

There is no absolute commitment to our purpose in life. And surely our purpose is far greater than anything that the world has. Surely standing before the King of Kings and hearing those words, well done, good and faithful servant, surely that is more important than becoming the President of the United States, or the Bill Gates of computers, or whatever worldly achievement there may be, or winning five medals at the Olympic Games.

Surely that's more important. And so Paul says, he says, what I do is I don't fight uncertainly. I have a direction, verse 27, and I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.

I discipline my body and bring it into subjection. In other words, he's saying, I am in control of my body. Now, unfortunately, it seems that many people, their bodies are in control of them.

Their bodies dictate. So I don't feel like working out, I'm going to sleep. I don't feel like doing my chores, I watch TV.

I feel like three times the food that I really need, so I eat it. And so we can go on and on and on because people's bodies dictate to them. Paul says, no, he says, I bring my body under control.

Now, obviously he's saying, and he's inferring that if you allow your body to take control, your body will take control. And we know that there are many people like that, who are slaves of their bodies. Their bodies dictate everything that they do.

And whatever excess it may be, whether it's alcohol, or whether it's sexual, or whether it's food, or whether it's sleeping, or whether it's working even, their bodies control them. Paul says, no, I bring my body under control. I discipline my body.

He says, because there's an opportunity that I may fail in my purpose. That's the summary of what he was saying at the end of that verse. Now in 2 Timothy chapter 3, if you go with me to that verse, 2 Timothy chapter 3, and in this we have a list of the terrible times that will be in the end days, and this is today.

2 Timothy chapter 3, know this, that in the last days, perilous, dangerous times will come. Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, and this describes our society today, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God. That's a terrible description of the society in which we're living.

And you'll notice that with all of these other things, together with brutal, fierce is the word without self-control. That describes our society today. And you know, the heroes of our society are no longer those

who have achieved, those who win the gold medals at the races, those who achieve something in commerce or in business, but our heroes have become the movie stars.

And what characterizes the movie stars? No self-control. No self-control. And folks, those are our heroes.

You know, I'm constantly amazed and absolutely flabbergasted, and I don't know what the figures are, but when I look at the magazines that people put in their carts in the market, and when I look at the magazines that people bring to read on the treadmill at the gym, one of the most popular magazines has to be, and I don't know the statistics, but has to be People magazine. People magazine. These undisciplined, uncouth, ungodly people are our heroes.

We all want to be like them. Drink all night, crash your car, and it goes on and on and on. I don't want to get into all the details.

Folks, that's the last thing we should be doing. And Paul says that's the way it's going to be in the last days. And the sad thing is he's saying that's the way Christians are going to be in the last days.

We don't want to be like that. We want to be the people who are disciplined and who are self-controlled. In 1 Corinthians 6, verse 12, Paul says that all things are lawful to me, but all things are not helpful.

And so there are many things, as we've said before, there are many things that you say, well, there's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing in the Bible that says you can't have a second helping of soda. That is not exactly helpful.

There's nothing that says you can't sleep for 12 hours a day and watch TV for six hours. There's nothing in the Bible against it. There's no law against it.

No spiritual law, no law of the country, no law of the state or of the city. It's completely legal to sleep for 12 hours, watch TV for six hours, and play TV games for the other six hours. It's completely lawful, but it's not exactly helpful.

And so we need to define the difference between those things that are helping me, that are helping me spiritually, that are helping towards my purpose in life, that are helping me to reveal God to the world, and those things that are not. And so I need to bring my life under control. Well, I can't do 12 hours of sleep, six hours of TV games, and another six hours of watching TV, because that's lawful, but it's not helpful.

And so, you see, one of the problems is that when we grow older, we say, well, what do you want all these rules for? Why do you want to have to wash your body? A young girl, I was working in the workshop yesterday, a young girl came trying to sell me magazines. Somewhere along the line, I looked down, I saw her feet. I don't think she's seen water for a year.

I'm absolutely serious. Now, it's not exactly helpful. There are certain things you need to do in order to do a disciplined life.

And one of those things is just to attend to personal hygiene. One of those things. So all things are lawful, but they're not helpful.

In Proverbs chapter 16, Proverbs has some very interesting things to say about this, and it's very interesting because it seems that one man who didn't know anything about self-control was Solomon. He did everything to excess. There didn't seem to be any discipline or any order in his life, and that's one of

the reasons why he failed in the end.

He had everything going for him. He had every opportunity. He'd inherited the kingdom.

It was in a tremendously good state when he received it from his father. He received from God wisdom and riches and everything else that you would need. But in the end, he wasted it all.

Why? Because he had no self-control. He wanted to marry who he wanted to marry. He wanted to eat what he wanted to eat.

He wanted to do whatever he wanted to do, and he indulged his flesh in every area that he chose to. And this is one of the strange things about Proverbs, is that he speaks so much truth, which he somehow was not able to apply. But in Proverbs 16, 32, he says, he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city.

He who rules, he who controls his spirit. So it's not just my body. Paul spoke about, I bring my body under control, but Solomon is saying, I need to also rule my spirit.

And if I'm able to rule my spirit, I have done more than a man who has conquered a city. And in fact, let me say that it's sometimes harder to rule or control our own spirits than it is to take a city. In Proverbs chapter 25, 28, he turns it around and he says, whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down.

He who does not have control over his spirit is like a city broken down. In other words, it's a mess. It's a mess.

And the reality is when you're dealing with people, when you're looking at people's lives, many times you see exactly that, a city broken down. The walls are in ruins. The streets look like LA streets, full of potholes.

The electricity doesn't work. The sewers don't work. Everything is broken in their lives.

Why? Because they have not ruled their spirits. They have not taken control of the areas of their lives and they've not given God control of every area of their lives. And so when we speak about self-control, let's be practical.

And I've said I want to make this series and we want to speak about practical things. It means every area of my life, every moment of my life needs to be disciplined. Eating, we've touched on that.

Eating all junk food is just not helpful. It may be lawful, but it's not helpful. We need to eat the vegetables.

And we say, well, you know, we've come to hear about spiritual things. We haven't come here for a lesson on diet. But folks, when our bodies are broken down, we wonder why we can't serve God, because my body is not working and functioning the way it should be functioning.

And I wonder why somehow I'm not able to pray. I'm not able to read the Bible. I'm not able to concentrate, to hear the Word of God, because I haven't been eating a good diet.

But these things are practical, but they're real. You know, one of the things that I find amazing when I watch preachers who weigh 400 pounds and they're trying to tell people how to live their lives, but the preacher is not able to control his calorie intake. How does that work? You're trying to tell people to control what they think, but you can't even control what you eat.

It just doesn't work. And so eating, sleeping. Some people have a problem because they want to sleep all day, especially in church.

Others have a problem. They don't sleep at night because they're watching TV or doing whatever they can. And then they wonder why they can't stay awake during the day to do a decent day's work.

But these are practical. But we have a responsibility to live our lives in a purposeful way. And sleep is one of those things which needs to happen in a disciplined way.

If you get too little of it, you've got a problem. You get too much of it, you have a problem. So let me live my life in such a way that I can make sure that I am able to function the way I should be functioning.

See if that helps. Working. Some people work too much.

Some people don't work at all. Let me live in a disciplined way. Resting.

Some people rest all day. Some people don't rest at all. And then they wonder why their bodies burn out.

Temper. Now that's another huge subject. And I think when Solomon was speaking about he who controls or rules his spirit, he was particularly speaking in the area of temper.

So we need to be able to have control over those areas. And folk, I know it's hard. And sometimes Christians say, well, you know, I just can't control my temper.

But God does expect you to control it. And maybe we're not 100% successful, but we should be growing. We should be gaining ground in the control of our tempers.

Lust. And here you can talk about any appetite. Appetite for food, for money, for sex, for pleasure, for whatever.

Is my life being controlled by my appetites, by my lusts, by my desires? Or am I controlling those things? You know, we live in a time when, again, it has become the culture in our society to say, shame, he can't help himself. That's the way he is. He's a drunkard, or he's an alcoholic, or he's a drug addict, or he's a sexual pervert, or he's a whatever.

We say, well, that's, you know, he says, but I'm just doing what comes naturally. No, if, you know, if every one of us just did what we wanted to do, what came naturally, we would be like that man that Jesus cast the demons out. We would be all over the place just doing whatever we, can you imagine what society would be like? Just go down the street and just shoot whoever you want to shoot.

Say, but, you know, that's what I felt like doing. And yet we say, you know, it's okay to be homosexual, dare I say it, because that's the way he wants to be. If that's okay for him, then it's okay for me to be a pedophile.

But we say, no, it's wrong to do the one thing and not, it's, all of it has to do with one issue. We cannot allow our natural inclinations, our carnal desires to rule our lives. It doesn't matter what area it is.

We need to have self and exercise self-control. Discipline in serving the Lord, in prayer, in Bible reading, in attending church, in witnessing, in doing all the things. Now, Leo's telling me where to preach even.

I'll stand aside. We need to exercise discipline in those areas. I don't have to tell you that if you read the Bible only when you felt like it, you'd never do it.

If you only prayed when you felt like it, you'd never pray. If you only went to church when you felt like it, and I can tell you what, if I only had to preach when I felt like it, I would never preach. But we can't do what we feel like.

We have to live our lives in a purposeful way, in a disciplined way. We need to take control. And you know, it's easy to blame the devil.

I don't know if you remember that story, and I don't remember who the comedian was. The devil made me do it. You remember the story? The woman bought a dress, and the devil pulled the gun on me.

He made me go into the store. He made me try it on. He made me buy it.

No, the devil doesn't make you do anything. And neither do your natural inclinations make you do anything. You need to take charge.

You need to take charge of your life, and you need to do it today. Now, we're coming up to New Year, and it's time to make resolutions that we have no intention of keeping. And I trust that maybe this morning we'll make just one small resolution.

And I'm not asking you to change your whole life because I know it's hard. But to take one area of your life that you've been convicted about this morning and say, I'm going to take control of that area of my life. I'm going to do this in a particular way.

I'm going to change the way I live this one area of my life. That's all I'm asking you. I'm not asking you to change your diet, to change your habits, to change everything in one go.

Just take one area and say, Lord, by your grace, I'm going to ask you to help me to take control of this area of my life. And I'm going to live in a disciplined, self-controlled, purposeful way. Father, we acknowledge that the flesh is sometimes very powerful.

And Lord, our spiritual ability is sometimes very weak. But we pray today, Lord, that you would help us to be like Paul who brought everything under control and everything became subject to his one purpose and goal in life. And that is to please you.

Lord, we're ashamed when we look at the athletes and we look at the politicians and we look at the businessmen and we look at the captains of industry, how that they live their lives, absolutely dedicated and disciplined to one goal and one purpose. Yet, Lord, we have the greatest goal and the greatest purpose of all. And yet we so often live so carelessly.

And so, Lord, we pray today that you would help us to change things. Forgive us, Lord, for abdicating our responsibility and for blaming the devil and blaming our birthright or our inheritance and blaming our environment and blaming everyone else. When in fact, you're asking of us to take control of our lives.

Lord, we pray that you would, by your spirit, come and empower us and enable us to do that, that we might glorify you and that we might please you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Lord, we pray that you part with us with your blessing, keep us and protect us.

But above all, teach your word to us. Help us not to forget what we have heard today, but help us to be doers of your word. Bring us together again this evening.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25226.mp3>  
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/anton-bosch/self-control/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**