

SERMON SERIES: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, SUNDAY, AUG 23 2026

“The Fruit of the Spirit is: Self-Control” based on Prov. 16:20-33, Gal. 5:22-26

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Writing reflection on self-control was more difficult than the others for me personally. It was almost as difficult as writing about patience, as I shared with you a couple of weeks ago. And maybe that is what many of you feel as well when it comes to self control.

Perhaps that is because self-control is something we all struggle with, in one way or another. When we hear self control we might think about the amount of food, desserts, or sugar we consume. Or we might think about controlling our expenses on stuff we want but not necessarily we need. Or perhaps we think about controlling emotion, feeling, patience in particular circumstances.

But friends, when Paul speaks about self-control as one of the fruit of the Spirit, he is inviting us to see it differently. Self-control for Paul is not simply about trying harder to control ourselves; it is about allowing the Spirit of God to shape our desires, our choices, and the way we respond to the world around us.

Whether you are a teacher, a farmer, a plumber, or retired, self-control is something we all need. Whether you are young, old, or somewhere in between—like me, who is young in age but somehow already old on the inside—we all need to learn it!

And it doesn't matter whether you have money, power, and authority, or none of the above. Self-control is something that touches every part of our lives. It affects our health, our relationships, our work, and even our finances. In other words, no matter who we are or where we are in life, we could all use a little more self-control.

For most people, self-control can be very difficult in certain circumstances. As King Solomon in the Proverbs through ch. 10-16, as a bigger picture of chunk that we read today, revealed to us that human nature can lead us to arrogance and ignorance. Failure to seek God's will or examine our own motives can lead to disaster.

That's why Solomon offers warnings about self-control in v.32 and some verses after he continue to talk about the importance of wisdom. Here we can see that self-control refers to the ability of human to wisely control thoughts, emotions, words, and actions.

Now, let me ask you, have you ever felt like maybe God skipped giving you this particular fruit? Like self-control just isn't your thing? You know what you should do, but somehow, you still find yourself doing whatever you want. You feel like there are no limits, no boundaries, and nothing

holding you back. You might think, “I can do what I want. I can say what I want. I can be whoever I want.” And before we know it, everything begins to revolve around me, myself, and I.

Sadly, the world we live in today does not always make self-control any easier. Individualism increases every day where people are trained so well to focus on their self and their needs while forgetting that there is more in life that human need to consider before taking any actions or making any decision.

On top of that, there are so many things competing for our attention, our money, and even our loyalty. Modern advertising knows very well how to appeal to our desires. It doesn't just tell us what we need; it teaches us to want more—and then convinces us that we deserve it. We are constantly encouraged to indulge, and sometimes even to overindulge. The message we often heard is: more is better, more is enough, and perhaps more will finally make us happy.

And when we constantly hear that message, it can become easy to lose sight of the boundaries we need. We can end up putting our wants and desires at the centre of our lives, rather than asking what is good, healthy, and faithful.

Now, can you think of a time when you lost your grip on the reins of self-control? Maybe you ate too much, spent too much, talked too much, played too much, bragged too much, procrastinated too much, worked too much, or complained too much. We all have our own version of “too much.” And sometimes, we don't realize we've crossed the line until we're already on the other side of it.

And that is why self-control is such an important fruit of the Spirit. It reminds us that being free does not mean doing whatever we want. Sometimes, true freedom means having the strength to say, “I could, but I don't have to.”

Yes, we can blame some people or things around us, that we thought are the reason we can't control ourself. However, each of us has had to endure times of difficulty and frustration and defeat and realized that after all, we had no one to blame but ourself.

There's a Taylor Swift song that captures this reality of life surprisingly well. She sings, “It's me, I, I'm the problem, it's me.” Generally speaking, we don't like being told that we are the ones creating our own problems. We would much rather point the finger somewhere else. But sometimes, as difficult as it is to admit, we really do find ourselves in trouble because of unwise decisions we have made in the past. Sometimes, the problem isn't what happened to us—it's what we chose to do.

Biblical self-control, friends, means choosing to give up trying to control things on our own, surrendering to God for help, and working alongside the Spirit for real change. And it's difficult for human who have nature to try to survive that usually ends up with focusing on their self and believe that they can control everything.

Now, most of us are driving to get to church this morning, or if you don't, you might used to drive in the past. And I think we could connect self-control as a concept to driving a car.

A car is powerful invention. You can press the accelerator and go faster and faster. But imagine a car with no brakes. At first, the speed might feel exciting. But eventually, that same freedom of speeding can become dangerous.

Here we can see that the brakes in a car don't make the car less useful. They make it possible to use the car safely.

In the same way, self-control isn't something God gives us to take away our freedom or our joy. Self-control is the spiritual "brake" that helps us direct the power God has given us. Sometimes we think freedom means having no brakes. But imagine driving a car with no brakes. You wouldn't call that freedom—you'd call that a problem!

Or another illustration also can be applicable with food. Imagine someone puts a beautiful chocolate cake in front of you. And you love chocolate cake. You start eating one piece. Then another. And then another piece. Then you say, *"Well, I've already ruined my diet, so I might as well finish it. I'll work out or walk longer tomorrow."*

Friends, the problem isn't that eating chocolate cake is bad. The problem is when something good becomes something we cannot say no to and end up losing our control to say it's enough.

That is an important part of self-control. Self-control doesn't mean that we can never enjoy things. It means that we are able to enjoy good things without becoming controlled by them. Self-control is not saying, *"I can never have this."* It is sometimes having the freedom to say, *"I don't need this right now."*

Jesus himself needed to pass through some unpleasant experiences that tested his self-control. For example, in Luke 4, we learnt a couple weeks ago that Jesus being led by the Spirit into the desert. He fasted for forty days and forty nights and afterwards was hungry.

And that was the time when the tempter approached him. Jesus had to have been suffering, but he somehow resists the temptation offered to him in the form of bread saying, *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4)

Here Jesus shows us what self-control in the most inconvenient situation looks like. Hungry, depressed, exhausted, but with the very little strength left, He still obey God and not the other power below Him that seduces Him to turn His face away from God.

Friends, since we are very limited human being with all the human nature within us, everyone has difficulty in self-control in at least one area of their life. Addiction to particular things, food, anger issue, anxiety, fear, the need to control others, gossip, and the lists can go on and on.

Then, with the reality, we might ask, so is it possible to control this lustful flesh? Especially when we know we have a free-will.

Some prophets in the OT, and even the disciples of Jesus himself in the NT, are all the models of lives controlled under the guiding hand of God without relinquishing their free moral agency. Have they ever failed? Yes. We can see stories after stories when their desire, anger, and rational thinking take control and they fall. But, God is always with them, guiding them, nudge them softly, and care for them, even at the time when they didn't feel like it.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to be in control of our life is not easy most of the time. And it is a life-long process. The good news for us is this, the fruits of the Spirit are planted as a seed in every person who believe and have faith in Jesus Christ. It needs time and effort to grow. The fruit of the Spirit as a whole is beautiful picture of what it means to growing more like Jesus. And God wants our lives to reflect that beautiful picture.

It may be a dry summer – but there will be fruit when no one expects it. It may be a hard winter in your life– but there will be fruit when no one expects it. No season, no circumstances can stop the fruit of the Spirit from growing. Only one thing can stop the fruit of the Spirit from growing in our life, is when we quit believing that The Holy Spirit is indwelling within us, in our weakest moment as well as when we think everything under control and give too much credit to ourselves.

Before I end today's message, I just want to tell one illustration that hopefully can help us to reflect on where in the spectrum, our self-control really is right now.

Thousand years ago in Greece, they started a famous race called the torch relay. All the runners received a torch. At the start of the race, they would light their torches and take off running with torches lit. The only way you could win the race was to cross the finish line with your torch lit.

Even if you came in first but your fire went out then you were disqualified. So that means the whole time while running they had to protect fire from wind, rain, or anything that might put it out. Here the participants need to be fast but also to be careful. And usually these two aren't along with each other.

And it is the same principle for us in running the race of life. If we are going to finish it, we have to guard our "fire." We can't let our fire of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, goodness, faithfulness or self-control, go out while we are moving towards our end goal or finish line.

Too many people in our world have lost their patience. They are trying too hard and didn't even realize that they are still running the race but their 'torch' is no longer lit.

So today as we closing our sermon series, I pray may God bless us all with the gift of self-control, not just when we are in church, but every day, in all situations, this day and always. Amen.