

SELF-CONTROL IS INNER STRENGTH

- everyone has some human self-control; divine self-control is produced only in believers by the Holy Spirit
- divine self-control is inner strength (seen from the etymology of the verb *egkrateuomai* “having strength within”)
- is a supernatural ability to exercise power over the desires of the eyes and of the flesh (cf. Gal 5:16–17; 1 Jn 2:16)
 - is also a supernatural willingness to make sacrifices for others and for God
 - is one of the fruits of the Spirit—last in order of importance (Gal 5:22–23)
- is something God wants you to have: all believers are commanded to start adding self-control to their lives (2 Peter 1:5–7)
 - comes from a knowledge of the Bible (2 Peter 1:6)
 - comes from sustained human effort (“by making every effort” in 2 Peter 1:5)
- comes from practice: fasting is practice in self-denial to train yourself to make even greater sacrifices for God
- is not found in the unregenerate (any self-control an unbeliever has or can develop is not divine self-control)
 - is foolishness to the unsaved (cf. 1 Cor 2:14)—why do things that work to your disadvantage?
 - is beautiful and desirable like fruit: people see it and want it for themselves
 - is easy to acquire (easiest virtues to acquire are mentioned first in 2 Peter 1:5–7 but last in Gal 5:22–23)
 - increases as your knowledge of the Bible increases
 - takes time to develop (new believers don’t have much divine self-control)
 - is not acquired all at once, but grows slowly to maturity (2 Peter 1:8)
 - is present in different amounts (some have none, some have a little, some have a lot)
- may exist in one area but not in another (cf. 1 Cor 9:25): you may have self-control in your sex life but not in your prayer life
 - is God’s provision to help you obey the difficult commands of Scripture
- is ability to say No! to your desires in order to obey the hard things (e.g., Matt 5:28, 41, 44; Rom 12:19; Phil 4:4; 1 Thess 5:17)
 - is self-denial to accomplish a higher goal (1 Cor 7:8–9; cf. 7:32–35; 9:24–25)
 - is necessary for victory over sin
 - is one of the qualities that makes you a useful and fruitful Christian (2 Peter 1:8):
the more self-control you have, the more useful and fruitful you will be—who wants to be useless to God?
 - you’ll never endure suffering nor stand firm in times of danger without self-control (2 Peter 1:6)
 - you’ll never be content, give thanks in everything, and rejoice in suffering unless you develop self-control
 - a lack of self-control contributes to spiritual myopia or nearsightedness (2 Peter 1:9)
(to be nearsighted in the ancient world was to be clumsy, inefficient, disabled—of limited usefulness)
- will help keep you from stumbling and hurting yourself spiritually (2 Peter 1:10): a lack of self-control is often a source of pain
 - is one of the qualifications of an elder or overseer (Titus 1:8)
 - is necessary to win an imperishable crown (1 Cor 9:24–25)
- mention in witnessing (Acts 24:25): the lost know they are “indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph 2:3)—the Holy Spirit can use their lack of self-control to convict them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8)

EXAMPLES OF DIVINE SELF-CONTROL

- shown by Jesus in the garden: “Not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42)
- shown by Jesus when, “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats” (1 Peter 2:23)