

Speaking to the soul

Self-control

A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls. - Proverbs 25:28

It's always tragic to see someone who is drunk. They stagger around with no clear sense of direction, their speech is slurred and you worry that they'll fall over and hurt themselves. There are many other less obvious examples of a loss of self-control. Some people lack self-control in their spending or eating and the results can be disastrous. The writer of Proverbs compares the person without self-control to a city with broken-down walls – a city that is open to attack at any moment. It is completely vulnerable, and the citizens are right to live in fear. What city would want to live like that for a single day?

The New Testament identifies self-control as one of the fruits of the Spirit. These fruits naturally grow when the Holy Spirit is in charge of our lives. They are the characteristics of a life that is lived to the full. “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). None of the fruit can develop where there is an absence of self-control. Each of the gifts is intimately related to the others.

Self-control can only develop when God is allowed to be in control of our lives. He is the one who enables us to find the wisdom and strength to live in line with his will. As we grow in our faith, we will see self-control growing and enabling us to be increasingly effective and fruitful for God. We all need to seek this, not least because the alternative is so depressing. To live like a city with broken-down walls is to live a life of complete vulnerability, where you cannot relax for a moment because every day you are living under threat.

QUESTION

In what ways have you learned the importance of self-control?

PRAYER

Lord God, I thank you that your Holy Spirit is at work in my life helping me to become increasingly self-controlled. Amen

