

Sermon Mark S. Aites
THE NEED FOR SELF-CONTROL
(Based on a sermon by the late M.H. Tucker)

TEXT: 1 COR. 9:24-27 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

9:25 *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

9:26 *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

9:27 *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

INTRODUCTION:

1. **vs 25** *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.*
2. *Temperance* was a subject in years gone by that has been misunderstood.
 - 1) "At one time its use was virtually limited to total abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages. Some still think of temperance societies when they hear the word, and they visualize women rallying to close a saloon." (M.H. Tucker)
 - 2) "Other consider it a synonym for moderation; still others are sure it means to maintain a balanced temper." (Ibid.)
3. A more accurate rendering of this term is found in the ASV of 1901: *And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things.*
 - 1) *Temperate* (self-control) -- from 2 Greek words meaning "one who holds himself in; to exercise self-restraint."
 - 2) The late Guy N. Woods: "It denotes self-government, discipline, the ability to control one's own life."
4. Nichols informs us that there are 432 words in the dictionary which begin with the prefix "self."
 - 1) Let's face it, the real problem with self-control is self.
 - 2) "I have never seen a man who has given me as much trouble as myself." (Dwight Moody)
5. Our problem today is to bring our appetites, desires and passions into subjection to the will of God.
6. Paul speaks of *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)*.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE NEED FOR SELF-CONTROL.

- A. An individual without self-control is troublesome to say the least.
 1. **Prov. 25:28** *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*
 - 1) Such a city without walls lies exposed.
 - 2) So it is with one who lacks self-control; they expose themselves to satan and become easy prey.
 - 3) **1 Pet. 5:8** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*
 2. Satan can find real joy with a person who lacks self-control.
- B. It was Hamilton in his works that referred to one's appetites, desires, and passions

as “wild horses.”

1. Sigmund Freud, the famed psychoanalyst, unfortunately said, “These wild horses should not be repressed but expressed.”
 2. It seems rather obvious that our society embraces Freud’s view.
 3. Hardeman Nichols: “God did not design the flesh to rule. To allow it to have dominion is like letting a powerful superjet take off without a pilot at the controls.” (Denton Lectures)
- C. What really is needed is for these “wild horses” to be harnessed.
1. **Col. 3:5** *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence (desire), and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
 - 1) To *mortify* means to put to death; in a fig. sense, “to subdue.”
 - 2) **Rom. 13:14** *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*
 2. Peter tells us that there are things which we need to add to our faith, and in that list comes temperance or self-control (**2 Pet. 1:5-6**).
- D. A person either learns to control himself, or he opens himself up to everything that presents itself. (Tucker)
1. Yrs ago, Frank Mead said: “No horse gets anywhere until he is harnessed, No steam or gas ever drives anything until it is confined. No Niagra is ever turned into light and power until it is tunneled. No life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, and disciplined.” (Ibid.)
 2. We cannot progress as Christians until we learn to harness ourselves.
- E. The need for self-control is great, especially if we intend to enjoy life.
1. **John 10:10** *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*
 2. Bro. Tucker stated: “The discontentment and restlessness of our youth, and the anxiety and emotional disorders of adults, can be attributed to a large degree to the failure to control their own lives.”
 3. “Multitudes find their lives unmanageable. Things outside themselves seem to dominate; they drift along and become subject to whatever happens whether it be good, bad, or indifferent.” (Ibid.)
- F. We will not enjoy the beauties of Heaven unless we first learn to have self-control and self-discipline.
1. **Matt. 7:21** *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
 2. Those who can control their lives, and bring them into subjection to God the Father, are the ones who can one day enjoy the bliss of Heaven.
 3. For example, consider Jesus: **Heb. 5:8-9** *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*
5:9 *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*
- G. Even our text today emphasizes the need for self-control.
1. Paul points out: Every athlete that wants to master a sport must pay the price of training and discipline.
 2. “If we do this for an earthly reward, how much more should we exercise self-

- control over our minds/bodies in order to obtain an incorruptible crown.” (Ibid.)
3. In **1 Cor. 9:27** Paul said that he *buffeted his body*. (NKJV-”discipline”)
 - 1) Paul used a term which means “to strike someone on the face (under the eyes) in such a way that one would get a ‘black eye’.” (Kittel)
 - 2) Nichols: “It is the picture of the Isthmian boxer. When an opponent was knocked down, he was sat upon, and kept in subjection. If he tried to wake up, he would be given another knockout punch. Paul is saying, ‘My spirit controls the flesh and I do not intend to let the flesh control again. Why all this? To avoid damnation.’”
 - H. If we look at ourselves, we can honestly say that we need self-control.
 1. **Prov. 16:32** *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*
 2. This needs to be applied to several areas of life.
 - I. Tempers: **Eph. 4:26** *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*
 1. Paul doesn’t say it is wrong to get angry.
 2. The key is to have enough self-restraint that we don’t sin.
 3. The word *wrath* means rage -- a level of anger that is out of control.
 - J. Young people: need self-control concerning their own bodies.
 1. To realize that sexual activity is reserved for the marriage relationship.
 2. **Heb. 13:4** *Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.* (NKJV)
 3. And too, young people need to exercise restraint when it comes to drugs and alcohol.
 4. **1 Cor. 6:19-20** *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*
6:20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*

II. THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE SELF-CONTROL.

- A. “God has never required anything . . . without providing the means to achieve it.” (Tucker)
- B. When the apostle Paul reasoned with Felix:
Acts 24:25 *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*
 1. As Paul reasoned with temperance or self-control, he wouldn’t have done so unless it was possible for Felix to control them.
 2. Flip Wilson used to joke: “The devil made me do it.”
 3. Society often supports those who claim that they couldn’t help it; instead of condemning it, they find a way to embrace it.
 4. For example: Some places where they hold high school proms, parents rent rooms and supply the birth control for their kids, because as they reason, “they are going to do it anyway.”
 5. God doesn’t reason and think like man does!
Isa. 55:8-9 *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*

55:9 *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

- B. As we examine **2 Pet. 1:5-10** we are to be active, not passive, concerning the things (i.e. “Christian Graces”) that we must add to our faith.
1. Self-control is not just handed over to us by God, but rather self-control is something that we must add to our faith.
 2. For example: “If the tongue is a problem you are not to be passive and just leave it to the Lord.” (Ibid.)
 3. Rather, Paul says: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth... (Eph. 4:29).*
 4. If someone is struggling with their fleshly desires, there are those who would say, “Quit struggling, God will fight the battle.”
 5. However, Scripture says: *Flee also youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22); abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11).*
 6. At the close of Paul’s life: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).*
- C. Self-control is achieved through Christ.
1. **Phil. 4:13** *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*
 2. Paul’s strength for self-control was in Christ.
 3. **Gal. 2:20** *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
- D. Now, how do we harmonize the fact that self-control is achieved by man and Christ?
1. Use an Old Testament illustration: When Gideon fought against the Midianites in **Judg. 6:7**, did he rely upon his strength alone?
 2. The answer is no. His battle cry was: *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon (Judg. 7:18).*
 3. Gideon knew that achievement comes when we work at something with God’s help.
 4. Old Saying: “God helps those who help themselves.”
- E. We also can achieve self-control through prayer.
1. Think of the example of the apostles: **Acts 6:4** *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*
 2. We must never underestimate the power of prayer.
 3. *Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17).*

III. THE DESIRE FOR SELF-CONTROL.

- A. Some people will admit the need for self-control but lack the desire or incentive to want it.
1. **Matt. 16:24** *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*
 2. To the ears, and on the page, this sounds good but the desire or incentive is not there to make it happen.
- B. Granted, denying self is a difficult thing to do.
1. Paul didn’t say it was easy in **1 Cor. 9**, but he does let us know that you can achieve self-control if you want to!

2. Satan is going to make it difficult for you.
3. Despite the difficulty, with the proper motivation, and with the help of Christ, you can bring yourself into subjection.
4. It becomes more difficult as you embrace the world with its sinful desires and lusts; and as you fight self-control with your own will.

CONCLUSION:

1. All of this points to this: if you want to achieve self-control, it has to be a joint effort between you and God.
2. **Col. 3:3** *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*
3. Listen carefully again to what Paul says in **Gal. 2:20** *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
4. Are you struggling with self-control?
5. (Plan of Salvation)