

GALATIANS - SERMON 36

GALATIANS 5:23 – THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - TEMPERANCE - ἐγκράτεια
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INTRODUCTION: Read Galatians 5:19-26

This last of the nine component parts of the *fruit of the Spirit* is temperance or self-control. Self-control is that ability to do what we ought to do rather than what our impulses tell us to do or our temptations entice us to do. It is the conscious management of our thoughts, feelings, and actions so that they are in harmony with God's law. Self-control is necessary because we have strong motivations to do what is wrong. Often we give in to those motivations then, only later to wish that we had not. The conflict between doing what we ought to do and what we want to do is common to all Christians. Paul speaks of this conflict as well.

Romans 7:19

For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

The reason for this conflict in us is due to the remaining sin in us. It is the result of the conflict between the flesh and the new nature God has given to us. Self-control is simply the victory we have when our new nature, aided by the Spirit, through the operation of the means of grace triumphs over the influence of remaining sin in us. We do what is right even while there are still powerful influences in us to do what is wrong.

Self-control is something to be exercised over every aspect of our life. No dimension of our experience is to be allowed to be lived in an uncontrolled fashion. With reference to our minds we are to bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). With reference to our bodies we are to keep them under control and bring them into subjection (1 Corinthians 9:27). With reference to our speech we are to bridle our tongues (James 3), etc. Every area of our life is to be under control.

To fail to exercise self-control is a serious matter. In failing to exercise self-control we bring destruction upon ourselves.

Proverbs 25:28

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.

Spiritual trouble, family trouble, and financial trouble are all the result of the lack of self-control. To have success and peace in this life we must learn how to exercise this virtue, self-control.

How do we exercise and accomplish self-control?

OUTLINE:

- I WE EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL BY DRAWING STRENGTH FROM THE LORD.
- II WE EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL BY ESTABLISHING BIBLICAL MOTIVES IN OUR LIVES.
- III WE EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL BY PURSUING THE MEANS OF GRACE.

- I WE EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL BY DRAWING STRENGTH FROM THE LORD.

The idea behind self-control is that of having power or strength to master oneself so that we do what is right and avoid what is wrong. Where do we get the necessary power and how do we get it? It is obvious that it does not reside natively within us. The Bible makes it clear that such power and such strength reside within God. He is the possessor and source of all power.

Psalm 62:11

God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God.

If we are to have power over ourselves, the very essence of self-control, then we must obtain it from God. The Bible recognizes that we must get this power from God.

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The implication of this passage is that we are weak in ourselves and that there is a compelling necessity to obtain power from outside ourselves, namely from the Lord.

To those who acknowledge their weakness and make application to the Lord for strength there is abundant strength to be had. God resists the proud who will not admit this necessity. God gives grace to those who are humble and admit their need and are willing to pursue the method of God for obtaining that strength.

1 Samuel 15:29

"And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent."

God is called the *Strength of Israel*. It is one of the names given to God. This name declares something about God - His strength.

The passage we will concentrate is from Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

A *in the Lord and in the power of His might* - The command is for us to *be strong*. First note that we are to be strong *in the Lord* and secondly *in the power of His might*. God possesses the power and we derive power from Him by virtue of our union with Him. Union with the Lord is the thought of this verse. Our strength is derived from His strength. If we are cut off from Him then we are cut off from strength. There must be a vital connection between us and the Lord for us to benefit from His strength.

There are two aspects to this union we have with Christ.

1 We have a legal union with Christ, the result of divine sovereign election in eternity past.

Ephesians 1:4

. . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. . .

Our union with Christ was determined before the foundation of the world. It is fixed and unchangeable. It is the basis of all God's dealings with us.

- 2 We have a living union with Christ which is the result of regeneration. In this union our person is joined to His person in a living relationship that results in the flow of grace, virtue, and strength from Him to us. This is what constitutes our personal relationship with Christ. It is the channel through which we are to receive strength. If a person is not a saved person he will not be able to exercise self-control due to the lack of strength received from God.

Furthermore, for the Christian, the stronger his link with Jesus Christ and union with Him, the more there will be the flow of this virtue, grace, and strength from Christ.

- B *be strong* - The strength that we derive from Christ is not derived by one single event. It is not that we do something to obtain this power and, therefore, have no need for more of it. The verb in this verse is a present imperative - *go on being strong in the Lord*. The idea of continuous action or activity is included. We are, in the process of time to continue drawing strength from Christ. It is an on-going process resulting from our on-going union with Christ.

If we are to draw this strength from Christ, how are we to do so?

- C 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Though this passage is not speaking specifically about self-control, it is specifically dealing with an occasion of spiritual warfare in the life of Paul. God had allowed Satan to afflict Paul in his body. As a result, Paul is greatly distressed and finds himself without the means to endure it. Paul goes to God for power since that power is not found in himself. This need of power from the Lord in spiritual warfare is not different from the power we need from the Lord in order to exercise self-control. The same method and dynamic is used.

How did Paul get power from God to himself in order to deal with his distressing situation? From this we hope to learn how we might get power for self-control. The power and the method of getting it are the same though the circumstances differ.

- 1 Notice that Paul took his need to the Lord first: 2 Corinthians 12:8

Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

Paul had a need and he took that need to the Lord in prayer. His prayer acknowledges two things.

First of all it was an acknowledgment of his personal inability to deal with his problem in his own strength. It was an abandonment on his part of self-sufficiency. It was a humbling expression of personal inadequacy.

Second it was also an acknowledgment of God's adequacy and ability to deal with that situation.

For us, when we recognize that we have an area where we experience no self-control, we should then go to God and pray to Him. In our prayer we must acknowledge our inability to exercise self-control in our own strength. We must abandon any thought of self-sufficiency. We must recognize our total personal inadequacy. We must also acknowledge that God is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think. He has the ability to deal with our situation. We must express our faith and confidence in God's power to supply us in our situation.

2 Notice God's answer: 2 Corinthians 12:9

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

God answered Paul's prayer by promising and providing divine grace, divine strength, unmerited favor, and blessing adequate to meet the need at hand. The point of God's reply to Paul is that in the presence and acknowledgment of weakness that He manifests His strength. It was when Paul was weak that God's strength was given.

The use of the word *perfect* means that the strength of God is brought to completion or to a full expression and manifestation in the arena of Paul's weakness.

When Paul finally realizes this truth (verse 9a) he then adopts the spirit of gladness (verse 9b). Realizing that God supplies His strength and grace to those who acknowledge and confess their utter inability and weakness, Paul now sees reason to acknowledge his inability with gladness, not reluctantly, but with gladness.

There is a purpose in this for Paul. The purpose clause is introduced by *that* (verse 9c) - *that the power of Christ may rest upon me*. Access to God's strength is had by acknowledging one's utter dependence upon His strength in lieu of one's own complete lack of strength.

The word *rest* is the idea of a tabernacle. In acknowledging one's own inability and turning to God for strength, God sets up His tent to be with that one. God's power will come down and abide with Paul in that situation.

It is when the people of God become hopeless and helpless in their own power that they have the blessing of God's power.

There are many illustrations of this in the Bible. Israel against the Red Sea with Pharaoh in pursuit is a fine example. God delivered. When Israel comes to Jericho

with its superior defenses (walls), it is God's strength again that delivers them. Gideon must conquer 185,000 Midianites and he does so with only 300 men. When it is obvious that human strength is inadequate God delivers and manifests His strength.

Isaiah 40:28-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, 31 but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

God never runs out of power or resources. In verse 29 it states that God gives His power *to the weak*. *To those who have no might God increases strength*. God's strength is expressed in the expression of man's weakness.

In verse 30 reference is made to *youths*. Those who normally have confidence and strength in themselves will eventually *utterly fall*. By relying on their own power they eventually fail.

In verse 31 there is a contrast presented - *but*. In contrast to the self-reliant who will eventually *utterly fall*, those who look to the Lord alone, acknowledging their inability, shall have the great profit and benefit of God's strength supplied.

Psalms 138:3

In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul.

The strength did not come until the psalmist cried out in distress and in the recognition of utter inability. Often we do not have because we do not ask.

Hebrews 11:34

By faith. . . out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Lack of strength related to self-control is not a calamity to be bewailed, but a sin to be repented of. We do not have to be defeated. We are commanded to *be strong in the Lord* (Ephesians 6:10).

We must, each day, own our inability and lack of strength and cry out to God for strength. He will give it. If you will not believe you will not be established.

II WE EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL BY ESTABLISHING BIBLICAL MOTIVES IN OUR LIVES.

Everything we do we do because we want to do it. There is no exception. The things we do are accomplished because the motive for doing them over other things was more powerful. We have choices, motivation prevails in the selecting of choices. The way to change one's behavior is by changing one's motives.

Temptation to do what is wrong is a very powerful motive. We must not neglect to recognize the power of temptation. However, if we can establish a more powerful motivation in our minds to do what is right, then we will follow it and do the right.

Hebrews 12:2

. . . looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus Christ endured the cross with the help and motivation of *the joy set before Him*. There was much to motivate Jesus Christ to avoid the cross. Nevertheless, a more powerful motivation was turned unto, more powerful than the shame, pain, and humiliation of the cross. It was a *joy set before Him* that overpowered the other motives enabling Christ to endure Calvary. Thereby He brought many sons to glory.

In the same way we are powerfully motivated to give into temptation, unless a stronger motivation is supplied. Those more powerful motivations are set forth in the Scriptures both negatively and positively.

A The negative motives to resist temptation:

- 1 The consideration of the dangers of our sins. What will this sin do to me. It will harden my heart, cut off my fellowship with Christ and lead to apostasy. It could lead, ultimately to my destruction and eternal ruin.
- 2 The consideration of the destruction caused by our sins in this life. Our families may suffer destruction by our sins. The church suffers the destruction of our usefulness by our sins.
- 3 The fear of God's chastisements is a powerful negative motive against temptation. Jonah is an example. Our sins incur pain, agony, and misery. To avoid such suffering is a powerful motivation against temptation.

The consequences of sin and temptation are powerful motivations against it.

B The positive motives to resist temptation:

- 1 The first and the chief motive is love to Christ. The record of what He has done for us as sinners should motivate us to resist temptation.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died. . .

The love of Christ for us puts straps upon us with respect to giving into temptation. Stirring up one's love for Christ is a powerful deterrent to sin.

- 2 The blessings of obedience serve as additional positive motives. If we obey God we have peace, security, freedom, happiness, joy, and delight. These are good things that come to those who obey God. It makes for a great life.
- 3 There is increased communion and fellowship with God when we obey Him and resist temptation.

John 14:21-23

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus

answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

As a believer there is a powerful desire to have communion with God (a mark of regeneration).

Psalm 42:1

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.

More communion and more fellowship with God is a strong incentive against temptation for obeying Christ promises fellowship with Him.

III WE EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL BY PURSUING THE MEANS OF GRACE.

The Bible is a book about self-control from start to finish. If self-control is important to us then the whole Bible is important to us. There are several means of grace by which we exercise self-control, we shall list only three.

A Walk in the Spirit. This is actually the heading of this portion of Galatians chapter 5.

B Mortify sin. A beneficial way to exercise self-control over sin is by killing it - Romans 8:13 [Pastor Doner has a 21 tape series on the mortification of sin.]

C Involvement in the local church.

Conclusion:

Self-control has to do with conquering sin. How do you conquer sin? You draw power from God, exercise biblical motives, and pursue the means of grace. This is the only way. There is no other way. Learning self-control is a life-long journey and we have here the road map.

Hymn # 472