

Personal Discipline

1/21/18

Intro:

While his wife sang in the church choir, Mr. Nelsen took the couple's infant son to sit with him in the worship service. And, as children are so adept at doing, he let out a terrifying scream right in the middle of the pastor's sermon. Mr. Nelsen got up, took the child in the hallway where he was overheard saying, "Okay, John, just take it easy. Don't get excited. It'll be okay. Settle down. Whoa now. Just relax. Relax, John, relax." When the service ended, the woman who overheard Mr. Nelsen's conversation with his infant son, remarked to Mrs. Nelsen, "I certainly admire your husband's patience with your baby John."

"My son's name is Chris. My husband is John," the woman replied.

(Sometimes the self-control we need does come from within!)

Self-control is the capacity to break a chocolate bar into four pieces with your bare hands—and then eat just one of the pieces.

During his term as President of the U.S., Lyndon Johnson was somewhat overweight. One day his wife challenged him with this blunt assertion: "**You can't run the country if you can't run yourself.**" Respecting Mrs. Johnson's wise observation, the President lost 23 pounds. Unknown

They said that World War II military hero George **Patton couldn't or wouldn't control his temper** as a young officer. Patton once ordered a mule shot. Why? It had gotten in the way of his jeep. He forced members of an anti-aircraft unit to stand at attention for being sloppily dressed, despite the fact that they had just beaten off an attack and some of the men were wounded. In one notorious incident, he slapped a hospitalized, shell-shocked soldier, and denounced the man for being a coward.

Patton's commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, **did not believe that Patton lacked self-control, only that he was refusing to practice it.** He ordered Patton to publicly apologize for slapping the soldier, put Patton on probation, and postponed his promotion to general. **Notice this:** after this reprimand by Eisenhower, there were no more reports that Patton committed acts of emotional or physical abuse during the two remaining years of World War II. In other words, **Patton could control himself when motivated to do so.**

Our text is all about self control, learning to control our bodies in a way that is honoring to the Lord and brings personal satisfaction.

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any [1 Cor. 6:12].

1. God will not stop you from doing anything you chose to do.
2. We have the freedom of choice.
3. I once was challenged by a friend to a marsh mellow eating contest. Of course I was very young, but I accepted the challenge and consumed so many marsh mellows my stomach revolted and a mess followed.
4. To this day I cannot eat marsh mellows.
5. Anything that forces me to behave in a particular manner is enslaving.

Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body [1 Cor. 6:13].

1. What we eat is not a matter of spirituality; what goes in comes out and God will destroy both.
2. However; the principle of moderation comes in here, any food taken in excess harmful.
3. There is Christian liberty in what we eat, so don't think that being a vegetarian makes you more spiritual. Our diet can be a factor in our health, but it does not make one spiritual.
4. Paul is showing that eating food is not the same situation as the manner we use our bodies.
5. In contrast, our bodies are not to be used in the wrong manner. Our bodies belong to the Lord.

And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid [1 Cor. 6:14–15].

1. Today marriage is not seen as a major responsibility for couples.
2. There used to be some guilt connected with living together without being married, but that has changed.
3. God ordained marriage, God commands marriage to be the proper action, God honors marriage.

What? know you not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body [1 Cor. 6:16–18].

1. Every other sin is outside the body, but this one impacts yourself.
2. When we lack control in this area there are consequences; look at the growing number of diseases connected with this sin.

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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's [1 Cor. 6:19–20].

1. Here is a remarkable truth which many believers have not considered. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

2. Because our bodies belong to God, we are to guard our bodies from defiling what God has bought and paid for with His blood.

T.S. This naturally leads to a discussion of marriage.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman [1 Cor. 7:1].

1. It is obvious that the Corinthian believers had written a letter to Paul concerning this problem. We do not have the question, but we do have Paul's answer.
2. He has no reluctance in dealing with the subject of marriage, and he writes boldly and very frankly.
3. This is in reference to relationships prior to marriage.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband [1 Cor. 7:1–2].

1. God's design for society is marriage; this is the overriding principle. There are exceptions, some people are called to be single.
2. In order to behave in a manner that is honoring to the Lord when it comes to physical relationships marriage is God's answer.
3. Now Paul lifts marriage up to the heights that God intended it to be.
4. Every man is to have one wife, and every woman is to have her own husband. Paul lifted woman from the place of slavery in the pagan world, the Roman Empire, and made her a companion of man.
5. He restored her to her rightful position. He was in Ephesus when he wrote to the Corinthians, and in Ephesus there was much the same thing in the awful temple of Diana. It was to the Ephesians that Paul wrote, "**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it**" (Eph. 5:25).
6. Now I know somebody is going to say that he also **told wives to obey their husbands**. I would like to know where he said that. He did write, "**Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord**" (Eph. 5:22).
7. If you looked up the word **submit** to see what it means, you probably would be surprised. To submit means **to respond**.
8. Wives are to respond to their own husbands. The wife is to react to the man in her life.
9. Man is the initiator or leader. Women respond to what the man in their life does. This is not a matter of the physical alone; it involves a couple mentally, spiritually, psychologically, and physically. Man is the initiator; woman are the responders.

Paul lifts woman from the slave state to that of a partner of man. Listen to the next verse:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband [1 Cor. 7:3].

1. Benevolence is another way of saying kindness; we are to be kind to each other.
2. She is to respond to him. Men you need to constantly tell your wife you love her.

The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband has not power of his own body, but the wife [1 Cor. 7:4].

1. The basic principle is in play here, we each need to have the attitude that says I want to meet your needs.

2. If both parties are concerned about the other person good things will result.
3. The only motive for marriage is love—how can I serve you.

Now Paul continues his guidelines for conduct in marriage.

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment [1 Cor. 7:5–6].

He says this is not a commandment, but it is a guideline to follow so that Satan will not have an opportunity to tempt either member of the marriage relationship.

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that [1 Cor. 7:7].

1. At this time Paul did not have a wife. He did not remarry. He was not taking a wife along with him on his travels.
2. There are people in the Lord's work who have not married. They have made that kind of sacrifice—some for several years, some for their whole lifetime.

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn [1 Cor. 7:8–9].

1. It is better to marry than to burn with passion.
2. The time that Paul wrote this, things were difficult and it was hard just to survive.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife [1 Cor. 7:10–11].

1. The wife is not to leave her husband, and the husband is not to leave his wife. If one or the other is going to leave, then **they are to remain unmarried.**
2. Now there was a new problem which presented itself in Corinth. After Paul had come and had preached the gospel to them, a husband in a family would accept Christ but the wife would not. In another family it might be that the wife would accept Christ and the husband would not.
3. What were the believers to do under such circumstances?

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

And the woman which has a husband that believes not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy [1 Cor. 7:12–14].

1. If one was married to an unsaved man or to an unsaved woman and there were children in the family, Paul said they should try to see it through. Paul says, "Stay right where you are if you can."
2. Being unequally yoked with an unbeliever, can be frustrating, discouraging, and even costly.
3. But it need not be defiling because one believer can sanctify a home. In this sense sanctify does not refer to salvation; otherwise the spouse would not be spoken of as unbelieving.
4. It refers to being set apart, the basic meaning of sanctify and holy, terms that are from the same Greek root.
5. In God's eyes a home is set apart for Himself when the husband, wife, or, any other family member, is a Christian.
6. Such a home is not Christian in the full sense, but it is better than one that is totally unbelieving.
7. Even if the Christian is ridiculed and persecuted, unbelievers in the family are blessed because of that believer.

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace [1 Cor. 7:15].

1. If the unbeliever walks out of the marriage, that is another story. Then the believer is free.
2. The individual is free to remarry, but only in the Lord (another believer).

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? [1 Cor. 7:16].

1. The possibility exist that if you stay with the unsaved partner your godly life may move them to become a believers as well.
2. While God does the saving yet He uses us to be the instruments to bring people to faith.

Conclusion: Apart from our need for salvation I do not know of any section of Scripture that is more important than the passage we have just looked at. The need for self control and a willingness to sacrifice my own wants in order to meet the needs of my spouse will determine everything about me. If I do not have it right in this area, every part of my life will be affected from my spiritual walk with the Lord to my relationship to my family, my church, my work, my community, my whole world. Pain and heart ache are the price we pay for failure to obey in this area of life.

One startling bit of research conducted by the Christian Business Men's Committee found the following: When the father is an active believer, there is about a seventy-five percent likelihood that the children will also become active believers. But if only the mother is a believer, this likelihood is dramatically reduced to fifteen percent.

Keith Meyering, Discipleship Journal, issue #49, p. 41
