

Temperance

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Study Given by W.D. Frazee—March 22,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” Galatians 5:22-23.

In other words, all these traits are in harmony with law. They are not against law, therefore law is not against them.

We are looking at the fruit of temperance. If you wanted to grow apples, what kind of tree would you plant? If you wanted strawberries, you would put out strawberry plants. Temperance is fruit born on what tree? The fruit of the Spirit. So the tree is the Spirit. If we have the Spirit of God these fruits will be manifest in our lives. Without the Spirit of God, no one can be temperate in all things. Notice how much temperance is to extend:

“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” 1 Corinthians 9:25.

Often when we think of temperance we think of abstinence from whiskey and beer. Certainly it includes that. No one who drinks alcoholic liquors is a man with temperance. But Paul says that every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.

Temperance means absolute abstinence from everything that is hurtful, and moderation in the use of that which is good.

There are two great philosophies that underlie temperance and intemperance. No one can practice real temperance unless he has self-control. In some of the modern translations, the word self-control is used in place of temperance. Notice how Paul puts it:

“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” 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Where was Paul's body? It was under. Then where was Paul? He was on top. He was in control of his appetite and passions. He had the ability to say yes or no.

I was talking to a group of students a few weeks ago and asked them if they would rather have an automobile with a motor and no brakes, or an automobile with breaks and no motor.

They thought awhile, and finally someone said, "Neither."

I think that is a good answer. Don't you?

No matter how much motor power we have, unless there is brake power we don't want to get into the car, do we? And no matter how much desire and ambition there is in human life, unless there is the power of self-control we should not venture forth on any endeavor, for we will only involve ourselves in problems, and eventually in disaster. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."

This matter of self-control, particularly in this world of sin, involves saying no many times in many places on many subjects. When Daniel went down to Babylon at the age of eighteen, having already learned the lesson of self-control, he was ready to meet the test. The first chapter of Daniel tells us that he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, or the wine which the king drank. Daniel was successful, and God honored him.

In Daniel's mind temperance included food as well as drink. He thought it important enough to press the matter, and the Lord blessed him.

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" Daniel 1:8.

The prince of the eunuchs felt it would be unwise to grant Daniel and his companions such a simple diet. But Daniel suggested a little test:

"Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink" Daniel 1:12.

At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. They said, Look at us and see if we are sick or weak. See if we get along all right. We see the result:

"And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat" Daniel 12:15.

They got along all right. It was an interesting dietary experiment performed not on guinea pigs but upon some young students. God blessed their temperance, their self-control.

As I study this matter of temperance, I am impressed with the fact that most of us start too late. Up the side of that mountain there are many steep places. You know that if a rock starts rolling, the further down the mountain you try to stop it, the

more difficult it would be. Yet it might not seem to do any damage until it hits someone at the bottom.

Someone might say, All we have to do is build a wall along the cliffs at the foot of the mountain. Then what happens above will not make any difference.

But the difficulty is that a rock rolling down the hill might either break through that wall or jump over it.

In this country what was called the noble experiment of prohibition was tried a few generations ago. We believe in temperance. We believe in prohibition. We believe in every barrier set up against the liquor traffic. By the commands of God we are committed to use our influence in every effort, whether legislative or otherwise, to hold back that terrible tide of liquor traffic. But having said that, we must recognize that one of the great reasons prohibition failed was that there was little educational work carried on, and what educational work was carried on was largely concerned in warning people against the perils of the last cliff, the last precipice, which jumping over one is hurled into the ocean of drunkenness.

I want to study those barriers up the side of the mountain that God has erected. He has told us through the Spirit of Prophecy, and there is scientific evidence that confirm it, that every indulgence of appetite is a step toward drunkenness. Notice how the Savior suggests this:

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” Luke 21:34.

That is the day of God, the coming of Jesus. Many will be surprised because their minds have become dull. Their consciences are not active. They are overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, and cares of this life.

What is surfeiting? Intemperance in eating. Intemperance in the amount of food. Intemperance in the variety. Intemperance in the richness of food. All this is included in surfeiting.

What is the root of all that?

“Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness” Ecclesiastes 10:17.

Solomon is not talking here about drinking alcohol, although it might be included. He is talking about eating. Some people eat for drunkenness. Others eat for strength. What do you eat for?

One might say, How could a person eat for drunkenness?

They eat in order to get the same effect that drunkenness brings; eating for the same reason that one drinks. What is that? Merely to please the senses; merely to tickle the taste buds. Any individual who indulges in appetite and passion merely for the sake of sensation has already started rolling down that mountain. He may have certain barriers of self-respect, or desire for the respect of others that seem to stop him partway down, but he has already left the highland of self-control.

God did not give us our senses to be our masters. He did not give them to us that they might tell us what to do. No. He did not give us our impulses that they might run our lives. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." I keep my body, and the body is the seat of all those impulses.

Here are some princes that eat for drunkenness. That means they eat because it tastes good. They eat to get that sense of carnal satisfaction. Anyone who does that will tend more and more to richer food, eat more than he needs, and eat more frequently than he needs just to get the sensation.

Concerning those who are blessed, Solomon says they eat in due season. Is there a time to eat? Is there a time not to eat? Eating between meals is a species of intemperance. Overeating is a species of intemperance.

"Often intemperance begins in the home. By the use of rich, unhealthful food the digestive organs are weakened, and a desire is created for food that is still more stimulating. Thus the appetite is educated to crave continually something stronger. The demand for stimulants becomes more frequent and more difficult to resist...One step in the wrong direction prepares the way for another. Many who would not be guilty of placing on their table wine or liquor of any kind will load their table with food which creates such a thirst for drink that to resist the temptation is almost impossible...

"We bid all temperance workers Godspeed; but we invite them to look more deeply into the cause of the evil they war against, and to be sure that they are consistent in reform" *Ministry of Healing*, pages 334-335.

If we are to deal with intemperance properly we must get at the root of it. We found that temperance is born on what tree? The Spirit of God. And intemperance is fruit born on the root of selfishness, which is the opposite of the Spirit of God.

I was impressed recently noticing a contrast between two great characters of history—two lives that demonstrate these two great principles. Nero, the emperor of Rome, died at age thirty-two. He was a terribly intemperate man. Debauched. He had gratified every carnal desire, and had lived his life merely to glorify himself. His feasts were gluttonous orgies. He had gone so far in trying to satisfying his carnal propensities that he took pleasure in the sufferings of human beings. He would take the Christians, dip them in pitch, have them tied up on poles in his gardens, and burn them at night to light his garden while scenes of drunkenness were going on. He

was the judge when Paul was summoned to Rome at his last trial. Paul was falsely accused of setting fire to Rome, which, of course, Paul had nothing to do with. Nero himself had done it. But they were looking for a scapegoat. Paul was selected.

Paul was put in prison, and the time came when he was brought out to face that cruel monster on the throne. Paul is the one who said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." He was temperate because the Spirit of God was operating in his life. He was temperate because he loved God and his fellow men. He had no time to waste himself in indulgence. All his energies were devoted to the service of God and in helping others.

I will read a very sublime description of this scene:

"Paul before Nero, how striking the contrast. The very height of earthly power, authority, and wealth, as well as the lowest depths of crime and iniquity, had been reached by the haughty monarch before whom the man of God answered for his faith. In his power and greatness Nero stood unrivaled, unapproached. There were none to question his authority, none to resist his will. The kings of the earth laid their crowns at his feet. The most powerful armies marched at his command. The ensigns of his navies upon the seas betokened victory. His statue was set up in the halls of justice, and the decrees of senators and the decisions of judges were but the echo of his will. Millions of subjects bowed in obedience to his mandates. The name of Nero made the world tremble. To incur his displeasure was to lose property, liberty, and life. His crown was more to be dreaded than the pestilence. Yet while surrounded by all the outward semblance of earthly pomp and greatness, adored and revered as a god in human form, he possessed the heart of a demon.

"Paul, the aged prisoner, without money, without friends, without counsel, had been brought forth from a dungeon to be tried for his life. He had lived a life of poverty, self-denial, and suffering. With a sensitive nature that thirsted for love and sympathy he had braved misrepresentation, reproach, hatred, and abuse. Shrinking with nervous dread from pain and peril he had fearlessly endured both. He had been like his Master, a homeless wanderer on the earth. He had lived and suffered for the truth's sake, seeking to relieve the burdens of humanity, and to exemplify in his life the life of Christ.

"Paul and Nero, face-to-face. The youthful monarch bearing upon his sin-stamped countenance the shameful record of the passions that reigned within. The aged prisoner's calm and benignant face, telling of a heart at peace with God and man. The result of opposite systems

of training and education stood that day contrasted. The life of unbounded self-indulgence and the life of utter self-sacrifice. Here were the representatives of two religions—Christianity and paganism. The representatives of two theories of life—the simplicity of self-denying endurance, ready to give up life itself, if need be, for the good of others, and the luxury of all absorbing selfishness that counts nothing too valuable to sacrifice for a momentary gratification” *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, page 311.

Ah friends, this matter of temperance is far beyond the question of whether we drink whiskey or not. That is just one manifestation of it. That is just one branch on the great tree of indulgence. Every time we gratify self-indulgence we are taking a step in the road of intemperance. Every time we deny self for the good of others we are taking a step away from intemperance in the road of self-control.

I was impressed with the picture of those two great men. One great as the world views greatness. Great in sin and worldly power. A demon, a beast. But Paul had willingly sacrificed everything in order that others might know the blessing that comes through loving ministry. That is the experience I want. Don't you? That is the experience we can have if we are willing to deny self.

What were the two things Daniel objected to when he got to the king's table?

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” Daniel 1:8.

I suppose all understand why Daniel objected to the wine. It had alcohol in it. But why did he object to the meat? Because in meat there are certain waste products which act in a stimulating way upon the body, and prepare it for further steps in self-indulgence. You remember that when God created man He gave him his bill of fare as recorded in Genesis. That bill of fare included the fruit and nuts that grow on trees, and the seeds and grains that grow on various grasses and plants. The seeds with the fatty portions surrounding them were given to our first parents as their diet. Vegetables were added. Leaves and stalks and stems. But all of these were from the vegetable kingdom.

As the first five chapters of Genesis show, as men lived on that diet they obtained a life of over nine hundred years on the average.

Finally the flood came. It was brought by the wickedness of sinners who were not willing to follow God's plan. One of the things that led them into wickedness was intemperance. They began to slaughter animals and eat them. It made them blood thirsty, and they began to kill one another just for spite because of this terribly disposition that was engendered.

When the flood came and all the green things were destroyed, we find that God gave the children of Noah permission to eat flesh of certain kinds and with certain restrictions. God told them not to eat the blood and the fat.

When God led the children of Israel out into the wilderness He repeated the instruction, making it more explicit. They were forbidden to eat any blood or any fat.

Let us think for a moment. Carbon Dioxide is breathed out every moment. Where is it before it is breathed out? It is in the blood. Where was it before it was in the blood? Out there. Now this uric acid which is excreted in the urine, where was it before it was excreted by the kidneys? In the blood. Where was it before then? Out in the tissues. You can see then that when an animal is killed and the blood is in there, all those waste products are in the blood and the tissues. All those waste products is the thing that people eat and seem to enjoy. Some of those waste products is the thing that gives meat its distinct flavor.

If those who eat meat would eat meat as the Bible permitted it, seeing to it that there was no blood left in it, there would not be very much meat eating. I think that is one of the things that God had in mind when He told them to drain all that blood away.

The kidneys of the man who eats meat has to work double. They have to take care of the man's own waste, and the animal's waste he eats. What a thought. A man's kidneys working for the cow or pig, carrying out the tissue waste. I think that thought will help people to realize why God said, No blood.

Daniel knew this. He got down to Babylon, and as he looked over the table he said to himself, No, I am not going to drink the king's wine, and I am not going to eat the king's meat. He connected the two in his thinking. He knew what the original diet given to Adam was. He knew what the permission given to Noah was. He wanted the best diet. He got it. There in a heathen country, a slave, he got the best diet because he was determined and anxious about it. He looked upon the king's table not as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but as a test of his principles.

“It is unnatural to have a craving for flesh meat. It was not thus in the beginning. The appetite for meat has been made and educated by man. Our Creator has furnished us in vegetables, fruits, and grains all the elements necessary to health and strength. Flesh meats compose no part of the food of Adam and Eve before their fall. If fruits, vegetables, and grains are not sufficient to meet the wants of man, then the Creator made a mistake in providing for Adam” *Temperance*, page 160.

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt He was getting them ready for Canaan. We are getting ready for the heavenly Canaan. Did God make some reforms in their diet program? Did He change what they were used to in Egypt? What kind of program did He give them? It was a simple program. Most of their diet was manna. It came from heaven. Was it a vegetarian program? Yes.

Why did God do that? Did He do it because there was no way to provide flesh for them? Did He prove He could provide flesh for them? Yes. He sent quail. He proved to them that he could give them one just as He could the other. He quit sending quail and gave them manna. What happened by and by? They murmured and complained. Finally God gave them quail again. What happened? They got sick, and many died. For forty years from time-to-time there was murmuring and complaint.

Many of modern Israel has not appreciated the glorious plan of health reform and diet that God has given His people. Some do.

“God did not withhold meat from the Hebrews in the wilderness simply to show His authority, but for their good that they might preserve physical and moral strength. He knew that the use of animal food strengthens the animal passions and enfeebles the intellect. He knew that the gratification of the appetites of the Hebrews for flesh meat would weaken their moral powers, and induce such an irritable disposition that the vast army would become insubordinate; that they would loose the high sense of their moral obligations, and refuse to be controlled by the wise laws of Jehovah” *Ibid*.

Think of it. Satan knew this. He knew that if that great group of two million people would start eating flesh it would make them rebellious and insubordinate.

“Violence and rebellion would exist among them making it impossible for them to be a pure and happy people in the land of Canaan” *Ibid*.

Satan knew that. He was continually suggesting to them, Think what a good time you used to have down in Egypt.

What were they in Egypt? Slaves. Slaves in body to the Egyptians, and slaves to their appetites. But they remembered it with greedy interest. They said,

“We sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger” Exodus 16:3.

Think of it. Are there people like that today? Oh, the world is full of them. There is many a man and woman who will miss heaven rather than give up tobacco. Miss heaven rather than give up whiskey or beer. Miss heaven rather than give up tea and coffee, which creates appetite for tobacco and alcohol. And there is many a person who is wedded to these articles of diet that stimulate the blood, irritate and fever the blood, and through it the body and the mind.

God is calling His people to strict temperance. God is calling His people to a simple diet which will tend to make more gentle and quite and peaceful the disposition.

God knew what was best for the children of Israel. Does He know what is best for us today? Thank God, He does.

I trust that God will bless us with an understanding of these great principles of temperance. Let us remember that it includes not what we eat, but when we eat and how much, and the reason. Intemperance begins when we start down the road of self-pleasing on any subject. Temperance has its root in love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. Love is the great all embracing attribute. Temperance is one of the manifestations of love. If we really love God we will want to please Him. If we really love God we will want to preserve our energies in the best conditions that we may do service for God and humanity.

So selfishness on one hand and love on the other stand revealed as the underlying thing in this matter of intemperance and temperance.

It was at the cross that love and selfishness stood face to face. It was on the cross that God gave the supreme exhibition of love, self-control. And right there on the cross a most wonderful example of strict temperance was given. As they were nailing Jesus to the cross, they offered Him a stupefying potion which was given to criminals as they were nailed to the cross. But Jesus refused it. He would allow nothing to cloud His mind. He wanted His mind to be clear, that He might not be overcome by any of Satan's temptations. That was supreme self-control.

Dear Savior, at Thy cross we would view love and selfishness, self-sacrificing interest in others and self-indulgence. We pray that Thou would help us to so view these two great opposites that we shall be led to embrace one and flee from the other. Teach us the joy of loving self-denial. May we have our hearts blessed with the determination to be like Jesus rather than like Satan, to be like Paul rather than like Nero, to be like Daniel rather than like the indulgent Israelites. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

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