

Lesson 9

Temperance (1)

God's word instructs us to be temperate. It is one of the "Christian graces" that is to be added as we grow in grace and in knowledge.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance. . . (2 Pet. 1:5-6).

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things (1 Cor. 9:25).

That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience (Titus 2:2).

Temperance is self-control. In fact, some translations use that expression in the above passages. A.T. Robertson suggests that it comes from a word describing one "holding himself in" (*Word Pictures of the New Testament*, on-line edition).

Passages like the above tell us that we can (and we must) control ourselves. Furthermore, they tell us that we can make ourselves do what we know we need to do. One who says, "I know I need to. . ." but doesn't, is not temperate. Temperance is a general principle that applies in many areas. Let's see the things that temperance is essential to and what life would be like without it.

Temperance Is Essential to. . .

1. Becoming a Christian (Acts 24:25).
One cannot even obey the gospel unless and



until he denies his own will and yields to the will of God. That involves controlling self. Repentance involves ceasing things that are contrary to God. That involves self-control.

2. Basic happiness (Matt. 5:5). Those who are truly happy are those who place restraints on themselves. Sometimes, young people think that if they can ever get out from under their parents' rule, they will be able to really enjoy life. They think that if they can live without any control, life would be fun. Not so. True happiness comes only when we learn to master ourselves.

3. Unity (Eph. 4:1-3). In this text Paul lays down several attitudes that are essential to have unity. He says, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." These cannot be attained without self-control.

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To maintain unity, we must control our tongues, reactions, impressions, anger and wants.

4. Living pure (Titus 2:12). God's grace teaches us to "deny ungodliness and worldly lust." We must say "No!" to these in order to live pure. That requires self-control. Do you realize that every sin involves a lack of self-control? Thus, temperance is essential to living pure.

5. A happy marriage. Self denial is essential to harmony in the home. I can't think of a marriage problem that doesn't involve a lack of self-denial or self-control. Immorality, nagging, lack of communication, lack of love, being inconsiderate and not understanding one another are all due to a lack of self-control.

Several years ago I saw a book about solving marital problems. I haven't seen a copy of it since. I've wished several times I had bought a copy of it then. Throughout the book various problems in marriage were listed and explained. Then, below that, the answer to the problem was given. As I thumbed through a copy, I noticed that every problem was given the same basic answer: Mark 8:34. That passage deals with self-denial. At the time I

thought the approach was quiet simple, so I didn't buy a copy. However, I have thought about that simple approach many times. The more I think about it the more I realize how much self-denial is a factor in a happy marriage. As I see people with marriage problems, I can quickly identify that either one or both are not denying themselves.

With self-control it will not be a matter of how my mate can please me, but how I can please my mate. It will not involve how my mate can be better, but how I can be a better mate. It will not be a matter of what I want, but what my mate wants.

Self denial is essential to harmony in the home.

Without Temperance . . .

Can you image what life would be like if we threw temperance out the window? We would follow our own desires and pleasures. But, then, so would others, which might cause harm to us. We would be selfish. We would live like beasts. Unhappiness would fill our lives. Our relationships would turn sour. Our spirituality, our health, our finances, our self-esteem, and our jobs would suffer. Satan would take over and reign in our lives (cf. 1 Cor. 7:5).

Questions

1. Define temperance. _____

NOTES

2. List some passages that require temperance. _____

3. How does temperance relate to becoming a Christian? _____

4. How does temperance relate to happiness? _____

5. How does temperance relate to unity? _____

6. How does temperance relate to living a pure life? _____

7. How does temperance relate to a happy marriage? _____

8. Describe a marriage problem that could be solved by a dose of Mark 8:34 (self-denial).

9. What would life be like if men did not practice temperance at all? _____

10. List any practical lessons you have learned in lesson 9. _____

