

# The Advantage of Keeping One's Temper

by J.R. Miller

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*Good temper is a quality that is essential for a happy and fulfilling life, and it is worth striving to attain through self-control and the help of Christ.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 18:24, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Matthew 5:5, Romans 12:18, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:8, James 1:19-20

**Topics:** "Self-Control", "The Importance of Good Temper"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the sinful nature of bad temper, arguing that it is an infirmity that should not be excused or tolerated. He highlights the practical advantages of maintaining good temper, such as improving one's reputation, enhancing personal comfort, and fostering meaningful friendships. Miller asserts that good temper is essential for true manliness, aligning with Christ's example of meekness and self-control. He encourages striving for self-mastery, as it leads to a more fulfilling and noble life. Ultimately, he reminds us that with Christ's help, we can achieve victory over our tempers and embody the qualities of love and patience.

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## Transcript

Some people will scarcely admit that bad temper is sinful. They call it an infirmity, and apologize for it or seek to excuse it on the ground that they cannot help it. This, however, is a too self-indulgent view. Bad temper is sinful. It is an infirmity which even charity is not a wide enough cloak to cover. Or if we do have patience with it in others -- we have no right to condone it in ourselves. It is a miserable fault, and one to which we should never consent to give hospitality. It grieves God. It hurts our friends. It is one of the unseemly things which Paul tells us love does not do; one of the childish things which we ought to put away when we become men.

It may be well to look at bad temper from its practical side. There are advantages in good temper which should commend it to every one who desires to get the best out of life.

For example, there is one's standing among one's fellows. We all like to have others think that we are at least fairly good. One has reached a rather low depth of degeneracy, when he really no longer cares what people think of his character. There are many who have not the fear of God before their eyes, who are dominated in their conduct, at least in external ways, by the fear of men. It certainly is an advantage to have people think one sweet-tempered, and in order to have such a reputation, where one is intimately known -- one must have at least fair measure of control of one's feelings and words. Good temper is a

quality which cannot well be simulated. One cannot always time the outbursts of an ungoverned spirit, so that nobody will know of them. It would seem, therefore, to be worth while to acquire self-mastery, and to discipline one's self into reasonably good temper, if for nothing else, in order that one may be well spoken of among one's fellows and daily associates.

Another advantage of keeping good temper, is in the comfort it gives to one's self. We are always ashamed of ourselves when we have given way to anger, and have spoken or acted in an unseemly fashion. A bit of bad temper in the morning, spoils the whole day for us. We do not feel like looking anyone in the face for hours afterward. It leaves a sort of moral or spiritual malaria in our blood, which casts a miserable hue over all fair and lovely things. We can scarcely even pray after a fit of bad temper, certainly not till we have passed through a season of penitence and have wooed back again, the grieved Spirit of God and the sweet peace which this holy Guest alone can restore.

Certainly the cost of uncontrolled temper is too great to be indulged in, by any one who loves happiness. It brings too much self-reproach. It darkens too many hours. It takes too much out of life. It is well worth while to learn to control one's spirit, if only for the sake of the peace it keeps in one's heart.

Good temper also plays a very important part in friendship. A bad-tempered man cannot make close friends, neither can he keep the friends he has made. Love is very patient. It bears all things. It covers a multitude of sins. But even love cannot grow to its sweetest and best, if it is subjected continually to violent outbursts of anger, and to harshness, and bitterness of speech. Not many people care to expose themselves to such humiliating experiences, for the sake of continuing a friendship. The home loved ones are almost the only ones whose friendship is equal to such sore testing.

"A man who has friends -- must himself be friendly." Proverbs 18:24. If a man is to have friends with whom he can enter into close and familiar relations, and whose friendship he can hold securely through the years -- he must be friendly himself; he must at least refrain from words and acts and moods which would pain the hearts of those whose love he would cherish. We must be prepared to give as we would receive. Only gentleness will draw out gentleness. Only thoughtfulness and honor will win thoughtfulness and honor in return. No man can know much of the sacredness of friendship -- who has not achieved such self-mastery, as will enable him always to be sweet-tempered and kindly in act and speech.

Good temper is an essential quality in all true manliness. No doubt there are those who think that to be a man one must be ready to strike back at every offense, to resent every insult, to resist every wrong, to stand up for one's rights at whatever cost. But is that Christian manliness? Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek." He himself illustrated his own beatitude. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." He never lost his temper. Christlike manhood is not the world's ideal -- but it pleases Heaven. The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, certainly sets an ideal which it is not easy to follow -- but when one has mastered it -- one is living the noblest life possible in this world.

Is it not worth while to strive to attain "whatever things are lovely" in manly spirit and character? It may not be easy to do it. It may be easier to let our natural feelings have sway -- but we should be willing to deny ourselves the indulgence of temper, in order to grow into noble strength of character.

These are suggestions of the advantages of gaining self-control. We have the highest authority for saying that he who rules his own spirit, is greater than he who takes a city. The victory is not an impossible one. With the help of Christ, we may win it, and in winning it, take our place in the ranks of the noble and worthy.

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