

The fruit of the Spirit is...temperance

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“The fruit of the Spirit is...temperance...” (Gal. 5:23)

The preferred rendering of this last fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Temperance has become associated particularly with restraint in the use of intoxicating drinks. Self-control carries the thought of moderation or abstinence in every area of life.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer is enabled to exercise self-control over his thought life, his appetite for food and drink, his speech, his sex life, his temper and every other power that God has given him. He need not be enslaved by any passion or desire.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that an athlete practices self-control in all things (1 Cor. 9:25). He himself was determined that he would not be enslaved by anything (1 Cor. 6:12) and so he pommelled his body and subdued it, lest after preaching to others, he himself should be disqualified (See 1 Cor. 9:27 RSV).

The disciplined Christian avoids overeating. If coffee, tea or Cokes have a grip on him, he kicks the habit. He refuses to be mastered by tobacco in any form. He carefully avoids use of tranquilizers, sleeping pills or other pharmaceuticals, except where medically prescribed. He controls the time given to sleeping. If he is plagued by the problem of lust, he learns to expel impure thoughts, concentrate on a clean thought life, and keep busy with constructive activity. To him every addiction or besetting sin is a Goliath to be conquered.

We often hear Christians complain that they can't break a certain habit. Such defeatism guarantees failure. It means that the Holy Spirit is not able to give the needed victory. The fact is that unconverted people, who do not have the Spirit, are often able to quit smoking or drinking or gambling or swearing. How much more easily should Christians be able to do it through the indwelling Spirit!

Self-control, like the other eight fruits of the Spirit, is supernatural. It enables believers to exercise discipline over themselves in ways that others cannot match.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/the-fruit-of-the-spirit-istemperance/>

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