

Sanctification : 3. a Disciplined Body

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of a disciplined body in the process of sanctification, highlighting the need for mastery over bodily desires and a deep relationship with Christ.

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Scripture: Exodus 32:6, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 1 Corinthians 10:6, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, James 1:26

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a disciplined body as part of the process of entire sanctification. He highlights that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and should be respected accordingly. The speaker encourages believers to ask themselves four questions when it comes to their actions and behaviors: Did Jesus do it? Did Jesus teach it? Did the apostles do it? Did the apostles teach it? The speaker warns against hypocrisy and the danger of preaching powerful messages while failing to discipline one's own body. He references 1 Corinthians 9:27, where Paul urges believers to control their eyes and make them their slaves to avoid disqualification in their ministry. The speaker also mentions the example of the Israelites who left Egypt but were disqualified by God due to their indulgence in lustful desires.

Transcript

So, let's turn back to 1 Thessalonians 5.23, which is the verse from which we've been beginning each of our sessions yesterday. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely. May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete without blame, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful is he who calls you, and he also will bring it to pass. If you remember, we mentioned yesterday that this was God's work primarily, but it required our cooperation. It required our submission to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, whether in our conscience or when he leads us on to some new area of glory where our feet have not trodden so far.

The land of Canaan was not possessed overnight, but the Lord told Joshua, every place where the sole of your foot treads, that I give to you. So, it all depended on how far they allowed their feet to tread and possess the land. They could have gotten into Canaan and occupied Jericho and stayed there for the rest of their lives.

And it seems to me that sometimes Christians have come into a deeper life or victory in some area. They've conquered some Jericho, and they got so excited over that, crossing Jordan and conquering Jericho, that they've settled down there for the rest of their lives. The Lord told Joshua, there remains yet much land to be possessed.

And that's a word in the book of Joshua which we could apply to many, many Christians. There remains yet much land to be possessed. We can apply that to evangelism, but we also need to apply that to our own beings.

There remains much land to be possessed by the Lord. We saw that it's the spirit that should come first in the world. The order is the reverse of what we see here.

Body, soul, and actually no spirit at all. But a truly spiritual Christian has the order right. It's spirit, soul, and body.

We saw the importance of having a pure spirit, of being a worshipper, of making the Holy Spirit Lord in the sense of He's the one who prompts us and leads us in all of life's way to respond to His promptings, to listen to His voice. In my own understanding, a major part of prayer is listening. Many people think of prayer as speaking.

We need to speak. Jesus spoke when He prayed. But for many years, I used to think prayer was speaking, speaking, speaking, speaking.

But over the years, the Lord showed me that prayer was like having a telephone conversation with God. And if you were having either a personal conversation or a telephone conversation with a person who was even ten times more spiritual than you are, I'm sure if you were wise, you'd do a lot more listening than talking. We talk more to people who are less spiritual than us, younger than us.

When we are in the presence of mature, godly people, we listen more. Can you imagine what it is then to be in the presence of God Himself? How is it so many believers in their times of prayer only talk? There must be something wrong with their concept of God. For me, the major part of prayer is listening.

God knows everything about my needs in any case. I don't have to give Him any information. Prayer is an expression of my desire, but it's listening to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that about Mary, this one thing is needful. And Mary has chosen that good part. And what she did was listen.

She wasn't talking. She was listening. And Jesus said that is the one thing needful.

And I wish I could go all over Christendom and tell people there's one thing needful, to listen. It says in Isaiah 50 and verse 4 about Jesus' life, a prophetic reference to Jesus' life, that every morning the Father would waken His ear to listen. And I believe there'd be tremendous changes in our life if we develop this one habit of listening, not just in the morning in a half an hour quiet time or something like that, but an attitude of listening throughout the day to listen to the Spirit.

That is the way we give primacy to the Holy Spirit in our lives. When we don't do that, it's like I said yesterday, then the wife has become the boss in the home. The soul has taken over.

And if we are gifted and educated and intelligent and capable, there's a great danger of our soul becoming primary. The choice that Adam faced in the Garden of Eden, I see in the light of this scripture, is the two trees. Do you want to live by the Spirit or do you want to live by your soul? You want to develop your soul, the knowledge of good and evil, so that that knowledge is resident within yourself, so that you don't need to consult God when you take a decision, because you know so much.

You've got intelligence. You've got right priorities. You've got everything.

You don't need to wait on the Lord to listen. That's how Joshua got fooled by the Gibeonites. But the other tree, the tree of life, symbolized a life of constant dependence, like the branch upon the tree.

I may have produced fruit, received the sap for 50 years, but I still need to depend on the Lord. That is life in the Spirit, where the Spirit is primary and the soul, very essential, like a wife, very essential in the home, but subservient to the Spirit. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit.

And it says that if we walk in the Spirit, then we're free from the law. Then we don't need rules and regulations, because the Spirit prompts us, and we live at a far higher level than the law or rules and regulations. So the Spirit is to control our soul, and our soul consists of our mind, our emotions, and our will.

And I spoke mostly about the mind yesterday, because that is a primary part of our soul, to change our way of thinking. The Holy Spirit is trying to change our way of thinking, so that we see everything as God sees it. We see money as God sees it.

We see people as God sees them. And the more the Holy Spirit is able to change my way of looking at things and people, and the more the Holy Spirit is able to give me that heavenly perspective on earthly events and things, the more effective my service for the Lord is going to be. That's the thing that's going to improve the quality of my ministry and the quality of my service.

I didn't say much about the emotions yesterday, but that's also important, that our emotions are under God's control. The Holy Spirit is to control our emotions. The Spirit of the Prophets, the Bible says, is subject to the Prophets.

I can say a little more about that when we speak about the body today, because we express our emotions through our body, emotions of anger, joy, etc. But it's very important that our emotions are under the control of the Holy Spirit, because very often I find in a lot of groups that emphasize the fullness of the Holy Spirit, it looks as if their emotions have got out of control. People begin to parade their emotions to impress others, and the whole thing looks so ugly.

It's not glorifying to Christ at all. There's a lot of that in Christian circles today. Many Christians are deceived because the soul has taken over, and immature, young Christians who are not secure in God and who want to be accepted in the club also begin to do the same things or submit to that type of psychological manipulation in order to be accepted.

And then that has a domino effect. One after the other, everybody begins to do it. And it's not spiritual at all.

And one hardly finds anyone who has the courage to raise a voice against it because they don't know God either. But once we know the Lord and we are secure in Him, God has given us, it's different. God's given

us Jesus as a model, as an example.

And for me, the salvation has been from all this deception. Salvation from deception has come through asking myself four questions. One, did Jesus do it? And two, did Jesus teach it? Three, did the apostles do it? Four, did the apostles teach it? Very simple.

And I say, if it fails on all these four counts, then I say, you can keep it if you want. I'm not interested. I'm not questioning whether your experience is genuine or not, but I say it's not essential.

So that may be a helpful guide to you. I want to go on to, we spoke about this pure spirit, and yesterday we considered a renewed soul, and today I want to speak about a disciplined body. Entire sanctification, a disciplined body.

The body is God's creation. And, you know, we can go to two extremes. I want to say three things in connection with this.

First of all, that we need to respect our human bodies because the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Just like even the worldly person would respect a place of worship. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

I want to turn you to a passage in 1 Corinthians 6, where verses 12 to 20 speak about, there are a lot of things mentioned here about the human body. And I find in, generally speaking in Christian circles, I've seen two extreme attitudes to the human body. One is an indulgence, and the other is asceticism.

And both are not taught in scripture. One is to indulge every whim and fancy of the body, the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel is sort of an example of that. And the other is where the pendulum swings the other way of an extreme position of asceticism, which the last three or four verses of Colossians 2 says has an appearance of spirituality.

Asceticism has an appearance of spirituality in rigorous treating of the body, but it doesn't make a person spiritual. We're not followers of John the Baptist who wore animal skins and ate locusts and honey. We're followers of Jesus who ate well.

He ate so well that he was accused of being a glutton and a wine-bibber. If you passed a second helping to Jesus and he was hungry, he'd take it. He wouldn't bother about whether you thought that was spiritual or not, because he was not out there to impress you.

But don't forget, this was a person who could fast for 40 days as well. That's the part of it which sometimes people forget. He was not an ascetic, and he was not one who indulged his body.

There was a healthy balance in Jesus. It's wonderful that Jesus had learned from me. He's our example.

He's our dictionary, spiritual dictionary. Just like if I don't know the meaning of an English word, I'd go to an English dictionary. When I don't understand something about the Christian life or walk with God, I go to this dictionary.

The Word made flesh, and I have an answer there for everything. I find a balance there, whether it's the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit or the use of the body or how to preach or how to help others or anything. This dictionary has the answer to everything.

So, 1 Corinthians 6 verse 12 onward speaks about, if you see this in connection with the human body, Paul says, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. Apply this to the body. There are a lot of things which I can say, well, there's nothing wrong in my doing that, perhaps, but is it profitable? A lot of things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

It's this mastery that Paul is speaking about. The mastery of the body. I mean, the body becomes my master or I am its master.

And he speaks about food. He's got two subjects here which are very relevant to the problems that we face in our body. One is food and the other is sex, verse 16 onwards.

First of all, food and sex are both mentioned in verse 13 and he deals with both of them. He says, food is for the stomach and stomach is food, but God's going to do away with both of them. You see, it's that context that he's saying in verse 12, all things are lawful, but I'm not going to be mastered.

I'm not going to let food be my master. There's a respect for our body. We don't go to either extreme, but there is a place for keeping the body in subjection.

And that's the second thing I wanted to speak about, keeping the body in subjection. We respect our body because of it being a temple of the Holy Spirit, as mentioned here in verse 19, and also because it says here in verse 15, an amazing word. I don't know whether you've noticed it.

It's not just that we are members of Christ. It says in verse 15, our bodies are members of Christ. That means this physical body is a member of Jesus Christ.

That's an amazing thing. We thought it was only in our spirit. It's more than that.

Our bodies, don't you know, he says, a lot of Christians don't know that. Don't you know that your bodies are members of Christ? And that's why we've got to treat our body with respect. Point number one.

Secondly, as I said, we've got to make sure that this body does not become our master. I will not be mastered by anything. Verse 12, I will not be mastered by the desire for food.

Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. I will not be mastered by sexual desire outside of the boundaries God has placed for it. It speaks about being joined to a harlot in verse 16, how that makes my body one flesh with a harlot.

The verse that is applied to marriage, verse 16, the two will become one flesh, is applied to an adulterous relationship with a harlot as well. It's a serious thing. And that's why he says adultery and immorality is a sin in a special category by itself.

This verse, verse 18, says, every other sin, flee immorality, because every other sin is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. So, God divides sins into two categories, one, adultery, two, all other sins. Do you know that? One, immorality, two, all other sins.

It's in a special category all by itself. That's what we read in verse 18. It's a very serious thing, because I'm making my body, which is a member of Christ, a member of a harlot.

And that's why I've got to be very careful with my body, because it's a temple of the Holy Spirit. So, continuing on this second point of subduing the body, in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27, we read, Paul says, I

buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. Okay, question.

How could this wonderful apostle Paul, who did so much for the Lord, who was so wholehearted, who planted churches, did miracles, how could he be disqualified, finally, when he reached the end of the race? You know how we hear sometimes someone reaches the end of a race, 10,000 meters or something like that in the Olympics, and the referees say, sorry, disqualified. It looks as if you've come first, but you didn't come first, because somewhere along the way you violated the rules. Is that possible, that we can reach the end of the race and discover there that we're disqualified? How could this mighty apostle Paul be disqualified? Is that inspired scripture? It is, if he did not make his body his slave.

That's the plain meaning of 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27. If I allow my body, bodily passions and lust to rule me and master me, and I don't make my body my slave, I can preach wonderful messages to others. It says here, I can preach to others.

Tremendous sermons that move people and save thousands and impress multitudes, and at the end of it, when I come to the finishing line, God says, disqualified. It's a serious thing, and then he goes on to say, he says, I'll give you an example, think of all these people who left Egypt, chapter 10, verses 1 onwards. How they left Egypt, but God was very unhappy with most of them, because they indulged in their lusts.

They sat down, verse 7, chapter 10, to eat and drink and stood up to play, and the Lord destroyed many of them, verse 9. These things happened to them, verse 11, as an example, and they are written for our instruction. Verse 6 of chapter 10, these things happened as an example for us, that we should not crave evil things as they also crave. Now, all this, we mustn't forget, is written in the context of 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27, of the body not being brought under subjection.

The Living Bible says, I make my body, 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27, I make my body do what it should do, and not what it wants to do. Now, we all know what our body wants to do, but to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is to make the body do what it should do. That's a spiritual man, and that's part of entire sanctification.

And I would say the two most important parts of our body are the eyes and the tongue. Food is also an important thing, I want to come to that. But first of all, let me start with the eyes.

Jesus spoke about the eyes. He warned us that if I sinned with my eyes, it was serious enough to send me to hell. I don't know how many of us believe that.

Matthew chapter 5, that if my eyes make me to sin, Jesus said, pull out your right eye if it makes you to sin, because it's better to lose one eye and enter into life than have both eyes and go to hell. Those are His words, Matthew 5. And what if I pull out my right eye, and then I lust with my left eye? Well, give it the same treatment. Pull out the left eye, lest I have one eye and go to hell.

Better to be blind and go to heaven. The point is, we know that it's not a literal pulling out of the eye, but it is when I'm tempted with my eyes to be radical there and seek God for grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to be as a blind person. What would I do in this situation if I were blind? What would I do when I'm tempted with my eyes? If I were blind, I couldn't sin there.

And that was what the attitude Jesus was saying we should take. This is so important. I've met numerous fine young Christians in different places who have admitted to me how they had conquered.

They had been very careful with their eyes, but once Internet pornography became more available, they sinned and sinned and sinned. It's a terrible snare for young people today. And if you're not radical here, I believe this is one of the methods the devil is using to corrupt young people in our day.

We really have to fight it and battle it and make our eyes our slave, slave of the Holy Spirit. Not allow it to see what it wants to see, but what it should see. And the solution to all of this is to have a passionate love relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's the only way. There's no other way of overcoming sin. It's to love Jesus so supremely in our hearts and our spirits that anything that displeases Him, I don't want.

I mean, there are many reasons why we can not lust with our eyes, not sin. I can avoid sin of the fear of getting caught. Or, oh, somebody may see me.

Or I can avoid sin because I think it may harm me in some way. A person can avoid adultery because he's afraid of AIDS, not because he's afraid of God. There are many reasons we can avoid sin.

Or I say, if I sin, God won't use me. That's a better reason, but still not a good enough reason. The best reason is because I love Jesus Christ and He's not pleased with it.

Therefore, however much my heart is drawn to it, I'm going to avoid it. It's like, you know, it's if we love our wives deeply that we are protected from other women. It's when a man has a very shaky relationship with his own wife that he's tempted much by other women.

And that's why we have to, even if you have a difficult wife, you have to ensure that you love her like Christ loved the church. Christ, our love for our wives is not dependent on what type of person she is. It's only dependent on what type of person I am, what type of person you are.

As Christ loved the church, we've got to do it. And if I love my wife like that, that will be a protection from the snares of other women. We can apply that to our relationship with Christ as well.

If I love Jesus supremely, I really want to avoid anything that hurts Him. So, the area of the eyes is a very, very important area in subduing our body. Apply that to 1 Corinthians 9.27. I control my eyes and make them my slave, lest if I don't do it, I preach wonderful sermons to other people and they don't know what all I'm doing with my eyes in private.

And I continue with my wonderful ministry. And one day, when I reach the end of the line, I'm disqualified. And the people who were blessed by my ministry are surprised.

This wonderful man of God who blessed us so much, how is he disqualified? And God shows them the videotape of my life and they agree that I deserve to be disqualified because I was a hypocrite. I was not faithful with my eyes. It's a very serious thing to keep our bodies disciplined.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit. The passions in our body can be so strong, particularly when we are young, that if we're not crying out to God for help and the power of His Holy Spirit and grace, we cannot conquer, particularly in the day and age in which we live. There are unclean spirits abounding like frogs, it says in Revelation.

Like the frogs in Egypt were everywhere. There was a time when the frogs were only in certain places in Egypt. But when the plague came, they were everywhere.

And pornography was only here and there once upon a time. Now they're everywhere. Frogs are everywhere.

We've got to be really careful. And we can be protected like Israel was protected. There were no frogs where the Israelites lived.

And there need not be any frogs where we live in our sphere if we seek God for grace. God's grace is sufficient to help us overcome the tremendous temptations that face us in the area of our eyes. So there's a lot more to say on that, but I'll leave it at that.

The other is our tongue. The tongue is another part of the body which we really have to make our slave. When we think of a disciplined body, disciplined eyes and a disciplined tongue.

Here is another verse which a lot of Christians have never taken very seriously. James chapter 1 and verse 26. If anyone thinks that he's religious or we would say spiritual and he's not able to bridle his own tongue, he's deceiving his own heart.

And his religion is worthless. In other words, if I were to paraphrase that, if I cannot control my tongue in what I speak, all of my Christianity is worth zero. That's a very strong word.

James is a very strong person. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he says, all your Christianity is worth zero if you cannot control your tongue. A lot of preachers don't speak about that because they cannot control their own tongues at home.

However, wonderfully, I may preach in the pulpit. If I cannot control my tongue in the way I speak to my wife at home, if there's not graciousness in my speech, my Christianity is worth zero even if I'm considered the world's greatest preacher. It's a deception.

And everybody may think the world of me till I reach the finishing line and the referee disqualifies me. And then I discover the truth. But I don't have to wait till then.

I've got the Bible to tell me right now. I often think of that passage where Jesus said about the rich man who went to hell and he told Abraham, please send Lazarus to tell my brothers, Luke 16, the last few verses there, tell my brothers to repent. He knew white people go to hell because they don't repent, not because they don't believe, but because they don't repent.

And he knew that repentance was necessary. And he said, tell them to repent, lest they come here. And you know what Abraham said? There's no need.

They've got the Bible. No need for anybody to go and tell them anything. They've got the Bible.

They've got Moses and the prophets. So there's no need for an angel from heaven to come to us and say, listen, if you keep losing your temper, you will be disqualified. Your Christianity is worth zero.

No need for an angel to tell us that. You've got the Bible. It's written in James 1.26, which we profess to claim to be the inspired word of God.

It is. We're deceiving ourselves. I find in this matter of losing our temper, an uncontrolled tongue, most Christians I have met excuse it in some way or the other.

And that's the reason they never get victory over it. They call it a weakness. They take it so lightly.

It's like someone saying, oh, well, I got a little AIDS. What to do? It's one of my weaknesses. And then a week later, yeah, I sort of went and fell into adultery again and got a little more infected.

What to do? It's one of my weaknesses. My dad had it. My grandfather had it.

It's part of our temperament. We never say that about AIDS. Why do we say that about anger? Why do we excuse it? There's a verse in Romans which speaks about seeing the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

I believe we need to see that. The exceeding sinfulness of sin. Christendom in general has seen Jesus as their substitute on the cross, but has not seen Jesus as their example and forerunner to follow.

And this is where the failure has been. And that's why we have made much of him as our substitute as necessary. There's no way of salvation other than he being our substitute on the cross.

That takes care of our forgiveness of our sins. It takes care of our past, but it doesn't take care of our future. We need to see Jesus as our substitute to deal with our past, but we need to see Jesus as our forerunner and example if we want to deal with the future.

And this nature we have inherited from Adam. And Christendom has not emphasized that sufficiently. And when you present that to most Christians and you say, well, Jesus didn't lose his temper like that.

Their immediate response is, but he was the Son of God. And that's why I believe one of the greatest needs in Christendom today is to understand the humanity of Jesus Christ. And boy, you begin to preach on that and the devil will attack you left, right, and center till you either give up or you tell him to his face, I couldn't care less what you're going to do.

I'm going to proclaim what Christians need to hear. Have you understood the humanity of Christ? Have you understood that he emptied himself, not of deity. That's impossible for God to seize being God.

He was God on earth. That's why people worshiped him and he accepted it. But he emptied himself of the powers of deity.

That's why he had to come near a fig tree to see whether there was fruit in it. That's why he didn't know the date of his own second coming. The powers and resources of deity, he emptied himself of so that he could be exactly like us.

He had to be made in all things like his brothers. And then when we look at him and say, Lord, if you could live on earth without with a controlled tongue, without losing your temper, it must be possible for me. It brings faith.

That's why the Bible says great is the secret of godliness, the mystery of godliness. What is it? Christ came in our flesh, was tempted like us in all points and yet did not sin. For myself, this has been not only the challenge that has helped me to a more godly life, but it's also been the secret that that is possible for me.

It's possible for me to control my eyes. Jesus lived on earth with a body like mine, tempted like me and did not sin with his eyes, did not sin with his tongue. And if I keep him as my example and say, Lord, that is the standard to which I'm going to strive, I'm going to press on to perfection.

And I'm not going to allow myself to sink to the level of Christendom around me. You'll find that the quality of your ministry improves amazingly. The rivers of living water that flow through us will not be polluted like they're being right now.

The control of our tongue, it's so important, particularly because the tongue is the most important member that God is using in this day and age. And that's why on the day of Pentecost, it's not only that they spoke in other tongues, but it says there were fiery tongues, tongues of fire on top of each of those 120 heads over there. There were 120 tongues of fire, not legs of fire or arms of fire, but tongues of fire indicating that this is the main instrument in the body, the main part of the body that I'm going to use in this new covenant.

And that's why we've got to be very careful that our tongue is under the control of the Holy Spirit. That's what it means to be a tongue on fire. Because James 3 speaks about our tongues being set on fire with the fire of hell.

It's another type of fire. And that's the fire which produces anger and bitterness and curse words and all types of things. And we have seen that and experienced some of that in our unconverted days.

And even after we converted, that fire of hell has now got to be replaced with the fire of the Holy Spirit. We don't just cast out a demon and keep the heart empty for eight more demons to come in. No, we cast out the fire of hell and fill our hearts now with the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit has got total control of our tongue. I believe this is the deception that there is in a lot of charismatic circles concerning the control of the tongue, the Holy Spirit. Now, I speak in tongues myself, so I'm not against that gift.

But it's a great tragedy when people can praise the Lord Sunday morning in other tongues and then go home and shout at their wife in their mother tongue Sunday afternoon. There's something wrong there. I mean, does the Holy Spirit only control other tongues but not mother tongue? Well, that's not the Holy Spirit then.

That could be another spirit. How do we know that's the Holy Spirit? I myself have heard other tongues spoken by demons. When the demon is cast out, person stops speaking in other tongues.

So demons can duplicate that. But demons won't help you to control your mother tongue. So to me, the test of the Holy Spirit is speaking in my mother tongue more than speaking in other tongues.

Under the control of the Holy Spirit. A tongue under the control of the Holy Spirit. A tongue on fire.

And that's a pretty good test because that accords with James 1.26. If a man cannot control his tongue, his entire Christianity, no matter how much he preaches, no matter how much he knows, no matter how much he thinks, he's better than the liberals. His Christianity is worth zero. We think our Christianity is better than the Christianity of the liberals because their doctrines are wrong.

But if he cannot control his tongue and I cannot control my tongue, as far as God is concerned, we're both in the same category, even though our doctrines are different. That's very serious. And Jesus said we're to be his witnesses.

So whether we preach in the pulpit or not, we're all to be his witnesses. We talk to people in our homes and when we meet, we seek to be witnesses for Christ wherever we are. And we all know that the most important part of our body in witnessing is our tongue.

And can God use my tongue in private conversation or in a pulpit to proclaim his word if part of the time that tongue is loaned out to the devil? For him to use? Not possible. We need to take this much more seriously than we have done so far. Jeremiah 15 and verse 19 is a word that the Lord spoke to my heart many years ago concerning becoming God's spokesman.

I had a tremendous desire as a young Christian not just to be a preacher. I'd heard many preachers. But among the multitudes of preachers I heard, very few were God's spokesmen.

Very few. One in a hundred thousand preachers would be God's spokesmen. And I had a great longing as a young Christian not just to be a preacher but to be God's spokesman.

I hope you have that longing too. It's not a carnal longing. It's a truly spiritual longing.

Even if you're not a preacher. To be God's spokesman when you sit at home, a mother sitting at home talking to some visitor who has come to your home. To be God's spokesman.

I'm not talking just about the pulpit. To be God's spokesman. And Jeremiah 15, 19 says, the Lord says, the middle of that verse, if you extract the precious, let me read the whole verse, if you return then I will restore you and you will stand before me.

See, that's important. I stand before God. To be God's spokesman I have to develop the habit of standing before Him in everything.

I'm not standing before people. I've tried to consciously practice that when I preach to people. Imagine that Jesus is sitting there in that front seat.

You know how when you have somebody you really want to impress sitting in a meeting, you often look at him. See, what does he think about it? Jesus is there. I want to stand before Him.

What's he thinking about what I'm saying? And then he says, if you extract the precious from the worthless, let me add these words, in your conversation. If you extract the precious from the worthless in your conversation, you will become my spokesman. So, how do I become God's spokesman? By getting rid of all the worthless in my conversation and keeping the precious.

In other words, to be extremely careful about my speech in private. To be careful that I don't pass unnecessary opinions. I've done a lot of that in my younger days.

I've gone the foolish way that all most young people go, of zeal without wisdom. But as time has gone on, I've learned to be more careful in the use of my tongue because I want to be God's spokesman. It doesn't happen overnight, but if you work at it, it can get better and better and better.

When we say, get rid of the worthless, when I'm a young Christian, I don't understand everything that's worthless. As I grow in maturity, I discover, oh, even that I now see is worthless. You know how we grow, just like as children, once upon a time when we were children, we thought toys were very important as we grew, we got rid of childish things.

So, as we grow in maturity, we discover a lot of things which we once considered precious are worthless now. So, we should be growing. Speech becoming more and more pure because God needs spokesmen in this day and age who can represent him.

Those who have made their tongue their slaves, not become slaves to their tongues. So, I want to say, my brothers and sisters, I don't want anyone to feel condemned, but don't ever take losing your temper lightly. It's a very serious sin.

Why have I mentioned anger and lusting with the eyes? There's a reason. I don't know whether you've noticed it. I want you to turn to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5, and these words of Jesus, verse 20.

I say to you, Matthew 5, 20, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. He's talking about disqualification. Remember the word disqualified from 1 Corinthians 9? You shall be disqualified to enter the kingdom of heaven if your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

And having said that, he explains what he means in the following verses, and he speaks about two things, anger and lusting with the eyes. That's why I've spoken about those two points. First of all, anger in verse 22, then lusting with the eyes in verse 28.

There's a lot more. He speaks about being truthful in verse 37, and so on. It's another important aspect of the use of our tongue, being always truthful.

Our yes is yes, and our no is no. I want to move on to a third point, and that's food. Eve was tempted through food and fell.

Let's not forget that sin came to the world through the temptation of our physical appetite, food. And the first temptation that came to Jesus in the wilderness was also related to food. Turn these stones into bread.

And Jesus replied, man shall not live by bread alone, by food, but by listening to every word that proceeds from God's mouth. There again, what I spoke about listening. That's how we are to live.

So, we saw also in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, how food is for the stomach, the stomach is for food, but God's going to destroy both of them. And if a man doesn't have control over his appetite for eating, he can be disqualified, doesn't matter how much he preaches. And that's one reason why Jesus spoke about fasting.

In Matthew chapter 6, there are three things that Jesus said we must do in secret, giving, praying, fasting. Giving and praying, all Christians will accept and talk about, write books about, emphasize, particularly giving. But fasting is not so much emphasized.

Why is this among the three things that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 6 verses 1 to 18? Why is that third one left out? Is it any less important? Jesus did not give commands saying, thou shalt give, thou shalt pray, thou shalt fast. No, he didn't come with the spirit of the old covenant, thou shalt, thou shalt not like the commandments. He came with a completely different spirit.

He didn't even say, thou shalt not lust with your eyes. Have you noticed that? He spoke in a different way. He says, if any man lusts with his eyes, he is committing adultery.

In the same way, he said, but when you give, he said, give secretly, when you pray, do it secretly, and when you fast, do it secretly. I find that a true disciple of Jesus must have a place for these three things in his life, secret giving, secret praying, and secret fasting. All of them fulfill a function and says in relation to all three, it says, notice this, secret giving, verse 4 of Matthew 6, your father who sees in secret will repay you.

Secret praying, your father, verse 6, who sees you praying in secret will repay you. Secret fasting, verse 18, your father who sees you fasting in secret will repay you. He doesn't repay those who haven't done those things in secret, whether it's giving, praying, or fasting.

How can we expect God to repay us if we haven't done it? Have we missed something in our Christian life by overindulgence in food, by not allowing the Holy Spirit to control our appetites? Is it enough to keep a pure spirit and not a disciplined body? As I said the other day, truth is truth when it's held in balance in relation to everything else. Food is a very great craving in our body, hunger, and God provides us food. In fact, Jesus taught us to pray, give us this day our daily bread.

So, it's perfectly right to pray for food. But have you noticed in that prayer that we've got to see everything in context. What is the request immediately before that? Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, and then thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread.

Paraphrasing it, I would say it's like this, Father, I want your will to be done on earth in my body exactly like the angels do it in heaven. And in order to have strength in this body to do your will on earth and finish your task on earth, please give me food every day. So, the two are connected.

That I ask God for food, not to indulge my lusts, but to have strength to do God's will on earth. And that's why I need to be wise and disciplined in my eating habits. If I were to ask you, what was the sin of Sodom? Every Christian would, well, most Christians anyway, would say, we know what that is.

Sexual sin. Okay, let's turn to Ezekiel 16, verse 49. Ezekiel 16, verse 49.

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters had arrogance, plenty of food, careless ease, and they did not help the poor and the needy. Their sexual sin came out of abundance of food and careless, lazy lifestyles.

There's a close connection between overeating and inability to control our sexual passions. Fasting in one area gives us greater control in the other. We see that from the example of Sodom.

Yeah, let me move on to a third point, and that is health for the body. I believe a lot of Christians are sick, who should not be sick. Now, there are sicknesses for which, you know, which come because we live in a sin-cursed earth.

Thorns poke our feet and there's flu in the air, which we can pick up. And I'm not talking about all those things. I'm talking about sicknesses that are the direct result of sin.

Proverbs chapter 4, verse 20 to 27 reads like this. Proverbs 4, verse 20. My son, give attention to my words, incline your heart to my sayings, your ear to my sayings.

Don't let my words depart from your sight. For they, verse 22, are life to those who find them and health to their whole body. God's will for us is not sickness.

It's health, basically. Now, Christendom, generally speaking, has a tendency to go to two extremes. And we see both these extremes in this matter of health and healing.

There are some who say, if you're sick, it's because you don't have faith. To me, that's not true. I wouldn't say that.

And there are others who swung pendulumitis. You know, this is a very serious sickness among Christians, pendulumitis. Swing to the other extreme and you say, when you're sick, the only person who can help you is a doctor.

Of course, we nominally pray because that's the spiritual thing to do. We pray, but of course, we don't believe that Jesus is going to do anything unless we go to the doctor. See, this is pendulumitis.

If you were to search your heart, of course, we all pray when we are sick. I want to ask you to be honest with yourself and ask how many of you really believe that the Lord will answer that prayer? Does God have some interest in our body? I want to show you two verses. John chapter 9, to prove that all sickness is not due to sin.

John chapter 9, verse 2. Disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus' answer, neither this man nor his parents. There are a lot of sicknesses which have nothing to do with sin. It's because we live in a sin-cursed earth.

There's a curse on, we perspire, we die. It's because we are living in a world under the curse and sickness is part of that. Some of it can't be escaped and we trust God to be merciful, to help us.

But then, there's another type of sickness. John chapter 5, where this man was in the pool of Bethesda for 38 years and he was not healed. And Jesus came to him and said, do you want to get well? And healed him.

And then, it says in later John 5, 14, Jesus found him in the temple and said, listen to these words, you become well. Don't sin again, lest something worse happen to you. So, that man was sick for 38 years because of sin.

So, there are sicknesses which are in the John 9 category, not due to anybody's sin. And there are sicknesses which are in the John 5 category, which are due to sin. There are sicknesses among believers due to bitterness, jealousy, hatred, anxiety, unnecessary stress, tension.

Things which can easily be resolved by confessing and following the commands of scripture to love others. And where we can be healed from ulcers and migraines and arthritis and numerous things. If you read that book, None of These Diseases, by Dr. MacMillan, an excellent book, where he says so many cases.

He lists there in that book of people who could not be healed with injections and tablets and pills and all types of things, who were healed. And he says that as a doctor, not as a preacher. By teaching them to

follow the laws of scripture.

God wants us to be healthy, to serve him. So, let's give our bodies to God so that he can use them for his glory. We're not commanded to hate ourselves, we're commanded to hate our self-life, which we received from Adam.

Distinguish between these two. When my child is sick, I don't hate my child, I hate the sickness. I'm not to hate myself.

There's no verse in scripture that teaches me to hate myself. There are people who think that spirituality is to hate myself. No.

You get sick if you hate yourself. You've got to hate your self-life. This terrible sickness we got from Adam.

And God will give us health to do his will. Let's take wise care of our bodies so that our lives are not shortened by overeating, by laziness, or by not following God's laws. Psalm 119, 73.

The Living Bible reads like this, Lord, you made my body. Give me wisdom to take care of it. A good prayer to pray.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you created our spirit, soul, and body. Help us to present these back to you in gratitude so that you can use these for your glory.

We pray in Jesus' name.

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