

(Om Orientation) the Pull of the Flesh - Part 1

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon highlights the critical role of discipline in overcoming the flesh and living a victorious Christian life.

Duration: 21:48

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:21, 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Topics: "Orientation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of discipline in the lives of young men and women, particularly those who are called to be missionaries. He highlights the lack of discipline in society and how it can hinder missionaries on the field. The speaker also emphasizes the need to obey God's commandments and walk in the Spirit, even when it is difficult or goes against personal desires. He shares a personal example of sacrificing time with his family for the sake of his mission work. The sermon concludes with a reminder that leaders have a responsibility to help others develop discipline in their lives to avoid spiritual harm.

Transcript

On this occasion, George Verwer took his reading from 1 Corinthians chapter 9, commencing at verse 19. 1 Corinthians chapter 9, commencing at verse 19. Here now is George Verwer.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.

To them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them which are, or them that are without law. To the weak, because I, as weak, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, because I, as weak, that I might gain them that are without law.

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Just from what an undisciplined society most of us have been reared in. And we get into a situation where discipline is required and we find ourselves against a tremendous mountain of impossibilities. The number of missionaries that are cracking up in their first term on the field is staggering.

Just staggering. And it's so often because they have never learned to bring their body into subjection. Verse 27, Paul speaking, but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.

And more and more God has been impressing upon me that if I fail, and those of us who are carrying responsibilities in this work fail to do everything possible to bring you into a disciplined life, we are helping you commit spiritual suicide. Sometimes we leaders, we don't like to be too harsh, we don't like to enforce the rules, and we don't like to nag on people to try to maintain the little bit of discipline we do have, and believe me, it really isn't much. We don't want to get a reputation of being hard, we have a great emphasis on love and meekness and kindness and gentleness, and we push books like Andrew Murray's Humility and the Calvary Road and all these things, and so we at times of course can't quite see where any kind of discipline or enforcement can be applied.

If you think we have any kind of discipline, you need to study the Salvation Army. I might remind you that the General William Booth cut his own daughter off, cut his own daughter off completely because she disobeyed one command. He cut her off from the Salvation Army, the famous Marechal of France, and cut her off as heir and as his own daughter and practically never spoke to her again the rest of his life, even though she went on to lead more souls to Christ in her later years than he did.

And it was basically because lack of discipline. He told his daughter when she left Britain, he said first I'm your general and second I'm your father. And that's the kind of discipline that many groups have had in years gone by, and of course when you see how many tens and hundreds of thousands of souls were swept into the kingdom by the Salvation Army, you perhaps might hesitate to criticize General Booth for what seems to be rather extreme measure.

Well, we don't have anything near that. We're more lenient than most people would ever imagine. But I have been coming under deep conviction that whether I lose my best friends, I'm going to exhort, I'm going to cry, I'm going to preach, I'm going to do everything I can to get young people to see the need to bring their body into subjection at any cost.

Because it's so clear here that if we don't get this discipline, if we don't learn to bring our bodies into subjection, we're going to be castaways. If the Apostle Paul is going to end up a castaway, well, I don't know what hope that gives for some of us if we don't bring our bodies into subjection. You see, basically

the Spirit of God works through our mind.

It works through our minds and our will. The Bible says we have the mind of Christ. And so as we pray, as we think, as we meditate, God gives us the solution in our mind.

Now, that's usually quite easy, isn't it? The big job then is to get what you know is right in your mind to change the whole course of your body. And many of us have, of course, discovered that our mind goes one way, pulling us toward that which is right, and our body seems to pull us the other way. If you look in Galatians, just very quickly you have a very vivid description of this.

The book of Galatians, chapter 5, verse 16, this I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to another, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. You should never be amazed by the pulls of the flesh. Don't be shocked, discouraged, disappointed, and depressed when the most vile, unbelievable, out-of-this-world tugs and pulls come upon your flesh.

I have never met a man yet who was freed from temptation, which, of course, is the pull upon the flesh. God promises us that if we walk in the Spirit, we'll not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Walking in the Spirit is an act of discipline.

Walking in the Spirit is saying yes to the Spirit. Some people have the idea that if they go through a certain amount of spiritual gymnastics, whether it's Bible reading, memorization, prayers, nights of prayer, spiritual crisis, that they go through something, and you've got a hundred different people telling you what it is, that somehow you'll get the victory. But look, no matter what crisis you have, no matter how many verses you memorize, no matter how much you pray, no matter what kind of spiritual gymnastics you go through, you will never liquidate the need to make a decision.

God is never going to take from you the decision to do right or to do wrong, to walk in the Spirit or walk in the flesh. Now, through the study of the Word of God, through drawing nigh unto Christ, we sharpen up our weapons, we learn to wear our armor, so when the decision hour comes, we have the power and the ability and the grace to say yes, but we still will not be forced to say yes. God has given us the privilege, some might not think it's a privilege, but God has given us the privilege of constantly choosing, constantly choosing who you will serve.

Every king in the Old Testament had the choice. No matter what they went through, some of them went through revival, some of them had great fathers, some of their fathers were very righteous, but then it says, and he did what was not right in the sight of God and went after the sins of Jeroboam. And over and over again, we see how these men chose, we see how Solomon chose, we see how David chose.

All through the Bible, it is clearly seen that we have the freedom to choose, and this is what life consists of, doesn't it? Constantly choosing, constantly choosing. Yesterday, I walked past a newsstand in the morning, and some blanket magazines glared me in the face, that which before I knew Jesus Christ, and even sometimes after, used to just practically knock me out, spiritually. I had to choose.

Even though I had time in the world, even though I was living top spiritually, I'd been with different ones in prayer, John even the night before, I still had to choose, and I can tell you, even though I've been converted ten years, and God has given victory for ten years, I still find the choice not so easy at times.

And Paul obviously did not find the choice to not serve the flesh very easy, when he said, I bring my body into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. And my word this morning, as a young person, you must develop a disciplined life, no matter what the cost.

Some people think that a disciplined life brings about the loss of their liberty. No. Disciplined life gives you liberty.

It gives you the freedom to do what you know you should do, and not just what your body craves to do. Discipline is the road to freedom. Bringing your body into subjection is really the way to bring it into liberty.

Because as long as you don't know discipline, as long as you live by instinct, and the majority of people in the world live by instinct, Freud in all of his psychoanalysis proved basically He does not live by logic. He does not live by analyzing a situation and doing that which is sensible and right. He lived by instinct, by the drives of the flesh.

And Freud gave man up as pretty hopeless. But praise be to God, dear Mr. Freud didn't realize the power of the new birth. That the new birth can replace instinct drive with spirit guidance.

So that we as believers are not led by instincts. We're hungry, so we've got to have food, no matter what. Whether it breaks the rule, whether it hurts somebody, whether it offends somebody, this doesn't matter.

We've got to eat, so we eat. We've got to have sex. And so no matter what, we try to repress it, we try to push it back, but we don't really get the victory, and so sooner or later we find ourselves in the mix-up that's probably knocking out 80 to 90 to 95 percent of all young people in the warfare sooner or later.

And you'll never get this victory over sex. There's no sense pushing it under the table. There's no sense hiding it, like we did in the days of Queen Victoria.

This isn't going to help. We've got to face the reality that the sex drive today, and the fact that man is not controlling it, is literally driving us into the deepest ditch, the same ditch that Greece and Rome saw so many years ago. But I want to tell you there is victory over this instinct, this drive, which seems to be so forceful.

Billy Graham, as some of you have heard on the tape, says, don't be so surprised when it's such a strong desire. It's our creative power. God created.

In the beginning God created man, and he created man in his own image, and that meant he gave man the power to recreate. And so this tremendous power that was released from God when he created the universes, when he created the stars, when he created man, the same power is within us. It's a tremendous force.

It's our creative power. Every time we see a little child, we see the fantastic result of God's creative power to us. And so we shouldn't be surprised, but we should understand the words of Paul.

I think there are many people that believe that when Paul wrote these passages, he had very clearly in mind this tremendous battle that he was not free from. I keep under my body and bring it into subjection. I was never very disciplined in this.

I can tell you stories before I was converted, it wouldn't be very pleasant, so I won't do it. But I knew nothing about this. Eating, sleeping, it's just between eating, sleeping, and buying everything I ever wanted, it was like a soliloquy.

And when I started to see these things in the Bible about addiction, when I tried to control my Coca-Cola diet, which could almost take down ten bottles in one night, or my Popsicle craving, which used to liquidate 25 Popsicles on a hot day and blow the end of my pocketbook out, and all kinds of other little ridiculous cravings I had, it was like going over Mount Everest for a little babe like me. And yet I can say it's only because from the beginning of my Christian life I began to practice discipline, I began to bring my body into subjection by His grace. That's probably the basic reason that I'm here today.

If not, I would be washed out, absolutely. Temptations that have come, and it's only been because over time I've learned to say no to the flesh. And that's what you must develop, you must develop that ability to say no to the flesh.

And as you do it in little things, little things concerning food, little things concerning sleep, little things concerning work, then you will get to develop, you'll develop a habit so when that big crisis comes, you'll also say no. But if you don't develop that no to the flesh and the little cravings that come daily in this way and that way, sometimes even things that aren't really wrong in themselves, then when that big crisis comes and we're all headed for it, we'll not say no. And people can tell you, men have studied this thing, that if you learn how to say no over certain foods, if you learn how to say no concerning sleep, if you learn how to say no concerning work, you'll learn how to say no concerning the great battle of youth that seems to knock so many out.

And one of the greatest testimonies of this work is over the years God has given us such, such tremendous victory in this area of morals. Not because we are anybody, but because God's word is true. And we have had people in the ranks of this work, people I can tell you so many stories of, and I'm one of them, who have seen the victory and the power of God to deliver from all these kinds of problems.

I want to tell you, there's been times in my life before I was converted, if I started reading a lot of psychology, I would have considered myself just a case, a case for a doctor. Some of the thoughts that have come into my mind before I was a Christian and later after. I mean, if I got reading some of these interesting books, which I steer clear of, some people think I know a lot about psychology.

I've never read one single psychology book, and I don't particularly have any desire to do so. I've glanced through a few pages, but I think you can learn a lot more of psychology right from this book and right from just watching people. God gives us discernment.

And with the word of God and with the teaching, I believe, of men of God like Dr. Adolph and books like that, I've read some of those books, we can learn more and understand more about psychology than we could at four years of university grinding our brains through the devil's meat grinder. And I want to tell you, I find that a lot of people discover that they're mentally ill by reading about it. And I think if we all read enough psychology, we'd all discover that we've got some kind of neurosis or some kind of very serious problem.

The more we thought about it, the more serious it would get. And I've discovered that God wants us to take all of our little strange things and just cast them upon him and then bring our bodies into subjection, as it says here so very, very clearly. Look at that verse 26, I therefore so run, not as uncertainly so fight I,

not as one that beateth the air.

In verse 25, and every man that strieth for the mastery is tempered. That's discipline, self-control. Some people are scared of that word.

We have people that are always talking so much in the heavenlies that they're no earthly good. But I want to tell you, God is very practical. And you will not find that you're going to live the Christian life by going through a certain creed and signing your name at the end.

Nor will you find that you'll be able to live a Christian life by going up to a certain altar even if you cry all night. There is no substitute for self-control. The very fact that God uses the word self-control means that you're involved.

You, as a free will creature, as an act of the will, must serve the living God. Otherwise, why would Christ say, if you love me, keep my commandments? He should have said, if you love me, read my Bible. If you love me, memorize my verses.

If you love me, do this, do that. No, he says, if you love me, keep my commandments. And look at John 14 very quickly, and another verse, I think it's John 14, 21.

This is a very dangerous subject for me because I still lack discipline in keeping my messages short. But anyway, chapter 14, verse 21, he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. Isn't that tremendous? I believe it's one of the greatest verses in the Bible.

Jesus is speaking, he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. It's your acts of discipline that say, Jesus, I love you.

It's not when you get up in the morning and you have your little devotional, yes, Lord, oh, I love you, yes, I really do, and you feel a little tickle in your heart. No, God isn't interested in that, that's all right, if it's backed up by life. But it's when you don't feel like doing a particular job anymore, or you're out on the doors, you don't feel like going to another house, and you say, because I love you, keep your commandments.

This is the thing that proves to me my wife loves me. This is the thing that wins me. This is the thing that my wife has that batters me, breaks me, and sends me down on my knees.

It's because she's submissive, she does what I ask her to do. Because, you know, if she kept telling me she loved me, but every time I asked her to do something, she did the opposite, you know, pretty soon I just wonder whether she really did love me. And it's the same way with our relationship with God.

If we keep telling him we love him, we go through our little pantomimes, and our little evangelical jargon, and go through our little worship wheels, and we don't obey him, we don't keep his commandments. It's just, if you love me, if you love me, if you really love me, you keep my commandments. You walk in the Spirit, you say yes to the Spirit, and no to the flesh.

I discovered in the Christian life that a vast majority of the things I do, I don't particularly like to do. I didn't want to come on this trip. I tell you, it's not easy.

Some people think it's only hard for the women when the men go away, but I'll tell you, here's one standing in these old beat-up shoes that finds it very hard to leave his wife and three children. The day before I left, I had three days with my family from the last month's tour down in Turvandrum. I took my family out sailing.

I have a friend who's a pilot at the Bombay Port, a ship pilot, and he wanted to do something for me, and so we went out in a little sailboat to visit a training ship. I still have ships on my mind. Anyway, we visited a training ship out in the Bombay Harbor and took my children sailing.

What a wonderful thing it is to be with one's family. One's wife and one does love. Then after one or two days, you just sort of get to know them.

They just realize their little daughter's still trying to figure out who's her father. Just as you get together and the Lord seems to be meeting your heart, you have some time of prayer, of course, then you step into an airplane and you go away again for another three weeks. If you think I enjoy this, you're crazy.

I hate airplanes. In my flesh, I'd rather walk through the back jungles of Cairo, at least temporarily. I'll get fed up with that soon too, because you must realize one thing about the flesh, it wants change.

It's always greener on the other side of the fence. That's why some people go through life just constantly whirling around, because the flesh wants change. You do door-to-door work eight hours a day, you'll want to get an administrative job.

You do administrative work eight hours a day, you'll want to do door-to-door work. You preach eight hours a day, you'll want to do some other work, because the flesh just so constantly wants change. If you're going to serve Christ, if you're going to live for Christ, you must learn to do not that which you feel like doing, not that which you like to do, but that which God tells you to do, as you wait on Him in prayer, as you allow the mind of Christ to take over in your life.

And that's going to mean you're going to have to bring your body. And if you're not willing to do this, you're heading for the spiritual graveyard. I have seen so many casualties, so many casualties.

Men who have been evangelists, who have led thousands to Christ, who hit the rock bed of sexual lust. I can name three missionary directors. Some of you have heard me say it before, but I'll say it again.

It's a warning, because God in His Word gives us warnings about these things. He says, these are written that ye might not do the same thing. But I can give you the names of three missionary directors who rock piled and married their secretaries to divorce their wives.

You say that's unbelievable. Men who have led hundreds of souls to Christ. Men who were respected.

Men who preached all over the world. Men who were considered men of God. Rock piled.

There were two famous men some twenty years ago.

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