

Christian Self-Restraint 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the importance of self-restraint and service in the Christian life, drawing from Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19

Topics: "Service to Others", "Self-Restraint"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the call for Christians to practice self-restraint and serve others selflessly, as Paul exemplified in 1 Corinthians 9:19-27. He highlights that true Christian living involves denying oneself for the sake of others and the gospel, urging believers to win souls for Christ rather than seeking personal gain. Miller stresses the importance of accommodating the weak and exercising patience and gentleness in interactions, as well as the necessity of temperance in all aspects of life. He warns that even the most devoted can fall if they do not keep their bodies in subjection, reminding us that the Christian life is a race requiring discipline and focus. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a life dedicated to serving others and glorifying Christ through our actions.

Transcript

Paul taught this lesson in verse 19, "I made myself servant unto all." We are not our own. We are Christ's. But we are Christ's for love and service. He does not want us to spend our time merely praising him in words and songs. He wants us to go out into the world and do our work. He wants us to live to serve others--that is his work in this world. No matter how independent of others we may be in our earthly condition or circumstances, as Christians we are under obligation to all, to every man, woman and child. We are to love all, and love means readiness to deny ourselves in any necessary way in order to do good. We are to serve others as Jesus did. He kept nothing back--but gave all, even gave himself on the cross.

"That I might gain them." We are in this world to win souls for Christ--not to win friends for ourselves--but to get people to be friends of Christ; not to gain honor for our own name--but to add honor to the name of Christ. We should think of what it means to gain a friend and a follower for Christ--what it means to the person thus gained. It means the saving of a soul from death, and the hiding of a multitude of sins. A great many people who join the Church seem to forget that they have anything to do in getting others to become Christians. It is the plan of Christ for saving this world, that his Church shall grow through the efforts of its members. One day, by the Jordan River, two men followed Jesus--the Church had two members then. These were the first. But soon each of these had brought another and then there were four. So the work of

getting disciples went on. Each Christian has been brought by somebody else.

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak." There are many weak people in this world. Some have narrow views or imperfect consciences and are hard to get along with. Some are weak morally, unable to resist temptation. Some are weak in character--sensitive, touchy, easily offended. Some are weak in mind, unable to grasp the truth. Some are unreasonable, obstinately attached to certain views and uncharitable to those who do not think just as they do. A wise winner of souls must know how to deal with all of these classes. To the weak--he must become weak. That is, he must accommodate himself to their feelings, prejudices and frailties, even to their whims and caprices, to their narrowness, touchiness, or sensitiveness. It requires infinite patience, gentleness and tact to do this.

It is easy to get impatient and cross with people, to become vexed with their unreasonableness, or their narrowness and uncharitableness. It is easy to be offended by their whims and prejudices. But if we yield to this spirit, we shall do little good in the world. We must condescend to people's weaknesses and never vary in trying to help them. Teachers need this lesson if they would succeed in doing the best work in their classes. Tact, patience and gentleness are essential.

Pastors need the lesson--many a pastor, by his lack of this apostolic grace, is continually marring with one hand--the work of Christ which he is earnestly doing with the other hand. Parents need the lesson, that they may do their children good in the truest way. Many a child's life is hurt irreparably, by parents whose love is deep, tender and true--but who do not know how to become weak to the weak. We may learn from God's fatherly treatment of us--how we should condescend to weakness in others.

"This I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." One does not read very far in his New Testament without finding that a Christian life means utter self-denial. There is no room in Christ's method of living, for selfishness in any form. One can never make self the aim and goal--and be a Christian. Whatever we do with our life, the motive must be something outside of self. We must tie our life to Christ--that he may draw it after him wherever he will. We must live for Christ and his gospel, no matter what it may cost us, how it may interfere with our self-interests in business, in pleasure, or with our comfort and ease.

In no other way can we really save our life. All other saving, is losing. But when we thus devote our life to the gospel and the work of the gospel, we become joint partakers with those we help to the blessing which they receive through us. It is always more blessed to give than to receive--the giver gets the larger share of the blessing.

"So run, that you may obtain." The picture is that of the race-course, with contestants striving for the prize. Yonder is the goal, and there is a laurel wreath held up which is to be given to the victor. Christian life is a race. A great company of witnesses are looking on--earthly and also heavenly witnesses. We know how boys run in a race on the playground, how everyone tries to be first. So Christians should strive to run, to excel in life and service. There is only one prize to be won in the race-course; but in the Christian race, there is a prize for every one who persists in running well.

"Every man that strives for the mastery--is temperate in all things." That is very plain, so plain that no one can fail to understand it. Those who are training for any kind of game are kept on plain diet and are rigidly required to observe all the rules of the health, for some time before the contest. Thus their bodies grow supple and strong, and they are prepared for doing their best. So it should be in Christian life.

Just so, if we would be good Christians and excel in character and attainment, we must be temperate in all things. We use the word temperate generally, with reference only to strong drinks. This is very important. Intemperance in drink is ruining thousands of lives. But the Christian must be "temperate in all things." We must learn to control our appetites, feelings and tempers, and must keep all our earthly life in subjection.

Young people do not usually understand the importance of this. It applies in school work. If we do the best with our mind, we must watch our bodily life--never overeating, never indulging in strong drink, guarding our temper and our passions and affections, taking plenty of exercise and of sleep, and in every way, learning to master the body, making it the servant of the mind.

It applies also to the moral and spiritual life. We must train our body, for it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. If our soul is to be saved and our character is to grow into its best strength and beauty--we must keep our body under control, and held always in subjection. Thousands of young men lose all that is worthy and beautiful in life--by allowing their appetites and passions to rule them.

"Lest. . . I myself be a castaway." Even the great apostle saw the possibility of danger in his own life, if he failed to keep his body in subjection. This ought to be a solemn warning to all of us. Many people make light of this matter. Young men are often heard saying, when warned against the habit of drinking: "Oh, I am all right. I can stop whenever I please." But a little later we see them dragged down into debasing drunkenness. The body has mastered the soul, and the higher life has become the slave of the lower. The only sure way to noble and victorious living, is to keep the body always in subjection. It is a fearful thought, that even after one has been helpful to others in teaching or preaching--one's own life may yet be dragged down by bodily appetites and passions--and the person who was so honored under God--be rejected of Christ, unfit for further service.

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