

(The Activity of the Holy Spirit) the Discipline of the Body

by Peter Brandon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a disciplined body in order to preach the gospel and achieve the incorruptible crown.

Duration: 32:57

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19

Topics: "Discipline", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Peter Brandon emphasizes the necessity of a disciplined life for spiritual growth and effective ministry, drawing inspiration from the disciplined practices of Christians in China. He highlights the importance of maintaining communion with God to sustain spiritual experiences and urges the congregation to commit themselves wholly to the Lord. Using the Apostle Paul's teachings from 1 Corinthians 9, he illustrates how discipline in both body and spirit is essential for preaching the gospel effectively. Brandon encourages the audience to adopt a structured approach to their daily lives, including prayer and scripture reading, to cultivate a deeper relationship with God and a passion for soul-winning.

Transcript

But we have been criticised because we all rise at 5.30. But I said, why do you rise at 5.30? What time do you start your lessons? They said, at nine o'clock. And one fella looked at me as though I was a backslider. He said, we rise at 5.30 to have communion with the Lord.

We all do that in China. We spend time with the Lord. They said one or two other things that it wouldn't be wise to share with you.

But my wife and I, we went home like a couple of backsliders. You see, they were living a disciplined life. And that's where revival is breaking out.

Just before we came here on the BBC, and they go through all the facts with a tooth comb, before they put them on the wireless, our national news, they said, a hundred million people have become Christian in the last 30 years. And that means one of the greatest revivals that we've ever known in church history is happening now in China. Now look, can I say this right at the beginning? If 50 of you give yourself wholly to the Lord, do it today, don't wait till you get home.

Then what happens after that? Now note this. Any experience you can get can be lost overnight if it's not maintained by a life of communion. Can I repeat that? Any experience you get at camp or in the church can be lost overnight if it's not maintained by a life of discipline and communion.

And so I'm going to speak to you on the discipline of the body. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. Before I start reading, let's give an outline of this chapter so that we're not taking a text out of its contents. From 1 to 7 in this chapter, he gives us the moral rights of a preacher.

That they have the right to receive gifts, they have the right to marry and so on, and to eat like normal people. Then from 8 to 14, we have the support of a preacher. You mustn't muzzle the ox, he says, but you should give him food.

And he uses that script to show that the man of God who is full time in the Lord's work must be properly cared for. Then from 15 to 23, we have the great concern for a preacher. Now we shall touch that.

And then right at the end, we shall see we have the discipline of the preacher's body. That means if we're going to be used by God, we must have a disciplined body. And may I say this, it's a wonderful thing to discipline your body, even for your physical health.

It can be a tremendous blessing. But we'll start reading now from verse 19 just because of our limited time. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I may gain them all.

Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I may 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 the law, as without the law, being not a law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I may gain them that are without the law.

Now I'm not going to chat on that, but it simply meant when Paul went among the Jews, probably he would wear a little skull cap. And he would minister and preach the gospel. When he went among the Gentiles, he wouldn't wear it.

Why? If he didn't put the skull cap on, he would offend a lot of Jews, and they wouldn't listen to him. So he said, I'll wear anything in order to get the gospel to them. And when he went to the Gentiles, he didn't do that.

He just preached the gospel, and he was dressed just like the Gentiles were. You see the whole point was to win them, and not to offend them. Now when we preach the gospel, we must not offend people by dress or by habit.

Our job is to get the word of truth into them. Now do you see that? That's very important. Go on.

Verse 21. To them that are without the law, as without the law, being not without the law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.

I made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. You see the great desire of the apostle was not to offend men, but to bring the gospel so that they might be saved. Oh I wish I could go into the details of that, because that is very important today.

The whole point of the gospel is to reach people so that there might be divine regeneration in them. Then he goes on. Verse 23.

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that she may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body, I bring it in subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. Now first of all, I want to bring to your attention the reason for a discipline body is that we might preach the gospel and bring it to the masses.

Mr. St. John was an outstanding man of God, and in his young days he used to preach to the down-and-outs. Now he realized that if he went to them with a very nice saddle-row suit, they wouldn't listen to him. But if he put on rags, they would listen to him.

So what he used to do at 10 o'clock at night, he used to put on the rags of a poor man. And then he would take a crust of bread, and he would sit with them until 12 o'clock at night and preach the gospel. You see, he wasn't going among them in a beautiful suit so as to embarrass them.

He went in their clothing and preached the word of God to them. Hudson Taylor, when he went to China, realized that the European missionaries were going with all their civilian suits, and it put the Chinese people off. So he made them all wear Chinese dress.

And he went among them in Chinese dress, and he won thousands to the Lord. You see, he wasn't taken up with dress. He wanted to get the gospel to them.

Now look, that's a thing that we've got to do. Now what is the gospel? Number one, we evangelicals that believe in the inspiration of the word of God, and that means verbal inspiration, I can't go into the details of that, but all of us must hold fast to the fact of verbal inspiration. That we must take the word of God as it stands, as it's put in the original, and believe every single word that's found in the original scripture.

Verbal inspiration. Now our job as evangelicals is to preach that. Now you will notice that we're being opposed by three groups, and this is what is happening.

The devil is looking at the scriptures, and he's carrying out scriptural principles of preaching, so that he might propagate his error. And the JWs are doing that. I'm not going to call them the Jehovah's Witnesses, I'm just going to call them JWs.

The Mormons are doing that, and the Christadelphians, and they are making more converts than all the evangelicals in Australia put together. And that is why they are prospering. Now, I'm going to use those for a moment, because I believe if we apply it to them, they will bring a sense of embarrassment to us.

But what we believe is that we believe in a trinity. We believe in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. We believe that each individual member of the Godhead is a divine person, all making up one glorious Godhead.

Not three gods, one God, but a glorious Godhead. And we see the evidence of this in creation, for everything that God makes is a trinity. He doesn't make things in fours or fives, he makes things in threes.

Now, unless we believe in the trinity, we cannot believe in salvation. Now, why? Because it's the whole trinity that has a unity in our conversion. It was the Father that gave the Son.

It was the Son that gave his life. It's the Holy Spirit that brings in regeneration, that's the new birth. So, if you don't believe in the trinity, you can't believe in salvation.

So, you can see it's absolutely essential for us to believe in the trinity. So, we believe in God the Father, we believe in God the Son, and we believe in God the Holy Spirit. Secondly, we believe that man has fallen, and therefore through Adam, the whole race is born as sinners.

That's a terrible catastrophe. We believe that we've all broken the ten commandments, and therefore we're all guilty before God. And we evangelicals believe that if a man dies guilty before God, he is eternally lost.

The JW's don't believe that, the Mormons don't believe that, and the Christadelphians don't even believe in hell. But how zealous they are. Now, immediately we believe in a lost eternity, and I must put this over emphatically, we are under a tremendous responsibility.

Think of it, as we are sitting here in this tent on this beautiful morning, millions upon millions are in outer darkness, and millions of our fellow men are without Christ, and without God. Now, the moment we believe that, we have this tremendous responsibility to preach the gospel. Now, if that responsibility hasn't come to us, it means that the fact of man's lost condition has not yet hit us.

Secondly, we believe that the emergency was so great, that God actually sent his son into the world. Think of that. We believe that the situation was so serious, that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, not to live, but to die.

And we actually believe that when he was on the cross, though he was co-equal with God, he was made sin. Think of it. The one who knew no sin, made sin.

We believe that he was buried, and we evangelicals believe this, that God raised him from the dead as a man, and confirmed in raising him from the dead, his absolute divinity. Now, the JW's do not believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead as a man. The Christadelphians are doubtful, and the Mormons don't believe that.

But we do. We believe that God has taken him back to heaven, and there's a man in the heaven, the Lord Jesus, and all power is given unto him, and in that man is the coming king, and in that lovely man is the head of the church, and when the moment comes for him to come for his church, he will remove the Christians, then bring judgment upon the earth, and then after that period of judgment, he will come and reign for a thousand years. The JW's are completely at a loss over that.

And we have all that truth. Now, that is what we're to get over to the average man, and that's our responsibility. Now, the apostle makes it quite clear, this I do for the gospel sake that I might be a partaker thereof with you.

And what he's saying is this, this message has so gripped me, it's got hold of me like a malarial fever, the love of Christ constrains me, and that's what that word constraining means, it's got hold of me like a malarial fever, and I want to take this to all men, and to a Jew I shall be a Jew, to a Gentile I shall be a Gentile, as long as I get the gospel over. Now, wouldn't it be lovely if we had that conviction? But you say,

how do we can get the conviction? By consecrating yourself to the Lord, and not being conformed to the world, but transformed, and the Lord will fill your heart with a compassion for souls that you've never had before. You know, when I first went into the Lord's work, I must tell you this, I used to go to the back room, and I remember going to South End, and there would be 30 men all kneeling, with bowlers under the chair, and those men would beat the chair before them, they would plead with God to save souls, the tears would be running down their cheeks, and when you came out of that prayer meeting, you felt sure that God was going to save that night.

Why? Because of what was happening in that prayer meeting, a compassion for souls. And then when you would be preaching, the place would be packed, you would hear, Amen, praise the Lord all over the building. You see, there was life.

Now we've got to get back to that, and wouldn't it be lovely if some of you young people, you came together, and in your little groups, you started to weep for souls, because they were going to hell. And some of us older ones, in our prayer meetings, if we really got down and pleaded with God to save souls. Now, that's what's before the Apostle, and let's pray that he'll give us a love for souls.

Then he gives us, not only the reason for a disciplined body, you see, if we are not disciplined, we shall not get that compassion, he gives us an illustration of a disciplined body, and he uses two illustrations, one is the runner, and the other is the boxer. If you look at verse 24, you will see this. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize, so run that they may obtain.

And every man that is striving for the mastery, is still talking about the runner, is temperate, controlled in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, that was the garland, but we are incorruptible, that's a crown that goes on forever. Then he uses another illustration, look at verse 26, I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body.

Now what does he mean? First of all, he's thinking of the original Olympics, and in the original Olympics, the key race was the marathon, the 5,000 meters, and all kinds of people would train for it. One of the Caesars tried to train for this, but he came in last. Why? Because he couldn't discipline his body, and really he showed himself up.

But the people who went in for this race would train, and Paul had been watching them training. First of all, they would get up in the morning at a certain time, and then they would eat certain kinds of food, and then they would put their bodies through the most protracting exercises, and then they would run. And some of them would run every day 20 miles, and there you'd see them thrashing it out on the stone floors that Rome built.

And if you went up to them and said, why all this discipline? I want to get the garland. And Paul was watching these people, and he could see that each one was disciplined. But it seems if you read between the lines, he has his eye on one man, shall we call him Blondie, and he watches this fellow, and he gets up a little earlier than the others at five o'clock, and he watches him doing his exercises, his discipline.

And then he sees him eating, and he eats very carefully. He's not going to eat those things that put a bay window on his dining room. No, he's going to eat those things that are going to go into muscle.

Then he sees him doing his jogging. Boy, he said, that's more than a jog. He's almost sprinting.

And as he watches this fellow, he can see that this particular fellow has got his body uncontrolled. In other words, it's not the body controlling his mind, it's his mind controlling his body. Then comes the day of the race, and everybody's steaming with excitement.

And then the flag goes down, and he watches his Blondie. And they go round and round, and the people are cheering and shouting. They're calling on their hero.

They're going round and round and round, and they're going round until they come to the last three laps. And he watches Blondie. The others are puffing and panting, and you know if you've done long distance running, when you come near to the end, your lungs feel like lead, your body feels like iron, and you feel as though you're going to collapse, but you have to tell the body, go! And he watches this chap, and he moves past five, six, seven, and eight, until he's right up in the front.

Good. Good, he said. Look at the way he's got this disciplined body.

And then it's the last lap, and he's running in the box, and someone's trying to trap him, but he won't get trapped. And then he's got 300 yards to go, and then he breathes in, he tells his body to go, and he moves out of the box, and then he pushes himself forward. He sprints a hundred yards, and he's first, and he gets the garland.

Thoughts are, he had his body well disciplined, always had that in mind. Well disciplined. Then would you believe it, he sees the boxing match.

And in the corner, and I'm exaggerating this, you won't find this in the concordance. In the corner of the ring, there's a man we call the bear. Massive.

Looks an ugly specimen. Totally bald-headed, but muscles like an elephant's hind. And then in the other corner, there's a well-trimmed tray man, and he looks, the bear.

And a man that's controlled by brain, but beautifully made. And the bell goes, and out comes the bear. And he's throwing punches everywhere.

Puffing and panting, but the man's ducking and weaving. And then when he sees his opportunity, hits him with a left, and his head goes back like a football. And then he moves out of trouble again, and this fellow comes in, snorting like a bull, and he's throwing punches right, left, centre.

And this man watches and ducks him, and then hits him again, and the same thing happens. And that's the end of the round. The second round is more intense.

The bull comes out, and he's boring in, but he's ducking, he's weaving, he's hitting his target. And that goes on the second round. And then the third round.

The bull crawls out, and then he watches this tray man, and he measures him up with two lefts, and then he brings back himself, and all his body goes behind it. He hits him with a right, straight on the chin, and it's all dickie birds. And they're all singing, stars at night, and he doesn't even hear tense.

Oh, says Paul, I've learnt a lesson. With that runner, he had a disciplined body, and when he came to the end, his mind told him to go for it, and he won the goal. That bear was completely undisciplined, and that fella in the corner of the rim had a disciplined body.

He wasn't hitting the air like the bear. He was hitting the target. Now, brethren and sisters, in many of our Gospel meetings, we're hitting the air.

We're not hitting Satan. We're beating the air. Why? Because of the lack of discipline.

If we want to be used of God, we must have a disciplined body. Now, what does that mean? Look at the prize, and then we get right down into the details of this. I therefore so run, not as some certainly so fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body, I bring it in subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be accursed away.

And then if you look back there at verse 25, you will see he's after the incorruptible crown. Now, says the Apostle, that runner did it for the garland, and when they put the garland around his neck, and I must be very careful what I say, according to Greek customs, he was worshipped. Now, he was saying, I do not want to be worshipped.

The last thing ever I want to be is that. But I want that incorruptible crown, so that when I stand before the Lord, he'll say, well done thou good and faithful servant, and he'll give me a crown of glory. Much better.

Then he thought of that boxer, and he thought of that bear, hitting the air. He says, I don't want to be that in my preaching. I don't want to play at gospel preaching.

I want to be like that teller that gave the knockout punch, and I want to hit people right under the heart with the gospel, so that there's real conviction. But then comes the point, what do you mean by a disciplined body? Now, can I give you this in class? Any experience you get, you can lose, unless you have a disciplined body. That means get up at a certain time.

That means form in your life a time sheet, so that you go through life systematically. You see, we waste hours of time sometimes in idle chatter. Nothing wrong with chatter, unless it's turned into gossiping.

But don't spend hours of your time lazing away your moment. When you're young, get discipline. Rise at a certain time.

When you have to do your study, put body, soul, and spirit into it, so you do your best. If you're doing apprenticeship, and you're learning farming, or whatever it is, make sure that you do it for the glory of God, and you become a good bricklayer, a good plumber, a good carpenter, and a good farmer. God loves people who specialize in secular activity.

And then, when you come to night time, don't waste your hours going to bed at one o'clock. Go to bed at a certain time. Have a disciplined life.

Get back when you're young, and it will go all the way through with you. You see, you will never become a holy Christian, if after consecration, you run for the bus. I'm talking about a London person now, with a bacon sandwich in your mouth.

You know what I mean? You get out of bed, and you run for the bus, in order to be on time at your work. Don't do that. Learn to have a disciplined life.

And therefore, make a time sheet today, that you'll go to bed at a certain time, you'll do certain things at a certain time, and make sure you have communion with the Lord every day. Now, can I give you a leaf out of my own book? I have a prayer book. You say a prayer book? Yeah.

And every morning, I try to get up at a certain time, and I have a prayer book, and I put in my prayer book, all the things I'm going to pray for. And then, if I'm feeling tired, I don't kneel down, because I can go to sleep. And I want to tell you this, sometimes I've fallen asleep in prayer.

So I walk about, and I pray walking round and round the room. Now, you have a prayer sheet, and do that, or a prayer book, so that you outline the things you're going to pray. And then, go through the Bible systematically.

Don't just pick out verses, go through the Bible, start with the New Testament, start with Matthew, and if you can, read a chapter a day, and then a half a chapter at night. Now, if you're better at night than the morning, then reverse it. You know how you feel.

And go through the Scriptures carefully. And don't constantly pray for yourself, pray for all the people in your local church, pray for missionaries, pray for those people that you're interested in. Now, when it comes to soul winning, here's the point.

And then, each day, ask the Lord to lay a soul on your heart. It may be just one. And then, keep praying for that one person.

And then, say this to the Lord, Lord, I would like to lead that one soul to the Lord Jesus. And you will find this, if you are constantly praying for that soul, God will open his way for you to speak to that soul. And when you lead that soul to Christ, you'll get a joy that you never knew before.

The first chap I led to the Lord in the Navy, gave me a lot of trouble. But the Lord told me to pray for him. He was a young man that was a boxer.

And quite frankly, I was a little afraid of him. But the Lord told me to pray for him. And I suppose I prayed for him for about three or four months.

And we were lining up for our supper, and someone touched me on the shoulder, and I turned around, and it was this fella. He said, I'd like a chat with you, Bish. They used to call me in the Navy, Bish, short for Bishop.

And I had that name all the way through. So I said, meet you then after supper. So he said, look, just before I left home, my mum prayed with me, she's a Christian, that I might be saved.

I couldn't believe it. His language was appalling. He said, I think the time has come for me to try.

And I said, I can't trust the Lord. Well, I said, I can't lead you to the Lord in the barracks. It was packed with fellows.

I said, we'll have to go outside. And none of us had a torch. So we were going over this green, and both of us fell in a ditch.

And we were up to our knees in mud, and we crawled out. But that didn't stop us. It says, come on.

And there in the middle of a field, about 10 o'clock at night, I heard for the first time a man weeping and asking the Lord to save him. The joy of the Lord filled my heart. Now may God give you all the joy of leading someone to Christ.

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