

THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS

Message 9: HOLINESS IN BODY

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (ESV)

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

5 observations from this text:

1. God is calling us to OLYMPIC-LEVEL Christianity.
2. How we live (“run”) MATTERS (hence the analogy of a “race”).
3. At the conclusion of life (“race”) there are potential REWARDS.
4. You can DISQUALIFY yourself from these rewards if you run (live) badly.
5. DISCIPLINE of my BODY (“self-control in all things”) is absolutely essential if I earnestly desire to have these rewards.

BIG question: How do I discipline my body?

Some important **truths** and **texts** we need to consider first:

1. God created us with certain APPETITES and DESIRES that can/should be fulfilled in a way that BLESSES us and GLORIFIES Him.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

2. Those same appetites and desires can become PERVERTED and manifest themselves at UNCONTROLLED LUSTS which, left unchecked, become deadly.

1 John 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

1 John 2:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.

James 1:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

How do I know the difference?

Can I THANK GOD for this?

Is this FORBIDDEN in Scripture?

Can I PRAY about this?

3. Every single physical desire I have is subject to GOD'S OWNERSHIP of me.

I do not have the RIGHT to do whatever I want with my body if I am a Christian.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

What does it mean that my body is God's temple?

How can I glorify God IN my body?

If your body makes all the decisions and gives all the orders, and if you obey, the physical can effectively destroy every other dimension of your personality. Your emotional life will be blunted and your spiritual life will be stifled and ultimately anemic.

- Michel Quoist, *The Christian Response* (as quoted by Jerry Bridges)

God is concerned about what you do with your body. He created them, he bought them, he owns them, he indwells them, and what we do with them demonstrates to the world who our Lord is. If I were to stop here with this general admonition, our consciences would give us some guidance in specific cases, say, of whether we should smoke, or drink, or use drugs, or overeat, or never exercise, or get too little sleep, or engage in sexual relations outside marriage, or wear enticing clothing, or other things that misuse or abuse the body. But what our consciences approve and disapprove of is not always an accurate guide to what God approves of.

- John Piper (sermon excerpt)

Some thoughts and ‘rules’ of the ‘race’:

- Ignorance of the “MANUAL” is no excuse.

2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness ...

- “SMALL” infractions matter.

1 Corinthians 6:12-16 (ESV)

¹² “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³ Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”

The habit of always giving in to the desire for food or drink will extend to other areas. If we cannot say no to an indulgent appetite, we will be hard pressed to say no to lustful thoughts. There must be an attitude of diligent obedience in every area if we are to succeed in mortifying any one expression of sin.’

- Bridges, pp. 109-110

- Keep it down the MIDDLE.

Proverbs 27:12 (ESV)

¹² The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.

2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV)

²² So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Romans 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

*If you want to sin less, be **tempted** less.*

- Study the HABITS and PATTERNS of WINNERS.

1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1, Phil. 4:9, 1 Thess 1:6, 2 Thess 3:9, Hebrews 6:12, Hebrews 13:7, 13:17, etc.

- Study my own habits of FAILURE.

To labor to be acquainted with the ways, wiles, methods, advantages, and occasions of the success of sin, is the beginning to this warfare.

- John Owen (as quoted by Jerry Bridges, p. 112)

- Winning is more than a RESULT. It begins with an ATTITUDE that begets HABITS.

To want a thing, or feel that we want it, and then to turn from it because we see that it is contrary to the will of God is to win a great battle on a field larger than Gettysburg or Bunker Hill. To bring our desires to the cross and allow them to be nailed there with Christ is a good and a beautiful thing. To be tempted and yet to glorify God in the midst of it is to honor Him where it counts. This is more pleasing to God than any amount of sheltered and untempted piety could ever be. To fight and to win in the name of Christ is always better than to have known no conflict.

God is always glorified when He wins a moral victory over us, and we are always benefited, immeasurably and gloriously benefited. The glory of God and the everlasting welfare of His people are always bound up together. The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse not only actual sins which have been committed, but the very inward desires so that we will not want to sin. Purified desires will tend toward righteousness by a kind of gentle moral gravitation. Then it can be said that we are "spiritually minded." A blessed state indeed, and blessed are they that reach it.

- A.W. Tozer, *The Root of Righteousness*, p. 66

Next week:

Repentance and Spiritual Holiness