

Assurance 101

Lesson 3

Temperance

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: We live in a society of extremes and addictions. As a result, much of society suffers from the extravagance of the average American lifestyle. Because we are not controlled in our eating, drinking, pleasure seeking, and spending we suffer from obesity, drunkenness, laziness, and debt. The root problem of each of these areas is the sin of intemperance. This is known to be one of the most socially acceptable sins because the driving force is hedonism or the pursuit of personal pleasure. A great step toward genuine assurance of salvation is to “add temperance” to our faith.

The common way that individuals seek to “add temperance” to their lives and overcome their addiction is to focus upon the problem and seek ways to lessen its control over their life. However, the true solution to obesity is not just to go on a diet and exercise. The solution to debt is not solely or primarily to spend less. While there are certainly benefits from these approaches, the real root of the problem is the inability of the individual to find their contentment in their relationship with God and God alone. Failure to understand this single principle is why temperance is such a rare commodity.

In most instances, the failure to overcome the grip of sin is an indication that there has not been a genuine conversion. That is why Peter challenges saints to give diligence to add this to their faith. That does not discredit the fact that we can develop physical addictions to food and drugs. However, if a person is truly born again the Bible is explicitly clear that “*sin shall not have dominion over you*”. The inability to add temperance to your faith is an indication that there has not been a genuine new birth and the Bible offers no consolation to a profession without victory over sin.

Again, the root cause of addiction is found in the pursuit of happiness. Though few people realize or would ever confess it, the root of the problem is that they are seeking happiness through food, possessions, or entertainment. What they fail to understand is that the only source of true happiness is to be found in a vibrant, daily walk with the God of the universe. God alone has the ability to satisfy the longings of the soul and because the natural man (and many professing Christians) cannot comprehend this concept, they look to other things for happiness.

Temperance is a fruit of the Spirit, because having the presence of God in your life produces an appetite in our soul for true holiness and changes our immoderate desires. A great paradox is that while the world views temperance as constricting and restraining to their passions, the Christian experiences that a relationship with God satisfies and changes their desires liberating them from the control of the lusts of their flesh.

Our flesh has appetites that are given by God. However, there is a danger of allowing the appetites of our flesh to control our lives. Examples of the appetites of our flesh include: eating and drinking, sleep, sexual desire, and dominion. These are basic functions of life that are necessary for survival but they are not intended to be the driving force in our lives. The nature of sin, the aim of the world, and the temptation of the devil seek to constantly exalt these desires out of measure. Temperance is to bring these appetites under the control of the Spirit of God.

Definitions: *For English use the Webster’s 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong’s Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong’s number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Temperance** -

Moderation -

Greek: (1466) **egkrateia** *eng-krat'-i-ah*

(1468) **egkrates** *eng-krat-ace'*

(1933) **epieikes** *ep-ee-i-kace'*

Quotation:

“Excess in meat and drink clouds the mind, chokes good affections, and provokes lust. Many a man digs his own grave with his teeth.” Thomas Manton

“Those who eat too much are just as guilty of sin as those who drink too much... Men often times complain that they have spent too much *money* in feasting, but it is rare that any have admitted that he has spent too much *time* in feasting.” Joseph Caryl

“To the Christian in duty the body is as the beast to the traveller; he cannot go his journey without it, and much ado to go with it. If the flesh be kept high and lusty, then 'tis wanton, and will not obey; if low, then it's weak, and soon tires.” William Gurnall

“But knowledge is not the end of the work of grace. To it we must add temperance. Without it, both faith and reason may soon relinquish their rightful place to temporal pleasures. Temperance is an excellent steward. It regularly inspects the soul and sets the saint's affections in order so that he does not ignore holy duties to pursue his own entertainment. If you allow your love of creature comforts – or even your pleasure in family and loved ones—to outrun your love for the Lord, you cannot be a victorious soldier for Christ. Therefore, pray for temperance, which keeps the spiritual gauge of your heart well within the safety range, and sounds a warning when your heart grows too warm in its temporal affections or too cold toward Christ.” William Gurnall

“Those that are too merry when pleased are commonly too angry when crossed.” Philip Henry

“More are hurt by lawful things than unlawful, as more are killed with wine than poison. Gross sins afright, but how many take a surfeit and die in using lawful things inordinately. Recreation is lawful, eating and drinking are lawful, but many offend by excess, and their table is a snare. Relations are lawful, but how often does Satan tempt to overlove! How often is the wife and child laid in God's room! Excess makes things lawful become unlawful.” Thomas Watson

“Overdoing is the ordinary way of undoing.” Richard Baxter

“The physician saith, nothing better for the body than abstinence; the divine saith, nothing better for the soul than abstinence; the lawyer saith, nothing better for the wits than abstinence; but because there is no law for this vice, therefore it breaketh out so mightily. Whoredom hath a law, theft hath a law, murder hath a law, but this sin is without a law.” Henry Smith

“To rot and to riot differ but one small letter.” Thomas Adams

“By fasting, the body learns to obey the soul; by praying, the soul learns to command the body.” William Secker

“Satan, like a fisher, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish.” Thomas Adams

“Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that reared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them we shall find a nest of honey within them.” John Bunyan

“The way to avoid temptation is not always to apply a salve directly pertinent to the temptation; but turn off your mind and your thoughts to some other good object, and by that time your mind is settled upon other objects, you will be easily able to meet with the temptation.” William Bridge

“To avoid excess on both sides, so as neither by luxury to be confused, nor, by becoming sickly, to be disabled from doing what has been commanded.” Chrysostom

“The principle involved is that of the concentration of all man's powers and capabilities upon the one end of doing God's will, in and through whatever calling God appoints, and the renunciation of everything either wholly or to whatever degree necessary, however innocent or useful it may be in its proper place, that interferes with one's highest efficiency in this calling” Augsburg Confession

“I counsel every Christian to answer all temptations with this short saying, “The Lord is my portion” O, sir, if Satan should come to thee with an apple, as once he did to Eve, tell him that “the Lord is your portion”; or with a grape, as once he did to Noah, tell him that “the Lord is your portion”; or with a change of raiment, as once he did to Gehazi, tell him that “the Lord is your portion”; or with a wedge of gold, as once he did to Achan, tell him that “the Lord is your portion”; or with a bag of money, as once he did to Judas, tell him that “the Lord is your portion”; or with a crown, a kingdom as once he did to Moses, tell him that “the Lord is your portion.” Thomas Brooks

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

London Baptist Confession of 1689

Chapter 18 Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation - paragraphs 1-4

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. What is the root problem of an addiction?
2. What are the fruits of intemperance?
3. Why is intemperance such a socially acceptable sin?
4. What is the common way individuals seek to overcome their addictions?
5. What is the true solution to overcoming addiction?
6. Why is temperance such a rare commodity?

7. What is the only source of true happiness?

8. Why does adding temperance help to provide assurance of salvation?

9. Why is temperance a fruit of the Spirit?

10. Explain and summarize the last quote by Thomas Brooks.

Key Scriptures:

Proverbs 21:17 The promise given to the person who loves and lives for pleasure is that they shall be _____ and those that have extravagant tastes shall not be _____.

Proverbs 25:28 The failure to rule our spirit makes us as vulnerable to attack as a city that is _____ and without _____.

Acts 24:25 When Paul was preaching to the ruler Felix, he reasoned with him of the importance of _____ which was not likely to be found in a wealthy ruler.

Romans 13:13-14 Our walk is not to consist of indulging the flesh. Instead we are charged not to make _____ for our flesh.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul describes the Christian life as a marathon race. If we are going to strive for the _____ in the Christian life, we must be temperate in _____. While they are running to receive a crown that will rot, we are striving for an _____ one.

Galatians 5:23 One _____ that the Spirit will produce in the life of a Christian is temperance.

Philippians 4:5 Our _____ should be obvious to everybody because we are living with the expectation of the Lord's return.

Titus 1:7-8 One qualification of a _____ is that he must have his temper and his appetites under control.

Titus 2:2 In instructing different age groups in the church, Paul expects the _____ men to be an example of temperance.

Key Chapter(s) (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

Romans 6

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: I Corinthians 9:25

Personal Definition: (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Temperance –

Personal Application: identify one area of your life that is not in moderation and develop a plan to bring it under Spirit control.

Meditation question: (*be prepared for discussion*) What is the difference between self control and Spirit control?

Extra Credit

Ask another Christian how they overcome the vice you are struggling to bring into subjection.