The Fruit of SELF-CONTROL

INTRODUCTION:

Living in the flesh contrasted with living in the Spirit.

Rom. 8:12-17

"temperance" = self-control (a rigid discipline for an athlete)

Self-control - temperance
- = = strength, power

Acts 24:25 - a conviction to a lost man

> Acts 24:25 - "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

II Pet. 1:6 - an addition to your faith

Tit. 1:8 - a qualification for a pastor

Last days -
II Tim. 3:3 - "incontinent" - no ability to contain your lusts, without self-control

We are living in an <u>undisciplined</u> age. Where we constantly hear messages saying: "Do your own thing," "have it your way," "You deserve a break today," etc. Technology has given us more luxury, more time to be idle, and hence more time to sin. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

(Cp. the real sin of Sodom - Ezek. 16:49. 1) self-centered 2) plenty of goods 3) plenty of time 4) inconsideration of others)

The Bible says: In the last days, "men shall be lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:4)

The word "disciple" means "disciplined one."

I. Have the <u>RIGHT REASONS</u> (GOALS) to control self (I Cor.9:24-25; v.27)

How would you like to be in the Olympics?

"The Greeks had two great athletic festivals, the Olympic games and the Isthmian games. The Isthmian games were held at Corinth and were therefore intimately familiar to those to whom Paul was writing. Contestants in the games had to prove rigorous training for ten months. The last month was spent at Corinth, with supervised daily work-outs in the gymnasium and athletic fields. The face was always a major attraction at the games, and that is the figure Paul uses to illustrate the faithful Christian life. ***"Those who run in a race run all, but only one receives the prize."*** No one would train so hard for so long without intending to win. Yet out of the large number of runners, only one wins. A great difference between those races and the Christian "race" is that every Christian who will pay the price of careful training can win. We do not compete against each other but against the obstacles--practical, physical, and spiritual--that would hinder us." (MacArthur, p. 214).

The background context of verses 24-27:

The Apostle Paul gave this example to challenge believers to surrender whatever it takes so that they might be more effective in giving their lives for the Lord's work!

I. Paul chose to remain single
so that he would not be hindered by marital obligations (v.5)

II. Paul chose to minister without pay
so that he would not be misjudged as a money-hungry evangelist (v.6-18)

III. Paul chose to adjust his methodologies
so that he would reach more people, without compromising his message or Biblical convictions (v.19-23)

IV. Paul chose to discipline his life
so that he would win the Lord's prize and remain usable to Christ (v.24-27)

"Run all" - Every believer is in the Christian race.

--Not on the side lines -- Not spectators in the stands -- But athletes in the event!

In the Olympics, no athlete quits -- too much is invested to give up and watch.

"One receiveth the prize" -

In a race, all runners run, but only one ends up the winner.

All of us believers, who are also running a race (Heb. 12:1-2) ought to run so as to obtain the favor of Christ. Not a half-hearted, lacsadasical, who cares style of Christianity.

In the Greek Isthmian games (likewise in the Roman Olympics), there could be only one winner, but in the Christian race, there can be many winners.

In the Olympic games, each contestant competed against others; in Christianity, we compete against ourselves (Gromacki).

"Obtain" - Run to get God's prize; "go for the gold!" Give it your best effort so that you may attain that which Christ has obtained you for. (Phil. 3:12 - *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.")*

In the Christian race,

--some run to be seen by others ("See, I made it!")
--some run to keep up with others ("I'm as good as you are!")

Others run to be their God-given best and to allow God to grant them victory.

Acts 20:24 - *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."*

Our Lord deserves more than a half-hearted flabby Christian service.

A. An <u>incorruptible crown</u> (v.24-25)

"Corruptible crown" - perishable victor's <u>pine wreath</u> (a *"stephanos")*. A crown of leaves that would weather, not last!

Nothing this world offers will last.

In the Olympics, the glory fades and your are forgotten. You can't take the award into eternity when you die; this world's trophies stay in this world.

"Incorruptible" - not subject to tarnish, ruin and loss.

"The greatest investment is an investment in the greatest things."

B. A <u>desire to remain usable to God</u> (v.27b)

II. Have the <u>PROPER TRAINING</u> to control self (I Cor. 9:26-27)

To be temperate you need...

A. <u>Focus</u> (v.26)

"Not as uncertainly" - not without aim; not aimless or without purpose or objective-- We need a goal! God's goal!

To run with uncertainty would mean to be unsure of the goal and course of the race, the how and why of the race. Do you as a believer lack focus as to the "how" and "why" of the Christian race?

--Focus on God's directions for the race by knowing and obeying His Word. (ILLUS: the coaching needed by Olympian champions)

--Focus on the goal of our race, which is to glorify God.

Why are you here? To glorify God. How? Jn. 15:8 - *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."* --- By proclaiming the Gospel and make disciples.

Evangelism and edification is to glorify Him on earth.

Do you know why you come to church?
Do you know why you should read God's Word?
Do you know why you should obey God?

Keeping your focus involves:

1) Not being distracted by your past
(moving on from past victories or defeats)
"forgetting those things which are behind" (Phil. 4:13)
2) Keeping your attention on your future goal
"reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13b-14)
3) Following the right example
"Looking unto Jesus..." (SEE: Hebrews 12:1-2)

"Not as one that beateth the air" - Don't be a "shadow-boxing" Christian; going through the motions but doing nothing. Rather, get in the ring and do something.

B. Discipline (v.27)

"Bring it into subjection" - lit. to make it (my body) a slave.

A slave to who? To Christ, i.e. to His Spirit.

The Spirit should control our minds and our minds then control our body.

1. Spirit
2. Mind
3. Body

Paul's body did not control him; rather, he controlled it and subjected it to his spirit and mind.

Too many people reverse the order. Their body dictates to their mind what it wants and the weak mind rationalizes and justifies a violation of conscience, and thus grieves and quenches the Spirit.

"Most people, including many Christians, are instead slaves to their bodies. Their bodies tell their minds what to do. Their bodies decide when to eat, what to eat, how much to eat, when to sleep and get up, and so on. An athlete cannot allow that. He follows the training rules, not his body. He runs when he would rather be resting, he eats a balanced meal when he would rather have a chocolate sundae, he goes to bed when he would rather stay up, and he gets up early to train when he would rather stay in bed. An athlete leads his body; he does not follow it. It is his slave, not the other way around." (MacArthur, p. 215).

III. Have NO CONFIDENCE in the "Flesh" but in the Spirit (Phil.3:3 cp. Gal.5; Rom.7 & 8)

IV. Make NO PROVISION for the "flesh" (Rom.13:14)

A. Guard your eyes (Job 31:1; Ps.101:3)

B. Guard your tongue (James 1:19; James 3)

C. Guard your thoughts (ex. covetousness)

D. Guard your emotions (ex. anger)

E. Guard your Appetites (James 1:15-16; 4:1-2)

1. Appetite for food

2. Appetite for sleep & leisure

3. Appetite for physical pleasure

F. Guard your Wants

1. Control your material wants

2. Control your money

3. Control your entertainment (ex. T.V.)

V. Say NO to "SELF" when your desires conflict with God's (Mark 8:30-38)

Why does conflict come between our will and God's? Why is it so hard to deny ourselves?

1) The temptation of Satan (v. 33)
Satan tempts us to mind ("savour") things that are of men.
NOTE: Preceding context: Peter had no sooner pronounced Jesus as the "Christ" (Messiah) (Having learned it of the Father - Mt. 16:17), than he turned around and rebuked Jesus (under Stan's influence) for saying that He would suffer and die.

God's will was that Christ would die. (NOTE v. 31 "must" . . . v. 33 - "things that be of God").

When our will conflicts with God's, who wins? Beware of our adversary.

2) The pull of the world's pleasures (v. 33, 36, 38)
"Things of men" (v. 33)
"Gain the whole world" (v. 36)

We live in an "adulterous and sinful generation" (v. 38)

3) The selfish love of your own life (v. 35)
Man by (old) nature is selfish, seeks comfort, pleasure, etc., even at the expense of doing what is right.

4) The cost of sacrifice (v. 34)

Self-denial requires sacrifice. The phrase "take up his cross" meant a lot to those who heard it, because they lived in a time period when thousands were crucified on crosses.

If we are not willing to deny ourselves a little sleep, time, and money so that we might serve God and give to God -- what makes us think that we would ever die for Him??

"Deny himself" = the basic idea is to say "No." It is to disown oneself, to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness.

How do we deny ourselves? ("take up cross")
--Consider ourselves dead to our own selfish will (Ro. 6:11-14; Col. 3:1-ff)

Why do we deny ourselves? ("Follow Me")
--Our goal in self-denial is to simply follow Christ!
Anything, anything, anything that hinders our following Him, we must give up! (and the thing [whatever it is] may not be sinful in and of itself)

We don't give up things:
1. to impress God or others
2. merely because they are evil

But because they are weights, etc., that hinder our walk with Christ (Heb. 12:1-2)

What would motivate us to sacrifice in such a way to follow Christ?

Our love (devotion) to Him)cp. Mt. 10:37-39)

ILLUS: If you and your family are starving to death, and you are given a piece of bread, who gets it? If you love, you will see that your family gets it.

Every time you give up something for Christ's sake, you are saying, "I love you, Jesus!"

The answer to self-control is not celibacy, monkery, asceticism, anorexia nervosa, inflicting pain on yourself (self-torture).

The body is not evil (I Cor. 6:18-20).
Sex is not evil (Heb. 13:5)
Food is not evil (I Tim. 4:3-8).

The answer to self-control is simply putting yourself under the authority of God's will.

Don't offer excuses. EX: "This is the way God made me." "I'm stuck in this situation, and there's no way out."

Your life is like an unfinished story; why not make the conclusion of your life one in which your character was changed and became what God intended.

Conclusion:

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