

OUR BODIES AS SERVANTS

“I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

—1 CORINTHIANS 9:27

Paul says in the above verse, “I make my body my slave.” He doesn’t say that to enable him to live a godly life. He says that because Jesus lives in him, and he wants to function through a body he has taught to obey. “I beat my body” doesn’t mean he masochistically beats himself, but rather “I bring my body into subjection.”

Our bodies can make wonderful servants, but terrible masters if we are controlled by the road of least resistance. Proverbs 25:28 says, “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.” When a city’s walls are broken down anything can make its way in. In today’s world, temptation is all around us, and without self-control we have no strategy for resistance. 1 Timothy 4:7 says, “Train yourself to be godly.”

Our bodies have different capabilities and desires, but we need to train them not to be masters over us. This is living by the flesh, but we can also live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, loving God with all our hearts, and still wonder, “Why do I keep falling into the same old sin again and again?” There is nothing wrong with the Holy Spirit’s presence in us; we’ve just never taught our bodies to be our servant.

Along with dependence on God is disciplined living, and the Holy Spirit is involved in this process. Romans 8:13 says, “If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the

misdeeds of the body, you will live.” We are not on our own in this. The Holy Spirit’s presence in us puts the desire and motivation in our hearts to begin with, and He is the enabling. Disciplining our bodies is not designed to get holiness into our lives, but to allow the Holy Spirit within us to express Himself through us in a way that is right and godly.

Teaching our bodies to be our servants is a lifelong struggle and probably our biggest battle, but there is hope for everyone. Jesus said, “I have come to fulfill the Law.” That is, “I in you am here to fulfill the law, to make it work, to make it real.” Jesus is not saying salvation is dependent on whether or not we discipline our bodies, but that this is not purely a temporal, physical thing. It has eternal dimensions as well, because to a great extent, the kind of people we are here will have a bearing on the kind of people we will be throughout eternity. Our time is now in giving the Holy Spirit freedom to work in our lives.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray for a deeper work of Your Holy Spirit in me so that I may bring my body in complete submission to You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: When faced with the same sin again and again, do I turn to the indwelling Spirit of Christ and draw upon His strength?