**“True Temperance Is Self-control” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, 3, 3, 36.**

TRUE temperance is temperance in *all things*. To be temperate in one thing and intemperate in others is not temperance at all. This will be the more readily seen when it is understood, as it always ought to be, that *temperance* is *self-control*. Whatsoever it may be in which a person has not the control, the mastery, of himself, just so far he is intemperate. Thus it will be seen at a glance that the practice of temperance is not completed when a person has only renounced the use of strong drink. A person may never have touched a drop of spirituous or of malt liquors, yet at the same time he may be intemperate in many ways. In many things he may not have control of himself. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.1}

Some there are, yes, a multitude, who have not control of their temper. They are as quick-tempered as a flash. In this respect they have hardly any control of themselves at all. They are intemperate. Others there are by the thousands who are ruled by their passions. Such was Felix, before whom and with whom Paul reasoned of righteousness, *self-control*, and judgment to come. Such are intemperate. Others again are ruled by their appetites—things which in themselves are perfectly lawful, but by which thousands of people allow themselves to be controlled, instead of assuming the mastery themselves, and acting with self-control. These are intemperate. Others yet again allow the desire of gain to rule, and to drive them onward into many foolish and hurtful things. All such are intemperant. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.2}

So it is in all things, in every phase of life. Instead of ruling themselves they allow themselves to be ruled by some wicked, sinful thing. One is controlled by strong drink, another is controlled by impure thoughts and lustful desires, another by a gluttonous appetite, and so on through the long list of human frailties. All are intemperate. Each one lacks something of that self-control which he owes himself, in filling the place of a real manly man, or womanly woman, in the world. No one of us has much in which he can boast himself over his fellow-mortals. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.3}

“Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth,” saith the Lord. Romans 14:22. It is perfectly allowable to eat and to drink. How could any live without it? But the human race from the first pair onward through the world’s history has condemned itself in that thing which in itself is one of God’s good gifts to men. God created men and women in the world together. He himself established the marriage relation and surrounded it with his own holy sanctions. He created men and women with social qualities, capable of enjoying and mutually profiting by the social relation with the sanctions which he established. But for men and women to condemn themselves in these relations, which in themselves are perfectly allowable, has been not the least of the banes of human existence. The Lord directs that men shall be diligent in business, and prosperity is the inevitable result of such a course. But instead of holding the course with an even hand under God, men allow prosperity to lead them into the love of it for its own sake, and so condemn themselves in the thing which in itself is not only strictly allowable, but highly commendable. In all these things we must needs keep ourselves the subjects of our own control, or else we shall always be what we always have been, and that is, very slaves sold to serve under the arbitrary and cruel mastery of a perverted appetite or an unholy ambition. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.4}

It is for this cause that in the Scriptures we are so often exhorted to the practice of self-control, that is, temperance. Does the great apostle tell of “the faith in Christ”? He does it by reasoning of “righteousness, temperance [self-control], and judgment to come.” Acts 24:24, 25. Does he call men to a race for the heavenly crown? He lays down the one great rule of the contest, “every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25. Does he give directions as to who shall be intrusted with the care of the flock of God? One of the necessary qualifications is that he shall be “temperate.” Titus 1:8. Does he enumerate for us the fruits of the Spirit of God? One of these precious fruits is “temperance.” Galatians 5:23. Does Peter show us how we shall obtain an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? It is by adding to “faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, *temperance*,” etc. 2 Peter 1:5, 6, 11. Does Jesus himself tell us who shall be his follower? He says: “If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself* [control himself, master himself], and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke 9:23. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.5}

This is true temperance. Without it man is not himself. Without it he is not the whole man that God wants him to be, and which he must be to enjoy the full, symmetrical measure of all his powers. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.6}

It follows from this that if a man will be master of himself in all things, he must have the full use of his own will. Paul simply expressed the experience of the human race when he said, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Romans 7:18. Every man is ready to, and does, will to do certain things, but he cannot hold himself up to the height of his will. He resolves to do many things, but cannot hold himself to his resolution. To will to do better is ever present with every man, but they do not do better. How to perform that which their own better judgment, and their honest convictions, tell them is the right thing to do, is what they do not find. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.7}

The sole trouble about all this failure is that men have not the full use of their own will. Evil habits and intemperate practices destroy the will; they render impotent the power to perform that to which the mind readily assents as being right and proper. To convince men of what is right is ever the easiest task of the reformer, while the hardest task is always to bring them up to the place where they will do that which they know to be right. With temperance workers it is not at all difficult to convince men that the use of alcoholic drinks is injurious, and that the only right thing to do is to let it entirely alone; but the great task is to get them to let it entirely and forever alone. It is not at all difficult to convince men that the use of tobacco is only injurious and that continually, without one redeeming quality; but it is the hardest kind of a task to get them to quit it, even when they themselves confess that they ought to quit it. It is so also with the man or woman who uses opium or arsenic or morphine, or who is addicted to any wrong habit whatever. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.8}

And yet all are ready to say, “Oh, I *could* quit it if I only would!” Yes, that is true, but they don’t. As one old gentleman expressed it, who had been an inveterate user of tobacco, and had at last really quit: “I always said I could quit it if I would, but I *couldn’t would*.” In that single expression there lies couched whole volumes of philosophy. Men can quit evil habits if they will, but they can’t will. Men can do right if they only will, but they can’t will. They can *say* “I will,” but they can’t *do* “I will.” This truth was excellently illustrated in an article in the sanitary columns of the New York *Independent* a few years ago. In discussing the subject of “Stimulants and Narcotics as Related to Health,” the writer referred to those who have become enslaved by the use of these things, and then remarked:— {BEST March 1888, p. 36.9}

“If ever we have seen sadness in this world, it is in the case of those who are conscious of this enthralling enchantment and yet feel unable to extricate themselves from the wiles of the adversary... We do not believe anything has happened to us over and above the experience of most practitioners; yet we almost shudder to recall instance after instance where life has been burdened with this direful deceit, and whole families involved in the secret malady. The remedies are few *unless the will itself is rallied to a high determination, and then for a time fortified and affiliated with another will stronger than itself*.” {BEST March 1888, p. 36.10}

This is true. And whether the remedies be many or few, this is the *only* one that is sure. But it is also true that with no human will can any will be fortified or affiliated in any adequate degree whatever. A stronger human will may be found, and by it the weak will may be fortified in a certain sense by personal encouragement and watchful influence, and this only while that stronger will is present. But even then there can be no affiliation of wills so that the weaker will shall be really vitalized from the energy of the stronger. That is an impossible relationship between human wills. Under such circumstances the most that can possibly be done is that the weaker will shall be encouraged and guarded by the stronger until it shall of itself recover its wasted energies. But that is not enough, by far, and therefore such a remedy can never be certain in its results. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.11}

Far more than that is required if the wasted energies of the will are ever to be restored. As we have stated, what is required is that the stronger will shall be one that can be ever present, and which, at the same time, can be so affiliated with the weakened will that the weaker shall be actually vitalized and renewed by the very energy itself imparted from the stronger. It is evident that such a remedy would prove effectual and permanent. And there is such an one offered willingly to every enthralled soul. It is found alone in the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a will with which by faith every weakened and enthralled will on earth may be fortified and affiliated, and that to such a degree that whereas it was a struggling, despairing victim, it may be transformed and translated into the glorious liberty of a conqueror, to such a degree that whereas the enthralled soul could only cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me form the body of this death?” he may freely and gladly exclaim, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And then, and so, God, in Christ, “worketh in us both *to will* and *to do* of his good pleasure.” Jesus is the great Physician, who will supply strength for every weakness, a remedy for every ill, freedom to every slave, and victory to every warrior. Through Jesus Christ alone every man may become master of himself, and so, alone, can we be temperate in all things. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.12}

But out of Christ none can attain to it. Christ filled the measure of every perfection. He did it as a man, that *in him* man might do it. Out of Christ man is not himself, as he ought to be, nor as God wants him to be; he is handicapped with the weight of his own wrong tendencies, entailed upon him or acquired by him, and of himself he cannot rise to the complete dignity of a man. But in Christ his lapsed powers are restored, he recovers the strength that he must have to control himself completely. In Christ, and in him alone, can man surely acquire the mastery of himself, and so succeed in the practice of true temperance—self-control. Then he will be his own free man and Christ’s servant forever. {BEST March 1888, p. 36.13}

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