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What Does the Bible Say About Self-Control (Temperance)? — The Foundation · KJV Scriptures with Strong's Numbers

THE FOUNDATION · THE ORIGINAL STUDY, SET IN THE SEARCH IT OUT ORDER

Temperance — Foundational Biblical Doctrine

OPENING WORD

Listen now to a much-needed word. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance — the Greek word is egkrateia (G1466, temperance), strength within, the ruling of one's own self. It is not the strength that captures a city; it is the strength that rules a spirit. This study sets two ways before you. Look at a king who could not rule himself: for a vegetable garden he lay down on his bed, turned his face away, and would not eat any food — and in the end he sold himself. And he is not alone. Saul feared the people. Balaam loved wages. Eve saw and took. David sent and took. Each one set something above the voice of God, and each one gave himself away to get it. Then look at the Son. He was hungry, and would not command the stones. He saw all the kingdoms, and would not bow. He was insulted, and did not insult back. Though he was a Son, he learned obedience. And here is your comfort: this ruling of yourself is not your work alone — it is the fruit of his Spirit, and God is faithful to make a way of escape. Search it out.

THREE QUESTIONS THIS STUDY ANSWERS:

1. What is temperance, and where does it come from?
2. How does a person sell himself, the way Ahab and Esau sold themselves?
3. Who is the perfect example of self-control, and what does temperance produce?

GREEK KEYWORDS

“**temperance**” — **G1466 egkrateia** — self-control, continence, temperance
the fruit of the Spirit is temperance

“**temperate**” — **G1467 egkrateuomai** — to exercise self-restraint, to contain, be temperate

every man who strives for the mastery is temperate in all things

“soberly” — G4996 sophronos — with sound mind, moderately, soberly
grace teaches us to live soberly in this present world

“sold” — G591 apodidomi — to give away, to render, to sell
Esau for one morsel of meat sold his birthright

“humbled” — G5013 tapeinoo — to make low, to abase, to humble
he humbled himself, and became obedient to death

“reviled” — G3058 loidoreo — to reproach, to revile
when he was reviled, he reviled not again

HEBREW KEYWORDS

“sold” — H4376 makar — to sell, to surrender
you have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the LORD

(My personal thoughts — makar (H4376, to sell) is the word spoken over Ahab; apodidomi (G591, to sell) is the word written about Esau. Two languages, one and the same bargain: a person gives himself away for the thing he desires. Temperance is keeping yourself, so that you are not sold.)

OPENING ANCHOR

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance [G1466 egkrateia]: against such there is no law.

TEMPERANCE — SELF-CONTROL — IS FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

(My personal thoughts — notice where temperance stands: among the fruit of the Spirit. It is not first of all a work of man; it is fruit. egkrateia (G1466, temperance) is strength within — one's own self ruled. Where the Spirit lives, this fruit grows, and against such things there is no law.)

I. WHEN SELF-CONTROL IS ABSENT — AHAB

A. 1 Kings 21:1-4 And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

NO SELF-CONTROL — HIS INABILITY TO GET WHAT HE WANTED MADE HIM HEAVY, DISPLEASED, AND UNABLE TO EAT.

B. 1 Kings 21:7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

JEZEBEL'S OFFER TO OVERRULE GOD'S LAW WAS THE VERY THING AHAB'S ROTTEN APPETITE WAS WAITING FOR.

C. 1 Kings 21:20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold [H4376 makar] thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

AHAB SOLD HIMSELF TO WORK EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD.

D. 1 Kings 21:25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell [H4376 makar] himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

NONE WAS LIKE AHAB, WHO SOLD HIMSELF TO WORK WICKEDNESS, STIRRED UP BY HIS OWN WIFE.

(My personal thoughts — a king, and he could not rule himself. A whole kingdom was his, yet a vegetable garden made him depressed and took away his appetite. The word is makar (H4376, to sell): he gave himself away to get his desire. This is temperance absent — the man does not own the desire; the desire owns the man.)

II. THE PATTERN OF SELLING THYSELF — ANY THING VALUED ABOVE OBEDIENCE TO GOD

A. 1 Samuel 15:24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

SAUL VALUED THE FEAR AND PRAISE OF THE PEOPLE ABOVE OBEDIENCE TO THE VOICE OF GOD.

B. 2 Peter 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

BALAAH VALUED THE WAGES OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS ABOVE OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

C. Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

EVE VALUED THE APPEARANCE OF THE FRUIT AND THE DESIRE FOR WISDOM ABOVE SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WORD.

D. 2 Samuel 11:2-4 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

DAVID VALUED THE PLEASURE OF HER COMPANY ABOVE OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

(My personal thoughts — notice the one pattern in four lives: Saul feared, Balaam loved, Eve saw, David took. Not one of them was forced. Each one valued a thing above the voice of God, and gave himself away to get it. The thing is different; the bargain is the same.)

III. CHRIST — THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF SELF-CONTROL

A. Hebrews 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

THOUGH HE WERE A SON, HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS HE SUFFERED.

B. Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled [G5013 tapeinoo] himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

C. 1 Peter 2:22-23 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled [G3058 loidoreo], reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

REVILED, HE DID NOT REVILE AGAIN, BUT COMMITTED HIMSELF TO HIM THAT JUDGETH RIGHTEOUSLY.

(My personal thoughts — Ahab had a kingdom and no rule over himself; the Son had all power and full rule. He humbled himself — tapeinoo (G5013, to make low). He was insulted — loidoreo (G3058, to revile) — and did not answer back. Self-control is not weakness; it is strength bowed to the will of God, even to the point of death.)

IV. WHAT TEMPERANCE BRINGETH FORTH — THE FRUIT AND THE CROWN

A. 2 Peter 1:5-6 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance [G1466 egkrateia]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

TEMPERANCE IS ADDED TO KNOWLEDGE, AND FROM TEMPERANCE COMES PATIENCE, AND FROM PATIENCE, GODLINESS.

B. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate

[G1467 egkrateuomai] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

EVERY MAN THAT STRIVES FOR THE MASTERY IS TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS, FOR AN INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN.

C. Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly [**G4996 sophronos**], righteously, and godly, in this present world;

GRACE ITSELF TEACHES US TO DENY WORLDLY LUSTS AND LIVE SOBERLY IN THIS PRESENT WORLD.

(My personal thoughts — notice the order: temperance is added to knowledge, and patience is built on temperance. And grace teaches: the same grace that brings salvation teaches us to say no to worldly lusts and to live soberly — sophronos (G4996, soberly), with a sound mind. Those who run for a perishable crown are temperate — egkrateuomai (G1467, to be temperate) — in all things; how much more should we be, for an imperishable one.)

MOUTH OF TWO — THE WORD SOLD: MAKAR (H4376, TO SELL) AND APODIDOMI (G591, TO SELL)

A. 1 Kings 21:20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold [**H4376 makar**] thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

A KING SOLD HIMSELF FOR A VINEYARD OF HERBS.

B. Hebrews 12:16-17 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold [**G591 apodidomi**] his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

A FIRSTBORN SON SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT FOR ONE MORSEL OF MEAT, AND HEBREWS ADDS WHAT KINGS DOES NOT — THE TEARS THAT COULD NOT BUY THE TRADE BACK.

(My personal thoughts — of all the men in this study, the word sold is written about two only: Ahab and Esau. A king traded righteousness for a vegetable garden; a firstborn traded his inheritance for a single meal. The book of Kings ends Ahab with judgment, but Hebrews alone follows Esau further — into the day he tried to get the blessing back with tears, and found no place of repentance. Do not sell yourself; some trades cannot be bought back.)

C. Ecclesiastes 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

TWO SHALL WITHSTAND HIM + A THREEFOLD CORD IS NOT QUICKLY BROKEN.

THE SHADOW AND THE FULFILLMENT — THE THREEFOLD LUST, AND THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE

Shadow Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

THE FIRST FAILURE OF SELF-CONTROL: FOOD, EYES, AND DESIRE FOR WISDOM.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

THE SAME THREE ARE NAMED AGAIN.

Fulfillment Matthew 4:3-4 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:8-10 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

TEMPTED IN APPETITE AND IN THE EYES' DESIRE, HE ANSWERED WITH THE WORD AND WORSHIPPED GOD ONLY.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

BY ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE MANY WERE MADE SINNERS; BY THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE, MANY ARE MADE RIGHTEOUS.

(My personal thoughts — the same three gates: the flesh, the eyes, the pride of life. At the tree the woman saw, desired, took, and ate. In the wilderness the Son was tempted at the same gates, and answered every one, It is written. Where the first man fell, the obedience of one has made many righteous.)

CLOSING

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND WITH THE TEMPTATION WILL ALSO MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE.

2 Peter 1:6 And to knowledge temperance [G1466 egkrateia]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

TO TEMPERANCE PATIENCE + TO PATIENCE GODLINESS.

(My personal thoughts — here is the whole study in one line: temperance, egkrateia (G1466, temperance), is fruit of the Spirit — yourself ruled by his strength. Ahab sold himself, makar (H4376, to sell); Esau sold his birthright; Saul, Balaam, Eve, and David each valued a thing above the voice of God. But the Son ruled himself even to death, and by the obedience of one many are made righteous. And God is faithful: you will not be tempted beyond what you can bear, and with the temptation he makes a way of escape. Add temperance to your knowledge, and run for the imperishable crown.)

7 QUESTIONS

1. Galatians 5:22-23 — The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and:

- a) wisdom
- b) temperance
- c) knowledge

2. 1 Kings 21:20 — Thou hast sold thyself to:

- a) work evil in the sight of the LORD
- b) work wickedness in the sight of the people
- c) walk in the way of thy fathers

3. 1 Samuel 15:24 — Saul said, I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, because:

- a) I feared the LORD, and obeyed his voice
- b) the people took of the spoil
- c) I feared the people, and obeyed their voice

4. 2 Peter 2:15 — Balaam the son of Bosor loved:

- a) the rewards of divination
- b) the right way
- c) the wages of unrighteousness

5. 1 Peter 2:23 — When he was reviled, he:

- a) reviled not again
- b) answered again
- c) suffered them not

6. Hebrews 12:16 — Esau for one morsel of meat sold:

- a) his blessing
- b) his birthright
- c) his inheritance

7. 1 Corinthians 10:13 — God is faithful, who will with the temptation also make:

- a) a way to escape
- b) a place of repentance
- c) an end of sin

ANSWER KEY: 1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a, 6-b, 7-a

HOW THIS STUDY BRANCHES

- HOW THE SOLD ARE BOUGHT BACK: AHAB AND ESAU SOLD THEMSELVES, BUT YOU ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE (1 CORINTHIANS 6:20) — SOLD UNDER SIN (ROMANS 7:14), YET REDEEMED FROM THE CURSE (GALATIANS 3:13).
- HOW THE CITY IS KEPT: HE WHO HAS NO RULE OVER HIS OWN SPIRIT IS LIKE A CITY THAT IS BROKEN DOWN, AND WITHOUT WALLS (PROVERBS 25:28); AND HE WHO RULES HIS SPIRIT IS BETTER THAN HE WHO TAKES A CITY (PROVERBS 16:32).
- HOW THE RACE IS RUN: TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS LEADS ON TO RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, LOOKING TO JESUS (HEBREWS 12:1-2).
- HOW THE LADDER CLIMBS: TO KNOWLEDGE TEMPERANCE, TO TEMPERANCE PATIENCE, TO PATIENCE GODLINESS (2 PETER 1:5-7) — THAT YOU BE NEITHER BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL (2 PETER 1:8).
- HOW THE TEMPTED ARE HELPED: SINCE HE HIMSELF HAS SUFFERED BEING TEMPTED, HE IS ABLE TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE TEMPTED (HEBREWS 2:18) — TEMPTED IN EVERY WAY AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN (HEBREWS 4:15).
- HOW GRACE TEACHES: LIVE SOBERLY LEADS ON TO LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE, AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING (TITUS 2:13) — A PECULIAR PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS (TITUS 2:14).