

BEING STRONG, NOT WEAK IN Self-Discipline

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The ability to discipline oneself is one of the most important to develop in life. There will be only limited or meager success without it, but with self-discipline we can rise to our full potential.

Thought it is so important, it is something most people are very deficient in. It has become neglected in an age that is told to do its own thing—which means people do what they want to do and refuse to do what they don't want to do.

But we must discipline ourselves even though it be hard.

Good people are not good because they couldn't have been otherwise. Good people are goody by CHOICE and not by chance, by DISCIPLINE and not by drifting.

Every effect has a corresponding cause, and self-discipline is an important cause in anybody being a good person.

A good student has made himself a good student. A good carpenter has made himself a good carpenter. A good cook has made herself a good cook. The girl who has beautiful penmanship has worked to make herself a good writer. The boy who is a good ball player has worked to make himself a good ball player. A good preacher has worked to become that good preacher. All of these set out to become what they are now. They worked at it when others didn't. Each person of success has had a big part in the success he or she has realized.

It is not surprising that the Scriptures point out the responsibility that each person has for himself. Somebody says, "My heart is not right." Whose responsibility is it? The Bible says, "KEEP THY HEART with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23). It is your heart—nobody else's—and it will never be kept unless you keep it. The Bible tells us,

"KEEP YOURSELVES in the love of God" (Jude 21).

Of the Christian I John 5:18 says, "He that is begotten of God KEEPETH HIMSELF, and that wicked one toucheth him not." You may say, "I don't understand that statement." Well in physical matters of life we hear that "self-preservation" is the first law—that is, in danger one does things to save his life really before he even has a chance to think what to do. Why? "Self-preservation." This Bible passage is merely stating that Christians do the same thing in the spiritual realm—that a born-again person is going to keep himself from the devil. Now if you don't keep yourself, nobody else is going to. Yes, God will help you, but He is not going to help you unless He sees you are doing your part to keep yourself from the devil.

Listen to more Bible passages. "Blessed is he that KEEPETH HIS GARMENTS, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). When you get out of the bathtub, whose responsibility is it to see that you have some clothes on before you go out into the street? If you don't put them on, nobody else will do it for you. You must do the same thing concerning your spiritual garments. I Tim. 5:22 says, "Be not partakers of other men's sins: KEEP THYSELF PURE." And Jas. 1:27 shows we will never have pure and undefiled religion before God without self-discipline: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD." And John closes his first epistle with these words: "KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS" (I John 5:21). So every one of us has the responsibility to do the keeping!

Isn't it easy to blame others for our failures? It is done all the time, but that does not fool God before whom we shall all someday stand. We see it on the ball field where the pitcher blames the batter for striking out with the winning run on second base. But it may have been his poor pitching that made it such a close game. The song leader may blame the pianist for a poor song service, but he makes some mistakes too. The preacher may blame the Bible College he attended for his failure in the ministry, but others who went to the same college have succeeded. The man blames his wife for his not getting anywhere in life, but who picked her out in the first place? Didn't he? The parents may blame a preacher for the way their child went because he tried to correct the child. Possibly if they had corrected the child, a preacher wouldn't have had to.

And so it goes with those who fail: "The elders didn't call on me;" or, "The church isn't friendly;" or, "The church isn't spiritual;" or, "I wasn't given the talents for service that others were;" etc., etc., etc. This is

the way people talk who don't assume the responsibility for the way their things turned out always blaming it on somebody else and never assuming any responsibility themselves.

But what saith the Scriptures? Rom. 14:12 says we must give an account of ourselves to God. Matt. 12:36,37 says we must give an account of every word we speak. II Cor. 5:10 says we must give account of every deed we do. And Rom. 2:16 says we must give account of the thoughts we think. Oh, the searchingness of God's judgment! He will miss nothing and He will hold us responsible for everything that is not as it ought to be.

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