

## Lesson 5      30 November, 2014

### Ruling Our Spirits

**Lesson Scope:** Proverbs 10, 11, 14-18, 20-22, 24-26, 29, 30

#### Lesson Focus

This lesson deals with a universal problem of mankind—the need to control one's spirit. It is easy enough to tell others how to respond. The acid test comes when another crosses our path, or when things do not work out for us.

"The tongue can no man tame" (James 3:8). Of ourselves, we lack the strength to control our spirits. Only by surrendering to God and experiencing the new birth can we receive power to live above our carnal, selfish nature. Life is a constant proving ground. We must continually surrender self and allow the new nature to control us.

This lesson touches one of the greatest tests of character—the ability to control one's spirit. Some men pass great tests of endurance, but they fail in the smaller tests, such as controlling their speech and actions when things go wrong.

We emphasize the need for God's help to control our spirit. Even the best of men's efforts will fail. "The tongue can no man tame" (James 3:8). Only a person who is filled and directed by the Holy Spirit can rule his own spirit. And the challenge is ongoing—throughout life.

A man's attitudes and emotional responses reveal the condition of his heart. The child of God must therefore, by God's grace, rule his spirit.

Begin each day with a prayer for God's help

**Lesson Aim:** To see the involvements of ruling one's spirit.

**Theme Verse:** Proverbs 16:32. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

#### Lesson Text

##### "A Humble Spirit"

Proverbs 10:19-20 <sup>19</sup>In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise. <sup>20</sup>The tongue of the just *is as*

choice silver: the heart of the wicked *is* little worth.

**Proverbs 11:13** A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

**Proverbs 15:1-4** <sup>1</sup> A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. <sup>2</sup> The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. <sup>3</sup> The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good. <sup>4</sup> A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.

**Proverbs 29:20** Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him.

### "Slow to Anger"

**Proverbs 14:17** *He that is* soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

**Proverbs 14:29** *He that is* slow to wrath *is* of great understanding: but *he that is* hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

**Proverbs 16:32** *He that is* slow to anger *is* better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

**Proverbs 20:22** Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

**Proverbs 21:29** A wicked man hardeneth his face: but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

**Proverbs 22:24-25** <sup>24</sup> Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: <sup>25</sup> Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

**Proverbs 24:17-18** <sup>17</sup> Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: <sup>18</sup> Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

**Proverbs 24:29** Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

**Proverbs 25:8-10** <sup>8</sup> Go not forth hastily to strive, lest *thou know not* what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. <sup>9</sup> Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: <sup>10</sup> Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

**Proverbs 25:22** For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

**Proverbs 26:21** As coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.

**Proverbs 30:33** Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

### **"A Wholesome Tongue"**

**Proverbs 15:13** A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

**Proverbs 16:18-19** <sup>18</sup> Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. <sup>19</sup> Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

**Proverbs 17:22** A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

**Proverbs 18:13-14** <sup>13</sup> He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, it is folly and shame unto him. <sup>14</sup> The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

**Proverbs 20:27** The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

**Proverbs 25:28** He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city that is broken down, *and* without walls.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"A Wholesome Tongue"**

1. Give examples of how a multitude of words becomes sin.
2. How should the awareness of God's omnipresence temper the words we speak?

#### **"Slow to Anger"**

3. Define temper. Describe a properly controlled temper.
4. How does our response to the successes and failures of others reveal our character?
5. In what circumstances might we face the challenge of avoiding contention?

#### **"An Humble Spirit"**

6. How does the Christian's life radiate joy to others?
7. List some character traits of a humble person.
8. Why does returning good for evil leave such a powerful testimony

for Christ?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

"The tongue of the just is as choice silver" (Proverbs 10:20). What value can be placed upon a few well-chosen words!

"Hasty of spirit" (Proverbs 14:29) depicts a man who is rash and unpredictable. A man of quick reactions often needs to deal with regrets later. How much better it is to expect the unexpected in life and to respond calmly.

The soft answer (Proverbs 15:1) refers more to guarded or carefully chosen words than to soft-spoken words. What we answer, and the tone with which we answer, however, are both related.

"A merry heart ... like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22) is necessary to alter our attitudes at times. Merriment must be in proper doses, just as medicine must be.

Proverbs 30:33 gives a graphic illustration of how strife is incurred. It follows the stirring up of wrath, as surely as the churning of milk produces butter and the wringing of the nose yields blood.

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **"A Wholesome Tongue"**

1. Ruling one's spirit requires controlling one's tongue (Proverbs 10:19, 20; 11:13; 15:1-4; 29:20). How easy it is to say more than we should! We may be tempted to spread rumors. But a talebearer is neither kind nor considerate. Sharing a tasty morsel of news brings a certain carnal satisfaction to the speaker.

The soft answer comprises wise, kind words. Consider the power of words. A soft answer has the ability to appease an angry person. In contrast, grievous words from a carnal tongue will aggravate an angry person in his wrath. God's way is effective. Let us believe it and apply the soft answer with God's help.

Harshness of speech is usually regretted later. When someone shares a problem he is facing, give a full listening ear rather than preparing and issuing a prompt solution. It is both polite and essential to hear the whole matter before answering. The ability to keep words in check indicates a controlled spirit.

2. An awareness of God's omnipresence aids in ruling one's spirit

(Proverbs 15:3). God is the silent listener to every conversation. An awareness of God's abiding presence with us will temper the words we speak along with our actions. What would a recording reveal about your life if all the words you spoke today could be replayed? God has recorded every word. In fact, our words will determine whether we are justified or condemned (Matthew 12:37).

### **"Slow to Anger"**

3. Ruling one's spirit requires the exercise of patience (Proverbs 14:17, 29; 16:32). Man's natural response when provoked is to flare up in retaliation. Through God's help, the Spirit-filled man conquers his impulses and responds in a Christlike way. A man who controls his temper exemplifies wisdom and understanding. A man who rules his spirit with patience and self-control has accomplished more than the man who conquers a city.

4. He who rules his spirit will rejoice in another's success (Proverbs 24:17-18, 29). Man's natural response to another's fall is to step over the fallen and to secretly rejoice in his own supposed superiority. It takes a mature person to help another up when he falls or to rejoice when he succeeds. We should never be heard to say, "It serves him right!" Remember, we deserve none of the good things we receive from God. He has graciously provided for us in spite of our mistakes.

5. He who rules his spirit will be trustworthy (Proverbs 25:8-10). It is important to bridle the tongue and not share some information with others. When another confides in us, we carefully guard that knowledge. It takes a disciplined person to control his tongue rather than betray confidence.

6. Ruling one's spirit includes doing good to all men (Proverbs 25:21-22). The idea of giving food and water to an enemy clashes with the carnal mind. But it is God's way, and it is the only effective way to relate to one's enemies. God has promised to reward those who return good for evil.

The man who has learned to control his actions and reactions leaves a powerful testimony for Christ. The man who lacks self-control greatly diminishes his influence. May God help each of us to live by His power for His glory and praise.

7. He who rules his spirit avoids a contentious attitude (Proverbs 26:21; 30:33). A contentious man produces sparks that ignite many fires. Each

one of us exerts an influence on others. A contentious man adds fuel to strife. A man who rules his spirit is like water that extinguishes the flames of strife. Let us examine our lives honestly. Do I promote peace or strife in my relationships with others?

### **"An Humble Spirit"**

8. He who rules his spirit will keep a positive view of life's experiences (Proverbs 15:13; 17:22). What is inside the heart will show on our faces. A person who meets life with an outlook of despondency and gloom drags himself and others downward. Though we do not advocate a lighthearted, frivolous attitude about life, the Bible does teach us to be cheerful.

Do others see that something is different in my life? Does my response to life's circumstances radiate inner joy and peace? Snatches of song from the Christian's lips should be heard regularly. Cheerfulness and buoyancy are contagious. Let us bless others today with the tonic of a merry countenance.

9. The exercise of humility is necessary to rule one's spirit (Proverbs 16:18-19). It is said that a humble person does not have as far to fall as the proud person who has lifted himself up. God hates pride. He brings the proud low, sometimes by their own doings. We are called to express humility in both the successes and the failures of life.

A humble person senses his dependence on God; he does not credit himself for his accomplishments. He is willing to serve God behind the scenes, where no one notices. A humble person yields himself as a living sacrifice to God.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Ruling one's spirit requires controlling one's tongue (Proverbs 10:19-20; 11:13; 15:1-4; 29:20).
2. An awareness of God's omnipresence aids in ruling one's spirit (Proverbs 15:3).
3. Ruling one's spirit requires the exercise of patience (Proverbs 14:17, 29; 16:32).
4. He who rules his spirit will rejoice in another's success (Proverbs 24:17-18, 29).
5. He who rules his spirit will be trustworthy (Proverbs 25:8-10).
6. Ruling one's spirit includes doing good to all men (Proverbs 25:21-

22).

7. He who rules his spirit avoids a contentious attitude (Proverbs 26:21; 30:33).

8. He who rules his spirit will keep a positive view of life's experiences (Proverbs 15:13; 17:22).

9. The exercise of humility is necessary to rule one's spirit (Proverbs 16:18-19).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Give examples of how a multitude of words becomes sin.

A rash answer given to one who mistreated us is one example. Tale-bearing and gossiping are common ways people sin with their words. Sometimes we just talk too much and get ourselves into trouble. There is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

2. How should the awareness of God's omnipresence temper the words we speak?

God is ever near. He is the silent listener in every conversation, whether face-to-face, on the telephone, or in written form. More than this, each word is being recorded, and we will thereby be justified or condemned (Matthew 12:37).

3. Define temper Describe a properly controlled temper

Temper is a particular state of mind or feelings. It is a habit of mind with respect to irritability or patience.

A man with a controlled temper seeks God's help to control his impulses. He is not soon angry. It takes more strength to control one's spirit than to conquer a city.

Many men have stood up to severe tests, even the death of loved ones or financial reverses, only to fail in the smaller tests of daily living.

4. How does our response to the successes and failures of others reveal our character?

A carnal man rejoices when another falls, as though they were playing "king of the mountain." A righteous man with a ruled spirit feels for others. He is happy for another to succeed. Maybe the greatest test is when our brother is getting ahead financially while we are falling behind.

5. In what circumstances might we face the challenge of avoiding contention?

We may need to give the benefit of the doubt to a customer who complains. We must give a "soft answer" when others take advantage of us. We must acknowledge that our brother's idea is worthwhile, rather than insisting that we know best. Never argue; you will be a net loser even if you win the argument.

6. How does the Christian's life radiate joy to others?

The man who is living by Christ's power controls his response to life's circumstances. "In every thing give thanks" has been well learned. Others see Christ through our actions and speech when we remain cheerful even if things go wrong. A testimony of joy, peace, and confidence in God amid life's trials speaks to others.

7. List some character traits of a humble person.

He gives God the credit for his accomplishments. He does not berate himself for his failures. He depends on God for strength to meet his responsibilities. He is willing to serve behind the scenes in God's work.

8. Why does returning good for evil leave such a powerful testimony for Christ?

The natural man retaliates when ill-treated. Returning good for evil uproots evil and ill will in others. It ends strife, rather than fueling it.

"When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). It contrasts with the excessive litigation in society.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

### **Research Guide**

1. Read James 3. True wisdom is revealed by meekness. Harsh, unkind words do not proceed from God.

2. Read the chapter titled "Humility" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.