

SERMON GUIDE

Get Wisdom: Govern Your Passions

Proverbs 25:28



Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!

The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!

SERMON NOTES

During the Academy Awards in March of 2022, Will Smith walked on to the stage (uninvited) and slapped Chris Rock following a joke Rock told about Will Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith. The host of award shows like this have historically roasted people in the crowd. It's all a part of the deal. But Will Smith, after laughing at first, then goes on stage and slaps Chris Rock. He then awkwardly starts yelling toward Rock after he went back and sat down. Folks didn't know if this was a hoax and staged thing. Twitter/X blew up with commentary. But it was not a hoax. Smith completely lost his cool. And in one moment, the actor and music artist that had the most polished image, a massively successful career, and an almost universal likability lost it all. He became a joke and was seen as out of control, mentally unstable, and weak. Why? Because he let his passions rule him. He did not govern his passions. Today, as we continue in our Proverbs series, we keep searching what distinguishes the wise from the foolish. And what we're talking about today is something rarely ever discussed or examined. Yet it is massively relevant to our lives because it is a battle fought every single day.

Exegesis

Proverbs 25:28 – "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."

In the ancient world, the wall was the primary defense of any city. Walls provided security, identity, and order. A city with broken walls was exposed to attack, plunder, and chaos—utterly vulnerable to any enemy or destructive force.

"A man without self-control" The Hebrew phrase here could literally be rendered "whose spirit is without restraint." A man given over to his passions or appetites. An unruly man. It refers to someone who cannot govern his impulses, whether that be anger, lust, pride, or appetite. This gets to what theologians have called "passions" or "appetites." What are passions? The passions (or appetites) are the intense, often involuntary motions of the soul—inner impulses of desire, emotion, or affection—that

incline us toward or away from perceived good (like zeal, love, or righteous anger) or evil (like lust, envy, pride anger, rage). They are part of our created nature as embodied souls. God made us with a body and soul. The soul consists of our mind, will, and affections. The affections are the deep movements of the soul (our loves, desires, fears, joys, sorrows, etc.). They are not mere emotions. Our passions are a reactive subset of the affections. They are more intense, immediate, and bodily-influenced movements of the affections. They are often visceral reactions rather than slow-settled loves.

Examples

The Argument in Traffic You're cut off on the highway. Your heart rate spikes. You feel rage rise up, ready to shout or gesture or tailgate. Passion: Anger Will you govern it—or will it govern you?

The Jealous Scroll on Social Media You see someone's vacation, house, spouse, or success. You immediately feel the twinge of Why not me? Passion: Envy Do you rejoice with those who rejoice—or silently resent them?

The Fight at Home A spouse or child says something that stings or disrespects you. You're tempted to retaliate with cutting sarcasm, coldness, or shouting. Passion: Pride, anger, defensiveness Will you respond with humility—or fight to win?

The Late-Night Temptation You're alone with your phone, laptop, or TV. You're tired. Your guard is down. Lustful desires whisper. Passion: Lust, comfort-seeking Will you flee to Christ—or feed the appetite?

The Craving for Food, Drink, or Comfort You're stressed, bored, or sad. That dessert, that extra drink, that binge-watch promises relief. Passion: Gluttony, sloth, escapism Will you numb yourself—or seek refuge in God?

The Drive for Success You're praised at work. Recognition feels good. You want more. You start to crave approval, advancement, and control. Passion: Ambition, pride, greed Will you use your gifts to serve—or to self-exalt? Is success about assuring yourself of value or making you feel superior to others?

The Political Post You see someone say something outrageous or false. You're itching to unload, to shame them with a fiery comment. Passion: anger, pride, self-righteousness Will you speak with truth and grace—or just add heat without light?

The proverb warns us that a man without self control "is like a city broken into and left without walls": Just as the city loses its ability to protect, organize, and flourish once its walls are breached, so does a person lose the capacity for stability, honor, and spiritual flourishing if they lack self-control. Lack of restraint, lack of self-control over our passions and impulses can lead to:

- Lust that leads to adultery and divorce
- Impulsive remarks that lead to broken friendships
- Outbursts of anger that lead to murder

I just finished reading a biography on Tupac Shakur. It's fascinating to hear his story of how he grew up, his creativity and incredible artistic abilities. He could act, he was a poet, he could sing. He was the center of attention everywhere he went, his entire life. But he also lacked the ability to reign in his impulses, feeling the need to act on every perceived slight, ready to take justice in his own hands, spoke every word that came to mind, and gave full vent to his anger when it arose. This led to problems his whole life, leading to missed professional opportunities, time in prison, and eventually his murder. The thing I kept thinking as I read was: man, he just couldn't control his passions.

God warns Cain - Cain and Abel are brothers, both are offering gifts to God, Cain's is not accepted, Abel's is. Cain is angry.

Genesis 4:6-7 – The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

The Lord warns Cain. He knows he is angry and tells him that indwelling sin is waiting for its chance to act upon Cain's anger. It's an enemy within. Notice the Lord's words to him though. Cain is not obligated to give himself over to his anger. Just because he feels it doesn't mean it's right or give him permission to act on it. The Lord tells him he must rule over it. He must govern his passions. He does

not. And the result is Cain kills his brother and is banished from his family and forced to wander as a nomad.

As Christians, we are called in Colossians 3 to "put off" and "put on." We must cultivate self-control. To rule over our passions doesn't mean to eliminate them, but to put them in submission to Christ.

- To love rightly (God > self > neighbor)
- To desire wisely (holiness > pleasure)
- To rejoice in truth (not in wrongdoing)
- To exercise zeal and courage for righteousness, not self-glory.

The same idea we've been discussing emerges here. "He who rules his spirit" is talking about governing our passions and appetites. To have self-mastery is vital for the Christian who wants to honor God with their lives.

Application

1. Begins with regeneration.

You need a new heart and new desires. You can only do so much with the Lord's changing of your heart. Jesus said in John 15:5 "apart from me you can do nothing."

2. Train the affections to love what is good.

You do this by meditating on Scripture. Beholding the glory of Christ. We do this through practicing gratitude and thanksgiving.

3. Engage in the daily battle of fighting your flesh.

You must crucify your flesh daily. You have to choke out sin and sinful desires. Self-denial is one of the core tenets of Christianity. We do not gratify and entertain every impulse we have. We evaluate it to make sure it is in alignment with what God says. If not, we kill it. We confess sin. Fast. Find accountability.

4. Recognize the source of the battle.

You are not in a battle with flesh and blood alone (Ephesians 6). We have an enemy who seeks to devour. He seeks to entice your appetites and whispers for you to give full vent to them. His temptation

in the garden was with forbidden fruit. What was the promise? Something delicious that was withheld. Something to make them wise like God that was not given to them. He appealed to her hunger/appetite, to her fear of missing out. In other words, Satan stoked her passions.

5. Walk by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Submit to the Spirit each day. Ask the Holy Spirit, who lives in you as a believer, to help you. If you walk by the Spirit, you will not gratify the desires (passions) of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Abide in Christ daily. Pursue holiness and obedience to God's Word.



LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



LOOK UP

- **REVIEW**

- Read Proverbs 25:28 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
 - Proverbs 16:32
 - Ephesians 4:26
 - Colossians 3:5
 - 1 Peter 2:11

- **DISCUSS**

- What does Proverbs 25:28 mean when it says a man without self-control is like a city without walls?
- What are passions and how are they different from mere emotions?
- How does the story of Cain and Abel reinforce the call to govern our passions?
- What is the spiritual danger of letting our passions rule us?
- What does it mean to "train the affections," and why is that important?
- Why is self-control considered a mark of Christian maturity?
- How can we actively fight against our sinful passions?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us govern our passions?
- Why is it insufficient to rely on willpower alone to resist sinful impulses?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

LOOK AHEAD



- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT**

- **How are you making yourself known at church this week?**
- **How are you growing to know Christ better this week?**

- **How are you making Christ known this week?**
- **PRAYER**
 - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
 - **Pray for our team:** Morgan Cates (Shepherd Director)
 - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
 - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Indonesia Team departing on August 10, 2025
 - Rome Team departing on November 15, 2025
 - Nashville Team departing on November 17, 2025
 - **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>