

Disease Prevention through Godly Living – Sample Chapter

Prevention is better than cure—that is a well-known saying.

For example, instead of treating a patient with full blown clinical symptoms of cholera, it is better in the first place to provide the individual with clean drinking water, clean sanitation and also to educate the individual about the need to maintain good personal hygiene.

He who is not sick needs no physician. Let us pause a moment and consider our world suddenly transformed into a world free of disease—yes, a world populated only by healthy individuals. Imagine that—a world of healthy people where there is no diabetes, no arthritis, no HIV, no malaria, no mental illness, no cancer! Arguably, the number of the unemployed would suddenly shoot up into the high heavens resulting in possible social unrest as all our hospitals, polyclinics, health centres and psychiatric institutions closed their doors and sent their entire staff home for lack of work!

We Christians believe that in the world to come, there will indeed be no disease, no suffering and—no death! But so long as we are resident in a fallen and evil world, we will continue to be plagued with diseases. So I do urge all those aspiring to become nurses, pharmacists, dentists, doctors, psychiatrists, not to lose heart, for indeed as long as the world exists in its present state there will be plenty of work for you!

Still, there is the need for each and every one of us as individuals to do whatever we can to prevent disease. This brings to mind what I learnt from my driving school teacher in the northern German city of Hanover several years ago. He taught his driving class that three factors come into play the moment a driver joins the flow of traffic. These are:

- 1) The driving skills of the individual involved.
- 2) The condition of the vehicle he or she is driving.
- 3) The other drivers on the road, the condition of the road and the elements.

Whereas one can influence the first two factors, our teacher pointed out, the individual is completely at a loss as to third factor. He urged us always to do all we could do to minimise the chances of becoming involved in a road traffic accident by positively influencing the first two factors. For example, we should never drive under the influence of alcohol or when we are too tired, or too unwell to do so.

Concerning the second factor, he advised us always to make sure the vehicle we are driving is in perfect condition—with properly functioning brakes, good tyres, well-functioning lighting systems, etc.

In a sense, that thinking can also apply to the area of our health. It is said that the best defence is attack. In the area of medicine, I will modify that saying to this: the best cure is prevention! So let us make this our highest priority—the prevention of disease.

What kind of prevention, one might ask? Well, many a reader is surely aware of some of the well-known disease-preventive measures around. We read of them in books on health education; they may be handed to us when we visit our family doctor; we may also read about them from health education journals and the popular press.

These include maintaining good personal hygiene, drinking clean water, having vaccinations, and taking prophylaxis such as malaria tablets prior to travelling to the tropics, etc. Later in the discussion I will also touch on

disease-preventive measures such as eating a balanced diet and exercising the body on a regular basis.

Many a Christian will agree that our Lord Jesus Christ is the great physician of all times. We do indeed read in the Bible that He healed the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the paralysed. In other words, He actively intervened to heal diseases.

But have we sat down to consider the area of prevention? Have we ever linked Dr Jesus, the Great Physician of all time, with preventive medicine? Indeed, have we, as followers of the Great High Priest, sat down to consider the huge disease-preventing potential of the Word of God?

It might indeed not have occurred to you, but it is indeed true that the mere adherence to the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, either spoken directly by Himself, or through inspiration by His servants, could avert several diseases.

I want to stress my point. We may indeed not be able to prevent every kind of disease afflicting fallen Mankind, by accepting and abiding by the Word of Scripture. Still, it is my deep conviction that we could indeed avert many kinds of diseases, not only those affecting the body, but also those affecting the mind if we would accept and keep to the teachings of the Good Shepherd.

Modern medical science will not tell you that, because, after all, it is scientific-based and atheistically oriented. This book, as the title suggests, is meant in the first place for Christians, so I will take the privilege upon myself to point out the facts as I see them. You may not agree with me on everything I say, of course. Well, I do not claim to be the last authority in anything. I am merely trying to express my thinking with a good conscience, based on my knowledge and experience as a Christian doctor.

Now let us consider this passage of scripture attributed to the Lord Himself:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of

itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Matthew 6:25-34

Note the last verse (6:34) especially: 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'

A close look at the sentence as it stands, indeed, a close reflection on the verse as it stands, will probably lead one to ask the question: 'Why did we have to wait for the Lord to tell us something that, in reality, is a matter of common sense?'

The definition of tomorrow is—'the day following (or after) today.'

Now, as we are living today, the day following today has not yet arrived, has it? We are indeed always living in the today! Why then do you and I allow the problems of tomorrow, yes, the day after today, to burden us, to cause us a headache today? Today is today; tomorrow never comes—it's as simple as that!

And yet how often do we permit the problems of tomorrow to weigh on our brains, yes, to burden us to the extent that some of us eventually end up on the psychiatric ward!

Let us take a concrete example—the threat of job loss. That could lead to anxious thoughts—how we will feed ourselves and our family, how we will pay our utility bills, how we will pay our rent or mortgage, and how that might lead to the repossession of our homes, etc.

As the fear of the possible loss of our job tomorrow (tomorrow, that in effect never comes) persists, so also would the thickness of the dark cloud of despair surrounding us increase, to the extent it could lead us to consider ending it all!

We may indeed still have our jobs—only the threat of losing it might be looming over our heads. Still, we suffer anxiety and sleep disturbance as a result.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is not saying that we should not make the effort to avert the situation. We may for example apply for other jobs. We could also consider the possibility of becoming self-employed. What He is urging us is to do our best in the situation and leave the rest to Him. Our efforts, backed by our prayers, can change the situation, whereas our anxiety, sleep disturbance and depression cannot.

I am not implying that I am immune to that human weakness. I have indeed harboured anxious thoughts in the past. It did not lead to full blown depression but they were nevertheless anxious thoughts that occupied me for a while. Now, looking back on those periods in my life, how silly indeed was I to have harboured those thoughts!

Indeed, if only we could accept those words of the Lord with childlike faith, how many problems that plague us—anxiety, tension headaches, sleep disturbance, depression, would be averted.

Let me move on to another passage of scripture:

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6: 15-20

I want us to consider in particular Versus 19 & 20:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Now the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul is telling us that our respective bodies represent the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit! I want us to pause for a moment to ponder over this statement. I really do have the impression that often we take our responsibility as Christians too lightly. Wherein lies the problem, friends? Is it because the message coming out of the pulpit these days is made up of things like: "Pay your tithes and receive your blessings", "May the Lord bless you and prosper you", "All things work together for good"—without also including "We are Soldiers of the Cross", "God is a spirit and those who worship him should worship him in spirit and in truth", "Your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit," etc? "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit"—that is an awesome statement. I am not trying to be scary, but, indeed, sometimes I am even afraid to call myself a Christian because it is indeed a very high calling—indeed, it is. Now the Holy Father has sent His Holy spirit to dwell in us. As real soldiers of the Cross, our bodies are no longer ours, but the Lord's. This is an amazing fact. Now we know that the Lord is Holy and nothing impure can come near Him. So if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us, then nothing impure should come near our body to render it impure. It's as if we are wearing a snow white wedding gown—so dirt, filth, impurity, away, away with you! Go away, all impurity—never come near me! When I was young, when I at certain times became angry with my parents, I decided to go without food. Why did I do that? Well, in my immature mind I thought I was punishing them! In the same vein we might think we may be doing the Lord a favour, i.e. manipulating Him, by heeding (or not heeding!) his admonition to us to keep our, yes, the temple of the Holy Spirit, pure. If that is what we think, then please let us discard those ideas at this very moment as we read these lines!

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