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THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPIC

By the Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer, D. D.

June 5—Our Christian Duty to Maintain Health. I Tim. 4:8; Rom. 12:1.

We are just coming to place a new value on the human body. Years ago they did not regard the body very highly. There was a type of philosophy which looked upon all matter as evil, and the only thing to do was to keep it under, suppress it, or get rid of it entirely. The body was a material thing and was considered a hindrance to the spirit. The flesh and the spirit were set in deadly opposition to each other, and consequently men despised the body in the interests of the spirit. There were those who tortured and abused it, who starved and suppressed it in order that the spirit might be released. There was a time when men used to think that paleness and piety, sickness and saintliness went together. The paler a person looked the more pious he was supposed to be. Sickness was of the Lord and was regarded as a wholesome discipline of the body. One was not supposed to be healthy and holy at the same time. But now all this has changed. We have come to understand that the body as well as the soul, is holy. A new estimate of the body is one of the triumphs of our religion. Of course, way back in Paul's writings men read that we are to glorify God with our bodies which are His, that they constitute the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God which is our reasonable service. But the ascetic put another interpretation upon these words and therefore came far short of a true understanding and use of his body.

Now, it is our Christian duty to be healthy, as well as to be happy and holy. We are placing so much more emphasis upon health than we used to do. We see that sickness is a liability and health is an asset in every department of human life. A healthy mind and a healthy body are the chief requisites in a successful life. We used to think that sickness came fro mthe Lord and we were told to endure it and be patient and brave under it. It was a great lesson in submission and humility. But now we come to see that sickness is an interloper into our life, that it is abnormal, that it is a violation of some physical or spiritual law. There are laws of health, and if these laws are broken sickness is the result. Sickness, is, therefore, a transgression of the law. God does not want His children to be sick; He wants them to be well and healthy and happy. But when they violate the laws of health which are the laws of God, then they become sick and must suffer for it. Sickness is therefore a form of punishment for the violation of the laws of health. Sickness is due to certain poisons in the system. There is a perpetual warfare going on in our bodies. There are these enemies of ours, germs, microbes, parasites, poisons, which lie in wait to attack us. When they enter, the human body puts up a defense, it summons all its allies and forces and resources to overcome these foes that assail. The nature of the body is to make for health. If you break a limb or suffer a wound all the powers of your body, the blood and tissues put forth extra effort to heal the same. Sometimes external means in the form of medicine or other remedies must be called in to help them, but all nature is intent on healing, not hurting. That is the meaning of pain. Pain is simply a way the body has to tell that it is ill, that an enemy has entered its territory. A headache is simply a ringing of the bell that there is something wrong in the body. The trouble is usually not in the head, but the nerve wires register it there. Now if we could just drive out all the poisons, the enemies of the body, we might prolong our life many years and prove far more efficient than we generally are. The secret of health is to keep the body free from poison. That means that we must not put anything into the body which poisons it, and while there is always considerable poison left as a residue from what we eat or drink, we must eliminate it as fully as possible. The body is just compassed round about with glands which are intended to secrete or throw off poisons. They are the standing army, the police force of the body. The skin is intended not merely to cover the flesh, but to let out the poisons through the pores. Now when one or more of these glands fail to function, trouble begins. Sometimes other glands come to the rescue, do double duty and compensation is provided, but when this does not happen then danger is ahead, disease and death lie in waiting.

What are the laws of health? They are very simple, as all of God's laws are. They may be grouped in the form of an acrostic of the word Laws.

L.—Light. Sunlight. Most germs thrive in the dark, they die in the light. They hate the light, for their works are evil. Houses where the sunlight is banished are germ breeders. Dirt that lurks in darkness is one of our greatest enemies. Bring the hidden things to light. Let the light shine in. Bring sunshine into the soul, be cheerful, happy, radiant, of a sunshiny disposition. Be active, exercise, work, have your mind free of care and worry. Do not fret.

A.—Air. Atmosphere. We should all die without air. We need pure air, wholesome, invigorating air, the ozone from the hills. We need a happy, wholesome atmosphere that buoys us up and supplies us with vigor.

W.—Water. Few people know the value of water in the health regime. God made three times as much water as land, but man fails to put it to proper use. Drink lots of water, a few gallons a day. Apply it freely for internal and external uses. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and the daily bath is quite as essential for spiritual health as is daily prayer. One finds it hard to be good with a filthy body. A filthy body and a filthy mind often go together. There is moral value in a bath, not to speak of its physical and psychic value. Clean clothes have an effect on the whole personality. Thank God for water as well as for bread, and learn to pray, "Give us this day our daily bath," as well as "our daily bread."

S.—Sleep. Nature's sweet restorer. The Psalmist says, "He giveth His beloved sleep." But the proper translation is, "He giveth His beloved while they sleep." During sleep the wasted powers of the body are restored. Rest enables th worn and weary body to revive. Weariness, tiredness are due to poisons which sleep throws off. Therefore take plenty of it. Give the body a chance. No one can enjoy health who robs the body of needed sleep. The midnight oil cannot make up what lo s of sleep produces. Wrinkles, old age, dullness, bad temper, disease, death are the inevitable result of late hours and turning night into day.

Many other suggestions might be offered. These are enough. "Thou hast a body." It is a sacred thing. Keep it, cherish it, use it properly, do not abuse it. Plan to be well and healthy, fight sickness, overcome disease and so shall you live to a good old age and happiness and health and wealth shall be yours.

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Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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Lesson for June 5
PETER PREACHING TO GENTILES

LESSON TEXT—Acts 10:1-11:18.

GOLDEN TEXT—For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.—Rom. 10:12.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Peter Tells a Foreigner About Jesus.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Peter Takes the Gospel to Gentiles.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Taking the Gospel to All Races.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—How the Gospel Overcomes Race Prejudice.

The missionary program of the church having broadened to include the Samaritans, we see in this lesson it still widening and embracing the Gentiles. Through the conversion of Cornelius, the "middle wall of partition" was broken down (Eph. 2:4).

I. Cornelius (10:1, 2).

1. His official position (v. 1).

He was a Roman officer over a company of 100 soldiers.

2. His character (v. 2).

(1) A devout, pious man. (2) He was a praying man. (3) He was charitable. He gave much alms. (4) He was respected by his family.

II. The Supernatural Preparation for the Transition of the Gospel to the Gentiles. (10:3-33).

This was of divine arrangement. No barrier is too great to prevent the coming together of persons whom the Lord desires to meet. In order to bring this about:

1. Two visions were given.

(1) The vision of Cornelius (vv. 3-8).

While engaged in prayer, an angel of God announced that his prayer and alms had come before God as a memorial, and instructed him to send to Joppa for Peter who would tell him what to do.

(2) The vision of Peter (vv. 9-16).

This took place while Peter was praying (v. 9). He saw a certain vessel containing clean and unclean animals let down from heaven, and heard the command, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter protested that he had never eaten any unclean thing. God replied, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

2. A messenger sent from Cornelius (vv. 17-22).

Peter was greatly perplexed over what he had seen, but not for long, for messengers from Cornelius made inquiry at the gate for him. The spirit informed Peter of the matter and bade him go, nothing doubting.

3. The meeting of Cornelius and Peter (vv. 23-33).

(1) Peter took six witnesses along (v. 23).

(2) Cornelius waiting for Peter (v. 24).

He called together his kinsmen and near friends.

(3) Cornelius about to worship Peter (vv. 25, 26).

Peter repudiated his act and protested that he was but a man.

(4) The reciprocal explanation (vv. 27-33).

III. Peter's Sermon (vv, 34-43).

1. The introduction (vv. 34, 35).

He showed that God is no respecter of persons. This does not mean that Cornelius was already in a state of grace, thereby saved, but that he was eligible to hear the gospel and accept the terms of salvation.

2. His discourse (vv. 36-43).

In the discourse he touches briefly upon the mission of Jesus, showing that by means of His baptism and anointing with the Holy Spirit, He was qualified for His work as mediator. He then exhibited the work of Christ:

(1) In His life (vv. 36-39).

It was one of beneficence. He went about doing good, even casting out demons as a proof that God was with Him (v. 38).

(2) In His death (v. 39).

The just suffered for the unjust that He might bring us to God (I Pet. 3:18).

(3) In His resurrection (vv. 40, 41).

In this discourse is set forth:

(a) The basis of salvation—the crucifixion of Christ.

(b) The scope of salvation—whosoever believeth in Him.

(c) The method of appropriating salvation—believing on Him.

IV. The Holy Spirit Poured Out (vv. 44-48).

This was a new Pentecost.

V. Peter Vindicates His Ministry to the Gentiles (11:1-18).

Being called to account for visiting and eating with Gentiles, Peter rehearsed the whole story in such a way that his narrative took the form of logical argument, and showed how God had set His seal upon the work by the miraculous gift of the Spirit.

Closing the Day

Says Dr. R. A. Torrey: "No bank ever closes its business day until its balance is found to be absolutely correct. And no Christian should close a single day until his accounts with God for that day have been perfectly adjusted alone with Him."

The Best Side

The habit of looking on the best side of every event is worth more than a thousand a year.—Doctor Johnson.

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