

Sermon 1

Topic: My Body is God's Temple

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 6: 12 – 20

Let us pray

Father, we thank you for your grace and compassion in that, your love seeks us daily; reaching out to touch us; to alert us to your presence with us. Holy Spirit, we open our minds to hear your voice even as we open our hearts to love you, and our lives to follow your leading. Speak to us now, we pray, in and through your matchless name Lord Jesus. Amen.

Introduction

I greet you my brothers and sisters in the great and wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ. It is an honour to be invited to share with you on this very timely issue which is apt for everyday of our lives, the issue of our health. It is clear that without good health, our ability to enjoy our life is severely hampered since much of our time is consumed with concern for our deteriorating health and its impact on our family, our finances and our future. Today we address this area of our life and witness from the point of view of our topic: "My Body is God's Temple."

Our text is 1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20:

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Our health is crucial for long life and the enjoyment of that life. This area of industry is a multi-billion-dollar business with healthy food, medicine, vitamins, dietary supplements, exercise equipment and gym memberships combining to be a very lucrative business because everybody wants to live for a long time and put death off for as long as we can. Saint and sinner alike want to live for a long time. For us who belong to the Kingdom of God, it is good that we are giving this careful thought because one of the greatest advertisement billboards for a happy life in the Kingdom of God is a believer with a healthy body. In the text, Paul seems to be addressing what the Corinthians thought they had freedom

from Jewish Law. While Paul seems to agree with in some measure; that some things were a part of natural course or process of life, he insists that there are some things they never had freedom to become indulged in. While they thought they could use their bodies however they pleased, Paul aimed at helping them to know that God was not only interested in the so called “spiritual” side of their lives, God was also interested in their bodies; how they treated their bodies: what they allowed their bodies to become engaged in or with. Their bodies were to glorify God as well.

Even today, a lot of attention is generally placed on developing our spirit and being spiritually healthy, but we hinder the effectiveness of our witness when we repeatedly have to deal with members who are weakened from sickness. Having this focus on our health is critical because we are required to be good stewards of all our resources. In the same way that we are careful in the use of our physical resources; our finances, our skills, gifts and talents, it is our responsibility to the LORD to be good stewards of our bodies.

To maximize our service to God, we must see it as our reasonable service to God to walk in good spiritual health and be as efficient at maintaining our physical health. In order for us to be efficient at maximizing our service to God we need to see our efforts to maintain good physical health as a key component of our spiritual growth and God’s desire for us as expressed in 3 John1:2 **“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”** To get this accomplished we must first ascertain for ourselves what is good health.

Sourcing Good Health

Our journey towards attaining good health must begin with the consciousness and discipline needed to investigate the physical, emotional and spiritual needs for an individual to be disease-free in all areas of his/her being. Good health is more than just being disease-free in our physical bodies, it speaks to our lifestyle and the stress levels that are maintained daily. It is incumbent on us to ensure that we are rested and our physical bodies are allowed to recover from the challenges we put them through. We are expected to pay attention to our mental state because true health incorporates a healthy mind as well. Paul instructs us to view our bodies as the Jews viewed the Temple in his day.

For the Jews, the Temple was more than just a place where they could satisfy their spiritual longings. It was more than just a place where they could have a good time in worship. The Temple was a symbol of God's presence with the people and His choice as Sovereign to dwell amongst the people. He was above all else holy and expected those who accepted His sovereignty to be willing to pursue holiness in their personal lives. This meant self-discipline in every area of our lives and for our understanding today of good health, this expectation of self-discipline will take on great import. It challenges those interested in pleasing God to view the notion of good health as something we can attain in the first place, and more importantly, as being the point of our duty to God as we exercise restraint in our choices for food consumption.

The Christian who pursues good health as an aspect of their worship of God, honours God in their choices. Their thought life or their mental capacity is seen as the seed bed for their life and the area over which their control must be most vigilant. Good mental health is achievable through the disciplines of meditation and reflection and is supported by regular periods of rest. This disciplined approach can't be viewed as optional or even as intermittent. It must become the daily practice of every believer who embarks on the pursuit of viewing their physical body the way the Jews viewed the temple as Paul maintains. In Philippians 4, Paul states a formula for the believer who will seek to maintain good emotional health by monitoring their thought life. He tells us in verse 8: "8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

Without specifically stating the benefits to the believer for good mental health, Paul proposes a series of exercises for the believer and anyone in general who is serious about their health. The believer who sees it as a direct responsibility to view his or her body as the Temple of God will pay attention to the level of holiness in their thought life. The added benefit from following Paul's guidelines is stress reduction because the science reveals there is a significant risk to our physical health from elevated

stress levels.

Good health also entails stability in our emotional state. A major area which must be managed is our feelings which are linked to our psychological wellbeing. Paul's instructions which we went through earlier are also applicable as it relates to our emotional health. Our blood pressure can be readily controlled when we focus on positive things and we are less likely to be in a bad mood; less likely to be angry and stay angry; less likely to be fearful; less likely to be depressed; less likely to be hard on ourselves if we focus on the things he suggests we focus on. With this attention to our thoughts, our feelings and our diet, we can begin the process of securing and maintaining good health in our bodies, even as we view our bodies as the holy place where we meet God for worship, fellowship with his Holy Spirit and the place from which we receive instruction for daily living.

The challenge of viewing our bodies as God's temple brings us to a second area that requires our attention. That area is Caring for the Temple. This leads us to maintain our health.

Maintaining Good Health

The importance of taking care of our body cannot be over stated. A critical part of maintaining good health is caring for our bodies and minds. For the Jew, the temple represented the promise that God would be their source. God revealed himself to Abraham as the one who provides and His Temple stood as a symbol to the Jewish people that their needs would be taken care of. Strength and power in the day of battle; food and shelter in the time of harvest and the day of rain; love and security in the day of emotional test and trial. So, to the Jews, this meant that their relationship with the temple would shape, and in great measure, influence their relationship with their God. For us then, our bodies must be seen in a similar light. How we approach our bodies must reflect the knowledge that our bodies are our source of provision, protection and nurture. This means then that there must be great attention paid to the maintenance of our bodies since our relationship with our God is shaped by our relationship to our Temple.

As we seek to maintain good health then we must pay careful attention to our diet. We looked just now at the things we feed our minds, but we must look at what we feed our bodies, literally. The Jews were told by Moses that no defiled person could enter the precincts of the temple. The book of Leviticus indicates the categories of defilement for the Jew in much the same way as our various health care professionals, in particular, those in the arena of diet indicate to us what we should and should not eat. A disciplined mind is key to achieving success in maintaining a healthy diet, especially when we have been in the habit of eating poorly in the past. We have to rethink our approach to health and the relationship which we have with our body and with our mind. Paul challenges us to rethink our approach to our lives in his letter to the Church in Rome. In Romans 12 verse 2 Paul says:

“² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This challenges the believer and anyone interested in healthy living to look again at their mindset.

The average individual is influenced in all our habits by the media and by our circle of associates. Our diets are largely influenced in this way as well, but if we will treat our bodies as the Temple of God, and relate to it as the Jew would to the Temple, then a renewed mindset is vital for the accomplishment of this task. A transformed mind requires great discipline and a necessary tool for this is being selective about what we think about. If we follow Paul’s philosophy regarding our thought processes, then we learn that we have control over the things we focus on in our minds. He said we must determine what we will think about. Is it always possible to easily do this? No. It sometimes requires that we wrestle with the thoughts that float into our minds. Many of us probably have friends who are diabetic or hypertensive who we argue with regarding their diets. They want to be healthy but they want to eat what they want. This is akin to the Jew who wants to go into the temple to worship for the special feast days but also wants to enjoy his life, even if that enjoyment means self-defilement. It can’t happen. This is why Paul says we have to transform our mindsets.

For most of us the next question becomes, “How do we do this because it is hard to just transform ourselves?” Paul also tells us how to do this. In 2 Corinthians 10 verse 3 – 6 Paul wrote:

“³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶ and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”

In short, we have to be vigilant about what we will not allow to fill our minds, and when we instead choose to meditate on the things that are of good report, then we will make good progress in regarding our body as the way the Jew regarded the temple.

When we think about treating our bodies as the Jew treated the temple we must

- Source good health
- Maintain Good Health

Thirdly we must Guard against becoming lax as it relates to our good health.

- Guard our good health

One of the major causes for “falling off the wagon” as it relates to our pursuit of good health is because we become indifferent to the consequences of not taking care of our bodies. It may be the burden of having to give up the things we enjoy eating, or the pleasure we get from living a fast lifestyle, or it may be the attention we get when we put our emotions on our sleeve for the world to see, but for many of us we soon get tired of living healthy. Eventually, we go back to the liquor, or we return the salt or the sweets to our meals; we stay out late and we miss meals; eat late and when we do eat, we eat junk. We don’t read mind improving material and we wallow in self-pity, leading to a return of the weight which we had lost, or a growth spurt in a tumor, or a breakdown in a relationship. Paul advises against this relaxing of our efforts because he was aware that any effort to improve our lot would be met with stiff resistance.

Paul wrote in Galatians 6:9: *“⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”* The challenge to maintain our good health is an arduous one and can

only be successful if we push through those difficult periods when we want to give up. Our efforts must be viewed as Paul says in Galatians 6. We must see the end point of our actions as healthy living, whatever that looks like or means to you individually. He indicates that it takes time and requires effort but it is possible to achieve our results. Will we have push back against our progress? Yes. Paul said in Ephesians that we struggle against formidable forces of evil set in array against us. When we consider that ill health leads to pain and suffering and possibly early death on our part, and emotional stress on the part of our loved ones, we can understand why our struggle to maintain good health is hampered by those forces of evil. The thoughts telling us to give up; the unhealthy diets luring us back into unhealthy eating; the mindsets that make it so easy for us to get what we want instead of struggling so hard to be someone we have never been before, make our struggle real.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5: 8, 9: *“⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”* In short, we can only be defeated when we give up and stop focusing on our goal of good health in body, mind and spirit. For the Jew, the more difficult things got, the closer he drew to the temple, not just the physical precincts of the temple, but the spiritual significance of the temple. If we will succeed in not just viewing our bodies as God’s temples, but more so, in engaging our bodies in this light of them being God’s temples, and benefit physically, emotionally and more significantly, spiritually, then we must be prepared to fight against ourselves and see the goal of a healthy body, mind and spirit and what our quality of life will be like so that we can be walking advertisement billboards for God and the quality of life we can enjoy when we live healthy lives for God.

It is God’s desire for us to have life in all its fullness. Let make that discussion to care for the body God has given us; let us work at enjoying good health by the daily decisions we make and action we take. Amen.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank you for your grace which allows us to transform our minds and thus transform our lives. We offer you our bodies as our reasonable service, not only as a spiritual sacrifice, but for your service daily. Increase our understanding of what it means to be healthy and as we pursue good health, enable us to see the myriad ways we can bring attention to your kingdom as healthy persons in mind, body and spirit; that we may bring glory to you and your name; in your name I pray, Lord Jesus. Amen.