

PROSPERITY AND HEALTH¹

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If your house has a wood-shake roof, you will want to take very great care lest it catch fire. Such care and watchfulness will be better than trying to put out the fire on the roof, once it has gotten started. “Prevention is better than cure.”

The collision shop exists for the purpose of repairing damaged vehicles. If a driver wishes to do so, he may drive his car carelessly and run it into the ditch or hit a tree, and have it taken to the shop where it will be straightened out. But it is better to drive carefully and thus avoid the accident. “Prevention is better than cure.”

But we are often extremely foolish when we fail to take care of our bodies. We carelessly abuse our bodies just as the reckless driver ruins his car and then has to look for a repair shop. We look for some “miracle medicine” to make us well again in the hospital. But “prevention is better than cure.”

One’s food is a very personal matter. When we get hungry, we naturally want to eat what we think is satisfying to us. Often personal, even selfish, prejudice dictates our diet.

But there are increasing numbers of people who are learning that one’s choice of good largely determines health and therefore happiness. Some wait to change until they are forced by disease to

do so. In those cases, appetite has had to give way to the demands of simple survival.

Others more wise, learn to anticipate the possibility of disease and have voluntarily changed their eating habits. They sense the relation between food and health. And there are many of a different group—those who prefer a healthful diet because they frankly enjoy simple foods. Often these people have become vegetarians.

There is a good reason presented in the Bible why we should control appetite: only when we have healthy bodies and clear minds can we appreciate the present work of Christ our High Priest in His final ministry of cleansing the sanctuary, and preparing people for His second coming. God is interested in our health.

Some Ways by Which Disease Comes

A person may bring disease upon himself through disobeying the laws of health. Perhaps through lack of rest, intemperance, lack of pure air, or the wrong kind of food, or sexual intemperance, he brings disease upon himself. So he gets an injection of “miracle medicine,” and wonder of wonders, he feels well almost immediately. What does he proceed to do? He goes right back to repeating the mistakes and intemperance that made him sick in the first place.

Is this God’s way of healing? No, for the end result is that the sick man never learns to obey the laws of God, until he goes on so long in transgression that he finally dies of his intemperance and ignorance.

The Bible has much to say about our health. The Lord wants us to be well and happy. “Beloved, I

¹ 3 John 2-4. 27, 559.

wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

Our eating and drinking must be controlled by wisdom and self-rule. The body must not rule the mind. Self-denial and temperance in matters of eating, drinking, and other practices are necessary if one is to enjoy good health, mentally, physically, and spiritually. “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).

This principle of self-denial is the principle of the cross of Christ. *It is the way of a happy life*, and it is taught all through the Bible. Moses said, “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is *right in his sight*, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for *I am the Lord that healeth thee*” (Ex. 15:26).

What to Do about Mistakes in the Past, and How to Plan for a Better Future

If one has erred in the past due to ignorance, the Lord is merciful and gracious to him. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction” (Ps. 103:2-4). If we repent of our past mistakes, it is not too late to find new life in following what is right. “It shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the

mercy. . . And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee” (Deut. 7:12, 15).

The message of healthful living has always been a part of “the third angel’s message” since our beginning in the 1840’s.

Almost simultaneous with the “saints” accepting the first knowledge of the 1844 sanctuary message came the rudimentary understanding of what has been known as the “health reform message.” The principal item of the health message at that early time was giving up tobacco and alcoholic drinks. (Drug abuse wasn’t a noticeable problem then to the early Adventists).

From our beginnings as a people, the reason for the need of a health message was not so much the desire to live longer and enjoy lives more free from suffering, as to maintain clarity of mind to comprehend the truths to be associated with the grand “Adventist” concept of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. That sanctuary message was the driving force that made the Adventist message unique and appealing to “the remnant” who revered the Bible.

The idea of “cleansing” came to be thought integral to living in the antitypical Day of Atonement. Tobacco was seen as “the filthy weed,” and its use “defiling.” The emphasis on giving up tobacco was not so much fear of lung cancer or high blood pressure or all the other ills that follow its use today, but on this idea of “cleansing.” Abundant Scripture was found on the evils of drunkenness, and total

abstinence easily became the application of the idea of “cleansing” in the abandonment of all alcoholic drinks. In the early literature of the church, little is said about the physiological detriments of alcohol or tobacco use. Their use was viewed in the light of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

In the mid-1800s the health consciousness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was concentrated on the idea of a preparation for the second coming of Christ. The motivation was not egocentric as is the popular emphasis on “health” in the American public today. The concern that transcended that egocentric one was getting ready for the soon-coming close of probation (and yet its motivation *was* largely old covenant, and therefore egocentric at heart). We have to be honest and recognize the egocentricity; fear played a prominent role in “health reform.” (This is not to suggest that fear is or was a bad motivation for healthful living, nor is it so today; it is to suggest the need for a better motivation in order to become a more effective truth in practical godliness).

That idea of a better motivation was finally to arrive with the proclamation of the 1888 message when its time came.

The Lord Jesus Christ *wants* to come back soon, and that He *will* return soon if His people do not further delay His holy purpose. Our desire is to let the Holy Spirit present to us the “wisdom of the Great Physician” in such a way that we may follow His leading in a great “reformatory movement

among God’s people” in getting ready *in this our generation* for the final events.”²

The message on health reform does not torment us with greater fear or guilt. But it encourages us with that much more abounding grace that motivates us to be reconciled to our Lord and to His truth. In that experience of reconciliation with Him we find the blessed motivation to deny self *gladly* and *live* the health reform message because we find that self-denial is a joy “in Christ.” It’s beyond the “burden” experience.

This is accomplished by a simple but powerful “health reform” truth that is seldom comprehended among us as a people:

The self-denying death that Jesus died on His cross is not the kind of death that the popular Sunday-keeping Evangelical churches assume that it was. The gospel is far greater Good News than they are capable of seeing! *Jesus died the second death of the entire world.*

Not until the sinner can grasp that holy truth can he sense the “power” that is in what Paul calls “the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:4, 15). It’s the power of God unto salvation that Paul describes in Romans 1:16.

Paul begs us, “We implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). If we are, as Christ implores us, we shall also be reconciled to “health reform.” So “practical” is the “godliness” of Day of Atonement faith that our long-indulged

² *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 126.

perverted appetites can be re-educated to enjoy a simple healthful diet. You won't miss your harmful favorites. To bring Paul up to date, "Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live *in the flesh* [the flesh where appetite rules] I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

For Paul, the word "flesh" included our appetites for food, for he said, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

We must remember Ellen White's classic statement, "The health reform, I was shown, is a part of the third angel's message and is just as closely connected with it as are the arm and hand with the human body."³ It is equally true that the health reform is just as closely connected with "the third angel's message *in verity*"!⁴

ELLEN WHITE AND COMMON-SENSE HEALTH REFORM

Fanatics are great enemies of the Holy Spirit, but they don't know it. Sometimes they succeed in turning sincere people away from the most precious truths of [God's] the 1888 message. May the Lord deliver us from doing that! Ellen White cautions us to use care in presenting "health reform":

"Among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat-eating will eventually be done away. . . . We should ever keep this end in view, and endeavor to work steadily toward it."⁵ She also said that reforms in general should "not be . . . in an

excitement, or in a rash manner."⁶ "Great reforms are to be made. . . . But reforms which belong to the future must not be brought into the present."⁷

We can all agree that giving up flesh food is surely "present truth" for disease among animals has become rampant, but there are some people on the planet who even at present cannot easily procure vegetarian substitutes for meat.

We also read, "The time will come when it will not be best to use milk and eggs. But that time has not yet come. We know that when it does come, the Lord will provide."⁸ We are rapidly coming to the time when common sense will say, it's now!

We have come to the time when even worldly wisdom is leading us to health reformation: "It will not be long until animal food will be discarded by many besides Seventh-day Adventists."⁹ The media tell us this all the time.

A PRESENT PRESSING PROBLEM AMONG US

The total abstinence from harmful things is comparatively easy for us in comparison with our temptations to the intemperate use of foods which are considered proper in moderation. How to train our appetites to interpret "moderation" in a sanctified way will be our study.

Obviously, if we get ready for the second coming, we need to live until the Lord comes! That's one aspect of health reform.

LIVING THROUGH THE TIME OF TROUBLE

⁶ *Country Living*, p. 25.

⁷ *The Health Food Ministry*, p. 50.

⁸ *Diet and Foods*, p. 359; 1901.

⁹ *Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 124.

³ *Last Day Events*, pp. 80, 81.

⁴ *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

⁵ *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 380; 1890.

The very preservation of life itself calls for healthful living. It is true that Ellen White declares that many who are infirm will be laid to rest in the last days;¹⁰ but are you sure that is the Lord's primary will for *you* in particular? A good prayer for elderly people to pray is in Psalm 71: "O Lord, . . . do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails. . . . O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, *until* I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come" (vss. 8, 17, 18). Note the word "*until*." The Lord may have a special work for you to do that no one else can do as well as He has fitted you to do it, and your old age might be a tremendous asset in giving the message.

Seriously, while you are earnestly praying for the Lord to give you a new heart that loves righteousness and you ask Him to forgive your sins, you can also ask Him to give you side by side with that new heart a new appetite. Artificially prepared food is not what you need; simple food as close to the garden of Eden as possible will be a blessing. You can learn to love it. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

A healthy fear of cancer is good (not an unhealthy fear!). It is true that Ellen White has said that the use of flesh food is one cause of cancer.¹¹

AN OFTEN NEGLECTED ASPECT OF HEALTH REFORM

¹⁰ *Counsels on Health*, p. 375

¹¹ *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 384, 388, 404

This is a happy heart. "A merry heart does good like a medicine; but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22). Untold numbers of human hearts are "broken spirits" because they do not understand what Christ accomplished on His cross. They are not sure that the Lord has accepted them. Many Seventh-day Adventists have innocently accepted the popular doctrine that justification is an *offer* rather than a *gift* to "all men" "in Christ." They understand that because it's an offer, their salvation depends on their taking the first step in the initiative; and they never know if they have taken enough of the initiative. This fear is oppressive to the health. Many grow prematurely old for this reason. The "tidings of great joy" somehow have never gotten through to their hearts, and it may not be their fault.

The message of Christ's righteousness lifts a load of worry from their hearts! That in itself is practical, down-to-earth health reform—better even than "medicine" for their physical health (Prov. 17:22).

Understanding that the Savior has legally justified "all men," however, does not excuse us from doing all we can to make wrongs right. If you owe back tithe, or if you owe someone an apology, that worry could be counter productive to your health reform. Make the choice to obey the Holy Spirit's convicting you of sin, even as it involves the crucifixion of self; and then rejoice with thanksgiving for the much more abounding grace of the Lord. It's all good health reform.

The experts don't yet know all there is to know about heart disease. Yes, let us by all means keep informed of new knowledge that illuminates what

we have known by common sense and in the Spirit of Prophecy. And let us be glad as we follow common sense in simple, balanced, low-fat vegetarian diet. But why not do a little Bible study into what God's book might say about this organ—our human heart? Here's a very brief sample:

Jacob almost had a fatal heart attack because he did not believe God's good news truth (Gen. 45:26). Ten times we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart; he would have died of heart disease had he not perished by drowning.

Oh, friends: kneeling alone before the Lord and letting the tears of repentance fall, is wonderfully good for a hard heart! Hard hearts can cause hard arteries. Know what it means to let self be melted before the Lord.

I don't know of any scientific studies that confirm this but I am sure that contrition can lower high blood pressure. But TV comedies may not be good for a discouraged, darkened heart: "Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief" (Prov. 14:13). Our high-pressure lives dominated by movies and TV and incessant advertising—all this is bound to be hard on human hearts, and opposed to health reform. "In returning and in rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15).

A heart that has relinquished its envy of someone, is good for health reform (see Prov. 14:30). When one's heart "frets against the Lord" his health is adversely affected; the Lord told Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus that his hatred of Him and the Christians (also fretting against *Him*) was hard for

his health; he would probably have died of a heart attack if he had not been converted when he was (Prov. 19:3; Acts 26:14).

"With the heart one believes to righteousness" (Rom. 10:10), and righteousness is good for the health, for it "delivers from [early] death" and "leads to life" (Prov. 10:2; 11:4, 19). Sing new covenant hymns of heart-melting worship of the Lord. It's good for health reform!

THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF HEALTH REFORM

The primary purpose of "health reform" from the beginning has been to enable God's people to think so clearly that they can follow Jesus Christ in His final ministry in His most holy apartment.

It makes sense to realize that preparing for translation without seeing death will involve a firmer grasp of what our Lord is doing in His ministry in the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven. It is not identical with that which was in His First!

There will be "new light." It stands to reason that if someone is not interested in what His Lord and Savior is doing, he/she will not benefit from that special ministry which is progressing just now. "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."¹² In our early days, this was recognized: "You need clear, energetic minds, in order to appreciate the exalted character of the truth, to value the atonement,¹³ and to place the

¹² *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594.

¹³ "To value the atonement" means to "comprehend the . . . width and length and depth and height—and to know the love [*agape*] of Christ" revealed at His cross (Eph. 3:18, 19).

right estimate upon eternal things. If you pursue a wrong course, and indulge in wrong habits of eating, and thereby weaken the intellectual powers, you will not place that high estimate upon salvation and eternal life which will inspire you to conform your life to the life of Christ; you will not make those earnest, self-sacrificing efforts for entire conformity to the will of God. . . .”¹⁴

Two of every three people in the United States are overweight. The problem is also within the church. A simple but disturbing question: will we be happy to see Jesus come if we are overweight? Maybe that’s one reason why we hear so little now in the church regarding the *soon* coming of the Lord!

We enjoy a wonderful worship service Sabbath morning and then pig out at the potluck or in our great “Sabbath dinners.” Seventh-day Adventist cuisine is wonderful!

Again, this problem was met in our early days: “Even if you are strict in the quality of your food, do you glorify God in your bodies and spirits which are His, by partaking of such a quantity of food? Those who place so much food upon the stomach, and thus load down nature, could not appreciate the truth should they hear it dwelt upon. They could not arouse the benumbed sensibilities of the brain to realize the value of the atonement, and the great sacrifice that has been made for fallen man. It is impossible for such to appreciate the great, the precious, and the exceedingly rich reward that is in reserve for the faithful overcomers. The animal part

¹⁴ *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 66.

of our nature should never be left to govern the moral and intellectual.”¹⁵

Probably all of us have wrestled with this weakness. Seventh-day Adventist gourmet cooking is so delicious! This is a terrible, practical down-to-earth problem for many.

The relationship between the “flesh” and righteousness by faith. That’s where the battlefield is.

You will obtain an excellent education in the practical-godliness kind of “health reform” by reading Ellen White’s *Ministry of Healing*. Beautifully written, simple, heart-warming, balanced, “this book contains the wisdom of the Great Physician.”¹⁶ I believe it, not only because the author said so, but because I see the evidence all through its pages. It’s a good book to read on your knees.

But there is “most precious” Good News. The Lord Jesus in His incarnation “took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.”¹⁷ Jesus promised, “I will come to you” through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:18, 16, 17). His first work is to “convict of sin” (16:8). He is concerned for you to overcome. That means that before you can take that second helping when you shouldn’t, the Holy Spirit will convict you, “No! Say No!”

You don’t want to clog your mind with sweets that put you to sleep on Sabbath afternoon when you

¹⁵ *Idem.*, p. 361.

¹⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9, p. 71.

¹⁷ *Medical Ministry*, p. 181.

desperately need fellowship with your great High Priest who is cleansing His sanctuary just now. You need to learn of Him. You can't if you are stupefied.

If someone who wants to overcome is plagued with alcoholism, the same Holy Spirit will speak conviction before he takes a drink. Or if he is struggling with cigarettes, before he can light up, the Holy Spirit is faithful to convict him "No! Don't do it! You don't need to!" And before you and I can go to the refrigerator when we shouldn't, again the dear, loving Lord who is our Savior will "bring all things to our remembrance" in a conviction of sin.

Oh, may the Lord help us! *Stop resisting the Holy Spirit*—that's what the ancient Jews did when they stoned Stephen (Acts 7:51). The Holy Spirit tried desperately to save those Jews from committing that nearly unpardonable sin, but by resisting Him in health reform *today* we may put ourselves back in that group of hate-inspired Jews in the Sanhedrim who brought to an end in self-condemnation their 490 years of probation. Only we are coming ever closer to the end of human probation.

THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE IN VERITY IS GOOD NEWS!

Those who will have a part in the closing up of the great controversy between Christ and Satan will be those who "overcome even as [Christ] overcame" (Rev. 3:20). Not merely as a mere honor, but because the Lord Jesus *needs them*, He will seat them in His "committee," or "senate," or heavenly "parliament." They will "sit with Me on My throne," He says.

Forget about the great honor involved. Forget about your own crown. Be concerned that you have a part in crowning *Him* "King of kings and Lord of lords."

The issue that's back in the shadows here is a great Bride-to-be who has yet to "make herself ready" for "the marriage of the Lamb." I think we've learned enough in our attempt to study about health reform to realize that it does have something important to do with that Bride getting "ready."