

The Studied Care of Your Health

By F. T. Wright, from *The Messenger and News Review*, January & February 1966. This article appeared in the very first issue of the church paper, and is therefore the first article on health ever published by our church.

No message of living righteousness would be complete except it included a section on the study of the principles of healthful living. Far more than we yet realize, the strength and prosperity of our spiritual experience depends upon the soundness, vigor and well-being of our physical constitutions.

And not only is our spiritual well being dependent upon physical power but our whole efficiency in service to God is affected by the condition of health that we find ourselves in. More and more keenly are we going to feel the constricting limitations of humanity as the sphere of our influence widens and as the message becomes more and more vital and meaningful to us, we find ourselves yearning for unlimited physical power to carry the good news on.

No true Christian or missionary, for to be truly one is to be the other, needs to be persuaded that healthful living is a most essential consideration in his life. He knows it because of his deep heart longing to know more of God and to do more for God.

On the other hand it is the person that lives to himself that has the least regard for the care of the physical and mental powers. He is not concerned with the understanding of the great spiritual truths of the gospel that demand clearness of vision and sharpness of intellect, nor is he worried about his responsibility to tell to others the glad tidings of salvation.

Therefore, to him life's concern is to satisfy the demands of the physical nature and live unto himself. Such a one walks in darkness and the light of life does not shine in him. For him there is no possibility of ever attaining to Christian perfection

and against such a one the gates of heaven will be closed with the sad declaration,

“He lived only to gratify himself. There can be found no place for him here.”

Now to us who are living in this very time the whole matter is one of the most urgent importance. Consider a moment the situation that we are facing and see that in the light of our present position we cannot afford not to pay the closest attention to this subject.

Before us is the last great battle in the conflict between good and evil. In this battle the whole world is to be involved. On the side of evil the numbers will be enormous, the finance unlimited, the dedication absolute and their leader, the Devil, will bend all the depths of satanic skill and subtlety acquired, all the cruelty developed during the struggles of the ages against the people of God to these last days. We are going to be tested to the breaking point and everyone will need, between now and then to build the best possible physical constitution on the ruins that remain.

And they are but ruins after 6,000 years of sinful degeneration. There is a vast difference between the men who now walk the earth and the lordly Adam in the garden of Eden. Adam, we are told, possessed twenty times the vital force, that men now have (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 138, 139). He was more than twice as tall as men now living (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 34; *The Story of Redemption*, p. 21). What vigor he must have possessed! What powers of mind to discern the mysteries of nature and of redemption!

But we well know that it is not now so with us. We are forced to bear a heredity of sin and disease that has accumulated over almost 6,000 years of departure from the principles of life that the Lord has set down for our own good.

And yet despite the fact that we are now so far away and so weakened and physically devitalized, despite the fact that our numbers will be so few and it will appear that the whole

world is against us, and about to wholly engulf us, the Lord will use just such people for the finishing of the work. We are called today to prepare the way of the Lord.

Never was there a weightier trust, never a higher or a greater privilege. But it will be ours only if we make the necessary preparation. The message to you at this time is,

“The battle is coming tomorrow. Today is to prepare! Prepare! Prepare!”

And that preparation must be a diligent, persevering development of all the physical, mental and spiritual powers.

There is nothing new under the sun. What is to be and is, has already been. For every situation that we face we have a type or an example somewhere in the past. This is a very fortunate thing indeed, giving us a guide that is so much needed in these times. For us one such type is the life and experience of John the Baptist.

He was called in a time when the...

Daniel 8

²³ ...transgressors had come to the full.

The Desire of Ages, p. 36:

The deception of sin had reached its height.

He was called...

Luke 1

¹⁷ ...to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

It was a task that none but he could do and one that he was especially called to do. And because of the tremendous obstacles that he faced, he was called upon by the Lord to make the most diligent preparation before he could be considered fit to engage in that battle. And that preparation included the thorough training of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. Let us see it in the history of his life.

Before he was even born the angel enjoined on the father the need for John to lead a life of the strictest temperance.

Luke 1

¹⁵ He...shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.

That there is more implied in this terse statement than simply abstinence from alcoholic beverages is evident from the fact that in both dress and diet he lived a very abstemious life.

Matthew 3

⁴ And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair and a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

A plain and practical costume and a simple nourishing vegetarian diet set the habits of John apart from the world of his time. It was a simple and abstemious diet well calculated to build a vigorous and rugged constitution but it was not extreme or narrow. Such must always be avoided at all costs.

The Desire of Ages, p. 100-101:

John was to go forth as Jehovah's messenger, to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God's requirements and their need of His perfect righteousness. Such a messenger must be holy. He must be a temple for the indwelling Spirit of God.

In order to fulfill his mission, he must have a sound physical constitution, and mental and spiritual strength. Therefore it would be necessary for him to control the appetites and passions. He must be able so to control all his powers that he could stand among men as unmoved by surrounding circumstances as the rocks and mountains of the wilderness.

In the time of John the Baptist, greed for riches, and the love of luxury and display had become widespread. Sensuous pleasures, feasting and drinking, were causing physical disease and degeneracy, benumbing the spiritual perceptions, and lessening the sensibility to sin. John was to stand as a reformer. By his abstemious life and plain dress he was to rebuke the excesses of his time. Hence the directions given to the parents of John—a lesson of temperance by an angel from the throne of heaven.

What John the Baptist was called to be in his day and time we are called to be in our day and time.

The Desire of Ages, p. 101:

In preparing the way for Christ's first advent, he was a representative of those who are to prepare a people for our Lord's second coming.

As in his day so in ours, sin and wickedness are again reaching their height. Men and women are almost wholly given over to soul-destroying lust and intemperate habits. Sickness, disease and derangement are on every hand.

The Desire of Ages, p. 101:

The world is given over to self-indulgence. Errors and fables abound. Satan's snares for destroying souls are multiplied.

If we are going to be successful in our mission as John was in his, then like him we must have a sound physical constitution and mental and spiritual strength. But such does not come in a moment. It was not developed in John in a moment. It took time.

Have you ever considered that John spent thirty years of training and preparation to do just over six months or so of actual work? Think of it. Knowing just what kind of man was needed, the Lord set aside for him thirty years of extraordinary preparation so as to ensure that John would measure up to all that his task would demand of him. And measure up he did, for at the end of that period he was a fit man indeed.

And right now the Lord has set us aside in this quiet period to prepare for that contest. It will require time to do it. And that time must be spent intensively.

The Desire of Ages, p. 101:

All who would perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord must learn the lessons of temperance and self control. The appetites and passions must be held in subjection to the higher powers of the mind. This self-discipline is essential to that mental strength and spiritual insight which will enable us to understand and to practice the sacred truths of Gods word.

For this reason temperance finds its place in the work of preparation for Christ's second coming.

Note very carefully the requirements listed in the above statement: the subjection of the appetites and the passions, which holding in subjection is described as essential self-discipline. This is not easy work. It is something that we will find going very much against old established habits which will constantly strive for the mastery. We will have to battle in the fear and the power of God for the victory, but it will be more than worth it.

The path of self denial and abstemious living is the path of victory and achievement. Show me a man in history that accomplished a great and enduring work for the Lord and I will show you a man that was temperate and abstemious in his habits of life. They are a splendid band whose names shall stand glorified for eternity: Daniel, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Luther and Wesley to name but a few of the greatest.

And every one of those and the other lives like them demonstrate that it is a law that the building of a well-disciplined, abstemious life is the foundation for a life of spiritual power and usefulness. Then in the light of that, let us each one see that health reform is not just a teaching or a requirement that we must do. To see it like that is to see it as a yoke of bondage and a privation.

Let us rather see it as a glorious ladder that will lift us into the realm of high and holy achievement. Let us see in it a means whereby the foundation can be laid upon which can be built the mental and the spiritual strength that will fit us to be one of those who will carry the last warning message and thus, in that last terrible battle, deal the death blow to the beast and his image.

We have been called to the kingdom for just such a time as this. Plainly the Lord has set before us that which is essential for our preparation. Either we can exert all the powers that

the Lord has given to us and thus be fitted to take part in that day or we can be content to drift along with the multitude and thus never arise above a low level. The choice is ours. What will it be? Today's choice decides tomorrow's destiny.

Let us take up this work of reform in our own lives without delay. Let us study the foundations of the human mechanism, the laws of health, and set ourselves to obey all that we learn. Let us press on together toward the mark of our high calling in Christ Jesus.