

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of April 27, 2008

Theme: "Health of a Christian"

SundayRead II Corinthians 4:8-18

"We are not discouraged; though the outward man is deteriorating, the inward man is renewed day by day."

When we think of health, we are normally referring to our physical health. It is necessary and proper that we do all we can do to maintain our physical well-being; this is something that God would have us to do. We are given in James 5:13-17 some very valuable instructions for dealing with physical infirmities. Of far greater importance, however, is a concern for our spiritual health. We are told in I Timothy 4:8 that *"physical training is profitable, but training for godliness is much more profitable."* The sad thing is that so many people attend to physical needs while ignoring their spiritual needs; they are very conscious of those things that are temporal and oblivious to things eternal. There is no doubt that the outward man deteriorates with age, but how wonderful that the inner man can become and should become stronger and stronger with age. Sometimes those who are weakest physically are the strongest spiritually. This is the great truth that Paul is expressing in our text. He was being subjected to persecution by those who did not take kindly to his preaching, and suffered physical abuse. This infliction upon his body served only to strengthen his inner man. How could this be? His faith proved to be the source of his joy. Certainly, he would have preferred not having to suffer physically; but if this was his plight, he would not allow it to discourage him. He knew that God was sovereign. He knew that nothing could take away his eternal life and his eternal purpose. His joy did not depend upon the temporal circumstances. The joy of the Lord was his strength_

MondayRead Ephesians 3:14-21

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Paul understood the importance of the inner man. This speaks of character, the real heart of a person. Outward appearances can be deceiving. What is on the inside is the measure of a person; this is the area of a human being that needs to be strong. Everyone can be strong in a way of speaking when things are going right, but we need inner strength when things go wrong. How can a person gain inner strength? What is it that you and I can draw upon for inner strength? I think most of us would give an answer that our inner strength comes from our faith, and this would be a good answer. Then the important question becomes the source of our faith or the object of our faith. The scripture in today's reading talks about the strength of a Christian coming from the power of the Spirit of God. It is important to note that when a person places his/her faith in the Lord Jesus to be his/her personal Savior, that person's body becomes a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). This means that the power of God is within a person. The Christian life is, in reality, a walk in the Spirit. This is what gives a person the strength to conduct a victorious life. In Galatians 5:16-23, we learn that the *"if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh...that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."*

TuesdayRead John 3:3-7

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born again." To have spiritual health, a person must have spiritual life. We were born with a physical body enabling us to enjoy the material world. That body will develop into maturity with the passing of time, and will ultimately give way to deterioration. It requires another birth to enjoy the spiritual world. This is what Jesus was trying to explain to Nicodemus who had sensed that the Lord Jesus was a teacher sent from God. Jesus advised Nicodemus that to see the kingdom of God and all that God intends for man to enjoy requires a birth from above, a birth of the Spirit. This is necessary because humans are born with a sin nature that alienates them from God. The birth of the Spirit regenerates the spirit and opens the door to fellowship and communion with God. This birth gives to the person spiritual life and the possibility of the abundant life, both physical life with its temporal values and spiritual life with eternal values. People with only physical life only are greatly limited; people with both physical and spiritual life have so much more. They can enjoy God's earth in a way that pure and wholesome and can live their lives in a way that is consistent with what our Creator intended. They have victory over sin and the corruption and devastation caused by sin. True Christians are partakers of the divine nature by virtue of their birth from above (II Peter 1:4) and will enjoy life throughout the ages of both time and eternity. In I John 2:17, we read this: *"The world passes away, and the lust thereof;*

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but he that does the will of God abides forever." The riches of the glory of God energize the Christian and provide a daily drama with eternal purpose. The unbeliever can and does enjoy God's creation, the manifestation of His glory, but does so without the joy of giving God the credit, thus causing him to miss out on fellowship and communion with his Creator. Believers have a life that is eternal and abundant in that they are conscious of the glory of God in the conduct of their daily lives. They have the joy of understanding God by their faith. The benefits are countless, and the joy is unspeakable.

Wednesday Read II Peter 3:13-18

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." A sign of spiritual health is spiritual growth. It is one thing to have spiritual life; it is still another to grow spiritually. It is probably true that many people remain spiritual "infants." That is sad, because growing spiritually multiplies both effectiveness and joy. Spiritual life provides assurance of eternal life; spiritual growth enhances the possibilities of the abundant life. Without spiritual growth, the believer does not have much more in the conduct of his life on earth than the unbeliever. If a believer remains attached to the things of the material world, he misses out on the joy of eternal things. Paul advised the Corinthians believers that they should *"increase the fruits of their righteousness (II Corinthians 9:10)."* What are spiritual fruits? They certainly speak of the inner attributes gained by the indwelling of the Spirit spoken of in Galatians 5:22-23, including love, joy, and peace. Love should increase as mentioned in I Thessalonians 3:12: *"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men."* Peter talks about spiritual growth in II Peter 1:5-8: *"Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control add patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love for everyone."* The more we grow in grace, the more Christlike we become; and the more Christlike we become, the more fulfilling are our lives.

Thursday Read Ephesians 6:10-13

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The command of God to His people is to be strong. The power of God is immeasurable; His might is unparalleled. The devil has created the myth that Christianity is for weaklings; the opposite is true. A weakling would never make it as a Christian. Unbelievers are weaklings; they fall prey to the advances of the adversary. They go along with the flow, unable to buck the tide. The world system is working against God and all that God stands for. The world system is anti-Christ and anti-Christian. The world is perpetuating fabrications from the world of pseudo-scientists (I Timothy 6:20) to the world of revisionist historians. God calls on His people to *"stand against the wiles of the devil."* Secularists are trying to silence the propagation of the truth by believers. If they cannot accomplish that by ridicule, they will resort to political pressure. What they do not understand is that they are working against the power of God. The psalmist had it right when he said, *"Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89)"* Christians armed with the truth of God, the righteousness of God, the Spirit of God, and their faith in God are ready for spiritual warfare. We are engaged in a great battle for the souls of mankind. We are soldiers in the army of Christ and the defenders of the faith. Jesus said it well in Matthew 16:18: *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4).

Friday Read Isaiah 40:28-31

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." To maintain his spiritual health, the believer's strength must be renewed; and I dare say that it must be renewed daily. There can be a tremendous drain on the strength of the believer in spiritual warfare; the believer could become weary with all the opposition to his efforts to live for Christ. We cannot expect to go unchallenged. How does the believer revive his strength? The prophet Isaiah answers the question: *"We must wait upon the Lord_"* How do we do this? First of all, we must spend time with Him. This is the

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importance of daily devotions; taking time every day to spend time in God's Holy Word. This is how we feed our souls and spirits. There is no better way to start a day than by reading a portion of God's Holy Word. Secondly, we must spend time in prayer. That time alone with God is critical, conversing with our Heavenly Father. A careful study of the Gospels reveals that the Lord Jesus did this regularly. If Jesus had to spend time with His Father, how much more essential it is that we do the same. Abiding in His presence makes the storms of life seem calm. Abiding in His presence renews our confidence that He is in control. Abiding in His presence changes our focus, from the problems to the problem-solver. There is nothing too hard for Him. Thirdly, we must sometimes wait for God to act, recognizing that God's timing is perfect. There are times when God, for His own good reasons, works at a pace slower than we like. There are other times when God acts very quickly. Let us do as the psalmist said in Psalm 37:7: "*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently on Him.*"

SaturdayRead Psalm 126:3-6

"He who goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The Christian who is spiritually healthy will be actively engaged in soul winning. One of the evidences of spiritual health is a compassionate heart, which creates a desire to introduce others to Christ. In the early days of the church, Peter and John were reprimanded by the authorities for speaking out for Christ and commanded to stop. When they were caught continuing their ministry and asked why, their response was this: "*We cannot help but speaking about what we have seen and heard.*" The lives of spiritually healthy believers will be such that they have to speak out. Others will inquire about their obvious joy and peace. In their responses, they will be compelled to give God the glory. Soul winning is a mandate and the spiritually healthy will be involved in fulfilling this Great Commission of our Savior.