

The healthy Christian

ODCC 26/04/09 (The healthy Christian.doc)

Text: John 15:1-11

Introduction

1. I am not going to exhaust this subject today but I want to touch on a few key areas which can help each of us personally to see whether we are spiritually healthy.
 - a. If anyone becomes physically unhealthy you will realise it at some point.
2. Being spiritually unsound may or may not be as easy to detect as physical unsoundness
 - a. It will be if someone has ever been zealous for God and burned with love for God, then they will know unwellness in their spirit. There is a sense of loss no matter how much one is prospering or is healthy, etc.
 - b. That condition is often termed “backslidden”. Jesus spoke to the Ephesus church and said to them, “Remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first” (Rev 2:5).
 - c. The Prodigal Son was in that position and in the pig sty it says, “he came to himself”.
3. The unsaved person is spiritually dead and doesn’t even know they’re dead. You can’t get sicker than dead!
 - a. Even though they may be full of physical life they are blind, and deaf, and dumb because a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (1 Cor 2:14).
 - b. How horrible to be unwell and not realise it.
 - c. A couple of months ago we had dinner with a man I used to work with. He looked fit and well and he believed he was – nothing seemed amiss. A few weeks ago he developed a small lump and thought he’d better go to the doctor. The doctor thought it was a hernia and sent him to a surgeon. The surgeon was not convinced it was a hernia and had it tested. He is so badly riddled with cancer that they refuse to treat him estimate that he only has 2 months to live. He knew nothing of his illness until the lump appeared.

The healthy branch bears fruit

1. Our text gives a picture of a healthy believer. It is someone who is like a branch abiding in the vine, who is growing but occasionally needs pruning – pruning is not pleasant but necessary. This is not a wild branch, it’s a tended branch, it’s in the care of a very able gardener.
 - a. And it is a branch that is producing fruit. What is that fruit? Jesus doesn’t say but as we study we find that it is not a single thing – it’s multi-faceted. Or, just as a fruit is made up of such things as the skin, the flesh, the juice and the seed, so there are various things that make up the fruit that Jesus is talking about.
 - b. Here are some things that make up this fruit
 2. **That fruit is the constant changing of a person** so that we will always maintain the personality that makes me, me and you, you because God doesn’t want cloned Believers. But we will so begin to change that the character of God will be manifested in us so that the family likeness will be evident.
 - a. In what other organisation can people from such diverse backgrounds and experiences and cultures, etc. come together in love and unity?
 3. **It is the putting off of sin.** Sin is part of man’s nature. He sins because it comes naturally to him. But as we, like a branch, abide in Christ and draw from Him, part of the fruit is the putting off of sin. The writer to the Hebrews urges Christians to throw off everything that hinders, and especially the sin that so easily entangles (12:1).
 - a. It was sin that destroyed man’s relationship with God and is sin that continues to ruin our relationships, and robs us of peace. Sin is the ultimate in self-centredness because it’s all about me!
 - b. As a Christian my focus needs to shift from me to God and to others. Love the Lord with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27).
 4. Part of the fruit is **developing (by the Spirit) Godly attitudes** and these are listed in Galatians 5:22 and include love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
 - a. As that chapter points out, as natural as sin is to the unspiritual man, the fruit of the spirit are naturally produced by the Christian who walks by the Spirit.
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5. **A healthy Christian's life is also marked by works.** There is always a danger with works because we often think that works curries favour. But we don't work to earn favour rather we work because we have favour.
- There is much to do for God and we only have one life. A healthy believer understand God is his supply and as God has given to him so he wants to give back to God – including time, energy, talent, money, spiritual gifts, etc.
 - In Matthew's gospel Jesus said, "seek first the King of God." That doesn't simply mean, "how must I work for God?" It means I am a person of the Kingdom and so I ask the King, "How do you want me to serve you?"
 - Serving God is a learning thing and the healthy Christians will be seeking God's will for their life on a daily basis.

Spiritual health comes from spiritual input

- There is a parallel between physical and spiritual health. Physical health is dependent on input, and activity, and welfare (that is, duty of care to yourself and others – if you drive recklessly you could injure or kill yourself and others), etc. There's no need to elaborate; I am sure everyone knows what I mean.
 - The branches grow and bear fruit. They even get pruned – drastically cut back from time to time, and then grow and produce even more fruit. The branches can only do that because there is a vital attachment to the vine.
 - They are not artificially attached – that is by rope or nails, etc. – they grow out of and are of the same substance as the vine.
 - The branches draw their very life from the vine which results in health.
 - What is it that grafts us into the vine so that so that there is that life-giving union?
 - It is the body and blood of the Lord. Remember, Jesus said, "*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves*" (John 6:26-58).
 - It is not the literal eating and drinking but it is this: when Adam sinned and was judged and punished by God, all mankind suffered the same judgement and punishment because all were in Adam.
 - All who believe by faith in Christ, God places them in Christ as He is judged and punished and dies on the cross. We are buried with Christ and are resurrected spiritually with Christ (that's what baptism represents).
 - The resurrection life is what we now have. Paul tells us, "*If the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you*" (Rom 8:11).
 - Life comes by the Spirit! We should not only give ourselves physical check-ups, we need to also give ourselves spiritual check-ups.
 - Am I a healthy branch? Am I producing fruit? Am I receiving life from the Lord through the Spirit?
 - If we can answer "yes" to all of those kinds of questions then there is more! More fruitfulness as God tends us as an expert gardener.
 - If the answer is "no" and you are concerned about it, check the "flow" between you and the Lord. Be determined to draw Life from Him from today onwards.
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