

Health and faith

There are righteous men and there are unrighteous men. There are righteous Doctors, and there are unrighteous Doctors. Righteous Doctors focus on healing people first, and the unrighteous Doctors focus on personal wealth first. Luke was a righteous Doctor who gave up his practice to support Paul. Paul mentions Luke when he wrote to the Colossians:

Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. (Col 4:18)

Doctors are the right people to consult when we are sick or injured, but when they can no longer help us, it is good to remember to seek help from our Lord, who can heal and restore us to good health, through our trust and faith in Him.

And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign. (2Ch 16:12-13)

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." (Mar 5:25-34)

When we are sick we can come in faith to our Father, and ask Him for healing in the name of Jesus.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (Jam 5:13-16)

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (Joh 14:12-14)

We each have the responsibility to eat the correct amount of healthy foods, drink fresh water, take sufficient rest and exercise to keep our bodies in peak form. If we are not plowing, planting and reaping we should still get that form of exercise, as our bodies thrive on it.

In the beginning God told Adam and Eve:

And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. (Gen 1:29-30)

God didn't create giant flesh eating creatures, even lions and tigers were originally meant to eat grasses, herbs and fruit! Death, murder, the killing of animals and the eating of flesh, was as a direct result of sin, and led to the corruption of all in God's creation.

After the flood God gave Noah a new requirement. That if flesh was to be eaten, the blood of the flesh must be drained first, because the blood is 'the life' of the flesh.

"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood." (Gen 9:3-4)

To focus on 'certain food types' is unnecessary. Common sense tells us that fresh and untampered foods, free of preservatives, colourants and flavour enhancers etc. are the best for our bodies. Processed foods which are high in salt, fat and sugars are not good for us. I believe the natural foods which God made are all good. Free roaming animals, eating their natural foods are okay for us to eat; but grains, vegetables and fruits remain superior.

Judgement and causing offence, breaks down another person's faith. We are to support and assist our brother and sister, lightening the load they carry, not by adding to their burden.

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. (Rom 14:1-4)

Religious people tend to focus on the wrong issues. Paul often mentions this problem.

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin. (Rom 14:14-23)

The elders of a church are responsible to ensure; that only morally correct and well behaved people, remain or are elected, to serve and represent a body of believers. Paul writes to Titus:

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you - if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true.

Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. (Tit 1:5-16)

Eli's sons served as priests, but were greedy and wicked in everything they did. They are prime examples of the wrong people in office.

Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priests' servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force." Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. (1Sa 2:12-17)

Their actions were in contradiction to the Lord's instructions to Moses.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe. And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress.'

'You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.' " (Num 18:25-27,31-32)

These sons of Eli had profaned the offerings to the Lord, they had deviated from the instructions of the Lord for reasons of selfishness and greed. Eli confronts his sons:

So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them. (1Sa 2:23-25)

These sons of Eli were caught up in greedy and wicked practices. They had forgotten that they were serving the Lord on behalf of the people, and took more than the tenth they were entitled to. When the Philistines attacked Israel and defeated them on the first day, killing four thousand men; the sons took the ark of the Lord to the battle, instead of approaching the Lord and asking for His protection. They were already doomed because they had earned the Lord's wrath by behaving so wickedly.

And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. (1Sa 4:3-4)

This was the wrong action to take; trusting in artifacts and religious practices, is not acting in faith.

So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. Also the ark of God was captured; and the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (1Sa 4:10-11)

Some Pharisees also totally misunderstood the intention of the law. They used it as an excuse to rob the people and enrich themselves. Jesus spoke to them saying:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive a greater condemnation." (Mat 23:14)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Mat 23:23-28)

To sum up, let's look at Paul's instruction to the Galatians.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load. (Gal 5:16 - 6:5)

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