It Is Written

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Good Medicine

By Jerry Fite

Solomon reveals a truth worth meditating upon: “A cheerful heart is a good medicine; but a broken spirit drieth up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22). The body and spirit comprise the material and nonmaterial makeup of man. Because they are distinct, we might forget how they interact and affect one another.

For example, sleep deprivation can affect our spiritual well-being. Studies show that people with insomnia are five times more likely to develop depression than those without sleeping disorders. Yes, it can be a vicious cycle of depression caused by lack of sleep and lack of sleep due to depression. But a wise first step in dealing with depression might be as simple as the daily medicine of eight hours of sleep.

While physical matters can affect the spirit, Solomon reminds us that a cheerful heart can help heal our physical bodies like good medicine while a broken spirit can dry up the bones.

Maintaining a cheerful heart can be challenging in difficult times. The constant absorption of bad news through an angry agenda-driven media can wither away any cheer we can muster in a day. Therefore, we must at times meditate on good and positive things that counteract the withering away of cheer. There are some “good reports” with “lovely” and “virtuous” details to fill our hearts with lasting cheer available in God’s “medicine cabinet,” the Bible (cf. Philippians 4:8).

A strong faith and a determined will combine to keep cheer from drying up our bones. Paul’s faith equipped him to be “always rejoicing” while, at the same time, being “sorrowful” (2 Corinthians 6:10). He knew by faith that no persecution or anguish can separate him from the love of God in Christ. When he is enduring anguish and apparent defeat through persecution, his spirit upholds him as “more than a conqueror” by faith in Christ (Romans 8:37-39). Endued with faith, he determines to rejoice always!

The Hebrew writer speaks to the power of faith as it “stopped the mouths of lions” and “quenched the power of fire” (Hebrews 11:33,34). Faith in God’s power to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Daniel from moments of certain death strengthened the spirits of these men (Daniel 3:16, 6:16). But determining to not compromise God’s righteous standard, regardless of consequences, was combined with faith as good medicine for delivering their physical bodies from the effects of hot fire and hungry lions.

Inward reaction to thoughts can affect our physical countenance. Cain was angry over his sacrifice being rejected by God, and “his countenance fell” (Genesis 4:5). Ahab’s heavy heart caused him to lay down upon his bed, turn his face away from others and deprive his body of food (I Kings 21:4). Sadness from rejection can affect the physical body.

We should always be sensitive to the spirits of others. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a broken spirit who can bear?” (Proverbs 18:13). While the strength of spirit can bear us up under physical infirmities, what remains to bear the load when the spirit is broken? The wound of the friend is faithful, not destructive, for words of encouragement will consistently follow needed rebuke (cf. Proverbs 27:5-6). Never underestimate the effects of a cheerful or wounded spirit upon the physical body!

A Changed Man: The Story of King Manasseh

By Bryan Gibson

And a drastic or dramatic change it was, because at one point King Manasseh of Judah was about as evil as a man could be. He built altars and images for all kinds of false gods, and even placed some of them in the temple (2 Kings 21:3-7). He “made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums” (2 Kings 21:6). He “shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other” (2 Kings 21:16). His evil was even greater because of the influence he had on his people—“Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Kings 21:9). King Manasseh made a mess of his life, and he dragged a lot of people down with him. In fact, Manasseh was largely responsible for the Babylonian captivity His people suffered (Jeremiah 15:4).

Thankfully, the story doesn’t end there. To punish Manasseh, God sent “the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon” (2 Chronicles 33:11). Talk about a wake-up call! “Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD His God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God” (2 Chronicles 33:12-13). Despite all the evil Manasseh had done, when he repented, God forgave him and restored him to his kingdom. Manasseh then spent the rest of his life serving the Lord (2 Chronicles 33:14-17).

It’s a sad story, but it does have a happy ending. Here are a few things Manasseh might like to say to us—if he were here today. And yes, there is a way in which the dead still speak (Hebrews 11:4).

Don’t live like I did—before I came to my senses. I hurt myself, as well as a lot of other people. Yes, I was forgiven, and yes, I was restored to my kingdom, but I (and MANY others) still had to live with the consequences of my actions. I served the Lord faithfully in my later years, but think about how much good I could have done if I had started much earlier (and I did know better then).

If you have given yourself over to sin like I did, quit! You don’t have to stay in that same rut. Even if you’re just dabbling in it, stop. You may not get the same kind of wake-up call I got (dragged off with nose hooks), so consider this your wake-up call—this very article. With God’s help, I made a drastic change in my life, and so can you.

God’s grace is a marvelous thing indeed. No matter what you’ve done, no matter how many people you’ve hurt, no matter how many times you’ve provoked Him to anger, He is willing to forgive. Yes, I humbled myself before Him, and yes, I repented, but I still didn’t deserve what He gave me. You don’t deserve it neither, but you would be foolish not to take it. Repent of your sins, and seek His forgiveness—and don’t wait; please do it today!

The Power of God to Salvation

By Whit Sasser

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation" (Romans 1:16).

When churches try to lure people to their services by means of gimmicks and big promotions, they make a big mistake. Bingo parties, musical entertainment, films, dinners and such like, only cheapen the gospel in the minds of thinking people. A bigger attendance may be the short-term effect, but less respect for God is the long-term effect. If you gain souls by carnal means, then carnal means will be needed to hold them. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of GOD unto salvation, and though fewer may respond to it, salvation is only therein.