

## 2. The Power of Choice (2Q 2010—Health and Healing)

**Biblical material:** Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-13; Deut. 30:10-19; Ps. 119:11; Col. 3:2; Heb. 11:8-10, Daniel 1:8.

### Quotes

- In health there is freedom. Health is the first of all liberties. *Henri-Frederic Amiel*
- In order to change we must be sick and tired of being sick and tired. *Anon.*
- He knows little of himself or of the world, who does not think it sufficient happiness to be free from sorrow: therefore, give a wise man health, and he will give himself every other thing. *Lacon Colton*
- As a people, we have become obsessed with Health. There is something fundamentally, radically unhealthy about all this. We do not seem to be seeking more exuberance in living as much as staving off failure, putting off dying. We have lost all confidence in the human body. *Lewis Thomas*
- If I'd known I was going to live so long, I'd have taken better care of myself. *Leon Eldred*

### Questions

Why are the concepts of freedom and the power of choice so important in God's universe? What does this tell us about the kind of person God is, and how he runs his government? How does this relate to concepts of health? How much freedom to choose still remains? In what way do we demonstrate the truth of health laws as being right?

### Bible discussion

God provides freedom of choice in the garden—not as some arbitrary test, but as a way of giving every being the right to choose, for or against God (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-13). The sad results of the wrong choice are evident to all. God gives everyone the same choice: “Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death.” (Deut. 30:15 TEV). Knowing what truly is good is how the law helps us (Ps. 119:11). Our minds are to be fixed on the things of heaven (Col. 3:2), making a conscious choice to identify with God as to what is truly good and right—not simply because God says so, but because right is intrinsically right. Abraham followed God's directions (Heb. 11:8-10) by faith—not in a mindless, unthinking way, but based on his experience with a trustworthy God. In the same way that Daniel “made up his mind” (Dan. 1:8 TEV), we are to make up our mind to choose good health by following healthy practices, whether they are physical, mental, or spiritual.

### Comment

“When God created humans, He made them moral beings, and in order for humans to be truly moral they had to have moral freedom. In other words, they had to have the capacity to choose wrongly, if they wanted to. If not, if they didn't have that option, they really couldn't be free.” (Sunday's lesson). Much is made of this freedom of choice in this lesson, with health aspects related just to the choice of using alcohol. However this power of choice relates to all areas of health—in fact all areas of life itself!

*Look at three choices people made when confronted with Jesus and his message:*

Choice # 1. As they went on their way, a man said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lie down and rest." (Luke 9:57, 58 TEV). **The confident assurance of the zealot.** I'm going through with you. I'm dedicated, Lord, I've staked all on you. Like Peter saying, "I can handle it, Lord. Whatever's coming up, I'll be there. Don't you worry Lord, I'll never leave you." Maybe you already hear the echo of the cock crowing! For an emotional, enthusiastic decision is not enough. The commitment must be made in the cold light of a dull Galilean morning, sleeping out on the stony ground, hungry and thirsty and tired, and having nowhere to go. Says Jesus: "Don't follow me unless you're prepared for all this. It's no bed of roses following me. And if you're following me for what you hope to get out of it, forget it. There's no earthly reward for you, only hostility, pain and death. This is the way of the Cross." And many turned away from him, because he didn't live up to their expectations. They followed him no longer, because he didn't always feed them like the 5,000 and the 4,000. He wasn't willing to accept their way of kingship, to take up the physical struggle against the Romans. He didn't say the things they wanted to hear. His popularity waned, and his followers drifted away.

Choice # 2. He said to another man, "Follow me." But that man said, "Sir, first let me go back and bury my father. Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You go and proclaim the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59, 60 TEV). **Putting it off.** "Lord, I'd like to follow you but... I have higher priorities. I'll fit you in, Lord, whenever I can. I can't just up and leave right now. I can't decide to follow you just like that. I have things to do first, to set my affairs in order before I can come with you." Right enough, we might agree. We don't want to upset the boat. After all, Christianity needs to be fitted in to the rest of life, doesn't it? Don't want to be fanatical, do we? I know people who have put off making a decision because of work or family or other reasons. And that's alright, isn't it? After all, there's time. The Lord will wait for us, won't he? Like the man going to bury his father -- who hadn't even died yet! Says Jesus: "Forget it. You have to decide right now where your priorities lie. You just haven't got the time to concern yourself about the dead. Your job is preaching the good news of the kingdom. All other things are incidental. Your reply is just an excuse to put off your decision." All the dead things of our existence. The monotonous routine of daily life. The getting, the spending... All just excuses if we use them to avoid deciding to follow Jesus.

Choice # 3. Someone else said, "I will follow you, sir; but first let me go and say goodbye to my family." Jesus said to him, "Anyone who starts to plough and then keeps looking back is of no use to the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9:61, 62 TEV). **Family calls.** Fair enough, isn't it? Just let me go home and say good-bye. Hardly right just to scribble a note, or send a message with a boy. A few fond farewells, Lord, and I'll be there with you. You believe in the importance of the family, don't you Lord. Wouldn't want them worrying." Looking into the man's heart Jesus sees more excuses for not deciding. You know what it's like when you go home. Mum or wife says, fix the door hinges first. Oh, and can you get some money if you're leaving -- otherwise how will we survive. And then son wants some attention... Trapped back into the responsibilities of living -- important, but not supreme. How many excuse themselves from following Jesus on family grounds.

For someone looking backwards while ploughing is fit for nothing. A crooked furrow, maybe even a foot hurt by the plough! To plough straight you have to fix your eyes on the far end of the field, and always aim at that point, never getting distracted. Those who

look back on the way to the kingdom will be like Lot's wife -- lost. All distractions must be ignored, and we must look only to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Making decisions. Choosing. The necessity of making an immediate response.

For when Jesus says "Follow me" we must decide. We've just looked at three ways of making the wrong decision!

1. Looking to see what we can get out of it, making a superficial decision.
2. Delaying the decision by claiming prior commitments, making excuses.
3. Excusing ourselves because of our responsibilities to others.

*All this is poison to our decision making!* For whatever we use to delay, or excuse or avoid making a definite and sincere decision to follow Jesus is as deadly as the most potent poison. Spiritual cyanide!

Why? Because we must decide, and decide now. We simply don't know what the future holds for us here on earth. None of us knows how much life we will have. We don't have yesterday, we don't have tomorrow, we only have today.

### **Ellen White Comments**

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466}

The law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to Heaven. God has granted freedom of will to all, endowed men with capacity to appreciate His character, and therefore with ability to love Him and to choose His service. So long as created beings worshiped God they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. As there was no transgression of the law, which is the transcript of God's character, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies...

Before Him who ruleth in the heavens the mysteries of the past and future are alike outspread, and God sees beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, the outworking of His purpose of love and blessing. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. . . . Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {TMK 366}

Believe in Jesus Christ as your complete Saviour. Change your way to God's way. Choose the new path, the narrow path of holiness, which will lead to perfect freedom in Christ. You may follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. {YI, September 1, 1898}