

Scrupulous Purity

Bible Reading:

Deuteronomy 4: 1-9

Ephesians 6: 10-20

Mark 7: 1-23

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There **is** justice, after all!

I picked up Thursday's *Globe And Mail* and came across the following article -

Dark Chocolate Is Healthy

By ANNE McLROY

Globe and Mail Aug. 28, 2003

Researchers in Italy and Britain have found that each time volunteers ate 100 grams of dark chocolate, a little more than two regular size bars, the amount of helpful antioxidants in their blood was boosted significantly..... Antioxidants stop free radicals from forming, and bind with those already in the body to prevent the cellular "rusting" that can lead to cancer. Antioxidants also reduce the risk of heart disease and protect against potentially deadly blood clots.....

It was also found to reduce blood pressure.

AND - gotta love this - turns out to be a good source of iron and zinc.

I am vindicated!

Dark chocolate - Health Food!! ;-))

Seriously, we are becoming more and more aware that what we take in, what we consume, can affect our health significantly.

It's not only true of food.

It's also true in virtually every other area of life.

Actions we engage can affect the well being of our mind.

What we think about in our mind affects the health of our body.

I met someone recently who had gone somewhere. Being there caused high stress in her mind and prevented her from thinking clearly on certain other matters which required attention.

Those activities, and the mental stress affected her stomach. She lost her appetite. Which left her feeling weak. Which affected activities she was involved in.

What goes on **inside** and what goes on **outside** is connected.

Please remember that as we engage our bible passages for today.

Read with me from the Word of God.

DEUTERONOMY 4: 1-9

EPHESIANS 6: 10-20

MARK 7: 1-23

Be careful, believer, about what you do, and what you don't do.

Because what we do **HAS** consequences.

Perhaps today.

Perhaps next week.

Perhaps in five years.

But it **has** consequences.

And not just what we do - but what we think, and see, too.

There were, in the days of Jesus, a group of heretics known as the *Gnostics*.

They believed that what you did in your bodily life had little or no effect on what occurred in your mental life and your soul life. Your inside, private life and your outside, public life were separate from each other.

The writers in the New Testament spent a lot of their energy fighting against this idea. As did the early church for the first few hundred years.

It was poison.

It destroyed the souls of those who bought into it.

I'm afraid that somehow it has returned today and people are getting sucked in by it.

It is the poisonous, destructive idea that I can go places that perhaps are somewhat off-color; I can engage in activities that perhaps aren't of the purest shades; I can watch movies that I wouldn't want my little sister to see..... and as long as I don't hurt anyone - hey - gotta live, not a big deal - don't be so uptight!

It's a thrill.

All the others are there.

The action is good.

It's not all the time.

That's the idea - what we do on the outside doesn't really affect us on the inside. That we can do something in one area of our life without it affecting another area of our existence.

It's a deadly teaching that rips people apart.

And delights the Evil One.

Here's why.

When God created the first human beings He created, says the ancient Hebrew text of Genesis, *Nephesh Chayah* - living beings.

It doesn't talk in the opening chapters of the bible about a body with a soul somehow duct-taped to it.

It talks about "*living beings*,"

whole, complete beings.

all parts of those being integrated, linked - the outer physical parts and the inner spiritual, emotional and mental parts.

That's how we were created.

Then came sin. And the curse.

Sin brought death.

Death is separation - first of all from God, and then separation of the various parts of the *nephesh chayah*, the *Living Being* - separation one from another.

Pull an arm off the body and it will wither and die.

Yank out your spleen and it will cease functioning. Dead.

Twist or damage the mind so that it functions in a realm all of its own - a realm of mental illness or dysfunction - and one can tragically become a walking dead person. The "real you" seems to die.

Not only does that one part of the person die - the rest suffers terribly.
And Evil laughs.

Understand - Satan's only goal is to destroy what God has created.

Evil NEVER creates anything.

It damages.

It obstructs.

It rips apart.

What it leaves are shadows, ghosts and empty spaces.

That is why C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Great Divorce*, describes hell as something that can finally be contained in a tiny crack between two blades of grass growing in the soil of heaven.

Evil is a parasite.

Watch out when you encounter forces which try to tell you that what happens in one part of your existence isn't tied to another part.

Watch out for seductive songs that tell you –

"It's only in this one area. And it's only this once."

Friend, you are created by God to be a *Nephesh Chayah*, a Living Being, a whole person. Reject those lies which come at you, telling you that:

What you see with your eye doesn't affect your body's health.

What you do for your body's health doesn't affect your soul's vitality.

The vitality of your soul life doesn't affect your spiritual connection to God.

The web sites you visit and who you chat with on MSN are really of no consequence.

Business is business and that's just the way it is.

Sure the language isn't great, but hey, come on!

Music? It's only the beat.

Money? It's mine to spend.

That's what they'll try to tell you.

And as we give in to this lie, and allow ourselves to be fragmented, divided up - bit by bit
piece by piece

our lives are poisoned, crippled, damaged;
and we are on the road to death.

Because even as Evil tries to infiltrate one piece at a time, it knows that the poison will work its way through the entire system of our being.

Or as it pulls one part away, the rest suffers terribly.

The Pharisees and scribes in Jesus' day had been drawn in by exactly this kind of thing. They kept that word of Moses from Deuteronomy 4:

Keep the commandments of the Lord your God - v.2

Observe them diligently - v.6

No problem. They had it all figured out. More rules and more careful observance of those rules than you could begin to count.

Outwardly they had it down to a fine art.

But they forgot about v.9:

9 But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life;

V.9 of Deuteronomy 4 indicates that it's not just the outer commandments, the outer actions,
but also what you take in with your eyes;
it's also what you let rattle around inside your mind.
It's also these things that affect our eternal well-being.

And so Jesus minces no words and lets the Pharisees and Scribes know that they have become disconnected -
their inner motivation and thought life is completely disconnected from their actions.

They had come up with ways to get around certain family obligations that God had laid on them;
Obligations that are included in what Moses referred to in Deuteronomy 4. They figured that as long as they
were technically correct, the intent didn't matter.

But they were dead wrong -
Their attitude was slowly destroying them.
Which is why Jesus was so tough.
Their eternity is in doubt.
Immediate change is required before it is too late.
He can't afford to pussy foot around.

Neither can we.

Be very careful. Hear Deuteronomy 4:9:

About what you do.
About what you look at.
About what you think.

The sorts of actions in which you become involved - even if only for fun, and supposedly only for once -
will have a shaping influence on your soul.

The images that you let enter your eyes - even if you know they are computer generated, or merely for
entertainment - will either soften your heart to be more open to God's goodness and grace, or harden you
towards whispers of His Love.

The kinds of thoughts that you harbor, the imaginations that you let dance around in your mind, the
secret dreams that you hang on to - they will build you up, or begin to tear you down.

None of this stuff is neutral.

There isn't a single part of it that doesn't matter.

It will either
add to your life.
Or pull you towards death.
It will draw you closer to Jesus.
Or pull you away from him.

That said, go with me to the third reading of the day, Ephesians 6.

It speaks about our life as a battle.

V. 11 - *Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

It's not that you can live a neutral life, and some day when you are ready, you can begin to make
spiritual choices.

Friend - if you don't make the choices, they will be made for you.
Satan is on the prowl.
He is out to destroy everything about you.
Watch out.
Be alert.
Be ready to defend and counter-attack.

Now notice the armor - v.14-17:

What parts of the body are covered by God's armor?

Can you see?

Head to toe.

Everything.

It all has to be covered - because it all matters.

Every part - top to bottom - can affect our life.

And every part - top to bottom - is vulnerable to attack by Evil.

So live - and live very carefully in the Fall Season ahead.

There will be many meetings.

Clubs and school and work - all starts up with renewed intensity again.

And sometimes, when we get busy,

sometimes we let things slip.

sometimes we're not as careful as we should be.

The Word of God calls us to be careful and keep our guard up.

Please, please, please – Will you commit to doing so?

Be very, very careful.

And one more thing -

Very important before we head home this morning.

Reality being what it is, most of us encounter times when chinks appear in our armor, part of us gets cut off and away from the rest of our self -

- and we get damaged.

There's lots of temptation around.

There's more than enough trash around.

Plenty of pain and dark spots that can slime a soul.

And I think most of us recognize the times and places where we blew it:

- we really shouldn't have made that business decision.

- wish I hadn't said this to that person

- no that wasn't a very good program to watch

- why did I not go to.....

OR The times and places when others make choices or take action that affects us and hurts us

- we are wounded inside.

I tell you - Evil multiplies itself. And so Satan and many little minions who follow him will try to replay images in our head that are dirty, degrading or destructive.

They'll say things like, "*Hah! You liked that didn't you!*"

They'll run, as it were, audio tapes in our mind - replaying again and again words and phrases that we have spoken, or that have been spoken to us:

painful, damaging words

accusing words

They'll dig with condemnation and shame.

You're no good.

You don't deserve any better.

You'll never get out of it.

If anyone finds out.....

If they really knew.....

They'll dangle temptation before us with greater intensity than ever.

Just remember - none of that has the last word.

Friends -

Look on the wall behind me.

See the cross of Christ.

Know that He who suffered and died on the cross has power that is bigger and stronger than any wrong choice we've made.

Christ is powerful and able to heal any pain which has been inflicted on us.

He is able and ready to forgive any wrong we have committed, any dirt that we have tossed on another, any sinful place we have gone.

He is able and desires to come in and clean out any garbage we have allowed to fester in our soul.

Friend -

Jesus died for you.

Jesus rose from the dead for you.

The holy power and strength that raised Him from the dead is available to all who believe in Him.

It is not about how strong your belief is in Him.

It is, rather, about the strength that comes to you when you submit in belief - even weak, halting belief - to Him.

Please understand the difference!

Eph 6:10: *Finally, be strong **in the Lord** and in the strength of **His** power.*

Notice what Paul writes at the end of Ephesians 6.

Notice what he calls believers to do once they've suited up with armor.

See the activity in which they are to be involved.

It is prayer.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me.....

Prayer is how we connect our lives to the power of God.

Prayer is where the life of Jesus flows from heaven to earth.

Prayer is where healing is found.

Prayer is where forgiveness is offered.

Prayer is where release is experienced.

Prayer is where courage to go forward is gained.

Prayer is where power is experienced to live.

To live as whole, complete children of the King of Heaven.

Full lives.

Good lives.

Lives that He created us to experience.

And so -

As we head into a new season -

Please join me in prayer: