

withhold from Him what rightfully is His? "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov. 3:9, 10). Paul tells us we ought "to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And he also said: "...freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). Study also Luke 12:16-21.

**Obedience**

Who will finally be saved? "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). We must keep the commandments: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). Who are these saints? "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2). "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). And now: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

(Italics have been used for emphasis in some of the scripture verses quoted.)

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**Keeping Fit Spiritually**

When one has been saved and has become a Christian, does that end the matter or begin it? Having had a genuine heart-felt conversion and having been baptized in water, what then? "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

As new creatures, what change has taken place? "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye become obedient from the heart to that form of teaching wherunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18, R.V.). "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

And so we enter upon a new life with new desires, new aspirations, and new hopes. It is not enough to start; we must finish. "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Having heard, believed, and obeyed the word of truth, what then? "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). And what does that word instruct us to do? In other words, what must we do to keep saved?

As new converts we are but "babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1), and we must grow. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and

all guile, and hypocrites, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:1, 2). "But *grow in grace*, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). And we cannot expect to grow in grace if we neglect the means of grace. If we are to keep saved and be strong and healthy Christians we *must* take spiritual exercise regularly. How is this done?

#### Consecration

First of all, a life of daily consecration must be lived. We are exhorted: "...yield yourselves *unto God*, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:13). As new creatures in Christ Jesus we have become His disciples--His servants, and it is our business to do His will. "...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). And how is this to be accomplished?

mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye *transformed* by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12: 1, 2).

We must be *filled* with the Spirit, for the Spirit-filled life is the only really successful Christian life. In fact, we are told to "...be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This is not merely a suggestion; it is a

command. Let us remember that it is one thing to have the Spirit, and it is quite another thing to be *filled* with the Spirit. All Christians *have* the Spirit, for it is written: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). However, all are not sufficiently filled with the Spirit. Thus, inasmuch as all are to abound spiritually, there should be a constant seeking to be filled more and more with the Spirit. Christ said:

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that *ask* him?" (Luke 11:13). This is the power that we need for witnessing, for service, and for living the victorious life. Lack of this is the chief cause of so much backsliding.

#### Bible Study

Another important part of keeping fit is Bible study. We should read and study the Bible daily. To neglect this is dangerous. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosca 4:6). As children of God, we are to do the will of God, and we must study His Word to learn what His will is. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Paul also said: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself,

and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Error abounds on every hand, and we must constantly turn to the Word for protection against false teaching. Jesus said:

"Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matt 24:4). "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39), and "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

**Prayer**

In order to keep spiritually fit the Christian must make constant use of prayer. There can be no spiritual growth and victories over sin without it. How often should a Christian pray? Paul said: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Of course, we know that one cannot literally spend all his time on his knees, but it is possible for each one to keep his heart "on its knees." Posture of body is not as important before God as the attitude of the heart.

Regular times daily for prayer is the foundation of the Christian life. The prophet, Daniel, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God..." (Dan. 6:10). The Psalmist said: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psa. 55:17). Jesus spent long hours in prayer. He is our great example. (See Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:12).

**Service**

And there must be service in order to keep spiritually strong. We are saved to serve. His call to discipleship means a life of active service for Him. He says: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"

(Matt. 4:19). He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), and He said: "if any man serve me, let him follow me... if any man serve me, him will my Father honor" (John 12:26). We cannot serve two masters—Christ and the world. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). And Paul added:

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23, 24). We must follow Him only. He alone should be our example. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). And let us not forget these words: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

**Self Denial**

We must also live a life of self-denial. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). That this is to be a daily practice is made plain in Luke 9:23. Selfishness is the cardinal sin today among professed Christians, and self must be put aside if we would follow Christ. There can be no true discipleship without the practice of self-denial. Paul tells us: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation,

the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (1 Pet. 4:4).

**Right Words**

Another way to keep fit spiritually is to guard the tongue. Our words are an index to our character: "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). There is a saying that "talk is cheap," but from the words of Jesus it would seem that too much talking may prove to be a rather expensive indulgence. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). Note what is said about the one who does not control his tongue:

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26). What, then, shall we do? "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1 Pet. 3:10).

**Giving**

Giving of our means is another prerequisite to keeping spiritually healthy. Paying is just as much a part of our religious lives as praying. God says: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10). The tithes (tenth) of our increase belongs to the Lord. To withhold it is to rob God. (See verse 8.)

How can we expect to prosper if we

and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

The life of the Master was one of continual self-denial. Paul fought to overcome self, and practiced a rigid self-denial. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). After all, the greatest battle we have to fight is the one against *self*.

Keeping spiritually prepared also involves shunning worldliness. There must be no compromise here. Peter tells us: "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). Just because something may not seem to be wrong does not mean that it is right. If we act and talk and live like sinners how can we expect people to have confidence in our profession of Christianity? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

There is a difference between a worldly and the true child of God. Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me..." (Matt. 12:30). There is no middle ground. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2). We may be criticized, ridiculed, and even ostracized, but that is to be expected, for it is written: "Whererein they think it strange that ye run not with them to