



16. IMPERIAL VICTORS: LIFE AT ITS BEST

Some people think we each have a time we're going to die, that that time is set, and there's nothing we can do about it—so health habits don't matter! That attitude is totally out of touch with all the scientific evidence clearly demonstrating that our daily choices affect our likelihood of living a long and healthy life. Revelation 12:9 exposes Satan for the deceiver he is and says he "deceives the whole world." He deceives millions of Christians into thinking it makes no difference how they treat their bodies as long as their "hearts" are right with God. They accept the temporary pleasure of some defiling physical indulgence — drugs, alcohol, tobacco, harmful articles of diet, sexual immorality—and in the process destroy both body and soul. Listen to these plain words in Revelation 21:27; "There shall by no means enter into it [the Holy City] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Those who defile their bodies with abominations are outside the city. Yet Revelation 14:7 urges us to "Fear God and give glory to Him..." and giving glory involves a commitment of our entire being, our lifestyle. Look at 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and 10:31: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price [redeemed by Jesus' blood]; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." In Romans 12:1 Paul earnestly appeals, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Authorities in the field of Preventive Medicine tell us our lifestyle practices are killing us. Our choices contribute to disease and premature death or health and long life. Let's look at practices that are destroying millions of lives—and what we can do about them!

Dying For a Smoke? The Sixth Commandment says, in Exodus 20:13, "Thou shalt not kill." Dr. Linus Pauling—one of the few scientists ever to win two Nobel Prizes—said that every cigarette you smoke takes 14½ minutes off your life. In other words, smoking is committing slow suicide. Tobacco causes hundreds of thousands of deaths each year from cancer, emphysema, and heart disease. But Christ can deliver you from this addictive, health-destroying habit just as He healed the sick 2000 years ago. The Bible says in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." You can be delivered—by the power and grace of God, you can quit!

Fighting the Battle of the Bottle? Alcohol affects our brain, the organ through which the Holy Spirit communicates with us. That's why the devil brewed alcohol in hell's laboratory, because alcohol deadens the brain! When people start drinking, after a few drinks they don't have many inhibitions, so drinking and sexual immorality go together. Drinking goes with a moral fall. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Alcohol causes crime, serious marital problems, family problems, and job-related problems, all as a result of drinking. Don't talk to me about "responsible drinking." There's no such thing! You become irresponsible when you drink because it deceives you. Shakespeare said of alcohol: "O God! that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains."

Man's Original Diet: When God created the human race, He gave them a magnificent diet of grains, nuts, and fruits—a vegetarian diet. Genesis 1:29. The diet God gave provides very adequate protein. Strong animals like the horse and cow get all the protein they need from the oats and corn and other grains they eat. They get their protein firsthand, from the earth, and grow big and strong. The man who kills them and eats their flesh is getting his protein second hand. It wasn't until the time of Noah's Flood that God gave

people permission to eat flesh food. The average life span before the Flood was 900 years! Genesis 5:5; 5:27; 9:29. But right after the Flood—since the catastrophic Deluge ripped up trees and plants and temporarily destroyed all vegetation—God gave Noah and his family permission to eat meat. And immediately man's life span was shortened by hundreds of years! Ever since, men have lived much shorter lives. God gave permission to eat meat after the flood, but if you eat a lot of meat, you'll have more animal fat in your diet—and in your arteries. So you need to cut down on that high fat in your diet. If you want the best diet, of course, you'll choose a vegetarian one, as God intended.

Clean & Unclean Animals: God's distinction between clean and unclean animals goes back long before there was a Jewish nation. In Genesis 7:2 God mentions it to Noah, centuries before Abraham, the first Jew. When we note the anatomical guidelines built into the animals, we realize it goes back to Creation: clean animals have split hoofs and chew the cud; clean seafood have fins and scales—Leviticus 11 & Deuteronomy 14. God's clean-unclean distinction was not just for Old Testament times. Isaiah 66:15-17 shows it will still be in effect when Jesus returns: "Behold, the Lord will come with fire...and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves,...eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord." God never said we could eat unclean animals! Nor should we want to—someone noted that "He was a valiant man who first ate an oyster!"

We can learn to control our appetites. We can eat to live rather than live to eat. We don't have to be among those God speaks of in Philippians 3:19, "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly." The Lord will gladly help us sanctify our tastes if we ask Him. Instead of junk food, we can learn to enjoy the premium fuel our bodies deserve.

Peter's Corrective Vision: Some may wonder about the strange vision Peter had in Acts 10:1-35 when he saw all kinds of unclean animals and God said, "Get up and eat." Peter's reply proves that during his entire three-and-a-half years with Jesus, he never heard about any changes in the status of unclean foods. But what did it all mean? Peter himself, who was puzzled at first, explains in verses 28 & 34: "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean...I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." And Peter immediately began teaching about Christ to Gentiles, people he had formerly despised. Peter's vision was about people—not food. The Bible interprets itself—if we only let it!

Our health comes to us as a sacred trust. Failure to care for this priceless machinery called our body is an insult to the Creator. Jesus wants us well! He can help us change our careless, self-destructive lifestyle to one that heaven can approve. In John 15:5 Jesus says, "Without Me, ye can do nothing." On the other hand, the apostle Paul triumphantly proclaims in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Without Christ, we can do nothing. With Him, we can do all things! Jesus says, "Surrender all, and let Me work miracles in your life. Put your life on the altar and give Me your heart. My welcoming arms are out for you!"