

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

by Dee Bowman

I am convinced that every home in America has at least one trampoline, a rowing machine, a treadmill, or a ski-trac exercise apparatus stored away in the garage or some back room somewhere. Strangely, most of them are almost brand new or at least have only a few miles on them. Furthermore, they were all bought the same way: there was this dream, probably prompted by some tv commercial, that came upon you that buying one of those gadgets would firm up your stomach, give an immediate ripple to your abdominal muscles, and turn your present flab into instant bulging brawn. The dream fades quickly, however, when the sweat starts to pour and the sinews tighten up, when the pulse runs away and the joints jerk. And then comes the rationalization process. After all, a little fat never hurt anything, and "I look about as good as anyone else my age."

I did all that. And when I had finished the above process, I tried to sell my almost new Nordic-trac. After a couple of years of newspaper ads, I finally gave it to a fellow for hauling it off. Again, the rationalization process: "Well, I at least learned my lesson about that!" A \$600 lesson!

Americans spend millions of dollars each week trying to stay healthy. The trek to the gym, pound the pavement, walk the walk, seek for absolute ab's, tight thighs, and strong posteriors. Other millions are spent just for the toggery to wear while working on these matters. We are truly a health-conscious people. Ironically, in spite of all the dollars we spend trying to be healthy, we Americans are still among the world's most unhealthy, obese, and flabby people.

Actually, trying to stay healthy is a good thing. Even for our Christianity. We can be better lights if we feel well. We can be of better service to others if we are in good shape. If we are fettle our mind will likely be more alert, more active, more receptive to learning. After all, Paul said to Timothy, "bodily exercise profits a little" (1 Timothy 4:8).

But in the end ('scuse the pun) it's mostly a futile exercise ('scuse the pun). The fact is, no matter how much you use your Nordic machine, no matter how many miles you row, no matter how many "reps" you do at the gym, your body will grow old and eventually wear out. And while it is right and proper that we should spend some time tending to our bodies and making sure they are kept in good working order, in the final reality, it's an unavailing and useless performance. In time we lose the dexterity we once had, the bones become brittle, we get hair where we once had none and lose it where we did. Solomon said it well: "When the grinders cease because they are few, and those that

look through the windows grow dim...when on rises up at the sound of a bird...and they are afraid of height and of terrors in the way...the grasshopper is a burden..." (Ecclesiastes 12:3-5). In the end "man goes to his eternal home and the mourners go about in the streets."

But there is a health that is lasting, a hale and hearty existence that is sound and without impediments. There is a health that is ageless; in fact, one which gets better with age, not worse. Listen to the rest of the story: "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

Godliness is profitable to all. God said, "You be holy, even as I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Godliness, being as much like God as we can, gives us the stamina and fortitude to live life with sanguinity, no matter the externalities. Godliness is the grand investment in life; it pays eternal dividends. It grows and grows, gets better and better, and is never affected by which way the stock market goes.

Having the promise of the life that now is. Godliness is good for us right now. The human body is at its peak level of efficiency when it is controlled by a mind given over to God. The Christian is more apt to be healthy than are those who constantly abuse their bodies with sin. The person who is godly will have a better attitude. And doctors everywhere tell us how important a healthy attitude is, how even those who are ill will respond to treatment more readily if their attitude is buoyant. Studies show that an ebullient spirit even heals more quickly.

And of that which is to come. Ah! Here is the best part. Godliness connects to eternity. Good spiritual health is lasting health indeed. If a person is godly here, the result will be eternal life. Can you contemplate that? Can you imagine a body that cannot be ravaged by disease, one that will never tire or become damaged? Can you visualize a body where there is no aging and no wrinkles brought on by time, where there will be no worries, no anxieties, no consternation, no fear nor trepidations? Godliness can ensure that you have such a body.

Learn this lesson well. "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. From the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Yeah, it's good to be healthy, but better to be godly.