Preventive Maintenance?

by Wayne Goff

"**Preventive**: (adjective) designed to keep something undesirable such as illness, harm, or accidents from occurring: *preventive medicine.*"

I will never forget reading an article years ago in the **Longview News-Journal** from a doctor who said, in effect, that we know much more now about *how to prevent* certain illnesses, but what we don't know is *how to get people to act on them!* Believe it or not, people will do that which will harm them in the long run in order to enjoy themselves now. Only when the "final results" hit them do they then begin to feel remorse.

This explains why smokers will not quit smoking immediately, or why drinkers of alcohol do not consider the effects of cirrhosis, or why obese people do not go on diets, etc. Now, dear reader, if you think it's difficult for doctors to encourage us to take better care of our health, how much success do you think gospel preachers have in trying to get people to take care of their souls?! *"…For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it"* (Matt. 7:13). The road to hell is not only paved by "good intentions," it is also the road of least resistance! People do what is easy, convenient, or what they like, rather than doing what is good for them.

Long-Term Value

Christianity is not a religion of instant gratification. It is not a sprint, but a marathon. The results do not happen immediately, but show up in the end. *"If **in this life only** we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"* (1 Cor. 15:19).

This design of Christianity is not by accident, but God is putting all of us through a "test" (life) to see how we will fare. The "results" will be given to us, without bias, prejudice or preferred treatment on the Judgment Day. I believe this is true because people will *feign* repentance when faced with disaster, but that is not their true self. The rich man (Luke 16) had no interest in repenting until he found himself in torment (Lk. 16). Unfortunately, that was too late for him.

People find it extremely difficult to *"repent."* This is the **hardest** part of Christianity, but it also easy to do if one is **convicted**. By "conviction" I do not mean the casual "that might be right" approach, but a deep-seated, unwavering persuasion. God **commands** all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30), but God gives all men everywhere the freedom to choose! The right to choose their life's path is not freedom from consequences though. On the Judgment Day every one of us will *"…receive the things done in the body, **according to what he has done**, whether good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). Good intentions will not be sufficient.

"Repent" In The New Testament

It is interesting to note that the word "repent" and its associated words appears 64 times in the Bible, and 54 of them are in the New Testament. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ introduced the new order of Christianity with the words *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"* (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; etc.). Now that is not to say that repentance is not an Old Testament theme, but in the New Testament it is God's **final call** to mankind:

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says

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