

## EXERCISE

**“ . . . exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (1 Tim 4:7-8m KJV)**

In 1968, Dr. Kenneth Cooper authored his best-selling book on “Aerobics”. By doing so he introduced a new word into the American lexicon and also spawned a renewed interest in physical fitness. Cooper believes that good health requires a good heart, good lungs, and a good circulatory system. He further believes that the only way to get all three is by exercise. When he first wrote about aerobics only about 100,000 regularly exercised by jogging. 40 years later the number had swelled to 30 million. Cooper is a devout Christian and is quick to witness to the importance of his faith. He has authored 18 books, and sold 30 million copies in 41 different languages. At age 85 Dr. Cooper is in good health and still breaking new ground in the field of preventative medicine.

James Levine of the Mayo Clinic has labeled “sitting” as the “disease of our time”. According to an article posted by John Hopkins Medicine, physical inactivity has been shown to contribute to cancer, depression, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels. The cure for the “disease of our time” involves exercise. Yes! Exercise! Yes! The monotonous and strenuous boredom of regular exercise.

The word translated “exercise” in our text is “gumnazo” from which we get our English word “gymnasium”. In a radio interview I did with Dr. Cooper many years ago, he told me that his wife was in better physical condition than “Mr. Texas”. Only building massive muscles does little for your heart, lungs, and circulatory system. Aerobic exercise involves such sustained activity that your lungs are cleansed, and your heart beats fast enough to purge your circulatory system. To be healthy there is no substitute for regular exercise.

But now let us consider again Paul’s inspired advice to Timothy. Physical exercise only profits a little. No matter how hard we try to live, we are all still going to die. Spiritual exercise, by comparison, is **“profitable unto all things, having promise of life that now is, and of that which is to come”**. There is a certain sadness involved in seeing overweight people go to an early grave because they refused discipline and exercise. This sadness pales into insignificance, however, by comparison to the destiny that slothful people will face at the Judgement (Matt. 25:26).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints)” (1 Cor 16:15 KJV)**. Addiction is invariably a gradual process. You start out with light and casual amounts and gradually advance to addiction. I met a dentist in Iowa many years ago who was “addicted” to running. When he started, he said that he hated every minute of it. The more he ran, however, the more enjoyable it became. Now he was able to experience what he called the “runners high”. He even took his running shoes to church so he could “enjoy” running home.

The same can happen spiritually. At first the discipline of Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance may seem boring and unprofitable. The more you do them, however, the easier they become. Ultimately you too can be like the house of Stephanas and become “addicted” to the ministry of the saints.

The greatest journey begins with a single step. Your transformation begins with the “renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). You cannot properly mature in Christ without Bible study, prayer, and church attendance. No! It will not be easy to regularly participate in these spiritual disciplines. It is always difficult to walk an unused path. The more you “exercise” yourself unto godliness, however, the easier it will become. Remember! Godliness is profitable unto all things!