

Think about it! (16)

The most important thing is to be healthy – that's what a lot of people think, and say. In fact the idea is so popular that it has given rise to the names of more than one radio or television programme.

It is, of course, a reasonably true and even quite good sentiment. If you have everything, but are ill, it's difficult to enjoy all that you have. On the other hand, if you're in good health, even though there may be a lot of things that you don't have, at least you can enjoy the little that you do have. And the good thing about this philosophy is that it's the exact opposite of being materialistic; it recognizes, albeit implicitly, that money and material things are not the most important things in life – a great truth.

But this popular philosophy that says that the most important thing is to be healthy, does have its down-side:

(1) It offers no help whatsoever to people who are ill! Try it out yourself: try telling someone who's ill, or someone who has a loved one who's ill, "the most important thing is to be healthy" – let's see how they react! And, you know, there are an awful lot of people in that kind of situation. What comfort is there for them in this popular wisdom?

(2) It's a philosophy that leads to disaster! No-one can be healthy for ever; and the unstoppable process of getting old, with its inevitable deterioration in health, turns "the most important thing" (in other words, one's health) into an ever more unobtainable state for the vast majority of mortals.

(3) It leads to idolatry; it puts health on the level of a goddess who ends up taking the place of the only true God. How do you know when you've fallen into this sort of idolatry? When you think more about your health than about the Lord; when you talk more about it than about him; when you put more on its altar than on his; when your number one concern, your top priority or your first love is it, and not him; in other words, when "the most important thing" is it, and not him.

(4) Strictly speaking, being healthy is not the most important thing. So, what is, then? From the Christian point of view, the most important thing is God; it's the spiritual realm; it's eternity; it's salvation. Not even the best of health can make up for losing one's soul, which the incarnate Son of God warned us about. On the other hand, possessing salvation, having the certainty of the Christian hope, has more than made up for not only the lack of good health, but even the most terrible experiences of torture and martyrdom.

If you're well, if you're enjoying good health, thank God for it and enjoy it! Think about other people who are not so well off as you, and ask yourself what you could do to help them. But above all, don't bow down before the goddess Health!; worship only God, take seriously his message to you and start getting ready for illness, death and the other side!

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