The covenant promise is that ***"With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation"*** *(Psalm 91:16).* Confirming the covenant promise of long life is something that Solomon could say: ***"Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings: and the years of thy life shall be many"*** *(Proverbs 4:10).* Our goal as covenant children should be to live to a ripe old age. At some point, many find that life will be terminated by a sickness unto death. All are under the sentence of death, and the grim reaper will come to claim us all if Jesus Christ does not return in power and glory before our time comes. When sickness is unto death, what should we do? Can we make wise medical decisions if that day should come into our lives?

WHEN SICKNESS IS UNTO DEATH

"Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died..." *(II Kings 13:14).* Elisha, the miracle making prophet, died in a sickness unto death. ***"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith Yahweh, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."*** *(II Ki. 20:1).* Hezekiah was afflicted with sickness unto death. In great repentance, he made an appeal for an **extension of life** and was granted another fifteen years. On the basis of this example, it is possible to make a godly appeal for an extension of days. Only under very unusual circumstances would this petition be granted, however. When sickness unto death knocks at our door, what should we do? Can we act with prudence in such a time of personal crisis? While we are in good health and of sound mind, can we not establish the proper Christian and Biblical mind set for this problem? Must we wait until the crisis is upon us and then be rendered incapable of making prudent decisions in so great a matter? Will we be able to mount the pressure that will come our way by way of doctors and family members? **Let us pray that we may make wise medical decisions should illness that is unto death come our way!** The following steps should help us govern and control our lives in a responsible and godly manner should this situation face us or members of our immediate family.

HEALTH MAINTENANCE

1) We should live in daily repentance before our God, seek to live with a clear conscience that is without offense to God and man, and be filled with the joy of our salvation. Our aim should be to walk the **High Road** of obedience and commitment to a high standard of Christian morality and life style that includes no alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or extra-marrital sex in any form.

2) We should spend time in prayer, Bible reading and memorization of scripture every day of our lives. Also, fasting one day each week (not on the Holy Sabbath!) is excellent.

3) It is vital to good spiritual and physical health to keep our bodies in tune with the rhythm of the **Biblical Sabbath.** We were created to be in sync with the Biblical Sabbath of the seventh day. Attending a holy convocation on this day, together with proper rest, will be a powerful stimulus to good health.

4) Our daily dietary practices are very important to good health. These biblical laws are imperative. Also maintain a low fat diet that includes lots of raw fruits and vegetables, grains (whole wheat bread), short grain brown rice, and other such natural foods. A diet that contains ample fiber is vital to good health. Supplementing your diet with a good program of vitamins and minerals certainly won't hurt. Keeping your body in proper form with the HIO adjustment is far more important than most people realize.

5) Our good health should mandate celebrating the **Sacrament of Holy Communion at Passover and Atonement** each year. The spiritual benefits from this translates into good physical and spiritual health.

6) When we do become very ill, it is important that we enter a time of **self-examination** to determine if unconfessed sin has robbed us of our health.

7) If our **sickness is persistent** and no response is forthcoming, following a time of repentance we should follow the command of James 5:14. **We should initiate the call for the elders of the Church in confirmation of our faith in Jesus Christ to be healed.** This prayer by the elders should include a time for confession of sin, followed by prayer and anointing with blessed and consecrated olive oil.

If this illness does not respond to the foregoing steps and the sickness appears to be a **sickness unto death,** consider this course of action.

SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

1) Enter a time of prolonged fasting and prayer under the care and supervision of a competent person in the field of natural health. This period of supervised fasting should be followed by a carefully established plan of nutrition (strict diet) and vitamin and mineral supplements.

2) If you have access to a Christian doctor, seek his counsel for a diagnosis and prognosis of the illness. Do not hesitate to seek a second opinion from another Christian doctor.

3) Do not allow yourselves to be incarcerated in the hospital for long costly stays during which time you become a guinea pig for experimental testing and besieged with enormous hospital, doctor, and drug costs.

MAKING THAT WISE DECISION

In the heat of personal crisis and sickness, tremendous pressures will come upon you by others. Under the pressure of fear, people often surrender precious ground that results in dire consequences. Before allowing yourselves to be placed under the subjection and authority of doctors, drugs, and hospitals in a case of sickness unto death, consider the following:

1) There is nothing to fear about death. Death is a celebrated event in God's Word. Ecclesiastes 7:1 confirms that the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. Revelation 14:13 declares that ***"... Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord..."*** St. Paul gave a beautiful statement about death in Philippians 1:21: ***"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*** Paul is confirming that death is a gain over life. II Corinthians 5:6 declares: ***"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."*** Paul continues to say in verse 8, ***"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."*** Why should a Christian fear death? Death is a step into the greatest adventure of life. If we are in genuine salvation, death is nothing to be feared. Rather, **it is to be a celebration of having fought a good fight, having finished the course, and having kept the faith.** *(II Timothy 4:7)*

2) What will you gain from subjecting your body to the ruthless testing, examination, pain, and suffering that medical science will bring when you have a sickness? **What will be your gain, and what will be your loss?** Will you gain a few days, a few weeks, or a few months? And what will the **quality of life** be during those days? And will you really gain any time? How many people would have lived longer by **never** subjecting themselves to hospital incarceration? **Is it not true that many victims of cancer did survive by never setting foot into the office of a medical doctor or hospital?** Will you gain anything with the cut, burn, and poison remedies of modern medicine? In an effort to cure one problem, how many other problems will be created by the surgeon with the knife, drugs, or radiation and other such treatments? Might the patient not live just as long, and with at least some quality of life, at home in the company of family?

3) When life can only be sustained with artificial helps and machines, is it proper to prolong it at such enormous costs in suffering and financial loss? Do you not find it tragic that many people spend most of their family fortune in a matter of weeks or months on intensive health treatment designed to give them a few weeks or months (seldom years) of extended life? **It seems to me that the time to make these big decisions is now—before sickness unto death knocks at the door!** A **Living Will** that prohibits extended life support systems is something worthy of serious consideration. It is time that people think twice before they spend the family farm in trying to survive sickness unto death by a few weeks or months. Let us purpose now to educate our family and not allow them to put people who are sick unto death under a terrible pressure to submit to the cut, burn, and poison treatment.

Sickness and health care are a major business in America. Health care is one of the most costly programs in our country. Let us purpose not to become another statistic in the growing numbers of people who submit their bodies as guinea pigs to the medical establishment and spend themselves into oblivion while they are in the process of dying. Let us purpose to live out **sickness unto death** within the walls of our home and in the company of our family and friends. Must we suffer death by the knife, drugs, radiation, or by some other man-imposed cure for sickness? Why not say "No!" to all of this and die with dignity in the company, comfort, and care of our own families? Let death become a celebration—not a time to mourn the loss of the family fortune and our precious family member. **Let us purpose to make wise medical decisions when sickness unto death comes to our home.**

Note: *The above discussion is about the type of sickness that can come upon a person at any time in life, but ordinarily later in life. This essay is an honest effort to encourage people to make godly decisions when they are faced with an illness that is life threatening. This discussion is not about people who are victims of a trauma suffered by accident or injury. In such cases it may be urgent to take all steps necessary—including emergency treatment at a hospital or doctor's office. There are many fine* ***Christian physicians*** *in the United States who are dedicated to the healing arts. Several such doctors are on our mailing list. I pray that you know that we do recognize the* ***office of the physician*** *and have great respect for those who are God-fearing and seeking to make a place for God and Scripture in healing their patients.*

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