

# SPIRITUAL VIRUSES!

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

November 1993

Several months ago my neighbor, a computer enthusiast, asked me if I had an anti-virus program on my computer. I told him no, I did not. He was shocked and cautioned me that sooner or later my computer would pick up a virus and do much harm to its internal organs, that is to my programs and data.

Well, I still don't have an anti-virus program for my computer, but the episode reminded me of an article that concerned itself not with physical viruses, but with spiritual viruses that can invade our mind.

And so my purpose is to draw a comparison between physical and spiritual viruses and apply the analogy to our spiritual lives and see how we can, in fact how we must, protect ourselves from "spiritual viruses."

Now, first of all what is a virus? You know long before we became familiar with the word virus in connection with computers, it was and still is, a biological term, which the dictionary defines as a "causative agent of an infectious disease." In other words a virus is an agent that causes infectious diseases. A biological virus is a piece of genetic material with a protective protein coating. After it invades a living cell, it begins to take over the genetic coding of the cell, redirecting the cell's functioning to produce more viruses. It begins to grow, and in doing so, it causes diseases such as colds, influenza, polio, smallpox, rabies and possibly some types of cancers.

Viruses have four basic characteristics: (and remember we are drawing a comparison of physical and spiritual viruses). The four basic characteristics are:

- 1) They enter from outside the body.
- 2) They enter undetected and may be dormant for a while.
- 3) They make changes in the body at the most fundamental level and
- 4) They cause the body to malfunction, leading to sickness and sometimes death.

A computer virus is similar in its functioning. A computer virus is a computer program that has the same four basic characteristics.

- 1) It is introduced into the system from the outside.
- 2) It is not detected by the computer or operator and may remain dormant for a while. That's what makes them so dangerous. Remember the most famous computer virus back in 1992 called Michelangelo, which was created in honor of the artist's birthday 500 years ago, and erased data from computers only on his birthday, March 6th of each year.
- 3) It begins to make fundamental changes in the computer's coding, changing the programs, changing the original intent.
- 4) It causes the computer to malfunction, destroying the programs or the data.

What about spiritual viruses? What are they? Well the Dictionary definition is that they are: "something that poisons the mind or soul". In other words they are the ideas, thoughts, knowledge or emotions that come into our minds from external sources. They may come from other people, from advertising, books or even from the spirit world. Often we don't realize we are absorbing these ideas or emotions, and if we don't find them, if we don't detect them and root them out, they can begin to make changes in our spiritual health. They begin to grow and ferment and fester until they change us into something different from what we were before. We become spiritually sick.

Now, the big question is: How can we defend ourselves against spiritual viruses? There are obvious ways we can, with God's help, fight spiritual viruses. We can prevent dangerous thoughts from entering our minds and we can, through spiritual education, detect them before they cause problems. But even after they cause problems, we can fight them with God's Spirit and we can be healed of spiritual damage they may have done. We need not fear them, for God provided the means and the tools to fight spiritual viruses.

Let's look at a couple of scriptures, for it is God's Word that can illuminate what is at the core of our being. It is God's Word that is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and II Cor. 13:5 says *"Examine yourselves, test yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith"*. Not someone else's faith. Your faith.

Brethren, to keep out spiritual viruses we must examine ourselves whether we are still holding on to the faith once delivered unto us. We need to pray to God, to teach us through the Holy Spirit as we study the Bible. God's Word can show us whether a particular thought, an idea that comes into our mind from the outside, is a spiritual virus that can make us sick. In that way, God's Word is like an anti-viral computer program. It can detect the presence of spiritual viruses, it can detect the presence of spiritual problems. But an anti-viral computer program can do more than detect a virus. It can destroy them before they becomes active, before a false idea, a wrong emotional appeal gains a foothold in our lives.

God's Word, that is Jesus Christ in us, can help us to prevent spiritual viruses from gaining a foothold in our lives before they do a lot of damage. Let's turn to Ps 119:9-11. Here, the question is asked: *"How can a young man keep his way pure?"* And I would add: How can a young woman keep here way pure? What about an old man, and an old woman? So the question really is: How can anybody keep his way pure? Here is God's answer: *"By guarding it according to thy word. With my whole heart I seek thee: (do you seek God with your whole heart?) Let me not wander from thy commandments! I have laid up thy word (God's Word, not mans word) in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."*

You know if we continually inoculate ourselves with Gods Word and make it a part of our deepest inner being and live by it, the spiritual viruses that come along (and they will) won't be able to take root in our lives. God's Word is what we need. Daily Bible study and diligent application of that study in our lives can function like an anti-viral computer program. God's Word can help us identify spiritual viruses, and help us destroy them before they jeopardize our spiritual health and lives.

So, next time someone asks me if I have an anti-virus program; I will answer: Yes, I do, for I have installed the written and the living Word of God in my heart and mind to keep out spiritual viruses. I hope and pray that you have done, or will do, the same.