

"HE WHOM THOU LOVEST IS SICK"

John 11:3

Those who are dearly loved of God frequently suffer sickness and disease. Realizing this fact, it is important for us to understand something about God's purpose in the sickness of His children. And it is important for us to prepare ourselves to glorify our God when sickness comes upon us. It is my desire that this brief article might be used of God to help His suffering children to glorify Him.

You are familiar with Martha and Mary and their brother, Lazarus. These three people loved the Lord. They lived by faith. They earnestly sought the will, the honor, and the glory of Christ. They were all saved people. They saw the glory of God in Christ. They were among the few in that day who worshipped Christ as God, their Savior and King. And the Lord loved them. John says, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

But Lazarus was now very, very sick. Martha and Mary knew that the Lord loved them and their brother. And they knew that the Lord could heal Lazarus if He would. So they sent a message to the Lord saying, "He whom thou lovest is sick." Blessed are those who can follow this example of simple, confident faith.

The Lord loved Lazarus; yet Lazarus was sick. It is evident, then, that sickness is not a sign of God's anger or displeasure. In their time of need, Martha and Mary turned to the Lord in simple, confident, submissive faith. They simply informed the Lord of their trouble. They did not ask for anything, much less demand anything from Him. They simply told Him of their heart's burden. They were resigned to the Lord's will and submissive to His purpose. Knowing Christ's love and power, they knew that He would do that which was best. And Martha and Mary fixed their confidence on the Lord Himself. They did not say, "He whom we love," or, "He who loves and serves thee," or even, "He who has great faith in thee." They simply said, "He whom THOU LOVEST is sick." You know how the story turned out. The love, grace, and power of Christ were greatly displayed. The faith of Martha and Mary was strengthened, and many were converted. In it all, God was greatly glorified.

With these things in mind, I want you to consider four very basic, practical questions about this matter of sickness among God's people.

WHY DOES SICKNESS COME? How do you answer your little child's question, "Daddy, why do people get sick and die"? The Word of God alone can give a reasonable and satisfactory answer. Sickness, disease, pain, and death are the results of human sin (Rom. 5:12). One great proof of original sin is the fact that even babies and little children get sick and die. If there were no sin, there would be no sickness and no death. Still, a question arises -- **WHY DO THOSE WHOSE SINS ARE FORGIVEN AND THOSE WHO ARE LOVED OF GOD GET SICK?**

Of this much I am sure -- God could prevent it. Pay no attention to those who tell you that it is not God's will for His People to suffer or become sick. If such were not God's will, it wouldn't happen. When sickness comes, it

comes by the hand of God according to His own will and purpose. And if this thing comes from God, there is some good purpose behind it (Rom. 8:28). My friend, mark this down and remember it -- **MANY TIMES THOSE WHO ARE LOVED OF GOD ARE AFFLICTED WITH SICKNESS.** "Those whom the Christ loves are no more exempt from earthly trouble and anguish than others; rather they are bound over to it more surely" (Trench). Job, David, Hezekiah. Paul, and Epaphroditus were all faithful and beloved servants of God; and they all suffered painful and protracted sickness.

Yes, God has a good purpose in bringing you down upon a bed of sickness. A loving Father's hand will never cause His child a needless tear. By this means He will try and prove the sincerity of your love and faith; Sickness also has a way of humbling and mellowing our hearts, teaching us patience, and increasing our faith. Through pain and sickness Christ will often become more precious to His people. And sometimes God makes one of His children sick for the good of another. Mary and Martha needed to learn something that could only be taught by the sickness and death of their beloved brother. Whatever His purpose may be, our hearts rest in this assurance --**THE SICKNESS OF GOD'S CHILDREN IS "FOR THE GLORY OF GOD."**

WHAT COMFORT DO GOD'S CHILDREN HAVE IN THEIR TIMES OF SICKNESS? It is a great comfort to have loving friends who manifest their love and care in so many ways. True, loving friends are a great blessing from the Lord. But we have a greater source of comfort than the best of friends can provide.

We are comforted by the fact that **OUR LORD HIMSELF HAS BEEN THERE** (Matt. 8:17). Believer, your Lord will never call upon you to walk any path that He has not already walked. Since He has felt the very pain you now endure, be assured that He now sympathizes with you. **WE HAVE A SYMPATHIZING HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN WHO IS TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES.** He is able both to comfort and to help. **OUR LORD HAS ALSO ASSURED US OF HIS PRESENCE IN THE MIDST OF OUR DEEPEST DISTRESS.** His word is, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." In the midst of your sickness, the Lord Himself will be a nurse to help you and make your bed comfortable (Psalm 41:3). And we have this comfort, too -- **OUR SICKNESS IS NOT UNTO DEATH.** Like Lazarus, we may die. But, like Lazarus, we will live again.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SICKNESS TO GOD'S BELIEVING PEOPLE? Let me just share some of those benefits I have gained from my own experience. **SICKNESS CAUSES US TO PRAY.** Regrettably, we do not do much praying until we have need. **BY SICKNESS I AM MADE TO SEE THE VANITY OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS.** None of those things for which men labor so hard are of any real value. Houses, lands, fame, financial security, and great learning will afford no comfort to a sick and dying man. **BY SICKNESS I AM MADE AWARE THAT SOONER OR LATER EVERY EARTHLY TIE MUST BE BROKEN.** Do not hold to anything too tightly. Soon you will have to let go. **BY SICKNESS I AM MADE TO SEE THE BREVITY OF TIME.** My days are numbered. The night will soon come when no more work can be done. If I am to do anything for the furtherance of the gospel, for

the kingdom of Christ, or for the glory of God, it must be done now. BY SICKNESS I AM MADE MORE SYMPATHETIC TOWARD MY SUFFERING BRETHREN. (Gal. 6:2; Matt. 25:36.40). AND BY SICKNESS I AM MADE TO SEE THAT CHRIST IS ALL. Truly, He is all my hope; He is all my acceptance before God; He is all my strength; He is all my righteousness; He is all my life; He is all my desire (Psalm 73:25-26).

NOW WHAT ARE WE TO LEARN FROM THESE THINGS? Child of God, learn to take your cares to the Lord. Cast all your care upon Him. He does care for you. Learn to submit to the hand of God's providence, leaving your cares to the wisdom and goodness of God. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Do not hold anyone here too dear. "Lazarus died." If God calls your dearest loved ones home, do not try to hold them, and do not murmur. The Lord desires to have them, and that is best (John 17:24). We must all learn to live in the immediate prospect of eternity. And learn this -- OUR DAYS OF SICKNESS, SORROW. AND PAIN WILL SOON BE OVER. If we die in faith, it will be a happy, welcome death (2 Cor. 5:1, 6). If we live until Christ comes, we will rejoice. He is coming to take us to a home that knows no sickness, nor pain, nor death (Rev. 21:4). Child of God, seek to honor Christ in your time of sickness. He is honored by the faith, patience, submission, and love of His suffering children. Walk by faith in His fellowship and communion while you are in health; and when you are sick, it will not be lacking.

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Comfort in Sickness

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