

# *Reasons for Sickness*

**By Robert W. Reed**

(Edited transcript of sermon preached Sunday, June 10, 2018)

I want to read the first four verses of John chapter 11 this morning, and then I'm going to come back to this passage later on in the message and elaborate on some things in the passage.

As you see on the board this morning, I'm going to preach a message titled "Reasons for Sickness." I have dealt with this subject in the past, and my views have changed very little over the years. I did a seven-week series in 2016 on "Anxiety and Depression," and then in 2012 I preached a message titled "Healing and Atonement" and then "The Great Physician" in 2015. And please bear with me this morning. I have a lot to say if I have the time to say it, and if you'll pay attention this morning, I think it will be a blessing to you.

Notice with me in John chapter 11, verses 1 to 4:

*"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>(It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) <sup>3</sup>Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. <sup>4</sup>When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."*

*Heavenly Father, we do ask Thy blessings this morning upon the reading of Holy Scripture, and, Father, I pray personally this morning that you would help me to convey the thoughts and the truth that I believe that You've laid upon my heart. And, Lord, I just pray now that Thy will to be done in this service, for it's in Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.*

And you may be seated. You'll notice on the board I have a three-point outline:

- 1. SICKNESS COMES FROM SIN**, and I'm mainly focusing in on original sin in the first point, not personal sin. We'll talk about personal sin later.
- 2. SICKNESS COMES FROM SATAN**
- 3. SICKNESS COMES FROM GOD**

I could actually add a point number four — and I'm not going to — but sickness also comes from stupidity when we use drugs and alcohol and cigarettes and gluttony and eat too many Twinkies. And then there are the sexually transmitted diseases, and then there's sky diving, jumping out of a perfectly good airplane hoping the parachute will open. So I'm not going to deal with point number four. We'll do that at another time.

But what I want to present to you this morning to bring a balance to this subject is that sickness can come from sin or from Satan, but it also can come from God. Why do we get sick? We live in a world that is filled with sickness; do you not agree? We all get sick and we all will eventually die. We may not like that, but we all get sick. Christians get sick. Innocent babies get sick and even die. Some of you were sick just in the last three weeks. So everyone experiences sickness and everyone will one day experience death.

In the Bible there are many faithful believers — many — who dealt with infirmities. As a matter of fact, in the last thirteen or fourteen years, I've dealt with a number of infirmities myself. I'm not going to start listing them, but when I get up in the morning, I've got two braces to put on depending on what kind of work I'm going to be doing. I told my wife that I feel like I'm harnessing a mule to go plow the corn during that day. And I've had many sleepless nights in the last thirteen or fourteen years. This year alone I've had many sleepless nights. This past week I had one or two sleepless nights because of infirmities. But we're not going to talk about that right now.

Notice in this passage that Lazarus, a godly man, a good man, the brother of Martha and Mary, was sick and he died. We're going to come back later and talk about this. But I want you to turn with me to Romans chapter 6 for our first point, and our first point is that sickness comes from original sin.

Now, in the religious world, we have the faith healers of our day that guarantee a healing, and if you don't get healed by them, then you don't have enough faith. It's never their fault; it's that you don't have enough faith. We've had a few come into this church over the years, one in particular a number of years ago that was here for a while. His eyes were starting to get weak, and he believed that if you had any ailment or any infirmity, you had a devil in you. So instead of getting glasses, he got a large-print Bible so no one would know that his eyes were getting weaker. But then also in the secular world, there's an alternative medicine that also guarantees healing.

So there are many cons out there today in the religious world and also in the secular world. They've got a plan, a pill, or a potion that will cure anything from growing hair on your head to giving you beautiful toenails, and some of them will even curl your hair. Now, I am not downplaying diet, but I'm going to show you this morning that diet is not the cure to all health problems. I want you to understand that. Diet and lifestyle have actually helped me over the last 10 to 15 years in some of the things I have dealt with, and still there's much more involved than just having a good diet.

There was one health group selling their barley green, and they said, "This is grown in a place where the soil has not been depleted," and they say that the rest of the world is depleted soil. Yes, it is depleted because it's under a curse. Everything we eat is associated with a curse. That's why we're dying. And it was God who brought the curse in Genesis chapter 3, verses 16

and 17, and not the devil. The curse came because of original sin, and we get sick and we die because of original sin. I mean, I'm not against a proper diet and a proper lifestyle, but that is not a cure-all. God gave His people a dietary law in the Old Testament; He gave them sanitary laws, and doctors even today will tell you that that dietary law has some merit. But still that is not the end of the story. The reason for sickness is much broader than trying to nail it down to one or two things. I've noticed that it's very easy for young people in their 20s and 30s and even into their 40s to say that someone is out of the will of God if they don't have perfect health. We need to be very careful because, as we grow older, the Bible tells us that infirmities and issues will come into our lives. Ecclesiastes 12, verse 1, calls those times "evil days."

So Lazarus was a godly man and he got sick. He did die. Now, in this case, we're going to find that the Lord raised him from the dead for a particular reason, but Lazarus died again later at some point in his life.

I just want to bring a balance to this today. As I began working on this and going through some of my notes, I thought it was interesting that I started getting emails about two weeks ago from another pastor who has written a book or a booklet or articles called "Quack Diets," and he's dealing with a lot of people even in Christian circles who claim that this, this, or this will cure anything. But I'm going to tell you something this morning: Good health is not all centered around a plan or a pill or a potion. It's much more involved than that.

### **SICKNESS COMES FROM SIN**

Now, notice with me as we come here to Romans chapter 6. I'm reading only one verse, verse 23, because I need to keep moving. Verse 23 says, "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" The wages of sin is death, that is, physical death and spiritual death. That took place in Genesis chapters 3 through 5. The original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden brought about a curse; it brought about sickness and it brought about death. Sickness is a reminder of the fall that took place there. Man is a fallen creature living in a fallen world because of one reason, and that reason is sin, and don't ever forget that. Now, we're not even talking about personal sins yet. We'll talk about that a little bit later. But sin is the cause of the curse and sickness and death — Nothing else.

Why do we get sick or why do we die? I've asked that question to many people for years. If you believe in evolution, then things ought to be improving, but things are not improving. Now, there are certain cultures and countries where you can live a little bit longer in some cases because of sanitary laws and medical technology, but the bottom line is nothing is improving. As a matter of fact, Psalm 90, verse 10, says, "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away,*" and Verse 12 says, "*So teach us to number our days...*" The average life span is between 70 and 80 years. Yes, some live to be 100 and some die at 45 or 50. I saw a guy

just recently who was 106 years of age, but then I know of one who died at 33. But the average age of death is 70 to 80 years.

For about three or four days, I took 15 deaths out of an obituary column from my home town in Dayton, Tennessee, and the youngest one that died was 47; the oldest one that died was 89, and of all those 15, do you know what the age of death averaged out to be? It averaged out to be 66 years of age. That's getting real close to 70, and that's what God says in Psalm chapter 90. We can't get away from the Word of God, can we? God said this is the way it's going to be.

Again, we ask this question, "Why do we get sick?" or "Why do we die?" Because God said it. In the original creation, Genesis 1:31 says everything was very good; in other words, it was perfect. But in Genesis 2:17 God said, "[But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.](#)" And then in Genesis 3, verses 16 and 17, after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit in the Garden, God told the woman that in sorrow you're going to bear children, and He also said that the ground is cursed and in sorrow shalt thou eat of it. He said there's going to be thorns and thistles, and in the sweat of thy face, thou shalt eat bread. What we eat today is from the ground, and that ground is cursed. Somebody has said, "Well, you know, the soil has been depleted." It began being depleted in Genesis chapter 3. And God also said from dust we came and unto dust we will return. In other words, everybody dies, Hebrews 9, verse 27.

Notice in verse 12 of Romans chapter 5, "[Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and](#)" — what's the next word? — "[death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.](#)" We're talking about original sin right here. You and I are a product of what took place in the Garden. Because of the sin of our federal head Adam, we find that all will die. There was no death before the fall. There is no such thing as a gap theory. Death came as a result of Adam's sin. The sentence of death is upon every one of us here today. And, by the way, verses 13 and 14 clearly tell us that we're subject to death because of Adam's sin and not just because of our personal sin.

In Genesis 3, verses 17 and 18, God is the one who brought the curse upon the earth, not Satan, and along with this curse is sickness and death. Diets don't cure that. I'm for a good diet, but there are too many people today saying that their diet will cure everything, and it does not because even those people end up one day getting sick and dying. And I could give you some names, but I'm going to avoid doing that. I've even bought some of their products in the past — and they're very expensive, by the way. But please understand. I'm not trying to kick against diets and lifestyle. Those things can be very important in our lives, but in our world today, a lot of people are making a lot of money off of some things and they're lying about some things.

I want you to understand that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now. The whole creation, including our bodies, is under a curse and is headed to the grave.

You see, creation didn't sin; man sinned, but creation is under the curse. Think about the volcanoes, two of them right now, one of them killing people. Tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes — This world is under a curse, and it's waiting to be redeemed just as we're waiting to be redeemed. Animals didn't sin, but do you know what happens with animals just like with man? They get sick and they die.

Let me give you just a few other verses to write down and that will be Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verse 2, "[A time to be born, and a time to die...](#)" That's repeated in chapter 3, verse 20. And in Ecclesiastes 9, verse 2, there is one event that happens to all men, whether saved or lost, rich or poor, free or bond, and that is death. In Ecclesiastes chapter 12, the entire chapter is dealing with the process of growing older and dying. It describes the hair, the eyes, the teeth, the voice, the emotions, the arms, the legs. It says, "[Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not...](#)" The evil days are the days of growing older and becoming more sick and the day that we die. So that whole chapter is dealing with the process of life from birth until the day that we will die, and nothing will stop it — Nothing will stop it. That's why the Bible says in the book of Amos to prepare to meet thy God.

Now, notice here in Romans 8, verse 18, "[For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.](#)" Notice "[the sufferings of this present time.](#)" Paul said in verses 19 through 23, "[For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.](#)"<sup>20</sup>[For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected \*the same\* in hope,](#)<sup>21</sup>[Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Now watch this,](#)<sup>22</sup>[For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.](#)<sup>23</sup>[And not only \*they\*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.](#)" This chapter is describing the curse that this whole world is under — the animal creation, humanity, this earth in general — and nothing will be completely healed or fixed until the day of resurrection when Jesus Christ roars out of Zion. That's when we get our glorified bodies. These bodies we're living in are still under the curse. We make the best out of it. They're the temple of the Holy Ghost, and we make the best out of what we've got, but there are some things that will come our way that we have no control over.

Notice with me as we come to Revelation chapter 21, verses 3 and 4. Here is going to be the complete healing and the solution to everything that we're dealing with now. You can go back and read the context of these passages because I think it's needed, but I have an agenda here this morning to get through these three points, and I'm going to add three more sub points in just a moment. But in verses 1, 2, and 3 we come to the new heavens, new Jerusalem, the new earth, but notice as we come to verses 3 and 4, it says, "[And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God \*is\* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his](#)

people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be their God.*" Now, notice carefully verse 4. This is in eternity, and verse 4 says, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes...*" That says that there are tears now, and it says, "*...and there shall be no more death*" — In other words, that means that there is death now — "*neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain*" — There is pain today — "*for the former things are passed away.*" We find here that there shall be no more curse.

Notice in Revelation chapter 22 and in verse 3. Again, this is describing the eternity of things, and he says here in Revelation chapter 22, verse 3, "*And there shall be no more curse...*" That curse began in Genesis chapter 3, verses 16 and 17. Well, here's where it's all going to be fixed — new heavens, new earth, new Jerusalem, resurrected and glorified bodies, living in a perfect body and a perfect environment. In other words, there shall be no more curse, no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain, showing that these things exist in our world today. Verse 3 again, "*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.*"

I think it's very clear from the verses we've just read and many other verses that we have not read that sickness, number one, comes from sin. And, again, I'm focusing in here on original sin. We'll talk about personal sin in point number three. But sickness and death come from original sin because we have a connection with Adam. It's appointed unto man once to die, and after that, the judgment. This is the appointment that every person has.

## **SICKNESS COMES FROM SATAN**

Let's come to our second point, and that is, sickness also comes from Satan. Satan is a destroyer and seeketh whom he may devour. He is an enemy. God will allow Satan at times to attack our bodies. Satan has power to bring illness, but he does not cause all sickness, as we've already seen. If Satan wasn't even around to bother us, we will still get sick at times and we will go to the grave.

Notice with me now as we go to the book of Job. I want to pick our reading up in chapter 2, verse 3. I want to read several verses in this chapter. We're not even going to deal with chapter 1. We're just going to talk about Job's health, his body. And we find that Satan smote Job with boils from the sole of his foot to his crown. This is something that Satan brought upon Job. And let me say this before I read, and I'm going to say this a little bit later. I said earlier that we need to be very careful when things come into people's lives and we start saying, "I wonder why that happened," and we start evaluating them. And I'm not saying this just in the last thirteen or fourteen years. I've said this for the last 40 years and for the last 35 and a half years that I've been preaching. We're going to read a little bit later in John 9 about a man who was blind from his birth, and even the disciples didn't understand why the man was born blind. They said, "Well, who

sinned, his parents or did he sin?" This man is an adult at this time. Job had some friends who did that. I've preached two sermons on this, one on Job and one titled "Miserable Comforters."

Now, God said in verse 3 that Job was a godly man. Job was not living in sin when this came on him. Verse 3 says, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is none like him in the earth*" — Notice — "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." And then Satan answered in verse 4 and said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." In other words, Satan is saying to God, "Job is a hypocrite. He's only serving you to get what he wants and to have good health and have all these finances." So God uses Job in this passage to make a fool and a liar out of Satan. The physical infirmities that came on Job did not come on him because he was living in sin.

Now, there are many preachers who will say, "Well, Job had to be taught some lessons." We all have to be taught lessons. Yes, Job learned a lot through this process, but Job was not living in sin. God Himself says he's a perfect and upright man, he feareth God, he hateth evil, and he holdeth fast his integrity. God said that, so we can repeat it. But do you know what happened when Job got sick? His friends came to visit him, and in chapter 16, verses 1 through 5, they're called "miserable comforters." When they came the first five or six days, they did a great job. They sat down and mourned with Job. Do you know when they got in trouble? When they opened their mouth — "Job, you must be living in some kind of sin." And we find that toward the end of the book in chapter 42, verses 7 and 8, God condemns Job's friends and instructs them to seek Job's prayer for their forgiveness. They thought, "Well, Job has lost everything. Even his wife is telling him to curse God and die." Job is sick and has these boils all over him, and his friends are saying, "You need to confess your sins. You need to do this or do that." But Job's afflictions had nothing to do with sin in his life.

Satan says in verse 5, "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life." In other words, you've got your way with him, but you can't take his life. Verse 7, "So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." <sup>8</sup>And he took him a potsherd" — that is, a piece of clay — "to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes." And Job's wife said just curse God and die, and when you come down to verse 10, Job says in verse 10, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Now, some tragic things had come upon this man. He lost his children, lost his home, lost all of his finances, and now he's lost his health. And, again, the average Christian today in America would say, "Job had to be living in some kind of sin. He's really done something bad." But God chose Job as a special man to do a mighty work of God, to make a fool and a liar out of Satan

because God trusted Job. Can He trust you and me? God trusted Job, and He looked at Job and told Satan, "Have you considered him? He won't deny me. He loves me. He will serve me." Oh, yes, Job wished he could die. Job had some sadness in his life, but he maintained his integrity.

Turn with me to Acts chapter 10. As we come into the New Testament, we find that Satan many times caused sickness. In Matthew 17, verses 14 through 18, there's a boy that is referred to as a lunatic who was possessed of a devil, and that devil cast him into the fire. In Luke chapter 13, verses 11 through 16, there's a woman who was bowed over and couldn't raise herself up for 18 years. The Bible says in that passage that Satan had bound her, and Christ released her and healed her. She couldn't raise herself up for 18 years. All through the New Testament we find that Satan inflicted people. In dealing with church discipline for a man committing fornication, the apostle Paul told the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 5, to "[deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh...](#)"

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 7 the apostle Paul says, "[there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me...](#)" That was for the rest of Paul's life. There's a reason for that. Paul wasn't living in sin. Maybe the devil doesn't bother some people because they're on his side and they belong to him. I want to tell you something. I know I belong to God, but I also know the devil has been on my back at times. I remember the first time fourteen and a half years ago that I walked on the street to begin abortion work. We finally closed down that clinic, and we've got another one under investigation. We've seen hundreds of women change their mind, and we've seen 40 or 50 get saved in the last fourteen and a half years. But I'm telling you what. I had good eyes for over 50 years, but from the first day I stepped my foot on the sidewalk in front of the abortion clinic fourteen and a half years ago in January I started going blind, and I'm thinking, "I need some glasses now."

I went to three doctors, and they said, "You've got fast-growing cataracts. You're going blind unless you have surgery." I prayed about that and waited for about a year, and I lost 60 percent of my vision in the left eye and 40 percent in the right eye in one year. I could tell you many other stories and I could tell you some stories that happened to some other people. Now, did Satan do that? It's sort of an opinion and I can't prove it, but it's very interesting with the timing of all of that. I'm not comparing myself with any of the Bible characters, but the Lord allowed some things to come into the life of the apostle Paul because he had great things for him to do.

Now, notice one verse in Acts chapter 10. I want you to notice that Jesus healed many who were oppressed of the devil. I'm reading in Acts 10, and I'm reading from verse 38. The apostle Peter says in this passage, "[How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for](#)



God was with him.” That was part of the ministry of Jesus Christ to prove that He was the Son of God. He healed many. There was much oppression of the devil in the first century.

## **SICKNESS COMES FROM GOD**

So, number one, sickness comes from sin, that is, original sin, what took place in the Garden. There was a curse that was placed upon the earth, upon all of creation, upon man himself. And then, number two, sickness comes sometimes from Satan, and, number three, sickness comes from God. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Now, I didn't have a place to write it on the board, but I have three sub points under this point, and I must give all three of these or this will not make any sense. Sickness comes from God, and I'm going to give you three examples. I'm going to put these in order, and then we'll go through them:

- 1. Sometimes our sickness is used to chasten us.**
- 2. Sometimes our sickness is used to prepare us.**
- 3. Sometimes our sickness is used for the glory of God.**

### **Sometimes our sickness is used to chasten us**

Let's talk about the chastening first. Now we're moving away from original sin in Genesis chapter 3 and Romans 5 and, for a few moments, we're going to talk about personal sin. I'm just simply saying that God does allow and does bring sickness into our lives for various reasons.

I'm reading in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 30 through 32. This is the context of the Lord's Supper. Now, don't be afraid to take the Lord's Supper, but in the context, many in the church weren't treating one another very well. They were disregarding one another, disregarding the church. Some of them were even despising and disrespecting the Lord's church. You can back up into the chapter to verse 17 and see what some of them were doing to each other. They weren't kind to each other. In verses 30, 31, and 32 the apostle Paul says, “For this cause many” — many, not all — “For this cause many *are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*” Sleep means that they're dead. So God allows sickness in our lives sometimes to chasten us. Many in the church were weak and sickly and dead because of the way they were treating one another. In Hebrews 12:6 it says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

Even in David's life through his sin there was a baby that died. That came about because of sin. In Acts chapter 5 a husband and wife lied, and they both died. In John chapter 5, verses 9 through 15 — especially in verse 14 — there's a man that the Lord told to “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” James 5, verse 15, says, “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if” — Notice — “if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” So there's that possibility that our sin, our personal sins, can bring about tragic things in our life. So there's no doubt that this is reality.

The whole chapter of Deuteronomy 28 is speaking of blessings and curses. So God does chasten us, and sometimes it's with sickness. Sometimes it could be finances. It could be a number of things. The reason we don't understand this a lot of times is because parents don't discipline their children like they should. Children get by with so much, and then if something comes into the parents' lives and God is dealing with them, they don't understand it because they don't understand the concept of discipline and chastening. You know, sometimes you've got to quit speaking to a child and get out the rod. You can't always reason with a child, and, you know, sometimes God can't always reason with us. He has to get His rod out and work on us a little bit. Again, Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." It's proof that God loves us when He chastens us.

### **Sometimes our sickness is used to prepare us**

So, first of all, God will sometimes bring sickness into our life to chasten us. The second reason that God will bring chastening into our life is to just simply prepare us and bless us. You say, "I don't understand that." I want to read one verse in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Again, I told my wife that I put a little bit too much together here for one sermon, so I'm not going to read every verse in the passage. I'm just going to kind of get to the point here because I want to finish. Now, I've got some other thoughts. I could come back and preach two or three more messages along this line if you would like me to. If you want me to, just tell me and I will do that, but I just want to get all of this into one truckload.

Now, the second sub point is "Sickness comes from God to prepare us"; in other words, it's for our good. I'm reading in verse 7 of 2 Corinthians 12. The apostle Paul mentions his infirmities in chapter 12, verse 5. He mentions his infirmities in chapter 11, verse 30. Read chapter 11 from verse 22 to the end of the chapter. By the way, do you know what Paul put on his resumé when he was trying to prove to the Corinthian church and the false teachers that he was of God? He said, "...in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. <sup>24</sup>Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. <sup>25</sup>Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned..." and on and on he goes. That's on the apostle Paul's resume to become a pastor. He had many infirmities. He actually said to the Galatians in Galatians chapter 4, verse 13, "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you..." Paul was not living in sin. He was suffering according to the will of God. Job was not living in sin. He was used in a mighty way. He was very special.

David was a mighty man used in mighty ways. David said in Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." He said in verse 71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." David said in verse 75, "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." How many of us can say that? You've got to have a walk with the Lord to be able to say that — "Oh, Lord, thank you for afflicting me. It was good. It taught me Your Word and it brought me back to the place where I

need to be so that You can use me." How many have ever said that? I've said that. I've found out that there are many benefits from afflictions. I don't like sickness. I don't like infirmities. I don't like weaknesses. But I've found out that afflictions prepare us for life here and also for death. Most live as though they're never going to die. Do you know what affliction does? These things soften our heart and sober our mind. Infirmities, afflictions, sicknesses, and heartaches draw us closer to the Lord and help us bring our focus into view. I'm encouraged when I read stories of the martyrs. When I read about things that people have been through, it's amazing — and they did all of this for Christ and kept doing it and going through this. That encourages me.

Notice in verse 7 Paul says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Verse 8 says that Paul prayed three times that God would remove his thorn in the flesh, and God said in verse 9, "My grace is sufficient," and then the apostle Paul said in the middle of that verse, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Paul said that when he was weak in the flesh, he was strong in the Spirit of God.

So there are benefits in afflictions. We don't like infirmities. I don't pray for infirmities. I don't pray for sicknesses, because I really don't want them, but I have learned over the years that when they do come into my life, I may not see it immediately, but I do learn that infirmities and sicknesses have brought me into a closer relationship with my Lord and my Savior.

### **Sometimes our sickness is used for the glory of God**

Turn with me to John 9. Again, I'm going to read only a few verses. But notice in verse 1 it says, "And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. <sup>2</sup>And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Even the disciples were not understanding this. Don't we do that sometimes? We hear about something coming into somebody's life, and we think, "Well, I wonder what he's done." I've heard people say that. I've heard them say it in this church over the years — some tragic thing — and I've said, "Leave it alone and pray for them." We have no idea why. Verse 3 says, "*Jesus* answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents..." This man was born blind so that one day the Lord Jesus could have an interaction with him and heal him and people would see this and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus said in verse 3, "...but that the works of God should be made manifest in him," and He said in verse 4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

So, again, sickness can come from original sin, it can come from Satan, and it can come from God, but it can come from God for various reasons, maybe chastening, maybe to make us a

better Christian as with Paul and Job and David, or maybe it's for God's glory — and maybe it's for God's glory and He does not heal us but leaves us in that condition. We see that in the Scriptures as well. You see, sometimes it's hard to figure all of this out. The best thing we can do if something comes into our life is to confess our sins, get right with God, and then not be angry with God if healing does not come in our body — because I know that we all desire healing, do we not? We want to see that.

So this man was blind from his birth. He's a grown man. The disciples assumed that either he sinned or his parents sinned, but, no, it was so that the Son of God might be manifest and made known so that people would believe on Him. Now, we can give some examples in our own lives, but let's talk for a few moments about some people in the Bible who were sick but they were godly people. Coming back to Lazarus, Lazarus' sickness was for the glory of God. In verse 4 it says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Verses 40 through 45 tell us that many of the Jews believed on Jesus when they saw the things that He did.

Paul's imprisonment in Philippians 1:11 was seen as a blessing in the advancement of the Gospel because even people in Caesar's court and in many other places heard and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's sufferings were for the glory of God, Acts 2:23. He suffered at the hands of wicked men, and yet He brought many to salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection. Joseph was sold into slavery, and his sufferings brought salvation to his whole family and to the birth of a nation, and he said in Genesis 50, verse 20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

In 1 Timothy 5:23 the Bible speaks of Timothy and his often infirmities. Now, I want you to just think this through. Timothy was a man of great faith according to 2 Timothy 1:8, and he was Paul's own son in the faith, 1 Timothy 1:1, but in chapter 5, verse 23, the apostle Paul told Timothy, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." Paul did not heal him at this time. Paul did not tell him to repent of his sins. Paul did not tell him to have faith and he could be healed. Paul describes medicine. He said to "use a little wine for thy stomach's sake."

There's another man in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 20, Trophimus, who was left sick at Miletum by the apostle Paul. Trophimus could not travel with the apostle Paul. In Colossians 4:1, Paul himself brought a doctor with him, the beloved physician Luke. In Philippians chapter 2, verse 25, the apostle Paul again mentions a friend, Epaphroditus, and Paul said in verses 25 through 30, "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus" — Now, listen to what he calls him — "my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. <sup>26</sup>For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because

that ye had heard that he had been sick. <sup>27</sup>For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Again, this is a faithful brother. And it says in verse 30, "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death..." These are godly people. Epaphroditus is a brother; he's a companion; he's a fellow soldier; he's a messenger; he's a minister, and he was sick nigh unto death. There are no miracles being performed here but the mercy of God. Paul had the signs of an apostle, but we don't see any healing taking place by Paul.

What am I getting at? I'm getting at the fact that we have to trust God. That's why I want to close in Romans 8. We have to trust God. There are various reasons why we get sick. I mean, if we live long enough, according to Genesis 3 and Hebrews 9:27, we are going to die. Just that process of growing older and dying is going to happen to all of us. So we can evaluate ourselves. We can go before the Lord and pray, and if we're confessed up and prayed up and if we can assume that our sickness is not the chastening hand of God, then it must be something else. Maybe God is perfecting us or maybe it's for His glory or maybe Satan is interfering in this or maybe it's just simply the process from Genesis 3 till now of growing older and there is sickness and death that can come into our lives.

I don't want to depress you this morning but encourage you of the fact that even if we don't figure it all out, God is on the throne. And everything is not cured with diet. Some things may be. I mean, if this thing is from Satan, it's not going to be cured with a diet, and the diet they're eating anyway is somewhat toxic because God cursed the ground. People act like just in the last 50 years the soil has been depleted in America because of fertilizer and overuse and whatever. It's been depleted for 6,000 years. There's a curse on the soil. We're eating from ground that was cursed. I thank God for the food that we do have.

In 3 John 2, if you're taking notes, John prayed for a man by the name of Gaius. John prayed that his body would prosper as well as his soul, indicating that there were health issues. In 2 Kings 13:14, Elisha had a double portion of the Spirit. Think about this. Elisha, a man of God, a preacher, a prophet, had a double portion of the Spirit, and do you know what happened to him? He got sick and he died. In 2 Kings 20, verse 1, Hezekiah was sick unto death. God spared him another 15 years, but do you know what happened to him? He died. In Exodus 4, verses 10 and 11, Moses was telling God, "I just don't speak very well," and he said, "I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue," and the LORD said unto him, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?" Whether or not we understand why somebody is born blind or deaf or whatever, we have to accept it. God is on our side. He's not against us. It's not God's fault that "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Romans 5:12. That's not God's fault.

I mentioned to you a moment ago a couple other verses that I would give you. Think about Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9. God said, "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. <sup>9</sup>For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." We don't think the same way that God thinks. God sees it all from beginning to end because He created it all. All we see right now is this little path that we're on in Coden, Alabama, but God works in eternity past and eternity future. So we don't comprehend everything as God does. We must trust Him.

In Luke chapter 13, verses 1 through 5, there are two tragic events — one with some Galileans — where a bunch of people died, and the Lord said that these that died were no more sinners than others. It was not because they were living in sin. And then the Lord said to repent or perish. He said everyone must repent. In other words, the Lord is just telling them to be careful. To be healthy, wealthy, and wise does not mean that we're right with God. There are atheists who are healthy, wealthy, and wise. According to Matthew 5:45, the sun shines on the just and the unjust and the rain comes upon the crops of the unjust as well as it does the just.

Now, what am I getting at? I want you to listen to a verse before I read here in Romans chapter 8. I want you to listen to Habakkuk, chapter 3, verses 17, 18, and 19. The Babylonian invasion and captivity was coming. Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. The people are going to be carried into captivity for 70 years, and we find Habakkuk's burden, his vision, and then we find him praying in the last chapter. And after thinking about this whole thing and speaking with God, he said, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: <sup>18</sup>Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup>The LORD God *is* my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' *feet*, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." Can I say this when these things come into my life? If everything falls apart, can I still cling to and hang onto God and trust Him and believe that He is for me? That's one of the questions we've got to ask.

I've got a relative right now who's dying of cancer — wonderful people. In my opinion, this is the process that we started out with in the Garden and original sin. Here's a quote by a Christian woman who has been in a wheelchair for 50-plus years from an accident that she had when she was a teenager. She's near 70 now. And she said, "Sometimes God allows what He hates to accomplish what He loves." When Job is laying with a piece of pottery scraping his skin, he said in Job 13:15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." And as the old hymn says, "Where could I go but to the Lord?" Where are we going to go? We'll find no rest and no peace and no joy apart from the Lord. Where else can we go except to the Lord?

Now, I'm going to close in Romans 8, verse 28. I could have written down 200 names, but I want you to listen to this. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, suffered tremendously with gout and depression and other things and died at 56 years of age. George Burns, a cigar-smoking comedian performing in nightclubs, lived to be 100. David Brainerd, a missionary to the American Indians and one of the greatest missionaries in the world, had tuberculosis for a number of years and died at 29 years of age — a godly missionary, gave his life and died at 29 years of age. I saw a black man recently who turned 109 — still smoking cigars and drinking and driving his pickup truck. Who can figure this out? Fanny Crosby, blind just about all of her life, loved God. She couldn't see you but she could see God. Many atheists and agnostics have great eyesight.

A man used to sit in our church to my left over here who lived into his 90s — a delightful man to be around, loved the Lord, loved life, loved driving, loved eating. But let me tell you something. All you had to do was buy one steak if you wanted to eat with him and just cut out all the fat and put it on his plate. That's all he wanted was the fat. It finally killed him, but he made it into his 90s. But then he had a grandson who sat with his wife on this side over here also, and they were so germophobic. I don't know whether that's a word or not, but they were pathetic, really. And they were the sickest people we had in the church. We had over a hundred people in the church, and they were the sickest people. They wouldn't touch that doorknob. They'd take their clothing and try to open a door. And you'd have to force them to shake hands. I used to have a lot of fun with that because I'd force a handshake before they'd get out the door. Sometimes they'd make two or three trips to the bathroom. But they were the sickest people we had in the church. Who can figure all this out?

My grandson went through heart surgery in New Orleans for a replacement valve. He made it through the surgery, but my wife and I saw many, many babies that were dying. The nurse took us through there and said, "Your grandson is going to be okay. These others, we're just waiting for them to die." There was nothing else that could be done for them. I'm talking about babies — a month old, six months old, a year old. Who can figure all this out? The 16-year-old we've been praying for with cancer that's dying in a Christian home, a preacher as the father, who can figure all this out? Do you know what we've got to do? We have to trust God.

Romans 8:28 says, "[And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to \*his\* purpose.](#)" Verse 29 says that we are being conformed to image of Christ in this life, and we will be conformed to His image in the next life in resurrection.

This is not just a cut-and-dry thing. There are a variety of reasons why things happen to us, one is just because we were born into the human race and we're under the curse of sin, and sin brings sickness and death. It's going to happen to all of us. Another reason is Satan and another is God — and God is not a cruel God. At times He chastens us as we do our children. At

times He's preparing us for better things as with Paul and Job and Joseph and others in Scripture, and at times, it's just for His glory, sometimes in healing and sometimes not.

When I think about Job, Satan accused him of being a hypocrite; in other words, he's only serving God for what he can get from God. God said, "Nope. I'm going to show you that." He said, "You can have your way with him." He'd already taken everything else. God said, "You can have your way with him, but you can't take his life." And Job shined. Oh, he cried and he prayed and he asked why, and he said, "Oh, God, let me die."

Would you stand with me this morning. Let us trust God. Let us not be critical when things come into other people's lives because we don't know why. We may think it's because of sin, but it may be because God is just using them in a mighty way. Let us be very careful.

*Father, we thank Thee for this day, for Thy love, for Thy mercy. Lord, we're in Your hands. Lord, help us to trust You. Help us to believe Your Word. Lord, help us to realize that we have an appointment with death, that we are to prepare ourselves for that, but let us live to the fullest, Father, upon this earth. Let us walk with Thee, that we might be drawn closer to Thee, that we might be more sensitive to those around us that are going through things that even they don't understand. Father, we thank Thee for Thy love and mercy, for it's in Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.*

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