

BIBLICAL PRAYER (51)

Biblical Illustration #3 - Philippians 2:25-30

Epaphroditus became so sick that he almost died. Although it is not specifically stated, it is certainly implied in **verse 27** that Paul would have prayed for him because he says that God had mercy on him and healed him. Obviously prayer did change the personal circumstance of both Epaphroditus and Paul.

Biblical Illustration #4 - II Chronicles 16:12

Here is an amazing illustration in a negative sense concerning circumstances that became the worst because one refused to pray. This text records the failure of King Asa to pray when he was sick and as a result he ended up dying.

King Asa was basically a good king (**II Chron. 14:2**). He was the third king of Judah, who succeeded his father Abijah (**II Chron. 14:1**), who was the son of Rehoboam (**II Chron. 12:16**). Rehoboam was the first king over Judah after the kingdom became divided in 931 B.C. and Jeroboam was the first king over Israel after the kingdom divided. Judah was the territory to the south and Israel was the territory to the north.

God greatly blessed Asa in his early days (**II Chron. 14:1, 7**) and in his early days as king, he was a man of prayer who depended on the Lord (**II Chron. 14:9-15**). It is important to note that Azariah, a prophet of God, specifically went to Asa and challenged him to continually pray and seek God (**II Chron. 15:1-7**). In fact, Israel had not been doing this for a long, long time and Azariah made it clear that as long as she seeks God she will prosper (**II Chron. 15:3-7**). Asa took the words of Azariah and immediately applied them to his own life and to Judah and God greatly blessed them (**II Chron. 15:8-17**).

However, in the 36th year of Asa's reign, something tragic happened. Baasha, king of Israel, rebuilt Ramah a city located 6 miles north of Jerusalem, so that he could prevent any travel or communication from the north (**II Chron. 16:1**). Instead of King Asa praying to God and seeking God's wisdom, he decided to take matters into his own hands and he gave money to Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, requesting that he break his pact with Baasha and attack Israel (**II Chron. 16:2-3**).

King Ben-hadad complied to Asa's request and attacked some of the key cities of Israel so King Baasha had to stop the construction of Ramah to go defend his other cities. When that happened King Asa took his men to Ramah and carried away all of their building materials (**II Chron. 16:4-6**).

The problem in all of this was that Asa had not sought God in this matter, but moved in accordance with his own wisdom. Therefore, God sent another prophet, Hanani, to inform Asa that he was going to have trouble because he did not seek God (**II Chron. 16:7-9**).

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Asa became so angry that he put Hanani in jail (**II Chron. 16:10**). He also started to oppress some of the people in Judah. He became completely self-centered, refusing to hear the word of God and refusing to pray.

As a result, in approximately 872 B.C., which was the 39th year of his reign, God allowed Asa to get a very serious foot disease (**II Chron. 16:12**). Again, Asa would not and did not pray to God. He sought out the council and treatment of medical doctors (**II Chron. 16:12b**), but he proudly refused to pray. As a result he died (**II Chron. 16:13**).

The text certainly implies that his medical status could have changed had he sought God in prayer. But he would rather rely on his own wisdom and the wisdom of the medical world rather than God and he died.

Had Asa prayed as Hezekiah did, we may assume that the outcome would have been different, because God wanted him to depend on Him and pray. Prayer could have dramatically changed the outcome of this personal disease.

Prayer in times of physical crisis, shows God and everyone else that one totally depends on God even above and beyond the doctors. Those who by faith humbly depend on God will most definitely see God do some great things.

It is very important that prayers be made in times of personal crisis including sickness. God wants His people coming to Him and depending on Him. It is very possible that this is one reason why God permits a crisis or sickness to hit us, so we will seek and look to the Lord for our deliverance.

Any believer who has an illness or injury or who goes into the hospital for a surgery and does not pray and solicit the prayers of others is one who is very foolish. We must always remember that the outcome of anything is always in the Sovereign hands of the Sovereign God of the Bible and wise are those believers who humble themselves and pray about personal circumstances.

When we consider the great things God can potentially do in changing personal circumstances of individuals who pray, one cannot help but wonder how we may reconcile the fact that God does not change, with the fact that God will change circumstances in regard to one who prays?

There are many passages in the Word of God that speak of God's attribute of immutability, which means God is a God who is not capable of change: **I Samuel 15:29; Psalm 102:27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8**. These plus many other references teach us that God does not have and is not capable of having a fickle character that changes one way and then another. God is always a stable and unchanging God. By His very nature, He must always be all that He is at all times, which means He cannot ever be any more or less than He is at any time, which would mean change is impossible for Him.