

Sickness

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[0:00] The next observation is this. God sends sickness to discipline His children for their holiness. God sends sickness to discipline His children for their holiness.

! And notice I said discipline, not punish. Romans 8.1 says, Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Sickness is part of the curse, but because of Jesus Christ, that curse never reaches us. It only comes in the form of discipline.

So discipline is like a drill instructor. So you send the recruits to the drill instructor, and he makes them run and run and run and do push-ups, and they probably hate him.

But he doesn't do it because he hates them. He does it because he actually cares for them. This is the difference between surviving and not surviving. He disciplines them.

[1:00] Or discipline is like a coach with his players. It's sweltering hot. It's middle of August. The grass is brown. And you're sweating, and you're running and running, and you're doing the wind sprints and the miles.

The coach trains his team for game time. He wants them prepared to play their best. And so he disciplines them.

Now, a coach isn't against his players. The coach is going for the same goal. He wants the championship just like the players. And so he disciplines them. Well, God is like a coach and like a drill instructor.

He's not against us in our discipline. He's for us. He's standing beside us, striving in the same direction. And so part of that training is sickness.

God's glorified in sickness, and men are sanctified in their sickness. It has a way of softening our hearts, doesn't it, when we ourselves are struck.

[2:06] There's a lot of things that can happen around us that don't reach into our very hearts. But when sickness comes and touches us, then God can begin to sanctify us.

So when you are so sick that you can't pick yourself up off the bathroom floor, and you're bald from chemotherapy, and you cannot walk because it hurts so much, you begin to learn something about your weakness.

You begin to learn something about what you thought was strong, was just really a phantom and a vapor. Sickness can also remind us of the brevity of life.

Because when we're sick, we realize that these body of ours, they don't last forever. They won't last forever. However, each of us carries this idea within us that I'm going to live forever.

That this body, we're just going to go on and on. And we would never write that down on a piece of paper. We would never say that out loud. But that is so ingrained into the way we think.

[3:22] So not too long ago, a young man was killed in Bremen. And many young people started thinking, what about death? I'm not going to live forever.

And they thought about things that they haven't thought about in a long time or ever. And I don't know for sure. And I don't know in every case. But I dare say most of those kids that were struck now have gone right back to the way that they were thinking before.

because our imagined immortality is so resilient. We are always, every one of us, not just unbelievers, but believers too, we just think that this life is going to go on and on.

But sickness shows me that it's not going to be that way. So God can use sickness to make us serious about living for Christ because we know the brevity of life.

Well, that's a brief theology of sickness. We made four observations. Sickness comes from the fall. God is always in control. God is seeking His glory in our sickness.

[4:33] And finally, God is disciplining us in all of our afflictions. So let's move on from there and ask a question. And I want to ask you a question.

But before I ask you a question, I want you to listen to a quote from Charles Spurgeon and then we'll ask the question. This is the quote. I venture to say that the greatest earthly blessing that God can give to any of us is health, with the exception of sickness.

Sickness has been of more use to the saints of God than health has if some men that I know could only be favored with a month of rheumatism, it would be God's grace to mellow them marvelously. So, he says, sickness has been of more use to the saints of God than health has. So, this is my question. If sickness is a gift of God, how can we use that sickness for our good?

So, when the hour of sickness comes, how can we use that for our benefit? How can we use it for our spiritual growth? Okay.

[5:49] That's very good. we can use that opportunity to, Michelle mentioned, read our Bibles. We can use that opportunity to draw close to God because we're sort of put out of the way for a while.

We don't have the same responsibilities. What does Satan want when we're sick? What does he want for our quiet times, for our devotions? Yeah. It's my chance to be the king.

You can have that. Yeah. Satan wants us to pity ourselves. He wants all of our thoughts to be on us and how badly I feel.

And when it comes time for devotions, is it easier or is it harder to do it when you're sick? Harder. It's harder. And Satan is out to break off our communion with God in sickness.

But, that's not what God has in mind in our sickness. My wife has recently received a number of invitations in the mail for teas and showers and things like that.

[7:00] And they all come in a beautiful envelope and they look very nice. But illness is an invitation too. It's not so beautiful. But it is an invitation from God.

to come and meet with Him. And that's what we need to see it as. As a, as a, as an invitation to meet with Him.

So, how else can we use our sickness for our benefit, for our good? Right. So, what's the difference between you come into a sickness and you experience it like Jim experienced it where it strengthens your faith.

And, what's the difference between that and when someone comes to sickness and all of a sudden they're doubting everything that they thought they knew and they think God is after them? I mean, how can I experience the one and avoid the other?

Right. So, as you go into the sickness, and, this is a problem because no one knows when they're going to be sick, do we? But, as we go into the sickness, to come into it with humility as opposed to an arrogant attitude will make a difference in how we experience and if we benefit from our illness or not.

[8:32] What else can we do in the time of sickness to benefit ourselves spiritually? Dave. I'm going to have an answer to the last one. Right.

We have an incredible attraction to this world, don't we? And the things of this world and the pride of life. And, sickness can wean us from those things.

They can show us how vain they are. And, God uses those to wean us from the world and from ourselves. But, you don't wean a child to starve them. You wean a child so that they can have new food.

And the new food that God is after is Christ and enjoying Christ and believing in Him. And in our sickness, we can come to a greater understanding of who Christ is for us, how rich He is, how good He is.

And when we learn to drink in Christ in our sickness as opposed to sin, then, then, we are being sanctified. And we can learn to say with Paul that we felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us to rely on Christ.

[9:47] Not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. What else can we do in our time of sickness? Roger. So that should be an encouragement for all of us.

That, you know, those four things, and we could probably say a lot more. The four things that we said at the beginning need to be in our heart, not only in our mind, but it needs to be an active part of how we live every day in order so when the trial does come, we're not taken by surprise.

I thought of one other thing that we can use our sickness for, and that's for self-examination. For self-examination, I don't want to make too big of a point of it, because it's a questionable thing, but

like 1 Corinthians says, some people were sick because they had committed some sin, and I think sometimes that God finds a sin in us that is buried deep, and he uses that sickness as a chastisement, and so we can, in our hour of sickness, and I'm not saying you dwell on this, you take 10 looks at Christ and one look at your sin, but you look for sin in your life that's buried deep, and sickness is a good time to find those idols in our heart, because when we're afraid, and we're uncomfortable, we are pushed to our limits, and we find out who we're really trusting, what idol are we really trusting, am I trusting in my health and in my strength, do I idolize comfort, do I idolize sleep, and if I don't have those things,

I'm losing it, I lose my temper, I'm grouchy all the time, I lose all patience and I snap at people, or I envy people, that shows us if we are acting that way, that we have an idol in our heart, and the idol might be comfort, and it might be health, and so sickness can do that, we don't only find our sin when we examine ourselves and our sickness, but we can also find graces, and thank the Lord that when we look into ourselves, we don't see sin, or everything but sin, or what am I trying to say, we don't see nothing but sin, it's not all sin that we see, there's grace there, God has worked in us, and we should be happy and encouraged to find grace working in us.

Well, those are some of the ways that we can benefit from our sickness, there's, the question now is, how can we glorify God in our sickness? sickness. I think everything that everyone has said is really a one way or another that we glorify God in our sickness, by believing him, by using our time wisely, by seeing it as a chance to be humble instead of proud.

[13:03] But, I just want to point two basic ways that we can glorify God in our sickness, and the first one is, continue to pursue God in our sickness, in our illness, continue to pursue God in it.

If we just suffer sickness and illness as passive victims, like, we have nothing that we can do in this, then we are not glorifying God.

We will not glorify God. But if we're active in our sickness to pursue God, then we're going to honor him. So, here's a man, and he loves to play the violin.

He loves it. He's a professional. He plays in an orchestra. And, he's diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Now, the survival rate for pancreatic cancer is 10 to 15 percent.

So, pretty much 85 to 90 percent of people who get it die. So, he's going to go into treatment, and he's going to suffer in treatment, and then he's probably going to die.

[14:06] But, throughout his time, his whole illness, and his chemotherapy, and all of his pain and suffering, he keeps playing his violin. So, he keeps trying harder pieces and new songs.

What does that say about his love for the violin? What does it say about the joy that he gets from playing the violin? Well, it says that it's absolutely worthwhile to him.

This is not something that's just good some of the time. This is something that he finds joy in all of the time. And it's a joy that exceeds the discomfort from the cancer, and from the treatment of the cancer.

Well, if we continue in our pursuit of God, even in our sickness, that shows the whole world that there is something in God that is better than my comfort, that exceeds all the pain and suffering that I go through.

It says that God is worth loving, and he's worth trusting no matter what, if we just have an active attitude towards pursuing him and growing in our relationship with him.

[15:18] So, when you're sick, don't see it as a time to lay down your arms. Don't see it as a time to put your spiritual life in neutral, but see it as a time to move forward, and you will glorify God.

And then, the second way we glorify God in our sickness is to bear it patiently, to bear it patiently. So, pursuing God is the active side, and this is the passive side.

These are two sides of the same coin, and this is the harder of the two. It's not easy. It's not easy to see your strength taken away.

It's hard to see other people working, and meanwhile, you have nothing to show. You're laying there. You're sick. Everyone else has these beautiful flowers of good work, and you feel like a branch that's been stripped bare.

It's hard to lie in God's hand and be still when we're sick, but that is one of the best ways that we glorify Him.

[16:28] The opposite of bearing it patiently is to complain. What does our complaining and our sickness say about God? He's not trustworthy.

You can't depend on Him. He can't help you. What else does it say? When you complain in your sickness, what does it say about God?

He's not good. God's mean-spirited. God's He wants to hurt you and He wants to hurt me. And we have a right to complain then.

What else does it say? What's that? Right. So, now all of a sudden, you're God and you know the best thing to do all the time.

Complaining also shows that God is not all-satisfying. He's not sufficient to meet my every need because when sickness comes, I'm in torment.

[17 : 38] I've lost it. I don't have a God that can help me anymore. God is not good enough. God is just not enough. Jesus Christ is not gracious and good enough.

He's good. Jesus is fine when it's all sunshine, but He's like a broken umbrella when it rains. That's what complaining says. So, if you want to glorify God before the whole world when you are sick, then lie and wait patiently with Him.

Bear it patiently. Do it without a complaint. And when you do that, you say, God is good. This looks bad, but God is good. God is trustworthy.

God is powerful. God meets all of my needs. there is enough joy in Him that I don't need to have health. I don't need to have strength in order to find joy, because He's enough.

Well, it tells the whole world that God really loves me, and He could really love you. And when we bear it patiently, we make a very good report of God.

[18 : 51] We say wonderful things about Him. Well, let's pray and ask God to help us to put these things in practice. It's much easier to teach a lesson and listen to a lesson than to be sick and then put it into practice.

So we need grace. We need more grace. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we come to You as empty, leaky vessels. We don't have strength of our own.

We don't have grace of our own. God, we ask that You would take Your grace and seal it in our hearts, that You would make Jesus Christ more precious to us.

Father, I do pray for those who are in our congregation who are suffering and sickness. Will You meet their every need? Will You do this for Your own great name's sake?

Your name is upon them. and so will You help them and strengthen them to glorify You in their illness. Will You be with all of us that we might grow in our humility and our love for You.

[19 : 58] In Jesus' name, Amen.