

# Understanding Sickness

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] 2 Corinthians 12, we'll read verses 1 through 10. Paul's vision and his thorn. I must go on boasting, although there is nothing to be gained.

I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body, I do not know.

God knows. And I know that this man, whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to paradise.

He heard inexpressible things, things that a man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.

Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan, to torment me.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me, but he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in my weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. Let's hear God's word preached. Well, the flu season seems to have hit early this year, we're told, and COVID is having another round with us.

And yeah, Sam Hart told me that all four of his kids went to the hospital this week. So many have been stricken here at Grace Fellowship with sickness.

[ 2 : 2 7 ] Some are perhaps streaming tonight because they're home for this very reason. Sickness, it's something that we all have to deal with, some more than others.

Everything from the garden variety of flus and colds and infections to more chronic and debilitating diseases, even life-threatening ones. Sickness is such a part of the normal Christian life that we may not give it much thought.

But since God's word has a lot to say about it, we're meant to profit from listening to what he says about it. So tonight, I have ten truths about sickness from our great physician.

And we'll just dive right in, not necessarily in any order, but number one, I guess, is starting from the beginning. And it is that sickness was not a part of the original creation.

When in Genesis you read chapter one, at the end of each day except for one, we read that the Lord looked over what he had made and he said it was good.

[ 3 : 3 4 ] And having made all things in six days, he looked it over and said, it is very good. Now God could not have said that if Eve was curled up in a ball somewhere in the garden with a migraine headache and Adam was vomiting over behind a bush because he had the flu, God could not say it is very good because that's not good.

We know that by experience. It's not very good. It's rather a sign that something serious has gone wrong with God's good creation. So that's the first lesson.

Sickness was not a part of the original creation. Why is it important for us to start here besides the fact that this is where the Bible starts? Well, it's that we might give to God the due praise and thanksgiving that he deserves for his overflowing goodness to the sons of men.

Good health, indeed perfect health, was part of God's original design and gift to man. So any day that we enjoy a measure of good health ought to lead us to God in praise and thanksgiving for the gift as we acknowledge his goodness.

He's the one that gives health. And that truth also should help keep us from blaming God for sickness and disease in the world that we see today and that we experience ourselves.

[ 5 : 09 ] This first point is critical then to a right view of God as being good. So sickness was not a part of the original creation. Well, that leads us to the second point.

Sickness is the effect of man's fall into sin. What is the penalty for eating of the forbidden tree? It was death. Death.

And that includes the sickness and disease that leads to death. Romans 5.12 says, Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned.

So sin entered and death entered when sin entered. Think of a screen door in the summer loaded with flies on the outside.

And when the kids come in, some of the flies come in too. With the entrance of sin, death came in.

[ 6 : 15 ] And all the diseases and sicknesses that are part of leading up to death, contributing to death. Death. So, death.

The punishment for sin. Death was now at work in the bodies of Adam and Eve. So there were first-time experiences of sickness then for Adam and Eve that they had never had before.

There was a first headache, a first cold and flu and virus. Adam's first backache at the extra painful work involved in making a living and that first morning sickness for Eve.

And all the other illnesses that came upon them, they experienced for the first time after sin. So this is the explanation.

This is why is this point important for us to get, that sickness came in with sin? It's the explanation for why sickness is a universal reality.

[ 7 : 23 ] All get sick because all have sinned. And it comes as God's curse for sin. We see this in the Mosaic covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai.

He gave both promises and curses. Promises for obeying the law and keeping God's covenant and curses for those who broke His covenant. Leviticus 26, 14 through 16.

But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you violate my covenant, then I will do this to you, God says. I will bring upon you sudden tear, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life.

I will send the plague among you. So seeing sickness and disease as part of God's curse for sin should do a couple things for us.

First of all, it should help us rightly estimate the evil of sin, the exceeding sinfulness of sin as Paul speaks of it.

[ 8 : 30 ] The terrible sicknesses and diseases that are seen in just one ward at Riley Children's Hospital are enough to make us realize that sin is no small thing if this is the result.

And it's a universal thing. John Piper wrote an interesting little ten-point track when he got prostate cancer, and it was called How Not to Waste Your Cancer.

And I'm just going to refer to it from time to time. One of his ten points was you'll waste your cancer if you treat sin as casually as before.

Again, if sickness and disease is the result of sin, it should lead to a proper estimation of its wickedness and a hatred for it.

But secondly, this point ought to make us far more thankful for any good day of health in this cursed world. We can almost get to thinking that good health is our right and complain then when we get sick.

[ 9 : 39 ] But we long ago forfeited any blessing from God. We long ago forfeited any good days from Him. So every good day is an undeserved mercy from the Lord.

The marvel now is not that we get sick, but that we have days and weeks and months on end for many of us without sickness. And so the wonder is that even in a cursed world where death is at work in our bodies, that these billions of body parts are so often working together in harmony to produce good health for us.

The amazing thing is not that it breaks down from time to time, but that it works so well for so many of us so often. So that's the second point.

Sin came in, or death, excuse me. Sickness is the effect of man's fall into sin. The third point.

Sickness is a needed reminder that one day we're going to die, unless the Lord Jesus comes first.

Nothing's more certain, and yet few things are more forgotten.

[10:55] We can get so caught up in the rat race of life that we easily forget our appointment with death. That life is just a vapor, and that the days appointed for me are quickly running out.

And God knows this. He knows we're strange creatures, that though death is everywhere all around us, we can still run through life without thinking of our own death.

So he may periodically slap us on our backs to get us to remember that death is coming, to remind us of our own mortality.

You know, with all the cures of modern medicine, there's still no cure for death. And sickness can be the reminder we need that death is the destiny of every man, that one day I will get sick and not recover.

Without a sense of our mortality, we don't live right. We live for temporal things and not the eternal, the things that are seen and not the things that are unseen. So I say God gives us a favor and giving us sickness as a reminder.

[12:09] Now, that means that today is the time for sowing, this kind of sowing, sowing seeds, planting seeds. Death ushers in the eternal reaping of what we have sown.

Death is the end of the sowing time, and sickness can remind us of this. So if you're going to do something for God, now is the time to do it. As Jesus said in John 9 and verse 4, the night is coming when no one can work.

I don't know about you, but I want to do some more work for Jesus before I meet Him face to face. Awareness of death's near approach has a wonderful way of sorting out priorities.

It immediately tells us what is glitter and what is glory, what is weighty and important, and what is going to soon be forgotten forever.

And so sickness can help focus our attention on what is really important. If it helps us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it has done us a service.

[13:26] If it brings us to pray, Lord, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom, that we may learn how to live wisely. Am I living for something beyond this grave, for spiritual things, eternal things, eternal rewards in heaven, laying up treasures there that will never wear out?

Sickness improved can help prepare us for our day of death then. And John Piper says we waste our cancer if we refuse to think about death. And again, I would just say to Piper's points that it's not just for cancer, it's for the flu and COVID and any other number of sicknesses.

We waste it if we refuse to think about death. So that's the third point. It's a reminder of death.

Fourthly, God is sovereign over our sickness and the degrees of health that we enjoy.

Now, much of the health, wealth, and prosperity doctrine says that God doesn't have anything to do with our sicknesses. The Bible says otherwise.

In Exodus 4 and verse 11, clear back in the second book of the Bible, when Moses told the Lord, I don't want to go and free Israel. I'm slow of speech and tongue.

[14:58] And God replied, who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? And in so speaking, he says, I am sovereign over health.

So, yes, I'm to be a good steward of my body. Yes, I'm to see that I feed it correctly, that I exercise and I give it rest and I treat it as the temple of the living God, that the very God of heaven lives in me by his spirit.

But still, my enjoyment of health, my experience of sickness is ultimately in the hands of a sovereign God. We think of Job's illness.

It had nothing to do with lack of exercise or improper diet. He didn't even know why he was experiencing it, but we do, because we're getting to read the book.

God gave Satan permission to strike him with boils. And again, it was God who struck the Egyptians with the plague of boils, and yet not the Israelites.

[16:15] He's sovereign. He strikes these with illness, but not these. Matthew 4, 4, Jesus says, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

He was being tempted to turn the stones into bread because he had fasted for 40 days and was hungry. And his response to Satan is, it's not bread that keeps man alive.

It's the will, the decreed word of God. If God decrees that I shall live, I shall live. You know, there's a lot of people that have all the bread in the world that a man could eat, but they can't digest it.

They've got a disease. It doesn't, man's life does not depend upon having enough bread. No, we live if God decrees that we live. And it shows his sovereignty over this area. Spurgeon was plagued with all kinds of gout and different physical ailments. And he said, I would be driven to despair if I did not know that my afflictions were personally designed by God for me. [17:32] Charlie, this is for you. I have made this, I have brought this to you. I've thought about you and all that you need.

And it's my personal design gift for you. What a wonderful comfort it is in our sickness to know that it hasn't come to me ultimately because of this or that or the other thing. All the second causes. But it's come to me designed by God. And we know that what he brings into the lives of his children is always for their good, to do them good.

So God's sovereignty reaches to every detail of my life. That does not exclude my sickness. The small sickness is the big ones. So let's remember that when sickness settles in.

Yes, we're urged to pray when we're sick and to pray for health. We see that in 3 John 3 and verse 2. He prays for the health of his friend.

[18:41] But he also prays that he would be as spiritually healthy as he is physically healthy, recognizing the importance of the spiritual health. So there's no fatalism.

It's not like we don't care that we're sick. We're encouraged to pray when we're sick for healing. But we're acknowledging as well that God is sovereign in this area of our lives.

So that's the fourth point, God's sovereignty. The fifth is growing out of it. It's that God sovereignly rules over our sickness and health to promote his own glory. There are some things that are more important to God than our present health.

Namely, his glory and our holiness. We're going to come to our holiness next, but this point number five is that God sovereignly rules over our sickness and health for his own glory.

That's what he's pursuing. And so as they went along, he saw a man blind from birth in John 9. And his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

[19:53] And Jesus said, neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God may be displayed in his life. And boy, was it displayed as Jesus healed him.

And he saw for the first time in his life. God was willing to have this man live in the darkness of blindness from birth so that one day Jesus Christ might come along and display the work of God in him.

He's pursuing his own glory in our physical health and sickness. John chapter 11, Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus is sick and he said to the 12, this sickness will not end in death.

No, it's for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it. Now his sickness led to death, didn't it? But it didn't end in death because Christ was greatly glorified by raising Lazarus from the dead.

But again, Jesus was willing to let Lazarus' sickness grow worse and worse until he finally died. He was willing to have Mary and Martha grieving over their sick brother and seeing him go from bad to worse to dead.

[21:25] All that God and his son might be glorified through it. But that's not the only way God is glorified in sickness.

He's also glorified by proving to be enough for his six, sick children. We sang it this morning. He's more than enough. And he's proving that in his very sick children that even in their sickness, they're finding their Savior is enough.

Who will deny that God has been glorified through all the illnesses of Johnny Erickson Tata?

The fact that God did not choose to heal her, left her in that state, and now cancer on top of it.

You know, we don't get to choose how we glorify God. That we glorify God is part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian, that we're called to glorify him.

[22:31] Some glorify him in freedom. Others this very night are glorifying him under stiff persecution, state persecution. Some glorify him in poverty.

Others glorify him in wealth. Some glorify him in sickness. And others glorify him in health. And God is the script writer for every single one on how this one is to glorify me and how that one is to glorify me.

It's clearly not the will of God to always get glory by healing his people. Again, though that be the mantra of the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, that it's always God's will that we be healthy.

In 1 Peter 5, 23, Paul writes to his dear son in the faith, Timothy, and he says, stop drinking only water. Use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

This is the beloved Timothy, his son in the faith. Such a wonderful co-worker. I have none like him because he's genuinely concerned for your souls, he tells the Philippians.

[ 23 : 53 ] He's sick. He's sick a lot, frequently. Well, just heal him, Paul. No. No, that wasn't God's will.

He's not healed, but he is helped. Helped to live with his illness to the glory of God. And so God has his own sovereign purposes for glorifying himself.

Yes, sometimes in healing. Yes, other times in leaving people sick. And all designed by God for his glory. Do you know that God has used an illness to bring salvation to people and so to glorify himself?

Paul, when he writes to the Galatian churches, churches in that whole region of Galatia, in chapter 4 and verse 13, he says to them, as you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.

The word there is some physical sickness, some bodily ailment, an infirmity of the flesh. It could have been some serious eye trouble from what follows because he goes on to say that even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn.

[ 25 : 21 ] Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that if you could have done so, you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me.

So it appears that there was perhaps a serious illness of his eyes that for some reason had him go to Galatia. And it was because of that serious illness that the gospel was preached there.

There will be people in heaven one day glorifying God for the sickness that God brought upon Paul that the gospel might come to them that was effectual and saving.

Reminds me of Naphtali and Halida O'Gallo and the testimony we recently heard. There they are living in Nairobi. Halida is afflicted and needs treatment.

And they find out about a specialist three hours away in Eldoret. So they move there temporarily.

And while they're there, they see there's a need for a church.

[ 26 : 36 ] So they stay and plant one. And people have been converted there in Eldoret and will be in heaven one day thanking the Lord for the sickness of the Leda that brought them from Nairobi to Eldoret that they might hear the gospel, that Jesus Christ might be glorified.

So again, He uses our illnesses for His glory. It's not always seen and known what those purposes are, but He is always seeking His glory and our good.

So that's the fifth point. God sovereignly rules in this area of sickness for His own glory. But then the sixth principle is that sickness is God's tool to sanctify us.

Now this is huge. It's no small evidence of how God takes what is evil and works it together for the good of His people.

That He would take sickness and work it for our sanctification, our greater likeness to Jesus. Well, how does He do this?

[ 27 : 52 ] Well, He uses sickness to make us more thankful for good health. Good health can be such a consistent gift that we easily take it for granted. The Lord knows this about us, and so it's not beneath Him to take it away for a while to remind us of the wonder of His daily gift.

You don't know what you've got till it's gone. And so we're sick as a dog for a week, and when we're back on our feet, we've got a better perspective on how good God is the other 51 weeks that we're healthy.

And we thank Him for this wonderful gift of health. So that's sanctifying us. It's thankfulness is a fruit of the Spirit, and unthankfulness is a mark of the unregenerate.

Romans chapter 1, neither were they thankful. So God uses sickness to sanctify us, to make us more thankful. And then He uses it as a child discipline in His family.

There's many Old Testament examples of this. When David had sinned, and was not confessing it, just covering it, he said, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

[ 29 : 16 ] That's a physical problem, isn't it? My bones were bad. Day and night, your hand was heavy on me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

That's a physical response to his sin and guilt. Chapter 38 of Psalms, he says, because of your wrath, there's no health in my body.

My bones have no soundness because of my sin. My back is filled with searing pain. There's no health in my body. The effects of sin upon the body, but part of God's chastening to bring David to the point of freely confessing his sin and being restored to the joy of his salvation.

Well, you say that's the Old Testament. Well, how about 1 Corinthians 11? There were clearly abuses at the Lord's Supper in the church at Corinth.

And it brought discipline from the Lord in a physical form. As Paul explains in verses 29 and following, anyone who eats or drinks the Lord's Supper without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

[ 30 : 35 ] That is why many among you are weak and sick. And a number of you have fallen asleep. Again, a term for death.

Because when we are judged by the Lord, we're being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. So, yes, it can be a discipline of the Lord to strike us with illness.

A discipline for a specific sin. It's not to say that it always is, but it is proper for us to pray, search me, O God, and know my heart, test me, know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Because sometimes sickness is sent as a discipline for sin. And that is to sanctify us, you see. How else does he sanctify us with sickness?

And that was the text that was read for us, 2 Corinthians 12.

[ 31 : 49 ] This unknown thorn in the flesh sure hints at it being something physical, though we're not exactly sure. And it doesn't come to Paul as a discipline because of some sin in his life.

It rather comes to keep him from sin. It came to keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations that were given to me.

And so because of that, to keep me from getting a big head, there was given to me by God a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me.

Now Satan's aim was to torment Paul. God's aim was to sanctify him and to keep him from growing proud under such success.

To keep him from growing self-reliant rather than God-reliant, God-dependent. Would God send sickness to keep us humble? Just to keep us weak and dependent upon him?

[ 32 : 56 ] He did. And he does. Some things are more important to God than good health now. And humility and dependence are two of them.

When we're thrown on our backs and made to slow down and made to know better, our utter weakness and dependence upon the Lord, even for physical strength and for all things.

And so Paul came to know the presence and power of Christ resting upon him. The Lord Jesus is willing to do this to prove to us that his grace is sufficient for us.

That's to sanctify us. And so Piper says in his book how not to waste your cancer. The aim of God in our cancer is to knock the props out from under our hearts so that we rely utterly on him.

How else does he sanctify us? Well, illness is God's megaphone calling us to draw near to God that he might draw near to us. Ill health has often been used to deepen our walk with the Lord Jesus, to know him in the fellowship of his sufferings, to know closer relationship with Christ.

[ 34 : 17 ] I recently watched a recent interview with Johnny Erickson Tata in which she just says point blank, I would not trade a healthy body for the personal relationship I have come to know through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, through my physical disabilities.

She was shut up to the Lord and she has found him to be faithful, worth knowing, more valuable to her than her own physical health.

You know, some of the greatest hymns that we sing were written by songwriters who were stricken with ill health all their lives. We think of William Cowper, William Cooper, and many others.

Their songs reveal that their sickness drove them to the Lord Jesus and they found in him a love and an intimacy with him that supported them in their illness.

Piper says, you'll waste your cancer if you think that beating cancer means staying alive rather than cherishing Christ. I want to know Christ, Paul said.

[ 35 : 31 ] And in our sickness, that needs to be our prayer. Lord, help me to know you better. How else does he sanctify us under trial, under sickness?

Well, he expands our ability to sympathize and minister to others in their sickness. 2 Corinthians 1, 3-6.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we're distressed, it's for our comfort and salvation. If we're comforted, it's for your comfort which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

Do you mean that God would actually put me through physical suffering just to make me more sympathetic to my brothers and sisters who are suffering? That's exactly what Paul is saying here.

[ 36 : 44 ] So that's number six. He uses sickness as a tool to sanctify us, to make us more like Jesus. Seventh, sickness is God's tool to warn sinners.

I'm not going to spend much time here. It's just, again, that idea of reminding of death and the sinner outside of Christ needs to be reminded of that.

You know, the body is capable of the greatest pleasures but also of the greatest pain. And sometimes the pains of sickness are reminders of the great pains of body and soul forever in hell. Indeed, Isaiah would ask that. If you can't handle a burning sore throat, how will you handle everlasting burnings?

The sinners in Zion are terrified. Trembling grips the godless. Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burnings? So, sickness can be a tool that God uses to warn the wicked of their need to repent and seek the Lord.

[ 37 : 51 ] Eight, the resurrection of the body is a glorious fruit of the gospel. Again, I'll pass over this very quickly just to say that this idea of the resurrected body was foreign to the Greeks.

They believed in the eternal, the eternity of the soul that the soul lives on but not the body. It was Christianity that gave hope of a real resurrection of the body and of course that hope was built upon the real resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ and because he rose we too will rise and it just reminds us that this great salvation that Jesus has brought is not only a salvation of our souls but it's a salvation of all that we are, body and soul.

He delights in the well-being of his servants, both body and soul. So, the resurrection of the body is a glorious fruit of Christ's work.

And then number nine, sickness will not be a part of God's newly created heaven and earth. In Romans, or Revelation 21, three to five, John says, I heard a voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them.

They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and he who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new.

[ 39 : 31 ] No more death means excluded are all the sicknesses that lead to death. No more crying or pain means a pain-free existence of the body and that is something new.

We haven't seen it since the garden and the old order of sickness is passing away. I am making everything new he says.

Revelation 22, three, no longer will there be any curse. So without the curse we will be without sickness since sickness entered with sin it is going to exit the universe with sin as well.

As Isaac Watts says, he makes his blessings flow as far as the curse is found. The curse brought sickness and death and the blessing of final salvation will be the exit of sin and death and therefore the exit of all sickness, all pain, all suffering.

And that's a reason for joy to the world, a world that is sunk in sickness and death. A whole new world awaits the followers of the Lord Jesus when the curse will be reversed and made unreal in the eternal state for the children of God.

[ 40 : 50 ] Now that's, that's no small explanation of Jesus' healing ministry while he was on the earth. Matthew 4, 23, Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

those two belong together. He's giving foretaste of his coming kingdom when it will be brought to completion.

Every disease, every sickness will be healed. He heals all our diseases. Blessings abound wherever he reigns.

And that's one of them, the coming kingdom of Christ. But now, where is this happening? When does this happen? By locating it here in Revelation 21, at the return of Christ, we're to be kept from

falling for this serious air of the charismatics and the Pentecostals who would tell us that it's God's will for us now to be always healthy and never sick.

And that if we are sick, it's our unbelief. That's an over-realized eschatology. That's claiming now what God is clearly reserved for later.

[ 42 : 13 ] And he tells us here, it's Revelation 21 and 22. That's where we'll enjoy that fruit of Christ's cross. Yes, there's healing in the atonement, but that kind of healing will only be ours when Christ returns and makes all things new.

And so this truth is a helpful truth to keep us from so many errors that are abundant in our day. It's also a truth that gives sweet hope to those who suffer great physical afflictions.

A day is coming when the sickness will be no more and I'll have a perfect body forever with my Lord. It should make us worship Jesus for what he's won for us by his work of redemption.

Included in this great package of redemption is a new body without any sickness or death. And then lastly, number 10, since God is the giver of our health, we ought to use it to serve him.

There's this beautiful testimony in the very, very busy day of our Lord in Mark chapter 1. and after a busy day of ministry, they go to Simon Peter's home and Peter's mother-in-law is sick in bed with a fever and they told Jesus about her and so he went to her, he took her hand and he helped her up.

[ 43 : 42 ] The fever left her and she began to wait on them. Serving the Lord and his disciples with the strength that Christ has just renewed her body with.

Do we not pray even as we eat, Lord bless this food to the nourishment of my body, to the health of my body, to what end? That we may serve you with the strength that you give.

To use whatever health has given us to serve our God and Savior for the doing of his will, the performing of our duties, our God-given duties, for the building up of his church, the promoting of his gospel, ministering to his saints.

Are you using the health that God has given you to serve the Lord? You say, oh, I'm not very healthy. You know who wrecked the curve?

It's that gal named Johnny. There are hours each day just to get Johnny up and dressed and ready for another day.

[ 44 : 57 ] Such is her pain, her suffering, hours every day just to get up and going. But who is serving the Lord with that strength that God has given her like Johnny?

ministering all over the world. So, before we beg off and say, I really can't serve the Lord, I'm sick a lot, remember, remember Timothy, he was often sick and he was serving.

Remember Johnny, always sick and yet serving. and that's part of what the Lord was promising Paul, that in weakness he would make him strong and would show that my grace is sufficient for you.

I'm going to leave that thorn in your flesh so that you know your weakness and so if anyone sees anything good come of you, they will know it's not I but Christ who lives in me.

Our Father, thank you for your word, thank you that you know where we live, you know the kind of trials that we face, you know our sicknesses and our health and you're sovereign over it all and you are good in all that you do.

[ 46 : 23 ] Lord, would you help us when we're sick to aim at the higher goal to know you better? Would you help us when we're sick to be thankful for what health we do have and that one day we'll be with you in a place where our bodies will know no more pain and sickness and death.

And until then, would you get glory to yourself in our weakness by showing forth your greater strength and upholding us in our sicknesses that even then we might serve you with the strength that we have.

We think of the many prayer warriors, dear elderly people who are sick in their beds and they're yet doing warfare for the kingdom of Christ by prayer.

Thank you that as long as we breathe there's work to be done and give us a heart then to serve you with whatever strength we have. Be with our sister Peggy, give her good rest tonight just to rest upon you and your love.

Thank you that nothing can separate her from that love. Thank you that nothing can separate Lou from that love. And so, we glory in Jesus Christ tonight.

[ 47 : 40 ] Thank you for another day together as your people. Send us on our way rejoicing in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.