

VIII. HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN REACT WHEN HE IS FACED WITH SICKNESS AND SUFFERING

When we're faced with sickness and suffering...

A. WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT SICKNESS CAN COME FROM A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SOURCES.

1. First of all, sickness can come on us as a result of natural causes. The Bible teaches us that we're all under the curse for sin which is death and therefore sickness and suffering oftentimes come as a result of the aging process (Rom. 5:17; Psa. 90:10; Eccl. 12:1).
2. Secondly, sickness can come from Satan himself (Lk. 13:10-16). This was certainly the case with Job and the apostle Paul (Job 2:7; II Cor. 12:7). We should understand when the devil would afflict us physically, it is only by divine permission from the Lord, and it's to serve God's purpose in our lives in some way, whether we understand it or not (Job 2:6).
3. Thirdly, sickness can come from the Lord for a number of reasons. These will be considered later.
4. Finally, sickness can come as a result of our own doings. The person who eats too much can make himself sick. The person who lives a loose life can bring sexually transmitted diseases on himself. Self-inflicted illness can come from any number of things. Obviously, the older and wiser a person gets, he should learn to abstain from things he knows will make him sick. We certainly have no reason to blame God when we get sick from our own wrong-doings.

B. WE SHOULD DO SOME SOUL-SEARCHING AS TO THE REASON FOR IT.

1. To determine, this we should ask ourselves, "Am I in fellowship with the Lord and living for Him faithfully?" or "Is there something in my life that the Lord may be chastening me for?" It could be God is using sickness in some way to chasten us (Dt. 28:20-22; I Kings 5; Heb. 12:6).
2. Notice if our sickness is not a result of God's chastening, even as a result of something we have brought upon ourselves, then we should consider that God may have some other reason in allowing us to be sick and to suffer.
 - a. Sometimes God may allow sickness and suffering in our lives to draw us closer to Him (Psa. 119:67).
 - b. Sometimes God may allow sickness and suffering that, through the experience, we may be able to help others who would go through similar trials (II Cor. 1:3,4).
 - c. Sickness and suffering may be used of the Lord to humble us and to teach us to depend upon Him more, rather than trying to be self-sufficient (II Cor. 12:7-10).
 - d. Sometimes God may allow sickness and suffering to break us and mold us into a

special vessel to be used in a unique way. God delights in and uses broken things. And there's nothing like suffering to break us for God's service. Note Psalm 34:18; 51:17.

- e. Sometimes God may allow sickness and suffering for reasons known only to Himself. But for whatever reasons we can know He will use it to be glorified in some way through our lives (Jn. 9:1-3).

C. WE SHOULD GO ABOUT TO CORRECT SOME THINGS IN OUR LIVES IF WE HAVE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE WE ARE BEING CHASTENED.

1. Notice that the Lord's chastening is done out of love to correct us and not to punish us (Heb. 12:6).
2. Notice for the Lord's chastening to be effective we must be exercised by it or allow it to correct us (Heb. 12:11).

Oftentimes some people are too proud and too stubborn to say "uncle" even when they are sick and suffering. This is certainly illustrated in Isa. 1:5,6.

3. It is sad, but it's a fact, that some people will continue to sin, despite repeated chastening, until they commit sin unto death (I Cor. 11:30; I John 5:16).

D. WE SHOULD CLAIM THE LORD'S PROMISES AND BE RESIGNED TO WHATEVER HIS WILL MIGHT BE FOR US.

1. Notice the Lord has promised to work all things together for our good. This means even sickness and suffering in our lives (Rom. 8:28).

Oftentimes God uses sickness in a person's life to deal with the hearts of others. This was true in my own coming to the Lord for salvation.

2. The Lord also promises to give us comfort and grace (II Cor. 1:4; 12:9).
3. Being resigned to the Lord's will means to trust God's dealings and to be patient or "remain under" whatever God allows to come our way (James 1:3,4).

Notice it requires faith on our part to trust God's dealings when we're called upon to suffer in some way. And it 's an expression of faith when we can say, "I don't understand why I'm called upon to suffer this, but I know God has a purpose and He has allowed it for some reason."

E. WE SHOULD AVOID SEEKING HELP FROM SO-CALLED HEALING PREACHERS.

1. It should be noted that the gift of healing which was a sign gift for the apostolic age is not operative in our day. Charismatics and others, who purport to have it, have repeatedly

been denounced as frauds.

I know of one case where the mother of a sick child called a certain so-called healing preacher for prayer to heal the child and was told to send fifty dollars and he would pray. I helped carry this child to her grave.

2. Healing preachers give people false hopes and then explain away their own inabilities by saying that an individual lacked enough faith to bring about healing.

F. WE SHOULD PRAY FOR THE LORD TO HEAL US AND BE OPEN TO WHATEVER MEANS HE MIGHT CHOOSE TO USE (II Kings 20:1-3; I Kings 15:23; II Chron. 16:12).

1. Notice it's a fact that God can heal without men or medicines. We see this truth illustrated in several instances (II Kings 5:1, 14; James 5:1-8).
2. It is also a fact that there are some sicknesses that men and medicine cannot cure (II Kings 5:7; II Chron. 21:18).
3. But notice God, in His mercy and grace, has greatly blessed mankind in giving us medicines and men with the technology to relieve our sufferings and bring about cures. And God oftentimes uses both men and medicines as instruments to bring about healing. This seems to be in line with James 5:14 and it is illustrated in Hezekiah's life (II Kings 20:1-11).

Some hold it to be unscriptural and unspiritual to seek medical help. Suffering usually has a way of changing that kind of mind-set.

Consider the way God has of meeting other needs in our lives. He could drop dollars out of heaven or anything else, but He usually chooses to use certain people to be a blessing to us in meeting our needs. So it is with the gospel to meet the greatest need that men have.

Finally, I believe a consecrated Christian, who is called upon to suffer some ailment for God to use him in some greater capacity, will be given the grace of God to sustain him, if it's not God's will to heal him (II Cor. 12:9). But I also believe, if it is God's will to heal him, He will most often direct him to someone trained in the medical profession to be a blessing to him. Consider the fact that even the apostle Paul took Luke, a physician, with him on his second missionary journey.