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Lesson 19 – Sin, Suffering, and Sickness

The problem of human suffering has engaged the minds of both commoner and sage since the days of Eden's flaming sword (read Genesis 3:22-24 ²² *And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: ²³ Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. ²⁴ So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.)*

It is a universal problem. Throughout the ages and in every land, anguished brows and grieving hearts have turned heavenward and asked "WHY?"

"If there is a God, and if (as the Bible says) He is a loving God, then why doesn't He prevent human misery, diseases, disasters, wars, pestilence, famine, mass starvation, poverty, accidents, and death?" "Why did He allow ____ to happen?" or "Why did He take ____?" Perhaps no other question has created more skeptics, agnostics, and atheists.

This study deals with the subject of suffering, sickness, and death. It is an important subject because it affects us all – if not now, then one day! It is a mysterious subject because we don't have all the answers and there are some things we will never understand this side of eternity. It is also a controversial subject because of the outrageous and unbiblical claims of the "so-called" faith healers and Their health and wealth gospel.

There have been notable failures in finding answers to human suffering. For its remarkable advances and achievements, SCIENCE hasn't kept man from dying. Medicine offers no comfort to a dying man (accept to alleviate his pain). Half the world goes to bed hungry. POLITICIANS have been unable to solve the problems by law,

handout, or education. Altruistic desires to make the world a better place, to eliminate war and man's inhumanity to man, to enforce democratic ideals, etc. consistently fail. An evolutionary world view ultimately condemns man to the **caprice of chance!**

THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE IS MARKETEDLY DIFFERENT:

- Believers are not exempt from these calamities. Read: Matthew 5:45 ⁴⁵ *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*
- Believers have the Word of God to strengthen them. Read Psalm 119:28 ²⁸ *My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*
- Believers have the Spirit of God to comfort them. Read John 14:26-27 ²⁶ *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*
- Believers have the Grace of God to sustain them. Read II Corinthians 12:9 ⁹ *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
- Believers have the presence of the Good Shepard to lead them. Read Psalm 23:4 ⁴ *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Nevertheless, the question often arises:

- Why do the righteous suffer?
- Why do we get sick?
- Why are God's choicest servants taken in death?

Therefore, this study will approach the subject of suffering, sickness, and death from a Christian viewpoint.

I The Fact of Suffering – Human suffering is a fact of life.**A. For Mankind in General.**

1. Job 14:1-2 *¹Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. ²He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.*
2. Ecclesiastes 2:23 *²³For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.*
3. James 4:14 *¹⁴Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*
4. Job 30:23 *²³For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.*

B. For Believers in Particular.

1. Natural Sufferings
 - a. James 5:13-15 *¹³Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. ¹⁴Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: ¹⁵And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*
 - b. Believers suffer illness... e.g. there was:
 - (i) II Corinthians 12:7 *⁷And 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.*

(ii) *Philippians 2:25-27, 30* ²⁵*Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.* ²⁶*For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.* ²⁷*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...*

³⁰*Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.*

(iii) *I Timothy 5:23* ²³*Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.*

(iv) *II Timothy 4:20* ²⁰*Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick.*

c. Believers died.

(i) *I Thessalonians 4:13* ¹³*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

(ii) *Acts 9:36-37* ³⁶*Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.* ³⁷*And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.*

2. Christian Sufferings

- a. John 16:33 ³³ *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*
- b. Philippians 1:29 ²⁹ *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*
- c. I Peter 4:12 ¹² *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*
- d. II Timothy 3:12 ¹² *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

II The Basic Cause of Suffering

We shall learn that there are many possible reasons why people suffer, get sick, and die. However, there is an underlying cause for all sickness and human misery.

A. The Reason Behind All Suffering.

1. Genesis 2:17 ¹⁷ *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.***
 - a. Spiritual Death – separation from God's presence and fellowship.
 - Read Genesis 3:9 ⁹ *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*

- Read Ephesians 2:1, 12 *¹And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ¹²That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*
- b. Physical Death – separation of the soul and spirit from the body.
- Read Genesis 3:19 *¹⁹In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*
 - Read Ecclesiastes 12:7 *⁷Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*
- c. Eternal Death – separation from God forever.
- Read Revelation 20:14-15 *¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*
2. Through Adam's fall, death came onto all men. Read Romans 5:12 *¹²Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*
3. The origin of wars and fighting (on the national scales and as well as a personal sense) is lusts. James 4:1 *¹From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

You cannot explain the problem of human suffering apart from the problem of SIN. Most wars and natural disasters are God's judgements on sin in the here-and-now. Hell and the Lake of Fire are God's judgement on sin in the hereafter. If you don't believe in God or Hell, you have no answers. Once you reject the Bible, you plunge into darkness.

B. The Person Behind Some Suffering.

It is interesting to see how **Satan** – the instigator of sin – shows up in the arena of human suffering and sickness.

1. The Book of Job, which was written to answer the "Why?" of suffering, revealing Satan as the one behind Job's trials. Read:
 - a. Job 2:7 *⁷So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.*
– Satan has the power to afflict.
 - b. Job 1:12 *¹²And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.*
– Satan's power is limited by divine permission..
 - c. Job 2:6 *⁶And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.*
– Satan's power is limited by divine permission.

2. Read Luke 8:2 *²And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,* Mary Magdalene was healed of evil spirits and infirmities and 7 devils!

3. Read II Corinthians 12:7 *⁷And 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.* Paul's thorn in the flesh is called the messenger of Satan.

4. Read Revelation 2:8-10 *⁸ And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; ⁹ I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: **behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison**, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

The Devil had some of the members of the church of Smyrna cast into prison.

5. Read I Corinthians 5:5 *⁵To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

The church was instructed to deliver an erring member to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

C. The Bittersweet Gift of Pain.

Pain hurts, but pain also helps. God has designed the sensation of pain to indicate a problem. We thank God for the physical sensations that enable us to taste, and smell and feel a baby's soft skin – but those same sensations come into play upon the passing of a kidney stone.

III **The Reasons for Suffering**

The Word of God gives many reasons why we suffer. The reasons are broadly grouped under five (5) headings:

A. We Suffer Because of HUMAN FRALITY.

Read Psalm 39:4-5 ⁴*Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* ⁵*Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.*

Suffering, and ultimately death, is the result of sin and the natural course of human life.

1. Read Genesis 2:17(c) ¹⁷*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.***
2. Read Genesis 3:19(e) ¹⁹*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, **and unto dust shalt thou return.***
3. Read Genesis 5:5 ⁵*And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.*
4. Read Romans 5:12(d) ¹²*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; **and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:***

5. Read Psalm 90:10 ¹⁰*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.*

6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16(b) ¹⁶*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

[NIV: That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.]

7. Read Hebrews 9:27 ²⁷*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*

Unless the Rapture intervenes, we will all eventually die. In one sense, the death process begins when we are conceived. Certainly from early adulthood, we are a dying people. Skeletal growth ceases about 14 for females and 19 for men. Reproductive and muscular strength begins declining about 18 for females and 28 for males. The brain is the only organ that actually improves with use, although it reaches maximum size about 12 years of age, thereby losing about 10,000 cells per day. Sin's corruption will eventually succeed - and for most of us its going to involve some sickness and some pain either along the way or at the end.

Remember: God sent one Man into this world, Who was without sin, and He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Speaking of Jesus: read Isaiah 53:3 ³*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Sometimes when we suffer, it is simply a matter of sin taking its natural course.

B. We Suffer Because We VIOLATE NATURAL LAWS.

The creation of God (including men) is governed by natural laws divinely set in place. Violation of these laws often comes with physical consequences. For example:

1. We can violate the laws of physical capability – jumping from great height, speeding, involvement in extreme sports, diving in shallow water, etc.
2. We can violate laws of bodily health – smoking, alcohol, substance abuse, wrong eating, extreme dieting, sun bathing, lack of exercise, poor hygiene, personal neglect, insufficient sleep, overwork, etc. Read (just a few verses warning of poor personal choices):

Proverbs 23:2 ²And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.

Proverbs 23:21 ²¹For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

3. We can violate financial laws and suffer because of loss of possessions or wherewithal – credit card debt, unwise investments, laziness, impulsive purchasing, etc. ALL HAVE CONSEQUENCES!

SOMETIMES WHEN WE SUFFER, ITS SELF-INFLICTED. We have no one to blame but ourselves.

C. We Suffer Because WE SIN AGAINST GOD.

Violating divine Law has consequences. These may come from:

1. Sins of the Flesh.

- a. Read Proverbs 23:29-30 ²⁹*Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?* ³⁰*They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.*

Read Proverbs 20:1 ¹*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

The physical effects of substance abuse are described in the above verses.

- b. Read Romans 1:27 ²⁷*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. **Sexual immorality.***
- c. Read Exodus 15:26 ²⁶*And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, **I will put none of these diseases upon thee**, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.*

2. **Sins of the Mind** – self-centeredness.

Living for SELF often manifests its self as:

- a. Anger - the outward reaction to SELF being threatened, resulting in physical changes (tension, hypertension, stroke, ulcers, etc.)
- b. Fear – the inward reaction to SELF being diminished, often contributing to ailments such as depression, stomach ulcers, etc.

3. Consider the case of King David:

- a. Spiritual laxity - read II Samuel 11:1 *¹And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. **But David tarried still at Jerusalem.***

Leading to...

- b. Fleshly lust - read II Samuel 11:2 *²And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.*

Leading to.....

- c. Double sin... read:
 - (i) II Samuel 11:3-4 *³And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? ⁴And David sent messengers, and took*

her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

- (ii) II Samuel 11:14-15 ¹⁴*And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.*
¹⁵*And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.*

From: http://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_samuel/11-1.htm

11:1-5 Observe the occasions of David's sin and what led to it:

- Neglect of his business. He tarried at Jerusalem. When we are out of the way of our duty, we are in temptation.
- Love of ease: idleness gives great advantage to the tempter.
- A wandering eye. He had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or, at this time, he had forgotten it.
- And observe the steps of the sin. When men begin to do evil, they cannot soon stop. Observe the aggravations of the sin. How could David rebuke or punish that in others, of which he was conscious that he himself was guilty?

Leading to...

- d. Physical suffering - read Psalm 32:3-4 ³*When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* ⁴*For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* [Selah is defined as a Hebrew word that has been found at the

ending of verses in Psalms and has been interpreted as an instruction calling for a break in the singing of the Psalm or it may **mean** "forever." An example of **Selah** is seeing the term used seventy-one times in the Psalms in the Hebrew **Bible**.]

ALSO, there is a law of sowing and reaping (read Galatians 6:7 ***7Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.***) A lot of people sow a crop, then spend the rest of their lives praying for a crop failure! If God doesn't do anything about a crop you have sowed, what does it prove? If you sow it, you're entitled to reap it!

Sometimes when we suffer, it is because we have allowed sin to reign in our mortal bodies.

D. We Suffer BY DEVINE PERMISSION.

Read I Peter 4:19 *¹⁹Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

It is possible for believers to suffer according to the will of God. No carelessness (by man) is evident. No sin has been committed. It is simply God's plan for a Christian life! Why? There are many possible reasons why the Lord allows us to get sick and/or suffer:

1. Read John 9:3 *³Jesus answered, **Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.***
2. Read John 11:4 *⁴When 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.***

Note: There are two important principles - Read John 21:18-22 *¹⁸ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and*

walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.

*¹⁹This spake he, signifying by what death he **should glorify God**. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. ²⁰Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? ²¹Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? ²²Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.**

1st - Even in our death we should glorify God.

2nd – In matters of life and death (including suffering), God's will for the believer is uniquely individual. (verses 21, 22)

The fact that I am called upon to suffer when those around me apparently aren't... is not to concern me.

3. Read Job 23:10 *¹⁰But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall **come forth as gold**.* (To make us more Christ-like.)

4. Read I Peter 5:10 *¹⁰But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.* God ay use tribulation, suffering, and / or sickness to:
 - a. Establish us – to bring about spiritual stability (patience)
 - b. Strengthen us – example: God helped David kill an bear and lion, David was able to trust God to take on Goliath. (experience)
 - c. Settle us – God needs Christians to trust Him no matter what the circumstances. (hope)

5. Read II Corinthians 1:4 *⁴Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* (Use us to be a comfort to others)

6. Read John 15:2 *² Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

7. Read II Corinthians 12:7 *⁷And 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.* (pride)

8. Read II Corinthians 12:9(e) *⁹And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* To keep us dependent upon the grace of Christ in our service to Him.

9. Read Acts 8:1 - 4 *¹And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. ²And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. ³As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. ⁴Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. **To spread the preaching of the WORD.***

10. To prove God true and Satan a liar, read:
- a. Job 2:3-6 *³And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, 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. ⁴And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. ⁵But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. ⁶And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.*

 - b. Job 2:9-10 *⁹Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. ¹⁰But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. 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.***
11. Read I Peter 4:16a *¹⁶Yet if any man **suffer as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*
12. Read Romans 8:18 *¹⁸For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*
13. To make God (Christ) more real, read Philipians 3:10 *¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

E. We Suffer Because of CHASTISEMENT.

A loving Heavenly Father often uses afflictions and trials as a means of chastising and correcting His children. Chastisement may come from:

1. **The Hand of the Lord** – Read Hebrews 12:5-13 ⁵*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. ⁹Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. ¹²Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; ¹³And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

From the verses above we read:

- a. The Lord will chastise those He loves. Verse 6 ⁶*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,*
- b. God's chastisement is evidence of true salvation. Verses 7-8 ⁷*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸But if ye be without*

chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

- c. God's chastening is for our profit. Verse 10 *¹⁰For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*
 - d. God's chastening produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness. – verse 11. *¹¹Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*
 - e. God will use hard times to open ears. – Job 36:15(b) *¹⁵He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression.*
- 2. The Hand of the Church** – Read I Corinthians 5:4-5 *⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

This scripture refers to disciplinary action taken by a Baptist church over one of its erring members. In such cases:

- a. The church is to GATHER itself together.
- b. The church has the POWER [authority] of the Lord Jesus Christ to act.
- c. The church is now to DELIVER the unrepentant member over to Satan. This what happens when a member is set apart from the

church under discipline. Read Revelation 2:2e 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: **and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles**, and are not, and hast found them liars:

- d. The church's action may well result in destruction of the sinning member's FLESH. Read: , ⁵*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh.*
- e. Such action does not result in the loss of salvation – verse 5b ⁵*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, **that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.***

Note: According to I John 5:16-17 ¹⁶*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*

For the believer (“brother”), there is such a thing as: “A sin NOT unto death and a sin unto DEATH.”

Examples of the latter (“a sin unto DEATH”) are:

- **Coming to the Lord's table in an unworthy manner.**
Read I Corinthians 11:28-32 ²⁸*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. ²⁹For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. ³¹For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are*

chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

- **Lying to the Holy Ghost.** Read Acts 5:1-10 *¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ²And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. ⁵And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. ⁶And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. ⁷And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. ⁸And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. ⁹Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. ¹⁰Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.*
- **Murmuring and complaining.** Numbers 14:27-29 *²⁷How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. ²⁸Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: ²⁹Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to*

your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

3. The Hand of the Law

- a. Read I Peter 2:14 ¹⁴*Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. **God ordained government for the punishment of evildoers.***
- b. Read I Peter 4:15 ¹⁵*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. **Christians ought NEVER suffer as murders, thieves, evildoers, etc.***
- c. Read I Peter 2:20 ²⁰*For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. **If we break the Law of the Land there is no glory in suffering for our faults.***

4. The Hand of Nature

Oft times, God speaks by means of His wonderful creation. For example read Job 37:9-13 ⁹*Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. ¹⁰By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. ¹¹Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: ¹²And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. ¹³**He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.***

Elihu recognized God sometimes uses weather for the purpose correction.

Natural events (disasters) which invariably cause widespread suffering are meant to be a wake-up call to the lost.

IV The Response to Suffering

How ought the believer respond to sickness/suffering?

A. Some Common Human Responses to Suffering

When someone contracts a serious disease or illness, or when some calamity befalls a certain person, an incorrect response is forthcoming:

1. Responses to Suffering: *I/They must have sinned!*

a. This was the basic response of Job's three friends. Read:

(i) Job 4:1 *¹Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,*

(ii) Job 4:7-8 *⁷Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? ⁸Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.*

(iii) Job 8:1 *¹Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,*

(iv) Job 8:4-6 *⁴If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; ⁵If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; ⁶If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.*

- b. This was the thinking of some who reported a tragedy to Jesus. Read Luke 13:1-5 ¹ *There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* ² *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?* ³ *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* ⁴ *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?* ⁵ *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
- c. AND this was the belief **of the disciples**. Read John 9:1-3 ¹ *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.* ² *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* ³ *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

Note: Sometimes when a believer begins to suffer, he may ask the question: “Am I really saved?... If I am truly saved, why would God permit these things to happen to me?” One of the most important thing to remember in times of suffering is that we suffer BECAUSE we ARE saved.

Salvation is a work of God. All His works are perfect. Salvation needs no testing to see if it will endure or if it is any good!

Read I Peter 1:3-8 ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴ *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,*

reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸ Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

2. Responses to Suffering: **Why me?**

Read: Romans 9:20-21 ²⁰ *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? ²¹ Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

Many people have had their faith made shipwreck because they have demanded answers that God in His sovereignty has chosen not to answer to their satisfaction.

Whenever we find ourselves passing through times of affliction – be it financial, physical, emotional, a bereavement – we ask the question “WHY?”. We should prayerfully consider all the Biblical possibilities. Is what happened because of:

- The curse – are the natural effects of sin just taking their course?
- Sowing and Reaping – am I suffering because of my own neglect or actions?
- Persecution – am I suffering because I’m Christian?

- Chastisement – is God dealing with me about something?
- God’s will – what is God wanting to accomplish with or through me?
- God’s desire – is He seeking to divorce me from things taking precedence over Him? Compare:
 - Exodus 20:5c ⁵*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;***
 - Matthew 22:37 ³⁷*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

And, above all else, we should be asking “How may I glorify God through my suffering and/or sickness? Read I Peter 4:16b ¹⁶*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; **but let him glorify God** on this behalf.*

3. Responses to Suffering: **God is blamed... Hearts become bitter.**
 - a. Naomi changed her name to MARA (“bitter”) and basically blamed God for her impoverished life. Read: Ruth 1:20-21 ²⁰*And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?*

In fact, her plot in life was the consequence of Elimelech's earlier decision. Read Ruth 1:1-2 *1Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ruled: 2And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.*

b. Bitterness comes when we fail to appropriate the **GRACE** (*the free and unmerited favor of God*) of God, Compare:

- Hebrews 12:15 *15Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*
- II Corinthians 12:9 *9And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Bitterness only hurts the container it's in!

B. The Considered Biblical Response to Suffering

When we are called upon to suffer, there are some things we KNOW for sure:

1. We KNOW the Lord LOVES us. Read:

- I Peter 1:7 *7Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

- Psalm 55:22 ²²*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

- a. He knows all about us. Read Matthew 10:30 ³⁰*But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

- b. We are of great value to Him. Read:
 - (i) Matthew 10:31 ³¹*Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*
 - (ii) Luke 12:6-7 ⁶*Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?* ⁷*But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

- c. He is touched with the feelings of your infirmities. Read:
 - (i) Hebrews 4:15a ¹⁵*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*
 - (ii) *Isaiah 53:3* ³*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

- d. He KNOWS the way we take. Read Job 23:10 ¹⁰*But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

- e. He records ALL our wanderings and even stores all our tears. Read Psalm 56:8 ⁸*Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*

- f. His spirit intercedes on our behalf. Read Romans 8:26-27 ²⁶*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* ²⁷*And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*
2. We KNOW that ALL things work together for GOOD to them that love God. Read Romans 8:28 ²⁸*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.*

NOTE:

- a. This passage is set in the context of the suffering and infirmities experienced in our bodies. Read Romans 8:22-27 ²²*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* ²³*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.* ²⁴*For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?* ²⁵*But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* ²⁶*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* ²⁷*And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*
- b. This scripture does NOT say ALL THINGS will be good. Rather, all things (good and/or bad) work together for good.

- c. This much-acclaimed promise applies to those who love God. Read John 14:15 ¹⁵ **If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

- d. Read Hebrews 11:22 ²²*By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.* Joseph was a man of faith. Consider his sufferings – how cruel, how enduring, how unjust they were – then read Genesis 50:20 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.*

- e. Read Genesis 18:25d ²⁵*That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?** GOD ALWAYS DOES RIGHT.*

- 3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9b ⁹*And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* We KNOW the GRACE of God is sufficient for every sickness and trial.

- 4. Read Romans 8:18 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.* We KNOW our sufferings are but for this PRESENT TIME but they will come to pass.

Because of these precious promises we were able to respond to our infirmities and tribulations with implicit TRUST IN GOD. Read Job 13:15 -16 ¹⁵*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.* ¹⁶*He also shall be my salvaton: **for an hypocrite shall not come before him.***

“I do not know why oft around me
My hopes are shattered seem to be –
God’s perfect plan I cannot see,
But someday, He’ll make it plain.
I cannot tell what depths of love
That move the Father’s heart above
My faith to test, my love to prove.
But someday, He’ll make it plain.
Someday, when I His face shall see.”

**An old-time preacher put it this way: “Heaven is the place for understanding.
Earth is the place for trust.”**

V Healing for the Sufferer

Whenever we are afflicted with some physical ailment our thoughts and prayers inexorably turn to God (and rightly so!) Just as a wounded child runs to their parent for comfort, so the child of God naturally looks to the Divine Physician for healing.

What does the Bible have to say about divine healing? What can we expect? What should we expect?

A. Power for Healing

There are two (2) issues here:

1. Can God Heal?

- a. God is omnipotent (all-powerful) and obviously His ability extends to His ability to heal the physical body. Read:

- (i) *Matthew 9:20-22 ²⁰And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and*

*touched the hem of his garment: ²¹For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. ²²But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; **thy faith hath made thee whole**. And the woman was made whole from that hour.*

- (ii) Mark 10:46-52 ⁴⁶And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. ⁴⁷And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁸And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁹And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. ⁵⁰And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. ⁵¹And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. ⁵²And Jesus said unto him, **Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole**. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

- (iii) John 5:5-9 ⁵And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? ⁷The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. ⁸Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. ⁹And immediately

the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

b. Also, to deliver a suffering saint. Read:

- (i) Daniel 3:20-28 ²⁰And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*most...: Chaldee, mighty of strength* ²¹Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*coats: or, mantleshats: or, turbans* ²²Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. ²⁵He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. ²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed–nego, came forth of the midst of the fire. ²⁷And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. ²⁸Then

Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

- (ii) (To deliver a suffering saint) II Timothy 3:11-12 ¹¹*Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. ²Yea, and **all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.***

[Read all of 2 Timothy 3 to understand the end times!]

- (iii) (To deliver a suffering saint) II Timothy 4:17 ¹⁷*Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.*

c. And, to restore life to a dead [temporal] body. Read:

- (i) Matthew 9:23-25 ²³*And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, ²⁴He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. ²⁵But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.*
- (ii) John 11:43-44 ⁴³*And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. ⁴⁴And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was*

bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

We must note however, God's exercise of this power of this power has been arbitrary, not universal (i.e., not everyone was healed or delivered.) And, that it has NOT also been conditional (i.e., in response to some quality in man.)

We should also note that God created a natural *healing mechanism* within the human body.

2. Does God Heal?

The question is really: "Is the [miraculous] spiritual gift of healing given to men TODAY?" Read:

- a. Mark 16:17-18 ¹⁷*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* The gift of healing is listed as one of the "Sign Gifts".

- b. Mark 16:20 ²⁰*And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.* The purpose of this class of gifts was to CONFIRM the Spoken Word of God, i.e. they confirmed the message or the messenger of God. Also read Hebrews 2:3-4 ³*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed unto us by them that heard him;** ⁴*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and**

with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

- c. I Corinthians 13:8-10 ⁸*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. ⁹For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰But when **that which is perfect is come**, then that which is in part shall be done away.* Like the gift of tongues (the miraculous ability to speak another language), the gift of healing passed away when “that which is perfect” (the written Word of God) was come.

The subject of divine healing or faith healing is covered in detail in Lesson G <http://www.wetmorebaptistchurch.com/Education/ABCs-mature/Lesson%207%20-%20Gifts%20of%20the%20Spirit.pdf>

B. Provision for Healing

The following passage is the only text giving specific instructions to present-day believers about healing:

James 5: 13-16 ¹³*Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. ¹⁴Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: ¹⁵And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. ¹⁶Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

1. The Context is Critical.

A careful reading of the entire chapter yields two key words – “affliction” (verses 10,13) and “sick” (verses 14, 15).

a. **Affliction** – the context defines this as **suffering from external causes.**

- (i) Fraud, murder, etc. (verses 4-9) ⁴ *Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.* ⁵ *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.* ⁶ *Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.* ⁷ *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* ⁸ *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* ⁹ *Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*
- (ii) Persecution (verse 10) ¹⁰ *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*
- (iii) Divine testing (verse 11) ¹¹ *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

b. **Sickness** - Here the context seems to define this as **suffering arising specifically from SIN.**

- (i) “If he have committed sins” (verse 15) *¹⁵And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

 - (ii) “Confess your faults (verse 16) *¹⁶Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

 - (iii) “Brethren... err from the truth” (verse 19) *¹⁹Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;*

 - (iv) “Converteth the sinner from the error of his way... hide a multitude of sins” (verse 20) *²⁰Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*
2. The Call is Clear. Read James 5:14 *¹⁴Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

The Bible gives us three (3) clear steps involving:

- a. The elders of the church (i.e., the “pastors”. Note: It is not the pastor who calls on the sick but the sick who call on the pastors.

- b. The anointing with oil... there are several opinions as to what this might mean:
 - (i) **It is equivalent to using modern-day medicine.**

Read Luke 10:34 ³⁴ *And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

(ii) **It symbolizes mourning (over sin).**

Read II Samuel 14:2 ² *And Joab sent to Tekoa, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:*

(iii) **It symbolizes sanctification, consecration.** (directions to Aaron about actions in the temple)

- Read Exodus 29:7 ⁷ *Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.*
- Read Exodus 29:21 ²¹ *And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.*

(iv) **It represents the Holy Spirit, Who searches the heart.**

Read I Kings 8:39 ³⁹ *Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; **(for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)***

- c. The prayer of faith – James 5:15 *¹⁵And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

This is prayed by the pastors (read verse 14). Faith means it is a Biblical-based request made to heaven – presumably claiming the promises given in:

- I John 1:9 ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***
- Jeremiah 3:22 ²² *Return, ye backsliding children, **and I will heal your backslidings.** Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.*

C. Praying for Healing

Prayer is an integral part of dealing with sickness and suffering. The afflicted are instructed to pray. Read James 5:13 *¹³**Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.** Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

And, the sick are to seek prayer from others. Read James 5:14 *¹⁴Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; **and let them pray over him,** anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

However, we can only scripturally pray. **“If it be Thy will, O Lord!”** The reason for this is that it is not always God’s will to heal. For example, read:

1. II Corinthians 12:8 *⁸For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

Paul prayed three times but was not healed.

2. Read Daniel 3:17-18 *¹⁷If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were prepared to perish in the flames rather than deny the faith.**

Their statement is a great exposition of the whole issue of divine healing and deliverance as it applies to us today:

“our God... is able” – “but, if not...”

Note: In II Kings 20, we read of King Hezekiah begging God to deliver him from a deadly plague (verses 1-3), where upon the Lord graciously granted him another 15 years of life (verses 6-11). King Hezekiah subsequently not only committed a serious indiscretion (verses 12-15), but was extremely careless about it. (verse 19b). God’s will and timing is always best!

II Kings 20 *¹In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. ²Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying, ³I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.*

II Kings 20:6 *⁶And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*

II Kings 20:12-13 ¹²*At that time Berodach–baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. ¹³And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.*

II Kings 20:19 ¹⁹*Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days? [translation: Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?”]*

Downloaded from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hezekiah>

According to the Hebrew Bible, Hezekiah witnessed the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by Sargon's Assyrians in c. 722 BC and was king of Judah during the invasion and siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 BC. Hezekiah enacted sweeping religious reforms, including a strict mandate for the sole worship of God and a prohibition on venerating other deities within the Temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah and Micah prophesied during his reign.

VI **The End of Suffering**

Read II Corinthians 4:17 *¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [i.e., For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!] **There is an end in sight!***

A. The “End of the Lord” **[i.e., the ‘purpose’ of the Lord; means what He’s trying to do...]** Read James 5:11d *¹¹Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end [**or purpose**] of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

1. Read Job 42:10-12a *¹⁰And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and everyone an earring of gold. ¹²**So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning:** for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. ¹³He had also seven sons and three daughters.*
2. Read Job 23:10 *¹⁰But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. [Job knew that the Lord was everywhere present; but his mind was in such confusion, that he could get no fixed view of God's merciful presence, so as to find comfort by spreading his case before him. His views were all gloomy. God seemed to stand at a distance, and frown upon him. **Yet Job expressed his assurance** that he should be brought forth, tried, and approved, for he had obeyed the*

precepts of God. He had relished and delighted in the truths and commandments of God.]

3. Read I Peter 1:7 ⁷*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

B. The End of Mortal Life

1. Read II Corinthians 4:8 ⁸*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; **we are perplexed, but not in despair;***
2. For the believer, death is likened to “falling asleep”. Read:
 - a. Acts 7:59-60 ⁵⁹*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ⁶⁰And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, **he fell asleep.***
 - b. I Corinthians 15:6 ⁶*After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are **fallen asleep.***
 - c. I Thessalonians 4:13-15 ¹³*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which **are asleep**, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep in Jesus** will God bring with him.*

- d. I Thessalonians 5:10 ¹⁰*Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*
3. Read Psalm 116:15 ¹⁵*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* The death of a child of God is precious (meaningful) to the Lord.
4. Read I Corinthians 15:42-54 ⁴²*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: ⁴³It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ⁴⁵And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. ⁴⁶Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. ⁴⁹And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*
- At the resurrection (the Rapture), every saved person will receive a spiritual, glorified, incorruptible (not subject sickness, pain, or death) body!**
5. Read Revelation 21:4 ⁴*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

There will be no more DEATH, neither SORROW, nor CRYING, or PAIN throughout eternity!

C. The Wrong Way Out

Suicide, whether by one's own hand or "assisted," is not sanctioned at all by the Word of God. Three men (**Job, Elijah, Jonah**) in the Bible wished to die, yet none of them contemplated taking his own life. Read:

- **Job 6:8-9** *⁸Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! ⁹Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!*
- I Kings 19:4 [concerning **Elijah**] *⁴But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*

From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah>

[“Jezebel, enraged that Elijah had ordered the deaths of her priests, threatens to kill Elijah. Later Elijah would prophesy about Jezebel's death, because of her sin. Later, Elijah flees to Beersheba in Judah, continues alone into the wilderness, and finally sits down under a shrub, **praying for death**. He falls asleep under the tree; the angel of the Lord touches him and tells him to wake up and eat. When he awakens he finds bread and a jar of water. He eats, drinks, and goes back to sleep. The angel comes a second time and tells him to eat and drink because he has a long journey ahead of him...”]

- **Jonah 4:8** *⁸And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and **wished in himself to die**, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.*

VII Resources When Suffering

Here are some helpful and scripturally sound resources for the times of sickness and suffering.

A. The Refuge of Prayer – Psalms 50:15 *¹⁵And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

B. The Comfort of Praise

1. Job 35:10 *¹⁰But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;*
2. Acts 16:25 *²⁵And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

C. The Fellowship of God's People

1. Hebrews 13:3 *³And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*
2. Galatians 6:2 *²Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*
3. Romans 12:15 *¹⁵Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*
4. I Corinthians 12:26 *²⁶ If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

D. The Distraction of Service – The apostle Paul suffered greatly, yet he continued to fulfill his responsibilities. We must not allow sickness or suffering to cause us to “DROP OUT.”

Read II Corinthians 11:23-28 ²³*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

Memorize: James 5: 13-16

¹³*Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

¹⁴*Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

¹⁵*And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

¹⁶*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*