

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Why Believers Get Sick and Die

The subject of illness and death for believers can often become a subject of contention and division among believers in Christ. The purpose of this paper is not to add to this debate but rather to record some observations from Scripture and life that should

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help to guide our thinking in it. To begin, it is quite evident that believers do get sick and die. Where is the Apostle Paul? Where is Peter? Where is John? Where is the last generation of believers? Martyred? Dead of natural causes? Regardless of the cause of their departures, it is quite evident that Hebrews 9:27 and 1Corinthians 15:50 are true. There is an appointment of death for every man, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Let us now consider several important principles relating to this subject. First of all, man's body on earth is not yet redeemed - Romans 8:23, 1Corinthians 15:51-58, Philippians 3:20-21, Revelation 21:4. This allows for the effects of sin to take its toll on man's body. A second principle to consider is that the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4 is said to be fulfilled by Christ while ministering on earth - Matthew 8:16-17. This reveals His power over sickness and death. This also reveals that such healing was not directly associated with his death on the cross. However, the prophecy of

Isaiah 53:5 is also said to be fulfilled by Christ in His death - 1Peter 2:21-25. This reveals His success in redeeming our souls to God and is, in context, a reference to spiritual healing of the inner man. This healing brings joy and peace in believing - Romans 15:13. [Note that the word used in this quote from Isaiah 53 for "healing" is often used of spiritual healing but can also be used of physical healing - Matthew 13:15; 15:28; Luke 4:18; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Hebrew 12:13.] A third principle to consider is that Christ's earthly kingdom will be marked by wonders and miracles performed by His disciples on those who are

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blessed to be present on earth at that time. See Matthew 10:8 as a preview of this fact. However, this present age of grace and the church is marked by persecution and suffering for the people of God - John 15:18-25, 2Corinthians 4:16-18; 2Timothy 3:10-12; 1Peter 4:12-19; 5:8-11. This seems, in most cases, to be impacting our unredeemed bodies. One more thing to consider is that "Infirmities" in the Scripture means "without strength" or "weakness indicating an inability to produce results." A believer is not to fear such weakness for God's strength is made perfect in such weakness - 2 Corinthians 12:9. Therefore, a believer is to embrace such infirmities as opportunities for God to manifest Himself to others.

In considering this subject there are at least five specific reasons given in the Scriptures why men are afflicted with infirmities in their bodies. One reason is for God's glory - John 9:3-5. You see, some sickness is meant to magnify God's power and majesty as He brings the healing that exalts His name over that of the enemy. A second reason is due to sin in believers' lives - John 5:13-15; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32; James 5:13-18. A third reason is for discipline in the believer's life - Hebrews 12:3-17. Sickness which is disciplinary remains upon us until the discipline is complete.

To appearance sin and death still reign. But to faith, we know that both have been conquered by our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

However, our Father does not discipline according to His whim but according to our need and always for our good. So, we can rest in His loving care as He administers His loving discipline. Another reason why believers are

afflicted with infirmities is for preventive chastening - 2Corinthians 12:1-10 [Note: Satan is allowed to inflict in this case. See also Job 1 and 2.] Sickness for the purpose of preventative chastening functions to sustain a broken and humble spirit in God's servant. Lastly, we see in Scripture that sometimes when men are afflicted by infirmities it is simply due to the natural human experience - 1Timothy 5:23, Philippians 2:25-30; 2Timothy 4:20; 3John 2; Galatians 4:13-15; Psalms 41:1-3; etc. Sickness is one way in which God reminds man of his weakness in the flesh. Some sickness is terminal because our appointed time on earth has come to God's appointed end. Some sickness is not unto death. Obviously, when praying for the sick or afflicted, we must discern the real purpose of God in the sickness and pray according to His will.

In conclusion I would just say that, this world is full of tears due to the entrance of sin. All that happens to us is not necessarily a direct response to our own personal sin, but all is a direct result of our condition which we share with all the world. To appearance sin and death still reign. But to faith, we

know that both have been conquered by our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We await the day of His appearing when all will see clearly His mighty victory over His foes. I do not think that you need to bear

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the guilt of association to this world full of sin and sorrow. In Christ you have been made a new creation. Unless there is some unconfessed sin in your life, let me suggest to you that as long as you are in this world you will indeed suffer

simply because of the natural condition in which we all find ourselves; however, you will never be punished by God for the sins of which He has forgiven you - Romans 8:1, 31-34. In all sickness, the hand of God is at work to accomplish His purpose. We must humbly submit to His will in the matter.

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