

LESSONS LEARNED IN SICKNESS

September 2, 2018

There has been a lot of sickness in my family lately, in the families of others, as well. There are lessons for us in sickness. For example, I learned this week that my help-meet was doing a lot more than I had imagined. I also learned that sometimes, women are tougher than men. We can also learn some biblical lessons concerning sickness.

We read in 2 Kings 13:14, *“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died ...”* This sickness was not a punishment, in fact, on his deathbed, Elisha was still uttering prophecies, after his death the touch of his bones brought a man to life again! We read of another great man of God, Hezekiah, *“In 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.”* (2 Kings 20:1). Again, this fatal illness was not a punishment but was according to the natural order of this world in which we live. However, after praying and weeping bitterly, God heard his prayer and added 15 years to his life. Prayer is of value even when the doctors say, “there is nothing more we can do.”

Our Lord’s dealings with the sick were plentiful and well-known. *“And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.”* (Matthew 4:24) *“And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.”* (Mark 6:56). Not only did Jesus heal the sick but His apostles and disciples did, as well: *“Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”* (Luke 9:1–2 cf. Acts 5:15–16). Truly, this would have been a remarkable time in which to live. We do not see such things happening today. The reason those things happened as they did then are explained in scripture. **To confirm prophecy** - *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses”* (Matthew 8:17). **To confirm Christ’s claim of divinity** - *“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house”* (Luke 5:24 cf. Jn. 20:30,31; Acts 2:22). **To confirm the truth of the message being preached** - *“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen”* (Mark 16:20 cf. Heb. 2:3,4). **To confirm a true apostle** - *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”* (2 Corinthians 12:12)

Today, these prophecies have been fulfilled, Christ’s claim to divinity has been proven, the message was confirmed and recorded by men who were also confirmed, thus the age of miraculous healing and all other such miracles have ceased. This was foretold by Paul *“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. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”* (1 Corinthians 13:8–10 cf. Eph. 4:7,8,13) “That which is perfect” (not “He” but “that”), refers to the “perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25; cf. Ps. 19:7). Further proof of this is found in the fact that Epaphroditus, a minister to Paul, had been

sick unto death (Phil. 2:25-27) and Trophimus, Paul left in Miletus sick (2Tim. 4:20). Why did he not heal them? Because the purpose and time of such miracles was ending.

James in about 44 A.D. wrote, *“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: 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”* (James 5:14–15). This was written within and concerning the miraculous age and is not directly applicable to Christians today. However, the following two verses read, *“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.”* Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.” (James 5:16–17) This principle still applies. Prayer is still worthwhile, and we should note the example of Elias following was an occasion where the answer to prayer was not a miracle, but providence.

What lessons can we learn from sickness in the Bible? First, sickness is part of the natural order of this world. Because one is sick does not mean he/she is in disfavor with God. Like the sun rises on the just and unjust, all men are susceptible to the infirmities of the flesh. Second, Jesus along with His apostles and disciples performed miraculous healings for specific purposes and for a specified time. Third, though those purposes and that time has passed, prayers for the sick are still worthwhile and should be offered for all who are sick. When doctors say, “there is nothing more that can be done,” there is, pray! Who knows how many years of extra life we have already been given through prayer. Who knows if more time might be given. To God be the glory!