

Day Twenty-Four

Is anyone among you sick? 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 offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. -James 5:14-16

Praying For Healings Part 1

Few of us will be spared the trial of watching a loved one suffer from illness, infection, disorders, cancer or tragedy due to accidents. All of us may witness it or even experience it ourselves. While some may come as a result of lifestyles or choices, there are others that seem to defy reasoning. How can an innocent child suffer from cancer when they are only babies? How can a father be taken from a family in the prime of life and leave behind a wife and children with no one to fend for them? How can someone endure the ravages of a disease and pain for years when so many are praying for them?

If you are expecting an answer to these questions, I apologize. I don't have them. Nor do there seem to be answers to many life's ills when we are in the midst of them.

Many bodies of work have been produced in an effort to answer the question of why do we suffer. C.S. Lewis wrote of his work, "The Problem of Pain": *"The only purpose of 'The Problem of Pain' is to solve the intellectual problem raised by suffering; for the far higher task of teaching fortitude and patience I was never fool enough to suppose myself qualified, nor have I anything to offer my readers except my conviction that when pain is to be borne, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all."*

A brother in Christ, who has now gone on to his reward, used a term in nearly every prayer, which I shall never forget. He would describe those who were severely ill as being *"On the beds of affliction"*. It is a term rarely used in everyday conversations. Even the term affliction is not

common in our English language outside of a small circle. It is a curious term to use of illness, that of affliction. There are two words for affliction in the New Testament. The most common is the Greek *'Thlipsis'*, which means *pressure, persecution, anguish or trouble*. The other word is only used three times, and it is the word *'Mastix'* which means *'a whip, a plague or a scourging'*. Its root word is from what the Romans would use for the flagellum. Now that's what we can relate to when it comes to human suffering. It is the pressure of severe punishment we feel.

In our search for meaning in illness we may come no closer than did Job to finding the purpose of pain. We may wildly speculate of God's will and coming away with more purpose in life, but what we truly desire is God's intervention immediately in times of suffering, right? Our discourse here could go on for pages and not resolve or even approach what we need to know about illnesses and their origins. Certainly there are those much more qualified than I to do so. Suffice it to say, at best, we must allow the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers in this area which we cannot know the depth of.

Where to begin with our prayers? That's the question. If we simply ask God to heal those who are sick without an idea of His will, then we cannot expect our prayers to be answered. Remember, in Jesus model prayer He tells us, *"Thy Will Be Done!"*. How do we find out what God's will is? As the omniscient and omnipotent God, we will never know all that He knows. But, we can pray to a merciful and loving God to intervene in the laws of this physical world and change the course of an illness.

In one's illness we can analyze the nature of that illness, but again we are woefully inadequate to know all things. But, within an illness may lie the paths to perfection that we may follow. It is not a pleasant thing to think of sickness and injury as a path to perfection, but a closer examination might be revealing to us.

Who could imagine in the wake of a horrific accident or the birth of a child with defects that a blessing might be awaiting someone. Yet, we have seen over and over how these have taken a life of those affected and defined their existence. Our society puts a value on the *'perfect physical specimen'*. Yet, even those who have only the slightest of movement have found enrichment and

give inspiration to many for their ability to overcome.

The apostle Paul gloried in weakness. **for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:10.** Though Paul speaks in terms of suffering persecution, it is an overall attitude of complete and total dependence upon God for His aid when we are helpless that we should glean from the passage. Whether it is persecution or illness that afflicts us with anguish, we go to God in prayer for His divine help in times of need.

When we are afflicted with illness are we driven to despair? Solomon reminds us to be strong when trials come. **If you faint in the day of trial, your strength is small. -Proverbs 24:10.** It is often the adversities of life that develop strong faith. How many times have we seen those who suffered as children grow up to be servants in the field of helping others?

It was with the likes of Franklin Roosevelt, who suffered with polio, that the campaign to eradicate this dreaded disease took off and with the dedication of a nation a cure was found. It is those who have suffered the setback of injuries who spearhead the efforts of awareness in a society to change the laws to accommodate the disabled. While it is unfortunate that one must suffer, it is a blessing for untold amounts of people who benefit as a result of setbacks we must realize. Your pain today may be the seeds of faith in others one day.

Some of our greatest Psalms of David were borne of the pain and suffering he underwent in his life. Some of our greatest hymns and spiritual songs have been penned by those who were personally acquainted with pain and suffering.

Fanny Crosby was blind shortly after birth, yet for the next ninety-five years she gave us thousands of hymns. Horatio Spafford wrote **"It Is Well With My Soul"** following the tragic death of four of his daughters in a shipwreck. William Cowper lost his mother and three siblings before he was six years old. He suffered from depression all his life, yet through his pain he wrote beautiful hymns including **"There is a Fountain"**. Luther Bridges lost his wife and three sons in a house fire. In his grief he wrote the hymn, **"He Keeps Me Singing"**.

To endure tragedy and pain takes an enormous amount of faith. The suffering we endure here, Paul gives us insight and hope to see us through in his letter to the Romans. **For I consider**

that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. -Romans 8:18. To find joy in our pain can only come from faith in a God of mercy and compassion.

Prayerful Thoughts: *Father, use our pain as a stepping stone to greater faith in Thee and a dependence upon Thee in our hour of need.*