

WHEN YOU ARE SICK

PSALM 6

Introduction:

Sickness happens! We live in a world where disease tracks us like dreaded enemies. We live in a body that is vulnerable to sickness. If you do not die suddenly in an accident, you will experience sickness before you leave this old world. This psalm was written by David in the midst of such an experience of sickness.

Some scholars date the Psalm in connection with the ordeal with Absalom. They speculate that the stress of the situation with Absalom lowered his immune system to the point that a severe illness of some type came upon him. Others see the sickness coming after the affair with Bathsheba for the same reasons.

This is definitely a psalm for the sick. Let us learn from the king's encounter with sickness.

I. IT MAY BE CHASTISEMENT FROM THE LORD.

Whatever the unnamed sickness may have been, David saw the chastening hand of the Lord in it. We learn from the healing ministry of Jesus that some illnesses are definitely chastening from the Lord. The crippled man who was let down through the roof in

Mark 2 was healed when he was forgiven. But not all sickness was the result of sin as we learn from the experience of the blind man in John 9, and in the experiences of Job. None of us wants to be like Job's counselors who were so certain that the sufferings of Job were directly related to personal sin. We best let God communicate to others what He is doing in their lives, but we can learn from David that it is good to search our hearts when sickness comes.

In this context we ought to consider the findings of the Center for Disease Control of the United States government. According to their studies, they estimate that as much as 85% of our illnesses are actually related to our bad or negative emotions. Emotions such as hate, fear, lust, worry and others can bring illness into our lives.

Should these not be seen by the child of God as a rebuke or chastening from the Lord? Listen to how David opens this prayer...

"O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." (v.1)

The anger of the Lord is probably focused on the destructive thing that we have brought into our lives. His hot displeasure again may be focused on the negative, offensive attitude or practice that we have made a part of our lives. Will God allow us to destroy ourselves by this offensive thing, or will He in love send an illness to humble us, and to draw us to himself.

We have been so secularized by the world around us, that it almost never occurs to us to ask, "Am I being chastened by the Lord? Is God trying to

draw me back to Himself? Is there some spiritual benefit for me in this illness?"

II. IT MAY LEAD TO SEVERE DEPRESSION.

The expressions of depression and anguish are so graphic in this passage that some think it was just a bad case of anguish. However a close study seems to relate the despair to the chastening of the Lord. It can be easily documented that deep depression and illness often go together. The illness depletes the inner emotional resources, and depression rushes into take advantage of it. Let's look at the words used by the king...

"Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. ³ My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? ⁴ Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. ⁵ For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? ⁶ I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. ⁷ Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies." (vv.2-7)

"My bones are vexed" is often related to emotions and depressions, as well as illness. The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates it "my bones are shaking." The bones represent the whole structure of life so the illness has him all shook up.

"My soul is sore vexed." Both Holman and the Good News Bible make the soul mean "my whole being." But inwardly and outwardly his life is in trouble emotionally and spiritually, as well as physically.

He describes the impact of the whole thing on him in strong language--he believes that he might die, so he reminds God that he can do more good staying alive than in Sheol. He cries so much that his bed is soaked. He has

shed so many tears, and his eyes are so swollen that he has almost gone blind. How long will God leave him in such a condition? He senses that he is utterly abandoned by God. Is this not a sure mark of depression and anguish?

III. IT IS TIME TO PRAY.

The prayer is mingled in with his description of the anguish of his soul. O there is a lesson for us! Our first response to sickness ought to be prayer. This is especially true if our illness is the rebuke or the chastening of the Lord. The pain is supposed to turn us to the One who heals all of our diseases.

Let's learn from David's prayer!

"Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. ³ My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? ⁴ Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. ⁵ For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? ⁶ I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. ⁷ Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies."

"Have mercy upon me, O LORD!" Mercy is the covenant word for God's steadfast love, His covenant love, for his mercy. The prayer is addressed to the LORD, the God of salvation, the Lord of the covenant. Our only claim on God is on His mercy.

"Heal me." The petition is specific: it is a petition to be restored to wholeness, to health, to usefulness. Would you dare ask the Almighty for anything less? Would you not ask your Father for His best? It is an appeal for the restoration of body and soul.

"Return, O LORD." This means that David is turning to God in surrender, now He asks the Lord to turn to him in mercy. He wants a sure sign that the favor of the Lord has been restored to his life.

"Deliver my soul....and save me."

What a prayer! These are things that only God can do. Only God can heal, deliver, save, and show mercy.

Are you sick? Why not pray?

IV. IT IS NOT NECESSARILY THE END.

The tone of the passage makes a dramatic change in the last stanza.

Some have suggested that they do not go with the first verses, but why not? They make a lot of sense if you assume that God heard David's prayer. Listen to them carefully...

"Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. ⁹ The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. ¹⁰ Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly."

Illness is not necessarily the end. It may be just preparation for extended service. "For the LORD hath heard my supplication; The LORD will receive my prayer." In Hebrew the tense of the verbs make it clear that God HAS heard him and ANSWERED him. This

changes everything. He is ready to get back into the battle against evil and for good in the world.

Just because you are sick does =mean that it is time to write your obituary, at least not until you and your friends have sought the face of the Lord.

After this illness David lived to write other psalms and to gain more victories. Who knows what joys and usefulness the mercy of healing might bring to your life? So I would a determined approach to the LORD like Hezekiah made when illness comes. In His own wisdom and with much grace God chooses to heal some of those who seek His mercy. We can add David's name to the list of those in the Bible who experienced healing mercy.

So this is a psalm for the sick. File it away where you can find it, you may need it soon.