

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 17 – Chronic Pain, Disease, and Death

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Review

God is faithful. He will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time. God is completely trustworthy. Because He is faithful, we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty. His faithfulness preserves us from worry, will stop our complaining, and drive us to trust His sovereign plan.

❖ **Do you know at the heart level that God is faithful and believe all His promises?**

God is sovereign, the supreme ruler, in control of all events. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. God's purpose is all-inclusive and is never thwarted; nothing takes Him by surprise. God's sovereignty deepens our reverence for His character, puts God in His rightful place and us in ours, magnifies God's grace, is profoundly humbling, gives us a sense of complete security, and provides comfort in sorrow.

❖ **How does understanding God's sovereignty change your view of suffering?**

All believers will experience trouble in their lives. The purposes of trials and suffering are to test the strength of our faith, humble us, teach us to trust God and not in ourselves, remind us of our future glory, develop godly character and strength, enable us to better help others in their trials, allow us to receive help in time of need, cause us to learn more of God's Word, and give us opportunities for service. God has given us everything we need to glorify Him through the suffering. It is important to always remember that in the midst of suffering, God is sovereign and in His sovereignty, He works ALL things for His glory and our good (Rom 8:28).

❖ **Are you able to consider all difficulty as joy?**

Extended Physical Pain/Illness

God has given mankind incredible mental capabilities and ingenuity through which we have developed the medical sciences. Because of this, many people in our modern world tend to think that any physical malady can be overcome with medical treatment (medicine, surgery, etc.). There are some physical ailments that may be alleviated with medical treatment, but cannot be overcome. For example: lingering pain from accidents; injuries like back, neck, knee, and shoulders; diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis; cancers, etc. Apart from God's supernatural healing, it is entirely possible that a dear brother or sister who is suffering physically may never experience relief this side of heaven.

❖ **What words come to your mind when you think of your or someone else's chronic ailment?**

What are some things we need to recognize when we are faced with chronic ailments?

1. It is NOT God's will that every pain/disease be supernaturally healed. It is good and right to pray for healing from God, but this may not be according to His perfect sovereign will. This was evident with the apostle Paul.

¹⁴This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.** ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 1 John 4:14-15

⁷Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:7-10

❖ **Do you submit yourself to God’s sovereign will regarding healing?**

2. Believers can be tempted to place their trust in medicine instead of God in the midst of difficult medical situations.

⁶Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. ⁷**Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.** Psa 20:6-7 (ESV)

❖ **Where do you place your trust?**

3. Believers may be tempted to despair in the midst of such chronic difficulty.

⁴My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. ⁵Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me. ⁶I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. ⁷“Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. ⁸“I would hasten to my place of refuge From the stormy wind *and* tempest.” ... ²²**Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.** Psa 55:4-8, 22

❖ **In difficulty, are you sustained by the Lord as you cast your burden on Him?**

4. Believers may be tempted to move their focus from heavenly things to themselves when faced with chronic pain/disease.

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Col 3:1-4

❖ **Where is your focus?**

What encouragement does the Scriptures give to believers who are experiencing painful suffering?

1. God is sovereign in the pain/disease. There is a purpose for this time – to glorify God. There is hope for this time – my good.

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Rom 8:28

❖ **What is your moment-by-moment purpose?**

2. The time of the believer’s stay on earth is short by comparison to eternity. Our home is heaven. We are aliens and strangers on the earth.

⁴“Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; **Let me know how transient I am.** ⁵“Behold, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Psa 39:4-5

²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. Phil 3:21-21

¹¹Beloved, **I urge you as aliens and strangers** to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 1 Peter 2:11

The sufferings of this present short time seem like the most devastating thing in the world. But the truth is that it is nothing in comparison to the glory awaiting us in heaven which is only a short time (compared to eternity) away.

¹⁸For 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.** Rom 8:18

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷**For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,** ¹⁸while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18

❖ **Do you have an eternal perspective on this life?**

3. God provides enabling grace.

⁷Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:7-10

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³seeing that **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Pet 1:2-4

❖ **Do you view God’s grace as sufficient?**

Each believer has a precious opportunity to present Christ to the unbelieving world. This can only be done if we seek to honor God in the trials of life including in pain and disease.

Death

All people, without miraculous intervention (e.g. Enoch in Gen 5:24 and Heb 11:5, Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11, or raptured believers in 1 Thess 4:17), will taste death and judgment (Heb 9:27). Death is the end of physical life when the soul is separated from the body (James 2:26) with no loss of our consciousness (Luke 16:19-31; Rev 6:9-11). For the believer, death means to immediately “be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (Luke 23:43; Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8).

²⁷And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. Heb 9:27-28

²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. James 2:26

For the believer who is approaching death or who fears death, reviewing the Bible's description of heaven can be encouraging and hope inspiring. The Scriptures portray a wonderful, blessed view of heaven. The believer's citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20) which is where we long to be (2 Cor 5:8). This sure, steadfast hope set before us is anchor for our soul.

¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.**

¹⁹**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope** both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, Heb 6:18-19

❖ **What is your view of heaven? How imminent do you view it?**

In heaven...

We will have full knowledge of God in heaven:

¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 1 Cor 13:12

We will have fullness of joy in heaven:

¹¹You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. Psa 16:11

Heaven will be a place of personal intimate fellowship with God:

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, Rev 21:3

In heaven, we will be busy worshipping God:

¹⁴I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵"For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. ¹⁶"They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; ¹⁷for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes." Rev 7:14-17

We will not be alone in heaven:

²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. Heb 12:22-24

Heaven will be a place where the ravages of sin which we now endure will be wiped away – tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain:

⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." Rev 21:4

The believer has been set free from the fear of death.

¹⁴Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵**and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.** Heb 2:14-15

❖ **Do you fear death?**

For the believer whose death is imminent:

1. They have a wonderful opportunity to learn to trust God.

⁹indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 2 Cor 1:9

❖ **Are you learning to trust God?**

2. They have a wonderful opportunity to cherish Christ in the time remaining.

²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Phil 1:21

❖ **Have you accepted this truth at the heart level?**

3. They have a wonderful opportunity to grow wise in Christ-likeness.

¹²So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom. Psa 90:12

❖ **Have you learned to number your days (to see how few are remaining)?**

4. They have a wonderful opportunity to not grieve like the world who has no hope.

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 1 Thess 4:13

❖ **Do you grieve like the world?**

5. They have a wonderful opportunity to purpose to finish the race well.

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;** ⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Tim 4:6-8

❖ **Have you purposed to continue to press, to excel still more and finish the race well?**

6. They should know that their passing is precious to their Lord.

¹⁵Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones. Psa 116:15

❖ **Do you view the passing of a believer as a precious thing in God's eyes?**

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself: Recently, you have been feeling fatigued, waking up with morning stiffness lasting several hours, and been having joint pain and stiffness in your hands. Your doctor has diagnosed you with rheumatoid arthritis. The prospects of increasing pain for the rest of your life seem daunting.

- A. What first response would best glorify God?
- B. What will be your purposes as the disease progresses? How will you maintain that purpose?
- C. What opportunities will you have to glorify God and display Him in the world through this?

Someone Else: A late thirty-something man who attends your church is battling cancer. This is the second round after being in remission for several years. The treatment is radiation and very strong chemo-therapy. In addition to battling the cancer, he is despairing about the future for his stay-at-home-mom wife and their three young children.

- A. What is the most important thing for you to know about him at this time?
- B. What truths would you begin with regarding this man and his family's situation?
- C. What other care might you offer?

Conclusion

In all the troubles of life, the believer's purpose is to glorify God as they are filled with the Spirit and exhibiting the life of Christ flowing through them. Chronic pain and disease and imminent death are significantly challenging individually and as we seek to minister to others. Yet in the midst of suffering God is sovereign, faithful, loving, and gracious and equips His children to honor Him in the difficulty.

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 17 – Chronic Pain, Disease, and Death – Additional Study

Re-read the verses in this study.

List out the things that are true about God:

List out the things that are true about you:

What is the most troubling thing if you were (or maybe do) have chronic pain or a serious disease?

Look up some passages that talk about that.

Do you desire to finish your life well?

What is your plan to finish the race well?