

The Discipline of Disease - 24

by Jack Hibbs

The sermon explores the discipline of disease, emphasizing the purpose of suffering in a believer's life and the comfort found in Jesus' presence.

Duration: 1:06:21

Scripture: Isaiah 35:4, Isaiah 59:1, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:37

Topics: "Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the training of Navy SEALs and the bond that is formed between partners through intense and life-threatening experiences. He draws a parallel between this bond and the relationship between believers and God. The speaker emphasizes that while life in this broken world is subject to suffering, there is hope in God's plan. He encourages listeners to understand and accept the reality of suffering, while also recognizing the counterbalance of God's love and redemption.

Transcript

We ask you to bless this word to our hearts, we need it. Lord, give us clarity of speech and clarity of reception that we might put these things into practice. And Lord, for all of us here tonight, this no doubt will touch us in some way, to some level.

For some who are hurting, to some that are in need, it will touch them, Lord, your word will touch them greatly. To some that are comfortable right now and kind of okay, then it will mean somewhat to them. But in time, your word will mean everything to us in this life.

And so Lord, right here, right now, let us learn why. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, church, grab your Bibles tonight and turn if you would to Matthew chapter 28.

And as usual, on these Wednesday nights, Matthew chapter 28, and then put your finger right there, Matthew 28, and go to John chapter 11. Matthew 28, John 11, and we are continuing on part 24 in our 31-part series, The Disciplines of Life. And tonight we come to the discipline of disease.

And what does that mean, the discipline of disease? Disease has been defined as something that is foreign, that attacks your body. It's something that can attack your mind. I would like to also add being Christians, because we are now alive and awake to the spiritual thing.

It can be that something that in the spiritual sense attacks your very soul. But as we talk about disease, you can write down in your notes that disease meaning all manner of gross illness, something that is life-altering by way of sickness and physical setback, predominantly so. But there's a discipline to disease.

There's a discipline to suffering that we're gonna learn about tonight. And we all can benefit from this. But in Matthew 28, verse 18, Jesus said to his disciples, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. What an awesome statement.

Who said that? Jesus said that. And Jesus is saying in Matthew 28, that he, though he be enthroned in heaven right now, he is with us everywhere we go, all the way through to the end of the world, he's with us. How does he do that? How is he with every one of us right here, right now? And then when the service is over, we all go to our places.

How does God do that? He does that by the person of the Holy Spirit who has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to be the one who indwells the believers. You never are alone as a believer. And I don't know about you, but that brings me great comfort.

Great comfort to know that wherever I go, whatever I do, Jesus is there. And I need you to understand tonight, listen carefully, that the more you practice the presence of God in your life in true, listen, true, simple, yet profound reality. It's profound because it's your intercourse with God on a continuous basis, but it's simple because the Lord has allowed himself to be available to you at all times.

There is no longer anymore going through a process to get to his presence. You don't have to go through the veil. You don't have to walk through a gauntlet to achieve God's attention or to get his glance or his notice.

As a believer, the Bible says, the Holy Spirit dwells with us and in us. And that's why Jesus says, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. You'll never be alone.

And I want you to remember that as we talk about suffering and what disease can bring to us. And then John chapter 11, this is our text for tonight. John 11, verse four, but look at verse three and we'll read into verse four.

John 11, three, therefore, Martha and Mary sent to Jesus saying, Lord, behold, he whom you love, speaking of Lazarus, their brother, is sick. And when Jesus heard that, he said, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the son of God may be glorified through it. Will you mark that in your Bibles? That the son of God may be glorified through it.

All of us need to memorize that. Now, in this case, it's Lazarus, he's sick. Jesus is down about, oh, I think it's about 30 miles from Bethany to Jericho down on the Jordan River Valley.

And for Jesus to leave Jericho and get up there through that mountainous terrain that many of us has made that drive up from the Jordan River Valley up to Jerusalem. Bethany's just right next door, about three miles away, that Jesus would have taken a couple of days to get there. The announcement comes, your good friend's sick.

Martha and Mary, that's the sister of Lazarus. Jesus, whenever he was in Jerusalem, he always stayed at their house. And Lazarus, obviously a good friend.

Martha, obviously a good cook from what we've seen in scripture. And Mary, a good listener. That's what we know about them.

They loved Jesus. And so when the messenger came, they said, the one whom you love is sick. And Jesus makes this announcement, it's not unto death.

Now think about this for a moment. The sickness that he's suffering with is not unto death, yet, you know the story, right? Jesus waits until Lazarus dies before he heads in the direction to help him. What in the world is going on? Is that just like how you and I experience suffering? And as this word, we look at disease, that when we're really sick, isn't it something that we naturally wanna struggle with God? Because one moment experiencing disease and sickness is enough too long.

I've had enough of this. You've been sick for half an hour, I can't take it anymore. What is going on? Jesus is telling us, the word of God is telling every believer tonight that the sickness, the disease, the suffering that you and I go through, listen, sometimes it will carry out and be elongated before relief comes.

Sometimes it's quick. Sometimes people are healed miraculously. Sometimes people are healed over what God has prescribed.

Listen, what God has prescribed through just medical treatment. You say, how does God get involved in medical treatment? Didn't man do that? No, no, no, no. No, man can only offer up what God has already created.

If you get a shot of some vitamin, God made the vitamin. He has all kinds of ways that he can bring a healing if he so chooses. And we've all seen every type of healing.

And I'm grateful that I can say that. But there's also, listen, and now you're not gonna like this next one. You're not gonna like it.

I can tell you right now, you're not gonna like it. And yet that's the very thrust of tonight. There is a sense when God does not bring the healing we define as healing into a believer's life and that believer dies.

And we go, man, where was God? Well, why do you even think like that? He was right where he was supposed to be. The bumper sticker that says everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die is applicable. Let's be honest, it's in our lives.

Oh man, I can't wait to get to heaven. I just wanna see God. Do you really now? Because it's gonna happen one of two ways.

One will be the rapture. Amen, may it come tonight, hallelujah Jesus. Where we bypass death, we meet the Lord in the air and wow, no death pains.

Wow, rapture, awesome. May it happen tonight. The other thing is death itself.

We could though, the way our government's going, we could be killed by taxes. That's coming. Could be a third thing.

Amen. Could be a third thing. But the disciple whom you love is now sick.

And Jesus makes this radical statement. It's not unto death. Did Jesus not know that Lazarus was gonna die? No, he knew.

It was not unto permanent death. Lazarus, though he may die, Jesus knows this. Jesus had a plan.

I'm gonna raise him from the dead. Why? So that the son of God and God himself would be glorified. Listen, Christian, tonight we're Christians.

And you say, I'm not a Christian pastor. My friend brought me in here tonight. I'm gonna assume you're a Christian anyway.

I'm gonna talk to you like you're Christians. Here's the awesome thing. Everybody suffers in life, everybody.

The thing is for the believer, we suffer with a purpose. We've got a tailor-made, custom-made prescription regarding suffering. And when we talk about these things of disease, what I mean by that is an overall great, great illness.

I'm not talking about a cold. I'm talking about things that challenge us to the core. Pain, death, suffering, and sorrow.

And it wouldn't help things if I were to tell you that it's just part of life. I don't like when people say that. Well, you know, death is part of life.

I hear that in funerals and stuff. And it's like, what? Don't you know? You guys know, right? Tell me you know. That death seems like to me a ginormous interruption.

It doesn't seem right. It doesn't feel right. And look, I'm not even the one that's dead.

I'll go to the funeral and I feel like this is not right. It's a very strange thing. And it should be a very strange thing.

God did not design you and I to die. He designed us to live forever. But we do die.

Why? The Bible tells us in the book of Romans that death comes because of sin brought into the world through Adam and Eve. Originally, we do everything we can to continue it on. But the human part of us, naturally, and I mean this with all affection, when someone says, well, you know, death just happens in life, that's not a good enough answer for us.

We wanna know a deeper answer. And so we should. But here's the amazing thing.

It's not a good enough answer to tell me that death just happens. Inside of every one of us, there is this question that says, why? How come? How can I beat death? Why does it have to be this way? And the lamentation at a funeral or the loss of someone or when you see maybe your loved one suffering with a deep, great illness or disease. And listen, for my definition, this works for me.

I don't know if you, a human, me, can really know love until you reach that point where you have a husband or a wife or a child, and when they're sick, you, with all true, innocent passion, get on your knees and you plead with God, have you ever been there? And you say, God, give me their disease, give me

their sickness, but let them go. You ever been there? In my opinion, that's true love. Parents know that.

A husband and a wife might know that. A brother and a sister, a sibling might know that for each other, that you would lay down your life to liberate them from that sickness or that disease. And maybe when we donate blood or bone marrow or whatever it takes to try to propagate life or some vital part of us, I think that's a great, great display of love.

But down deep inside, when we talk about disease and suffering, we have this question. And I want you to think now for a moment. I don't wanna sound philosophical, but I want you to be listening to this.

How is it tonight that if you struggle with, how come this is going on in my life? And God, why are you doing this to me? Or maybe tonight you're not a believer or you're listening in and you're watching right now, you're not a believer. And you're saying, well, and listen, have we not all heard this? Well, you Christians, you have this God of love. If you have a God of love, then why is there so much suffering in the world? If you have a God of love, how can a maniac in Tucson pull out a gun and blow people away like that? You know what's amazing about that question? How do you know to even ask that question? Think about it for a moment.

The very frustration that we hear you express proves that you know better. My question to you is, how do you know better? What gives you, remember the world you might live in, you live in an evolutionary humanistic world where you climbed out of a mud hole a billion years ago, and now you've got two eyes on your face and a nose and an ear and you're walking around and then you say, this is wrong. How do you know that's wrong? I'll tell you how you know it's wrong.

The Bible says in Genesis 2.16, and the Lord God commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden, you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not even it. For the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Every human being knows right and wrong, good and evil.

Instinctively, why? Because we are a people who were created in the image of God. And when we see something deep down internally, we can distinguish that's right, that's wrong. And even the unbeliever can say, that's not right.

And I agree with you. A man pulling out a gun, shooting people and going off and being evil like that, it is wrong. But that moral rudder inside of every human being has been something instilled with us by God.

It's an effervescent of the garden of Eden left over in us. It's an interesting thing. So listen, a God of love allows this.

No, my friend, take your logic all the way through to the end. You being able to question what's right and what's wrong is proof that you are created in the image of God so that you judge what's right and wrong. And you're able to pick up the Bible and the Bible agrees with your assessment.

What you and I do not agree on is the source of the evil or of the good. You cannot have evil in the world without the presence of good. You cannot have light in the world without the presence of darkness.

There must be a difference. You can't have love without hate. And you can't have hate without love.

The amazing thing is that in God, all these things are holy, beautiful, and wonderful. There's light, there's love, there's caring and compassion. And on the opposite side, there's darkness, there's hatred and

murder and all these other dark things, the light and the dark.

But listen, all of these things, for example, that this man who went off the other day and shot these people in Tucson, what was he trying to do? He was trying to maybe gain control, have some power. Was he, what was wrong with him? They're analyzing him now to try to figure out what made him tick. And I can tell you this right now, it's all the same in humanity.

Whatever his reasons were for going off, I'm not saying that it's right. I'm saying that he was pursuing something that he thought he needed to do. He did an evil thing.

In his mind, he's justifying his actions. Why? Because he was probably, like most people, pursuing to him a good thing. And he went around and did an evil thing.

To him, it was a good thing. To him, he's bringing some sort of justice. To him, and where does that come from, even in the sick mind? God.

Knowing that there's some form of good and evil in the world. And I wanna tell you, God is the absolute ultimate good, and man in his search cannot come close unless he comes to Christ. It's an amazing thing.

And when we consider the discipline of disease, how do we deal with people who love God and yet are suffering from cancer, or have illnesses and things going on in their lives? How do we deal with that? And I wanna march that tonight. Number one, jot it down, church, is this. Understand that life happens in a broken world.

Life happens in a broken world. John chapter 10, Jesus said, "The thief," he's referring to Satan, by the way, "The thief does not come except to steal, "to kill, and to destroy." Satan's agenda is to destroy, to kill, and to steal. He says, "I have come that you may have life, "and that you may have it more abundantly." Verse 11, "I am the good shepherd." Notice the difference.

There's the thief, and there's the good shepherd. And the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. The thief takes life.

Understand that. So life happens in a broken world. And I see this as a great, beautiful contradiction, because as a believer, I see great hope.

In this world of evil, in this world of sickness and disease, there is the counterbalance of God's amazing and awesome plan. Number one, life is subject to suffering in this world. We need to understand that.

Just write that down. Life is subject to suffering. We don't wanna sign up for it.

We don't wanna hear about it. We wanna avoid it at all costs, but it's true. Why? Because you and I live in a world that has fallen, and yet life continues on.

It's an amazing thing. God has made life enduring. He's made it resilient.

In fact, when you think about the entire Messianic ministry of Jesus, it was fulfilled in Scripture. Isaiah 35 is a tremendous chapter about the Messianic ministry of Jesus Christ. Isaiah 35, verse four says, "Say to those with fearful hearts, "be strong, do not fear.

"Your God will come. "He will come with vengeance, that is to defend you. "With divine retribution, He will come to save you.

"Then will the eyes of the blind." Listen, this is the ministry of Jesus. By the way, it's also a reference to the millennium when He returns. "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened." Did Jesus open the eyes of the blind? "And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped." Did Jesus open the ears of the deaf people? "Then will the lame leap like a deer." Didn't people get up and go dancing into the temple because He healed them? "And the mute tongue shout for joy.

"Water will gush forth in the wilderness "and streams in the desert." That's a reference to the millennium. That's when Christ returns. "But when Jesus came." That's why the Scriptures say that if you can handle it, the kingdom of God is here now, when Jesus was ministering.

Wherever Jesus is, the kingdom of God is at. And He brings healing. But life is subject to suffering in this world.

Without Christianity, without the Bible, without God's word, there'd be no hope in this world. Think about that. I know people don't wanna hear this, but a lot of people today are blaming Christians for everything that's wrong in the world.

And by the way, that's always true before persecution, historically. You always blame the Jews before the Holocaust breaks open or breaks out. That's the way it goes.

You always blame the Christian before they start killing Christians. But let me tell you something. Without Christian compassion, love, and care, where would the hospitals be? You wouldn't have Yale, Cornell, Princeton, Harvard.

You wouldn't have George Washington University. You'd have none of those things. All found, they were Christian seminaries for the raising up of pastors.

Did you know that? And go all around the world, even in pagan countries. And the greatest care and treatment that you'll get is that old missionary outpost with the cross on top of the building. And everybody will pick up their family that's sick or whatever, and walk to that missionary outpost all around the world today.

Why is it? Isn't it interesting that King, King Abdullah's dad, King Hussein, when he had cancer, where did he go? Did he go to the hospital in Cairo? No. Did he go to the hospital in Syria? No. He didn't even go to the hospital in his own country of Jordan.

Where did he go? He got on his private plane and flew straight to Newport Beach and went to Hoag Hospital for treatment. Hoag Hospital, a Christian hospital. Bible in every class.

I mean, in every room. Classroom. Classroom.

One of the greatest universities in the world, Loma Linda University. Who's the chief physician? Have you ever been there? It says right there, it's Jesus. Think about that.

It's an amazing thing to think about. In the midst of all of the suffering of the world, life continues on. And listen, we are pro-life.

God's pro-life. When I say pro-life, I want you to live. You say, I don't believe like you believe.

It doesn't matter, I want you to live. I want your life blessed. I don't believe in God.

I want your life blessed. God is for life. Matthew chapter four, verse 23.

I love this. Matthew 4, 23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Then his fame went throughout all Syria and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments. And those who were demon-possessed, what a great doctor to have, huh? Epileptics and paralytics and he healed them. That's my doctor.

What an awesome thing. Jesus Christ wants to alleviate the pain of human suffering. He didn't deny that there's suffering in this world, but life, God blesses and it continues.

Matthew 8, 14. Now, when Jesus had come to Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying sick with fever. So he touched her and the fever left her.

And she arose and served them. When then in the evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet saying, he himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. You say, Jack, this is fantastic, but I'm sick tonight.

I've got a problem now. Well, just hang on. Understand this, that life is always bigger.

Listen, life is always bigger than the issue at hand. We lose sight of that. Life happens in a broken world, yes.

But listen to this, church. Life. God has given you life.

Remember, and I don't wanna get sidetracked on this, but do you remember when Jesus tells the parable about the man who is gonna go away for a long time and he handed out talents, not like can you play the piano, investments. He gave to each man the ability to use his life for his master. One guy had five opportunities, one guy had 10 and one guy had 30, and they're all told to go and do with their life.

And remember, one guy took what was given to him and he buried it in the ground. That's a parable for fear. That parable is not about you listening to your mom and playing violin all the way through to your life.

It has nothing to do with that. It has to do with your life being invested for God's glory. It's you taking your life that God has given you to be a manager over so that when he comes, you will have lived a full life for his glory.

That, listen, that life lived for his glory also includes suffering. And if God calls you or I to suffer in this life, it's for his glory. And this is a hard pill to swallow and yet there's no other pill to swallow.

It's it. You and I, for example, if you're diagnosed with a certain disease and you're gonna waste away for 30 years, nobody wants to sign up for that. We all understand that.

And yes, the temptation is to question God and wonder. When all of that stuff runs its course like a fever and it gets out of your system, then there's that deep settling in of God, what would you have me to do?

And the sooner we come to that, if you're suffering tonight, if there's this thing that is plaguing your life, the greatest thing that you can do is surrender your will to God's authority in this area. It's better to do it now than later.

Get it over with. It's the only pill to take is to take his will and to embrace rather than kick against because why? He loves you and I absolutely. And we don't understand things that are going on often at all.

Why this? The greatest challenge to your faith would be going down to Children's Hospital in Orange County and walking through those wards, through those halls, and you see the suffering of children. And immediately you'll either say, how can God allow this? Or you can say, Jesus said in the Bible, Satan has come to rob and to kill and destroy, but the Lord has come that he might give life. And we need to understand that.

Our immature emotionally based theology would say, I am not gonna believe in God unless he does it my way. And there's a way that is beyond our human logic. And that's where trust comes in.

Life is always bigger than the issue. Hebrews 4, 13 says, and there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we must give an account. He sees everything.

This is the omniscience of God. He knows everything. Do you guys know that? You guys know? He knows everything.

What can we teach him? We try to teach him, it doesn't work. He knows everything. And this challenges us.

I'm gonna give you a couple of verses right now, and you know them so well, and I know them so well, but do we believe them? And that's a scary thing to know something and not believe it. In the midst of suffering and going through a life-challenging issue, listen to this, Romans 8, 37. Yet in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am persuaded. Think about how that happened. How is a man persuaded? How is a woman persuaded? That neither death nor life, verse 39 goes on, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.

Think about that. How are we persuaded? I'll tell you right now. There's only one way to be persuaded, that nothing will separate you from the love of God.

And that is difficult in life. And that is the battle of sickness and disease and suffering. There's no other way.

You can't get it in a book. You can't get it in prosperity. You can't get it in everything just going nice.

That kind of stuff only comes deep. It only comes through the pain and the sorrow and the suffering. But for the believer, there's great benefit to all of that.

How do we know this? As a believer, when these times come, you'll either cling to God. In fact, watch this. The believer will cling to God.

The world, because they don't know, they will get the pink slip from the doctor or the notice from whatever or whoever. And where do they go? They go right down to the bar. And they'll just start pounding down the drinks to deal with the pressure of it all.

And in the morning when he wakes up, he still has the problem. And yet maybe perhaps all night long, the Christian was at the feet of Jesus and their life is changed in that moment of suffering. There's no other way.

Also this, life is never wasted. Life happens in a broken world. Life never is wasted with God ever.

Think about that. In 2 Corinthians 7, verse four, the Bible says, great is my boldness. Listen to Paul, he's amazing.

Great is my boldness of speech toward you. Great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort.

The word means all comfort. Paul says, I'm filled with all comfort. What's the last verse statement? I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

Isn't that amazing? How can this be true? You've got all this joy, all this comfort. You are rejoicing and you have boldness and it's all come about in the midst of tribulation. Difficulty.

When you're given the bad news as a Christian, it's not bad news. So Jack, are you kidding me? I have to back up when bad news comes to me and say, Lord, this really feels bad. It looks bad.

And let's be honest. Lord, I don't see a way out of this. But I'm not God, you are.

I didn't know anything about heaven. You taught it to me. Lord, I had no hope in this world.

And you came and you spoke to me. I had no promise of eternal life. I didn't even know it existed, but Jesus came.

We will not live forever. We will not live for long, but God's eternal. And it's an awesome thing to think about that God never wastes life.

Some of you need to hear that. January is, I think, sanctity of life month, is it not? And you think about in America, how many children have been aborted? I got news for you. Those kids are in heaven.

I don't know how old they are in heaven. I don't know what they look like in heaven. That's in the wisdom of God.

But if there's an aborted child that's on your heart and mind as a Christian, you're gonna see that. You're gonna see that child someday. I don't know how that's gonna work.

It's gonna be amazing though. It's part of heaven. Think about that.

Since 1973, what are we looking at in America? 50 million kids? More than any war in America has ever fought? They're in heaven. And maybe tonight you're thinking how there can be nothing that can bring back or somehow redeem that thing you decided as a young girl or whatever it was. And hey, listen, you're gonna see that child by the grace of God.

You're gonna see. And I can't imagine how that day is gonna be. God never wastes the life.

It's a gift. It's amazing. That's why you love it so much.

And God put it within us to wanna fight for life. Hey, did anybody watch this? I'm gonna go off a rabbit trail right now. Did anybody watch last night? I forget what it's called.

It was on the military channel about training Navy SEALs and special ops people. Have you seen that? Nobody saw that? What's wrong with you people? They took US Army Rangers who wanted to be trained for underwater operations. And part of the whole deal of training these guys, first of all, they have to all be combat soldiers to qualify.

Then the first step is they put them in a pool. They tie their hands. They tie their feet together and their hands together behind their back.

And they had to swim 50 yards underwater with one breath. That's what I said. Wow.

And then as they progress through, their instructors would take them underwater. They had their mask all painted black and the instructors underwater would tie weights to them so they couldn't go to the surface. They would cut their airlines and start beating them up underwater.

And then at one point to graduate, every guy had to go through this process of drowning. You were with your partner and your partner's in front of you underwater. And then an assailant comes behind you, but you're looking at your partner.

And the assailant, the enemy comes and starts fighting with you as you're looking at your partner. Your partner's right there. And the guy winds up holding you down until you drown.

Then they quickly pull the guy out of the water and they revive him. And the first face that the guy sees when he comes back is his partner. And they said, there's a bond that's made that's never separated.

That they believe no matter what they do in the world, if it's just the two of them, they can take on an army. And it's a supernatural almost kind of bonding. And it was like, wow.

And I'm thinking, man, if they do that stuff in the physical realm, why aren't we doing that in a Christian realm? That my face and your face is the first face we see in the moment of difficulty. And it's the first face we see when we're being revived. And it creates a bond that can't be separated.

How does that happen? They made those guys for six weeks suffer like you can't believe. Why? Because those guys, those instructors loved those dudes enough to get them ready for any battle on the planet. They drop them off in the middle of the ocean in the middle of the night, 14 miles, naked with underwear and a knife.

And they said on a moonless night, they find your way home. They left and they got to read the water and figure out which way shore is by the moving of the water and they swim. And they said, well, what if you get attacked by a shark? That's why you have a knife.

And people die going through the course every year. Sounds like Christianity. It's amazing.

Life's never wasted. Never wasted. Psalm 119 verse 67 says, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word.

There's something about suffering. God never waste a moment in your life. God never waste your life.

How can a person waste their life? Church, family, listen, you have no authority to waste your life. I'm sick. I can't do anything.

I can't, I'm just, you know, who am I? Stop thinking like that. Do you know God? Yes. Does God know you? Listen, here's the deal.

If you're nine feet tall or three feet tall, if you can run a four flat hundred, or you're bound to a wheelchair, are you a Christian? Yes. Then God wants to use your life. Joni Erickson Tada.

Look at that woman's life. Nobody likes her. I don't like her.

I don't like her because I look at her and all my excuses fly out the window. I can't go tell anybody about Jesus today. I have a sore throat.

She can't, she has a mouth. That's all she has is a mouth. She's paralyzed from what? Her Adam's apple down? Her neck down? And she writes books and preaches and travels the world sharing Jesus with people.

And I can't even get out of bed. It's remarkable. God doesn't waste a life.

Humans waste life. God doesn't waste a life. I saw something that really bothered me and it's probably gonna bother you now.

I shouldn't, maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but God's gut is not into wasting life. And I saw a Christian woman not too long ago. She's a long time smoker and still smokes.

And she got a note from her doctor. She has lung cancer. She's gonna die.

You know what her statement was? How could God do this to me? If she wasn't in so much pain, I felt like punching her. Do you understand? It's insane. That's wasting a life.

The temple of God, it's wasting it. It's wasting what God wants to use. We need to value life.

And you start by, listen, I'm not talking some self-esteem program here right now. What I'm saying is you need to value your life knowing that God wants to use you dramatically. Do we believe in Romans 8, 28, where it says, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

I want you to write this down if it blesses you. This is private. In fact, on my notes, it says, I wrote here my personal testimony.

So this works for me. It may not work for you. But I know this sounds silly, but I'm just gonna tell you straight up.

If I'm getting a sore throat, or in 1990, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, and it took them nine months to figure it out. And it was nine months of bad stuff. And they went through all of this stuff.

Well, we think you have cancer. For four months, I thought I had cancer. They're treating me for cancer of the colon and all this stuff.

It's like, oh man, they're doing one test. It's ridiculous. It's terrible.

From a sore throat to that, I want you to think for a second. This is what I learned. I didn't read this in a book.

For me, this works. God gave this to me. I learned this in the time of suffering.

Whenever my life is challenged physically, or now spiritually, where I can't explain why I feel depressed, I have no reason to, why do I feel dark? And I feel like I'm gonna drown. What is that all about? It's a demonic attack. But watch this.

I even, I wrote it down to make it so crystal clear. Now, number one, I'll pray this. Lord, if this illness is from you, then give me the grace to go through it and allow me to hear what you're saying.

Why? Because I've learned with sickness that God is always wanting to talk. Sometimes, you know what? We never slow down enough. And that's one way I think that God will allow things to happen to get us to slow down.

And you pray, Lord, if this sickness is from you, and oh yeah, Christians, we'll see in a moment. God allows sickness. Sometimes he sends it.

Oh, I can't believe I heard that. Oh, just sit down. We're gonna read that in the Bible here in a minute.

Lord, if it's from you, give me the grace and let me hear what you're saying to me right now. Number two, I'll pray this. Lord, if this sickness is not from you, if it's from the enemy, which the Bible talks about can happen, then Lord, I ask you to rebuke the enemy and what the enemy has meant for my demise, double it up super duper as a blessing on me.

If it's not from you, Lord, teach the enemy the next time you wanna pull that on me that you're gonna bless my life. With every attack, I always pray, Lord, if it's from the enemy, stop the enemy and bless my life. Did you hear that? I mean this.

Number three, I'll pray this. Lord, if this sickness is from you, that you might be glorified in it, then just keep me right in the middle of it. Don't let me jump out and short circuit your plan.

And I promise you right now, if you guys start practicing a similar prayer, your whole attitude will change about suffering. And it doesn't just have to be physical. It can be any form of suffering.

Point number two tonight, it's this, understand this, that sin is our greatest enemy. Sin, the disciplines of disease is understanding now, not life, we've covered that, but now sin, that sin is our greatest enemy, Genesis 4, 6. So the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? Remember Cain and Abel? Cain was a wacko. Why are you angry, God said to him? And why has your countenance fallen? Your mug is dragging in the dirt.

What's wrong with you, Cain? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. Isn't that awesome? Now he didn't heed God's word and he wound up becoming the second murderer on the earth. Y'all know who the first murderer was.

It was Satan in the garden. Cain followed in his footsteps and killed his brother out of jealousy. The first man who committed manslaughter.

Sin is our greatest enemy. And what I like about that verse is that it warns us that sin almost, almost acts like a lion and it's crouching, waiting to pounce on who? On every one of us. So what do we do? Understand this, that sin brings separation between our lives, separately and corporately, separation.

In John 5, verse 58, why is sin so dangerous? John 5 says, now a certain man was there who had an infirmity 38 years. Now listen to this. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been in that condition a long time, Jesus said to him, do you wanna be made well? Jesus said to him, rise, take up your bed and walk.

Verse 14, afterward, Jesus found him because he had been healed. Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, see, you have been made well. What does he say? Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.

That man's sickness was in correlation to his sin. Listen, life, church, listen, life has its struggles because life has sin in it and life has death in it and life has issues in it. That's a given to everybody.

Now, point two is that sin can bring on illness. Sin can bring on situations. Now watch, understand this.

Not everyone who's sick is sick because they've sinned. That is a terrible, mean thing to think. But there are sins that we commit as responsible individuals, mature against God, against man.

And the result of it is suffering. Jesus says it, John chapter five. Look at Romans chapter one.

Romans chapter one, verse 26. Because of this, God gave them over to their shameful lust. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones and in the same way, their men also abandoned natural relations with a woman and were inflamed with lust for one another, men committing indecent acts with other men.

And the result was they received in themselves the due penalty of their perversion. The translation, disease. Inside, ill, wrong, unsanctioned sexual activity caused physical disease.

And that's a fact. You don't wanna talk about that. It's a fact.

Sin can be brought on or I should say sin brings on, can bring on great illness. Look at this also. Secondly, sin brings isolation within ourselves.

Isolation. In the book of Numbers chapter 12, Aaron and Miriam. Numbers 12, Miriam and Aaron, Moses' relatives, brothers and sisters, brother and sister, they start chewing on Moses.

Well, why is he doing that for? Ah, his leadership stinks. That guy, he drives me crazy. And they're just whining on, whining on.

And Moses, you know, Moses, it says in the Bible that Moses was the most humble man on the earth. Of course, Moses wrote that, but he never asked to lead anybody. And now his brother, he's a brother.

Man, you're a dope. Isn't he a dope? They're chewing on Moses behind his turban. And God says, hey, I heard that.

Wow. Numbers 12, eight says, why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? You shouldn't talk about Moses is what the Lord is saying. So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them and he departed.

Not good. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous as white as snow. Can you imagine? Then Aaron turned toward Miriam and there she was a leper.

Can you imagine? I bet you Aaron just shut his mouth. God brought judgment. Sin brings isolation.

Think about being a leper. Isolation. I was on the island of Molokai, actually it's Molokai, not Molokai.

It's Molokai in Hawaii. You know the leper island? And you come to the edge of the cliff and you look down on Father Damien's work, there's still over 200 lepers there today, right now. Leprous white.

Only access is by airplane. The cliffs that you could observe the leper colony from is over 2000 feet high and it goes straight down. It's one of the most beautiful places on earth, but it's cursed.

And the minds of the islanders, it's cursed. Nobody wants to go there. Interesting.

Isolation. In the Bible, during the Bible times, you had leprosy, you were completely isolated. You had to shout to people walking down the street as you're wrapped up in a robe.

Unclean, unclean, and people would part out of the way. Isolation, why? The Bible tells us, as it was with Miriam, that this is a situation where a person sinned and judgment came upon them. We don't want to even talk in terms like that today.

But God can bring not only his divine intervention in judgment, but also God doesn't have to get involved. God can just let sin bring forth its natural disaster in our lives when we do the wrong thing. Isaiah 59, verse one says, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short "that he cannot save, nor is his ear dull to hear, "but your iniquities have separated you from your God "and your sins have hidden his face from you "so that he will not hear." That's a strong word, huh? And then also this church, it's sin brings judgment upon ourselves.

Sin brings judgment upon us. Yes, life has challenges, difficulties, disease, and pain because this is a fallen world. And yes, number two, we can aggravate it all by sinning against God.

Third and final point tonight is this. Understand that godliness is formed in us. Mark that down, it is very important.

And for me, this is the most encouraging part of the message tonight. Godliness must be originated for us, for us, not by us, for us. Now watch this.

You say, what does godliness have to do with the discipline of disease or suffering? Because guess what? There is a godliness, are you guys awake? There is a godliness that's given to us by the Lord. It's called redemption, salvation. He gives that freely, okay? That's given to you, okay? Imagine right now.

Imagine if I were a non-believer, I hear the gospel, I give my heart to Jesus, and three minutes after I give my heart to Jesus, I step in front of a train and die. Where do I go? Yep. What if I accept Jesus and take a walk and walk the next 30 years, loving the Lord, born again, and I die? What happens? Heaven.

Think about that for a moment. All those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So this is cool.

So that, if I go to heaven being a believer for a moment, you know, the old deathbed conversion events? I'm so, isn't it great that our God will take a rotten, stinking, bad, wicked, Adolf Hitler type of sinner, and if that person would cry out to God, God washes them away, washes their sins away, and saves them in a second. Now, I know some people would say, I don't like that. Like, what if this guy that blew these people up in Tucson meets Jesus tonight in his cell? What if the Lord showed up in his cell? And the guy falls in his face, accepts Christ.

You know, they're gonna put the guy to death, there's no doubt about that. Well, what if he accepts Jesus? Well, he's still gonna be put to death. But here's the amazing part.

If the guy accepts Christ, repents of his sins, accepts Christ, he's jacking murdered a bunch of people. I understand that. I understand that.

Do you understand that you're Jesus, and his blood and the gospel is stronger than what any person can do on earth? How true is that? Absolutely true. See, you and I, we got our emotions involved. We want bums like that to suffer and burn in hell forever.

Not God. We say, he got what was coming to him. And the Bible says, the Lord weeps over the death of the wicked.

It's amazing. The person that's just converted or the person that lives for 30 years converted. What's the difference? Here's the difference.

Godliness that was imputed or given by the Lord over the course of time in those years living for Christ is lived out among all of us right here, right now. You guys, listen. The best way for you and I to really know if you and I are Christians is not like this here and now.

It's knowing one another. You should have to go to my neighbor's houses around me and ask my neighbors if they think Jack and Lisa are Christians. I should be able to go to your neighbors and ask your neighbors if Fred and Barney and Wilma and Betty are Christians.

They'll tell, they'll know, they'll know. Our kids know. Ask our kids.

I need to ask your kids. They'll know. They know.

I had a pastor tell me years ago, in fact, we were still a home fellowship. A pastor told me, now look, if this turns into a church, you gotta move. I said, what? He goes, you gotta move out of town.

I go, why? He goes, you don't want people to know where you live. And he never told me why. I just thought, this guy, he had been a pastor for years and I'm thinking, why? I'm still, I don't know why, but I think the reality is we should be able to know one another.

And then we'd find out, watch, but we find out that maybe we're not walking so straight or this area's weak in your life. How do you think we sharpen one another? See? Who are we when we're goofing off? Secondly, godliness must be established in us. Second Corinthians 12, verse seven, it says, to keep me from becoming conceited, Paul said, because of this surpassingly great revelations that was given to me, a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan was sent to torment me.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. This is the apostle Paul talking here. But he, the Lord said to me, my grace is sufficient for you.

My power is made complete or perfect in weakness. Therefore, listen to his answer. This guy's, Paul's under attack by a demonic spirit that won't go away.

And the Lord tells him, that's how I'm gonna use you, because I'm gonna use you so mightily that I gotta keep you humble. This is what's gonna work. So what's Paul's answer? I quit.

No, that would have been our answer. No, Paul says, therefore, all right, hey, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Hey, if I gotta be like this in this life to be effective for God, bring it on.

Now, that's a follower of Jesus. He's no different than us, you guys, Paul and us. It's what we're willing to do.

Are you willing to do that? Are you willing tonight to say, Lord, use me, no matter what, people will attack you. They'll say things about you. They'll generate all kinds of baloney about you.

You know what, are you willing to take it for Jesus? If somebody says, be quiet in Jesus' name or we're gonna beat you. And you'll find the Holy Spirit speaking right out of your mouth something he said 2,000 years ago. For us to obey God rather than man, you judge.

But hey, we're gonna follow God. And they're gonna slap you for speaking. Today, people are tiptoeing around, but I think the church is waking up.

We hear about students being made fun of in school and told to be quiet about Jesus. And there's students saying, I am not gonna be quiet about Jesus. And they're stirring it up.

That's the way it ought to be. So are you really saying so? Absolutely. Absolutely.

We, I don't know what dumb pill, stupid pill we've been taking, but it's also been a pill of complacency and apathy and it's dangerous. Godliness must be established in us. It's originated for us by God himself.

And then finally it's this godliness must be displayed through our lives, through us. John 11, 23, we're gonna end. Jesus said to her, remember Martha and Mary now, John chapter 11, this is great.

The whole, almost the whole chapter is about this. It's amazing. Jesus says to her, to Martha, your brother will rise again.

Remember now he's dead. Your brother is gonna rise again. And Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Of course she knows, she's Jewish. That's what they believe. They believe the Old Testament.

Absolutely. Right on. Jesus said to her, are you ready for this? This is amazing.

When Jesus says this to Martha, in my mind, I see her hair go like this. You know, like when somebody takes that breath maintenance. In fact, the setting is this.

Jesus is standing there and she says, if you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died. You ever feel like that? It's the same spirit that says, how could God let this happen? In the grand picture, he knows more. He knows more.

And Jesus says, hey, your brother's gonna rise again. Oh yeah, I know that. In the end, I want him now.

And Jesus says, John 11, 25, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, listen, though he may die. You know anybody who's died lately in Jesus? You say, yeah, but they didn't come back like Lazarus did.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait. Though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? He told her. Ooh, what does that mean? No way, people die all the time. That's not what he's talking about.

He's talking about living a life, believing in Jesus. And your body stops in this world. Your blood stops going through these veins.

Your brain, everything. You in this physical realm cease to function. And this is where you and I are hung up.

It's all about the physical. And Jesus says, listen, if a man dies, physical part, believing in me, he shall never die. It's just a door.

Hey, I didn't know this party was going on. You gotta go through the door, man. Jesus says a person believing in him, his blood stops flowing, which is the physical gateway into the new life.

And you'll never die. He's also talking about, you'll never see the grip of the grave. It'll never be dark and cold and empty and dead to be absent from the bodies, to be present with the Lord.

We end with this. It's a song. I haven't sang it in years.

I'm not going to sing it now. But at Calvary Costa Mesa, we sang this all the time on Sunday mornings. It was written in 1855.

It's perfect doctrine. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. So here's what we're going to do.

We're going to do this tonight. Are you, according to your estimation, suffering, sickness, disease? Tonight, as we end this service, I'm going to ask those of you who need physical healing by God, there's going to be pastors and prayer elders up here and to minister to you tonight. This is body ministry.

If you need prayer, if you want prayer, are you sick? Do you think maybe perhaps it's mental, it's a spiritual, it doesn't matter. Do you think tonight maybe you're possessed or you have somebody sitting next to you possessed? Bring them. But don't leave this building tonight without being anointed with oil and prayed for.

You say, well, Jack, what if God doesn't heal me? His grace will be sufficient then. He may heal you tomorrow. He might heal you in an hour.

He might do it next week. He may not do it at all. And here's the thing.

If he doesn't do it at all, then I would say, Lord, what's the deal? If I'm not getting healed, then how is it you want to use me? Because it must be tremendous. That's what Paul prayed basically. Three times I prayed, Paul says, he didn't heal me.

So what do you want to do, God? And Paul says this, God says to Paul, this is necessary because I'm gonna use you so much. This is the way that you'll be humble. And Paul says, right on, right on.

Are you willing to do that tonight? Are you willing to even be prayed for tonight? I sure hope so. Let's all stand right now as we close. And at the end of this song, we're gonna have whoever, as many as you come forward, you come on up and get prayed for.

Are we gonna end in song or no, huh? Father, we ask you, Lord, that right now tonight, there'd be a tremendous tug on any heart tonight that needs prayer. And the reality is, Father God, the importance of it is that Jesus would be glorified and the Father would be honored. So Father, we pray that you'd move in our midst by the power of your Holy Spirit.

And we ask you to do this because Lord, it is simply us here, we, your people, in complete harmony with your word. You have asked us to pray for one another. You've asked us to let these burdens be known.

You've asked us to anoint with oil, praying, believing. And so in obedience, we respond. Father, we pray that tonight, great grace would be present and may the power of the Holy Spirit here now be present to do great things.

Church, let's end in this song and you make your way forward anytime during this song or at the end of this song. I wanna give you a little bit of a rule though, you guys, listen up carefully. When you come tonight, listen, when you come tonight, fight the temptation, fight that temptation to tell this prayer warrior that you're about to be prayed for or prayed over by, don't tell them all the grand details of your ailment.

God knows the details. Here's the reason why. When we come in need, even to another brother or sister, and we begin to talk to them about, oh, I've got this problem, it's the big, the doctors say they've never seen something this bad in all the world.

You're deflating their faith and praying for you because you're overwhelming them by the situation and you yourself are exalting the problem so big that you've actually talked yourself out of the power of God being present. Don't mention it. Just come up and say to someone, I have cancer of the brain or I have a scratch on my elbow, please pray for me.

That's it. God knows. And let that person pray with you having mighty faith.

In fact, we should get the children's ministry here right now to pray. We should get all the kids in the church to pray for us. They've got great faith.

So let's close in this song and you can make your way forward anytime and there'll be prayer elders to get started with this precious body ministry right here, right now.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/21/SID21842.mp3>
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