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Messages From Murmurers

(Part 2)

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Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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Messages From Murmurers

(Part 2)

HOW GOD USES SICKNESS IN OUR LIVES

- I- To Affect Our Perspective
 - A- To remind us of the frailty of the flesh (Psalm 39:4)
 - B- To remind us of the reality of eternity (Psalm 90:10)
 - C- To teach us to appreciate what we have
(Psalm 27:5, 30:5, Ecclesiastes 7:2, Lamentations 1:7)
 - D- To get our attention when we are not progressing
(Jeremiah 2:27, Hosea 5:5, Psalm 18:4)
 - E- To lay up spiritual treasures (II Corinthians 4:17)
 - F- To prove to Satan the power of God (Job 1,2,3)
 - G- To give God an opportunity to glorify His Name
(Joshua 6:11, John 11:4, Isaiah 49:3, Psalm 50:15)
 - H- To remind us of our strength in the light of God's strength
(Psalm 103:13, Isaiah 40:28-31)
- II- To Affect Our Progress
 - A-To take us to the Word (Psalm 119:67,71; Psalm 94:12)
 - B-To test our responses (Psalm 66:10)
 - C-To humble us (Psalm 102:3-11, II Corinthians 12:1-10)
 - D-To deal with unconfessed sin (Psalm 107:4,5,10,17-10)
 - E-To bear fruit in our lives (John 15:2)
 - F-To change our direction when we are going astray
(Hebrews 12:6-9)
 - G-To mature us spiritually (II Corinthians 4:7-17)
 - H-To teach us patience (Romans 5:3, James 1:2-4)
 - I- To teach us depth in prayer (Isaiah 26:16)
 - J- To teach us to praise God in all things
(Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6-8)
- III- To Affect Our Relationships with People
 - A- To give others a chance to minister and comfort
(Proverbs 12:25, II Corinthians 1:3,4)
 - B- To create in us a ministry for the future
(II Corinthians 1:3,4)
 - C- To heal and bring unity in the Body of Christ
(I Peter 5:7-9)

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So when we are blessed with sickness, before we begin to murmur or complain, why not glance at this checklist and see what great works God is trying to accomplish in our lives through the sickness and a) begin to praise Him, and b) cooperate with Him in reaching His goals. He is trying to a) change our perspective, b) change our character by affecting our spiritual growth, and c) develop our relationships with others, and give others a chance to exercise their Spiritual Gift and demonstrate Christ to us. Truly, "All things do work together for good to them that love the Lord and are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

WHEN WE STOP MURMURING

Oh, dear Lord, what victory
Oh, what peace divine
When to thy great purpose
We with joy resign

What a change of vision
Comes to all our days
When we stop our murmuring
And turn instead to praise!!!

That's what these lessons are all about! They're all about extinguishing the flames of destruction that fly from a negative tongue and learning to refocus the fine tuners of our minds to God's perspective, until what once was a murmuring tongue learns to broadcast praise. Until what once was a complaining tongue begins to transmit newfound signals of joy. Until what once was a nagging tongue learns to become a tool of encouragement, building up the very lives it has been in essence tearing down. Oh, the tongue.

This is not an easy subject either to teach or to hear. It is not easy for at least three reasons.

1) To some degree it applies to all of us. The studies on anger and drunkenness and gluttony apply to many but not to all. They were more easily looked upon as a potential source of conviction for Uncle Joe or Pastor Sam or your dear wife or husband than for you.

But the tongue (which James tells us is a flame of fire set ablaze by hell itself) is a universal source of either potential destruction or potential encouragement. Though its venom may

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vary in intensity from one life to another and from one form of tongue trouble to another, we all can identify with the sins of the tongue.

A second reason this subject is so difficult is because it deals with subtle infractions that have been a programmed part of our behavior since childhood. That habit of complaining, that bent to murmuring, that subconscious tendency to sarcasm that's by now just "second nature," have been so programmed into the computer of your personality and mine that in varying degrees of subtlety they flow so naturally from your lips that we can justify those sparks of destruction as part and parcel of "us."

Proverbs says it this way (paraphrased), "We can justify our every deed, but is the Lord convinced?" The answer is obviously, "No." I'm convinced that while many of the behavioral violations of self-control that we've been studying are almost immediately curable, those subtle violations of God's character known as the sins of the tongue require God's supernatural transforming power over a long period of time as we retrain the mind that feeds the tongue it's negative signals. It's a lifetime project, but God means it for this lifetime, so that means we start yesterday. The sins of the tongue—a difficult subject indeed, because:

- A) It's a universal problem.
- B) It's a lifetime project.
- C) The tongue is a toughie because it is a battleground where Satan and God are vying for control of your testimony.

Therefore, you will be tested in whatever area you are committed to changing, and not only you, but the whole world sees your grade card.

This week my life has been a good example. In almost every area this lesson would touch, I was tested. And I trust from what I hear that a number of you were tested in those three vital areas we studied in the last lesson.

For those who missed the last lesson (and for those who have intentionally blocked the subject out of their minds), we are looking at the topic of murmuring and dealing incidentally with its tongue-tangling sidekicks, "complaining and nagging."

The title of this mini-series is "Messages from Murmurers." And our outline for the three lessons looks like this:

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- I- Murmuring, Complaining, and Nagging: A three-fold attack on the Sovereignty of God
- II- Murmuring Midgets in a Land of Giants: God's Picture Book of Complainers
- III- Marks of a Murmurer: What Christians Complain About
- IV- Murmurers From God's Perspective
- V- Messages From Murmurers

We are looking through the microscope of God's Word at Part three of that outline and asking ourselves, "What are the marks of a murmurer?" In other words, what are the kinds of things God's people murmur over.

Murmuring, you remember, is "an indirect undercurrent of complaining directed usually at others rather than the source of the complaint itself." And you may also recall that complaining; murmuring, and nagging all have two things in common. They are all three evidences of a discontented spirit, and they all reflect a negative concept of the Sovereignty of God. That, you see, is why we murmur. We do not believe that God has the situation under control. We either do not trust His power to defeat the enemy or His concern for our welfare or His higher ways that ultimately cause all things to work together for good. For if He is truly in control (and His control is for our good), then what possible reason could we have to murmur?

His sovereignty is the issue and our confidence in His sovereignty is the key. We ought not to murmur. Murmuring is a cancerous undercurrent that sends out negative signals in every direction that say, "God is not in control."

III- The Marks of a Murmurer

In the last lesson, we began looking at what we murmur over, and before the hands of time moved to their destination, we had uncovered the first three marks of a murmurer.

We found that, first of all, we tend to murmur over the glories of the past. We glorify our past in the Egypt of life and murmur about "The Good Old Days" when perhaps we ate better and met with fewer skirmishes with the enemy. Job had that problem. The children of Israel had that problem. But Scripture warned us,

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Do not ask why earlier days were better than these for that is not a question prompted by wisdom. (Ecclesiastes 7:10)

Of course Satan has launched an offensive in your life circumstantially. (You joined the ranks of the opposition!!) And circumstances are all he can control. Christian, you're in the army now! That's when the bombs fall, but that's when the enemy falls, too. God didn't promise you a rose garden, as the song says, but He guaranteed you an eternal Festival of Flowers in the life to come, and He promised you bouquets of Grace 'twixt now and then.

You say the battle's tough? Battles are supposed to be tough. Tough battles make for sweet victories. So stop murmuring about the past!

A second thing Christians murmur over is their wages or their jobs.

- The hours are too long.
- The salary too low.
- The boss too tough.
- The other employees too lazy.
- The product too poor.
- The prices too high.

The world loves to ride this hobby horse to demand its rights, but Jesus gave us a good illustration of how to give an employee attitude check in Matthew chapter twenty and the parable of the workers in the vineyard. As we found last time, Christian employees ought to have a whole different perspective on their jobs. We ought to:

- Be grateful to have a job.
- Work hard for the hours we're hired.
- Be thankful for our pay.
- Not compare our salary or rank with others.
- Not murmur about inequities.

Why so different? Because, Christian, a Sovereign God has control of your job, and He's calling on you to go to work and become by His grace a crown of faithfulness. You cannot wear that crown and murmur at the same time.

And thirdly, we concluded that we Christians tend to murmur when our privacy or our schedules become the victims of outside

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intrusion. Even intrusion that is in reality the result of answered prayer. So often we pray for people to minister to, but if the phone rings (or the doorbell) at an inconvenient time, we murmur.

Apparently we expect others to tailor their needs to our timetables. We want them to hurt only when we have nothing to do. So we murmur.

Our quest for the marks of a murmurer, continue now with a look at the fourth reason that Christians murmur: We murmur over problems in the church. And so often the outside world is turned off to Christianity because of what it hears about the church from the church. My friend, this ought not so to be. It's not our place to murmur about anything within the fellowship. *In the first place, the church is by design a government within a body of people with a God-ordained system of authority through which to register scripturally appropriate complaints in a Scripturally appropriate manner.* The form of government varies and the acceptable methods of registering dissatisfaction varies from church to church, but the authorities are ordained of God, and within that framework, murmuring has no place.

Secondly, church affiliation is a matter of choice. Unlike most forms of authority in our lives, if this authority is truly unjust and God frees you to do so, you can voluntarily remove yourself and move yourself to another Scriptural body of believers. It must not be done lightly, but it may be done.

But thirdly, even if some matter in your church has you concerned and you cannot resolve it through Scriptural channels, you never air a spiritual family problem with those outside that family, and certainly never around those who are unbelievers.

In any case, there is no place in the church for murmuring. It causes division, arouses hostility, generates jealousy, and puts on the emergency brake when, with a lost world before it, the church needs to be in high gear.

In Acts we read of one such problem:

And in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. (Acts 6:1)

You remember the problem. As always God used it for good and it formed the backdrop for the development of the office of deacon in the local church, but that didn't justify the murmuring.

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Notice three things about this passage in passing.

a) Notice the condition.

And in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplied, (Acts 6:1a)

But with the believers multiplying rapidly, there were rumblings of discontent. (Acts 6:1a TLB)

When the church begins to move against the enemy, the enemy begins to move against the church, “With believers multiplying rapidly”. Sometimes multiplication breeds murmuring. Success leads to hurt feelings. When numbers swell, some swell folks can get left behind. There are solutions to the problem. Murmuring is not one of them.

b) Notice the conflict. (Acts 6) It was between the Grecians and the Hebrews. The lines fall so often in logical places. It was the old timers against the newcomers. The Greeks were against the Hebrews. Men love to create divisions. God loves to dissolve them. Man lives to make, himself, separate. God died to make us one. No wonder Satan loves to carve the body of Christ into what he calls “logical camps”. It’s because a house divided against itself can’t stand.

c) Notice the cause. One group decided another group was getting more attention. They began to murmur “favoritism” and demand their rights. God took care of the problem. (But He would have anyway.) And He would have been far more glorified had there been no murmuring. Don’t murmur over problems in the church. While you’re burning up the telephone lines with, “Have you heard what Deacon Smith said?”, you’re burning up your opportunity to ask, “Have you heard what Jesus did?” And in the light of eternity isn’t that what matters?

A fifth thing Christians murmur over is the cost of discipleship. We pray for a ministry, then murmur over the time it takes. We pray for a chance to be taught, then murmur over the cost of preparation. We pray for growth, then murmur over the tribulation it takes to achieve it. We pray to know Him, then cringe when we learn that it’s the fellowship of His sufferings that we’re to enter into to experience the power of His resurrection. We long to hear that God is Love. We loath hearing,

He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: (John 14:21a)

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We love hearing,

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation;
(II Corinthians 5:17a NKJV)

But what stuns us is the reality that discipleship means discipline. Change means Commitment. Fruitfulness demands faithfulness. We want to be “spoon fed” Christians and don’t even want to have to chew. The hard realities of strong doctrine that require that we die for Him to live tend to cause us to want to turn back, and we can always tell when we’re about to turn back. We begin to murmur.

So did the disciples in John, chapter six. Jesus had been teaching that He was the Bread of Life. He said that those who come to Him never need to hunger again for the truth; they need never thirst again for the taste of righteousness. At this the Jews began to murmur, and Jesus rebuked them saying, “No one can come to me unless the Father draws him. But he that comes to me already has in his possession eternal life.” At this the Jews murmured, but the disciples were as yet still silent. For as yet, though Jesus had declared the specifics of salvation, He had not yet specified the cost of commitment. Then in verses 55 through 60, Jesus drew in the net and made it final.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.
(John 6:55,56)

Verse 57 is the clincher.

As the Living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father:
so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Jesus looks his troops right in the eye and draws a triangle around each of their lives. “The truth is this,” said the Master. “You don’t live for me anymore than I live for the Father. The Father’s alive. He sent me. And I live by Him.” Jesus was saying, “That is, He rules my life. Whatever He says, I do. Apart from Him I do nothing.”

That’s news enough to a band of men bent on redirecting their religion rather than forfeiting their lives. But now Jesus has to make it personal. “As I live by the Father (He controls my life), so He that partakes of my life must live by me. I must control his life. I don’t want you to live for me; I want you to die so I can live through you. You’re not joining a cause,” Jesus said,

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“You’re giving me your life. Try to save it, and you’ll lose it. Lose it for my sake,” Jesus said, “and find it.”

It’s what’s known as the high cost of discipleship.

Many therefore of his disciples (this was not the crowd, this was the team), when they had heard this, said, this is an hard saying; who can hear it? (John 6:60)

The Amplified Bible translates it:

“This is a hard and difficult and strange saying—an offensive and unbearable message. Who can stand to hear it? Who can be expected to listen to such teaching?”

“Let’s go back to baby food”, they groaned. This is too hard to swallow.

When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it; He said to them, does this offend you?

It is the Spirit that gives life. The flesh profiteth nothing.

And He said therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto Him of my Father. (John 6:61,63,65 Amplified Bible)

It says Jesus knew in Himself that they murmured. They didn’t complain to Jesus. They murmured to one another (about Jesus).”This isn’t what we expected,” they murmured. “It isn’t ‘God and I -We’ve got a lot to give.’ It’s ‘I must die-so He can live.’ That’s too hard.”

And what does Jesus do now? Apologize and change the rules so more would play? No, He draws the net even tighter. He says, “Without me you can’t do anything. And unless My Father draws you, you wouldn’t even come to me. Even your faith is a gift from God. It’s not of works, lest any one should boast. It’s His life and it’s for His glory. That’s what it’ll cost you to follow me,” Jesus said, “Everything.”

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6:66)

The membership was shrinking. Would Jesus go after them and beg them to come back? Offer them more coffee and donuts? Softer pews? More palatable doctrine?

Jesus turned to the twelve, will you also go away? (John 6:67)

Peter answered,

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Go? Where? You have the words of eternal life. We are sure of one thing. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
(John 6:68)

And the sooner you and I come to that conclusion, the sooner we'll begin to see our lives multiplied.

The conclusion is this: Jesus wants it all. He gave us His all. He died for us. He'll accept nothing less from us than our dying to our lives so He can live His in us. The cost is high, but the real price has already been paid. Sooner or later you and I must stop murmuring over what it costs us to be a disciple and start remembering what it cost Him for us to be a Christian. We must stop murmuring over how hard it is to memorize the Word and realize what a privilege it is to have it. We must stop murmuring over how hard it is to pray and bow before God in awe at the privilege. Maybe we make a mistake not telling new Christians what God is after. He's not after a place on our calendar. He's after our calendar. He's not after a place in our budget. He's after our budget. He's not after a bit of our strength. He is our strength. He wants our weakness to make it shine.

Stop murmuring, my friend, over what it costs you to walk with God. The King has made you His heir. Will you murmur that it hurts your head to wear the crown?

Stop murmuring, Beloved, at the cost of discipleship. To do so is an affront to Calvary where it cost God everything to make discipleship possible.

Sixthly, Christians murmur over our health. Probably no one question prompts more murmuring than the seemingly harmless, "So how are you feeling?" It is so often the combination that unlocks a floodgate of murmuring and complaining.

We live in bodies that have been infected and affected by sin. They are subject to pain, disease, and decay. It is only a matter of time until the machinery of the body in some way begins to falter. It is on its way to an appointment with death. "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment."

Accept that. Do all you can to care for your body. Nurture it and protect it as you can, but even the healthiest man in the world can fall victim in an instant to a germ so tiny the eye cannot even fathom its existence and be gone!

Sickness and pain are a necessary part of life. Left to

themselves, they bring about discomfort, discouragement, and depression. But they do have a purpose. If we can grasp that purpose and begin to operate in a sphere of excitement over what God is doing in our spirits when our body is ailing, even our pain can have meaning. And once something has meaning, murmuring ceases.

I believe there are basically three kinds of illness. There is:

1) Short-term discomfort- is the nuisance kind of sickness that we so murmur about (a bad cold, an allergy, a bout with the flu, an infected toe, an earache).

We are not incapacitated, but we are inconvenienced, even though we know that in a matter of hours we'll feel better. And strangely enough we probably murmur more over short-term discomforts than any other kind of sickness.

2) Temporary traumas- are serious problems that actually alter our way of life, cause us to miss work, maybe be hospitalized, maybe be crippled for a time; but they heal, and we return to normal. Broken bones are temporary traumas. Gall bladder surgery would be another. An operable tumor or cyst that turns out benign. An accident that causes you to be incapacitated, but not permanently disabled. Temporary traumas disrupt our lives, change our habits, but, in time, we return to life as it was before.

3) "Thorn in the Flesh" illness. Thorn in the flesh illness is treatable, but not curable. It can be controlled or arrested, but you know as long as you live, you'll live with this. It may be terminal. It often isn't, but it will make life interminable if we let it.

A chronic pain problem, an incurable vision deficiency or hearing deficiency, these are thorns. A weak heart that changes the way you live is a thorn. Diabetes is a thorn. Certain female problems are thorns. Some mental and physiological imbalances are thorns. They probably won't kill you, but you probably don't believe that.

All three kinds of sickness have one thing in common. It's this: Satan means them to destroy us. God means them to transform us. If we but see the sickness from the vantage point of God's purpose, we stop murmuring and start praising.

The first page of this lesson lists for you 21 ways God uses sickness to bless our lives. The next time one of these three

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kinds of sickness strikes your life, use this list as a checklist to see what God is up to, and you won't be so tempted to murmur.

We've divided our list into three categories.

I- How God Uses Sickness to Affect Our Perspective

II- How God Uses Sickness to Affect Our Progress

III- How God Uses Sickness to Affect Our Relationships with People

First of all, take note that God uses sickness to affect our perspective, to change the focus of our lives, to rediscover what's really important. It happens eight ways.

1) Sickness reminds us of the frailty of the flesh. In Psalm 39 verse 4, the psalmist prayed, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

If you pray that prayer, you'll probably taste of the cup of sickness before long, for nothing makes us more conscious of our frailty than to suddenly be immobilized; dependent on others for our very existence, uncertain of tomorrow, conscious only of the pain of today. But you see, it's spiritually healthy to be sick. Suddenly we realize that life is but a vapor.

2) Sickness reminds us of the reality of eternity. Psalm 90, vs. 10, paraphrased says this: "Seventy years are given us, and some may even live to eighty. But even the best of these years are often emptiness and pain. Soon they disappear, and we are gone." We delude ourselves into thinking this life will go on and on--This life is what we live for. Then sickness strikes and hearts in hospitals begin to ponder eternity.

3) Sickness helps us appreciate what we take for granted. To blind people, sight is a rich treasure; to those who see, it's an unappreciated necessity. The lame man treasures every step; the whole man murmurs over a broken toe or shoes that don't quite fit, and no one appreciates the absence of pain like one who has endured it.

The man who never hurts, never appreciates the fact that he doesn't. We appreciate our loved ones so much more when the thought strikes us that we will not have them forever.

4) God uses sickness to get our attention when we've stopped progressing spiritually. In Jeremiah 2:27, the writer says men

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are busy making their own idols to serve (until trouble comes). Then suddenly they think of God again.

5) God uses sickness to lay up spiritual treasures. Paul reminds us,

Our light affliction is for but a moment, but it worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at things which are seen but at things unseen.
(II Corinthians 4:17)

Our right response to sickness here means glory and treasures there. That is a small price to pay for so rich a reward.

6) Our sickness gives God another chance to demonstrate His power to Satan and his hosts: His power to heal; His power to sustain; His power to overcome.

Job was target practice for Satan, and sickness was his ultimate weapon, but God allowed it. He said, "Have at it Satan. I'll prove to you through Job's suffering what God can do in His children's souls, through what you are doing in their bodies." Through his sickness, Job was transformed. God was exalted. Satan was humiliated.

7) Sickness allows God to glorify His name in us. In John 11:4, Jesus said of Lazarus' illness, "The purpose of his illness is not death but for the glory of God. I, the Son of God, will receive glory from this situation."

And oh, what meaning pain takes on when we discover the purpose of this illness is for the glory of God. That was the purpose behind Christ's suffering; it is the purpose behind ours.

8) God uses sickness to remind us of His strength.

Isaiah 40:28-31 speaks loud and clear,

He giveth power (to who?) to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength (for who?).
(Isaiah 40:29)

No one leans on the strength of God like the man whose own strength is gone. Truly, "His strength is made perfect in weakness." "We, in our health, think of God as an adjective adding meaning to life. But we, in our helplessness, think of God as a verb. Without Him there is no sentence at all.

So through sickness, God affects our perspective of life.

The temporal gives way to the eternal.

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The frailty of the flesh gives meaning to the spirit.

We send a signal to Satan that God is.

We lay up treasures in heaven.

We appreciate what we have.

We bring glory to God and magnify His strength in our time of weakness.

From a standpoint of perspective, then, sickness is a blessing, a cause for rejoicing, certainly no cause to murmur.

But sickness not only affects our perspective, it also affects our progress.

It is the sandpaper of life that smoothes out the rough edges spiritually and sets our sails again toward spiritual maturity. (Quickly we'll just list them.)

Sickness does these things:

1) It drives us to the Word,

Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy Word.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes. (Psalms 119:67,71)

When sickness saps our strength, we grope for answers. We return to the Word where the answers are, and that in itself, is reason to rejoice.

2) It tests our response.

For Thou hast tested us, oh God, Thou hast refined us as silver is purified. (Psalms 66:10)

No matter how spiritual you think you are, you do not really know if you are until, on a bed of affliction, you must continue to praise Him. That, my friend, is true spirituality.

I don't have it. I wish I did. But with every test, there comes the confirmation that God is gradually purifying our responses, too.

3) God uses sickness to humble us. Paul said,

And lest I be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh... (I Corinthians 12:7)

Paul said God's cure for Paul's disease of "El Cranium

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Enlargo” was a thorn, a sickness Paul prayed would go away, but which a loving God knew Paul needed if he were ever to be humble enough to be usable.

4) God uses sickness to deal with unconfessed sin.

Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses. (Psalms 107:17,19)

Certainly most sickness is not the result of sin, but some is. And some is allowed by God to slow us down long enough and get us still long enough to look into our lives; at runaway seeds of sin. Sometimes we will not repent until God gets our attention through sickness.

We are almost out of time, so let me just mention some more ways sickness affects our progress spiritually.

It causes our lives to become fruitful. (John 15:2)

It changes our direction when we're going astray and demonstrates God's love. (Hebrews 12:6-9)

It causes us to mature spiritually. (II Corinthians 4:7-17)

Sickness teaches us patience. (Romans 5:3, James 1:2-4)

Sickness teaches us how to pray more effectively. (Isaiah 26:16, Philippians 4:6-7)

It teaches us how to praise God in all situations. (Romans 8:28)

Do you want to grow? Do you want to accelerate your progress?

Then before you murmur over that illness, consider this: God maybe afflicting you to bless you. Praise Him.

So through sickness, God affects our perspective, and He affects our progress.

But perhaps one of the most meaningful fruits of sickness comes when the physical body hurts. The Body of Christ reaches out and we begin to realize that we need people. No longer are we an island unto ourselves! Bedridden and dependent, now we must accept love and herein learn perhaps God's greatest lesson of all from the classroom of pain.

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For when one hurts, all hurt. Others are given a chance to exercise their gifts to minister to you. Maybe you thought you needed nothing. You were wrong. You needed people, and on a bed of pain you realize it.

Three miracles often occur in the body (corporate) when the body (individual) begins to suffer:

1) We begin to let others into our lives. (Job had to do this.) Unfortunately, his buddies had a spiritual problem worse than Job's physical problem, but our loving God solved them both at the same time. This happened even in Jesus' life. The interaction at the foot of the cross, included, "Woman, behold thy son," and "Son, behold thy mother." Now they could minister to Him by ministering to those He loved.

Many a self-sufficient saint has realized he needs others to pray for him, others to help him through, others to help his loved ones, others to help financially, when the perils of pain erased from his brain the notion that he could do it all.

My friend, nothing so removes the scales of martyrdom from our lives and lets us know we need others and that others care than sickness does. So if your illness causes the Body of Christ to begin working, that in itself is reason not to murmur.

2) A second miracle occurs in our relationships as we experience the awfulness of illness. God creates in us a part of our ministry for the future. II Corinthians 1:3,4 (One of our pet passages in our parade for progress) remember says, "Praise God when trials come in and stun your life. Know this and be happy. Your God (whose middle name is comforter) is going to comfort you through every phase of your trauma. He does this to equip you, because it's His plan then to send your way others suffering similar problems. That way, you can channel to them the very comfort you experienced."

You say, "Why me, Lord, WHY ME?"

Because God needs a station, that's why. He needs a place where He can send another to be encouraged in the days to come. And how much comfort could you be to one in pain if the cup of pain had never touched your lips.

You prayed for a ministry? God is giving it to you in the form of sickness. He's only answering your prayer. So don't murmur!

3) And one last thing, sometimes God allows one to suffer to

bring others together. How many times the families of men and how many times the family of God have tasted healing within its ranks as feuding and fussing faded at the bedside of one with a need. Sickness is a bitter pill. But it begins to taste sweeter at the realization, that as your body suffers, God's body, the Church, is being healed. That as your body comes apart, God's Body, the Church, is coming together. That's a price worth paying. That's reason not to murmur.

Now I do not for a minute expect you to go out and break your leg to bring healing to others, or to pray to get sick so you can grow. That's not what I mean. What I mean is that as James said in James, chapter 1, when these things come into your lives that are beyond your control don't resent them as intruders, welcome them as friends.

What I mean is, the next time we are blessed with sickness, instead of murmuring or complaining to all our friends about how bad we feel, why not take this checklist out and look to see what great things God is trying to do in us through this illness, be it short-term discomfort, temporary traumas, or a thorn in the flesh. And 1) begin to praise Him. Then 2) begin to cooperate with Him in reaching His goals. He wants to change our perspective until we see life His way. He wants to change our character until others see His life in us, and He wants to change the way His body works by altering the way ours does. He can do all that and more if, when sickness knocks on our door, we answer with a quiet smile and a yielded spirit instead of murmuring.

So we ought not to murmur over problems in the Church. We ought not to murmur over the cost of discipleship. And we ought not to murmur over our health-because God is what? God is SOVEREIGN. We can trust Him. He knows what He's doing, and He's doing what He knows is best. (And please don't murmur over the length of this lesson. We'll finish next time, Lord willing.) Until then, your job and mine is to begin and to continue a life-long project known as Operation Praise.

Operation Praise means an end to murmuring. Because every time you would murmur that the past was glorious, instead you begin to praise God for the glory of His salvation and the glories yet to come. Instead of murmuring over your job, you praise Him that you have one or that He has one for you.

Whenever we would murmur over our time, let's stop and

Messages From Murmurers (Part 2)

praise Him instead that He's given us time as a present to be shared, not a commodity to be hoarded. Whenever we are tempted to murmur about the church, let's praise Him instead that we live in a country where we can have a church. When we would murmur over the high cost of discipleship, why not break forth instead in an anthem of praise that He has counted us worthy to be called his disciples, and praise Him for the price He paid. And when we feel our bodies begin to ache and see disease taking its toll, instead of murmuring, why not just praise Him for what He's doing.

He's changing our perspective. He's accelerating our progress. And He's making His body work when ours doesn't. What a God we have! So worthy to be praised is He!

OH, WHAT A GOD WE HAVE

Oh, what a God we have
So worthy to be praised!
We look upon the way He works
And we but stand amazed!

The very things that cripple us
That dot with grief our story.
Become to Him but polished stones
To best reflect His glory.

The very things man seems to hate
That cause us to complain
The pressures and the problems
The things that cause us pain.

The things that make us murmur
The crises we so hate
Are drops of mercy from our God
Designed to make us great.

Oh, what a God we have
May we His power proclaim
Instead of murmuring, may our tongues
But live to praise His Name!

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