

SERIES: THE VALLEYS OF LIFE**# 3 “THE VALLEY OF SICKNESS****JOHN 11:1-15****INTRODUCTION**

ANOTHER OF THE GREATEST OF VALLEYS THAT A CHRISTIAN GOES THROUGH IS THAT OF SICKNESS.

PROLONGED SICKNESS OR INFIRMITY IS A DEVASTATING VALLEY BECAUSE OF ITS NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON OUR SPIRITUAL WALK WITH THE LORD.

THERE ARE MANY FALSE CONCEPTS CONCERNING SICKNESS, BUT THE BIBLE IS FULL OF IT AND BOTH SAVED AND LOST ARE AFFECTED.

WHEN IN THE VALLEY OF SICKNESS:

- 1. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO PRAY.**
- 2. IT IS HARD TO PRAY FOR OTHERS WHEN YOU ARE SO SICK AND HURTING, ALL YOU CAN SAY IS “LORD, PLEASE HELP ME.**
- 3. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE.**
- 4. WHEN WE’RE SICK WE SOMETIMES SAY THAT IT WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO CATCH UP ON OUR BIBLE READING, AND START TO FEEL SORRY FOR OURSELVES.**
- 5. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD’S HOUSE.**
- 6. IT IS MUCH HARDER TO HAVE OUR PRIORITIES RIGHT. ALL WE THINK ABOUT IS HOW SICK WE ARE.**

(I). BEFORE WE GET INTO THE VALLEY, LET’S LOOK AT SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SICKNESS.

- A. SOME SO CALLED CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE MADE A LIVING OUT OF THIS VALLEY.**
- 1. IF ONLY BENNY HINN TOOK HIS SO CALLED GIFT TO THE HOSPITALS.**
 - 2. SICKNESS IS A RESULT OF THE CURSE, BUT NOT ALL SICKNESS IS A RESULT OF PERSONAL SIN!**
 - 3. THE FIRST MENTION OF SICKNESS IS FOUND IN [GENESIS 48:1], “AND IT CAME TO PASS AFTER THESE THINGS, THAT ONE TOLD JOSEPH, BEHOLD, THY FATHER IS SICK: AND HE TOOK WITH HIM HIS TWO SONS, MANASSEH AND EPHRAIM. “**
 - a. THIS SICKNESS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WRONG DOING.**
 - b. SOME PEOPLE WILL TELL YOU THAT ALL SICKNESS IS THE RESULT OF PERSONAL SIN AND THAT A LACK OF HEALING IS A LACK OF FAITH.**
 - c. CHILDREN, WHO ARE INNOCENT AND HAVE FAITH, GET SICK AND SOMETIMES EVEN DIE.**
 - 4. SICKNESS HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO THE LORD LOVES.**
 - a. [JOHN 11:1-3], “NOW A CERTAIN MAN WAS SICK, NAMED LAZARUS, OF BETHANY, THE TOWN OF MARY AND HER SISTER MARTHA. (IT WAS THAT MARY WHICH ANOINTED THE LORD WITH OINTMENT, AND WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR, WHOSE BROTHER LAZARUS WAS SICK.) THEREFORE HIS SISTERS SENT UNTO**

HIM, SAYING, LORD, BEHOLD, HE WHOM THOU LOVEST IS SICK.” THE LORD COULD HAVE EASILY PREVENTED OR HEALED THIS SICKNESS.

5. SOME SICKNESS IS THE RESULT OF THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD.

- a. **[2 SAMUEL 12:15], “AND NATHAN DEPARTED UNTO HIS HOUSE. AND THE LORD STRUCK THE CHILD THAT URIAH’S WIFE BARE UNTO DAVID, AND IT WAS VERY SICK. “**
- b. **THE SICKNESS OF CHASTENING MAY WELL AFFECT LOVED ONES.**

6. SOME SICKNESS CAN LEAD TO DEATH .

- a. **[2 KINGS 13:14], “ NOW ELISHA WAS FALLEN SICK OF HIS SICKNESS WHEREOF HE DIED. AND JOASH THE KING OF ISRAEL CAME DOWN UNTO HIM, AND WEPT OVER HIS FACE, AND SAID, O MY FATHER, MY FATHER, THE CHARIOT OF ISRAEL, AND THE HORSEMEN THEREOF. “**
- b. **ELISHA WAS A GREAT PROPHET OF THE LORD.**
- c. **LAZARUS, WHOM THE LORD LOVED, DIED.**

B. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE LORD CHOOSES NOT TO HEAL.

- 1. **[JOHN 11:6, 15, 39] “WHEN HE HAD HEARD THEREFORE THAT HE WAS SICK, HE ABODE TWO DAYS STILL IN THE SAME PLACE WHERE HE WAS...AND I AM GLAD FOR YOUR SAKES THAT I WAS NOT THERE, TO THE INTENT YE MAY BELIEVE; NEVERTHELESS LET US GO**

UNTO HIM...” JESUS SAID, TAKE YE AWAY THE STONE. MARTHA, THE SISTER OF HIM THAT WAS DEAD, SAITH UNTO HIM, LORD, BY THIS TIME HE STINKETH: FOR HE HATH BEEN DEAD FOUR DAYS. GOOD, GODLY PEOPLE HAVE DIED OF SICKNESS IN THE LORD’S PERFECT WILL.”

C. GOD CAN STILL HEAL WHEN HE CHOOSES

- 1. [JOHN 5:3] *“IN THESE LAY A GREAT MULTITUDE OF IMPOTENT FOLK, OF BLIND, HALT, WITHERED, WAITING FOR THE MOVING OF THE WATER. THE LORD DID NOT HEAL ALL OF THESE, ONLY THE ONE.”***

D. GOD CAN GET GLORY OUT OF SICKNESS.

- 1. [JOHN 11:4] *“WHEN JESUS HEARD THAT, HE SAID; “THIS SICKNESS IS NOT UNTO DEATH, BUT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT THE SON OF GOD MIGHT BE GLORIFIED THEREBY.”***
- 2. OTHERS SEE OUR SUFFERINGS AND CONTINUANCE IN FAITH AND GOOD WORKS FOR GOD’S GLORIFICATION.**

**(II). HOW TO BEHAVE WHEN WE ARE SICK!
2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-12**

(A). MAKE SURE SICKNESS IS NOT THE RESULT OF SIN – [VERSE 7]

- 1. THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO BALANCE OUR LIVES.**
- 2. IF WE HAVE ONLY BLESSINGS, WE MAY BECOME PROUD; SO HE PERMITS US TO HAVE BURDENS AS WELL.**
- 3. PAUL’S GREAT EXPERIENCE IN HEAVEN COULD HAVE RUINED HIS MINISTRY ON EARTH; SO GOD, IN HIS GOODNESS, ALLOWED SATAN TO BUFFET PAUL IN ORDER TO KEEP HIM FROM BECOMING PROUD.**

4. **PAUL TELLS US ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE VALLEY HE ENDURED BY THE TWO WORDS HE USES TO DESCRIBE IT: THORN AND BUFFET.**
5. **WHOSE HAD A SPLINTER OR BEEN PRICKED BY A THORN?**
6. **YOU KNOW THE PIERCING, NAGGING PAIN IT CAN PRODUCE.**
7. **THE WORD “THORN” COMES FROM A WORD WHICH REFERS TO “A SHARP WOODEN STAKE TO TORTURE OR IMPALE SOMEONE”.**
8. **THE WORD “BUFFET” MEANS “TO STRIKE WITH THE FIST, TO MISTREAT”.**
9. **WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF PAUL’S THORN?**
 - a. **NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE, BUT IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT PAUL SUFFERED FROM AN EYE DISEASE OF SOME SORT, [GAL. 6:11].**
 - b. **WE DO KNOW THAT HIS BODILY PRESENCE WAS SOMEWHAT WEAK, [2 COR. 10:10.]**
 - c. **SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT PAUL’S THORN WAS MALARIA, EPILEPSY, OR SOME OTHER PHYSICAL AFFLICTION.**
 - d. **NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE, BUT WHATEVER IT WAS, IT MADE THE TASK OF PREACHING AND MINISTERING TO THE CHURCHES FAR MORE DIFFICULT FOR PAUL.**
10. **THERE IS A GOOD REASON FOR US NOT KNOWING WHAT PAUL’S THORN OR SICKNESS WAS, WHY?**
 - a. **BECAUSE I AM PREACHING TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE**

THORNS/SICKNESS AND ARE EXPERIENCING BUFFETINGS RIGHT NOW.

- b. IF PAUL HAD NAMED HIS THORN, THEN WE MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT THE PROMISES OF GOD ASSOCIATED WITH THAT THORN WERE ONLY GOOD FOR OTHERS WITH THE SAME PROBLEM.**
 - c. BUT, SINCE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HE SUFFERED FROM, WE CAN APPLY THE PROMISES HE RECEIVED TO THE SITUATIONS WE FACE!**
 - d. PAUL'S THORN WAS "IN THE FLESH". IT AFFLICTED HIM PHYSICALLY.**
- 11. OFTEN, THE THORNS AND BUFFETINGS WE ENDURE IN THIS LIFE WILL MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN THE PHYSICAL REALM, THROUGH SICKNESS AND OTHER FORMS OF PHYSICAL SUFFERING.**
- 12. AT OTHER TIMES, WE WILL ENDURE EMOTIONAL PAIN, SUCH AS DEPRESSION, LONELINESS AND HEARTBREAK.**
- 13. SOMETIMES OUR THORNS WILL BE SPIRITUAL IN NATURE, AS WE DOUBT OUR SALVATION, STRUGGLE WITH HOLINESS AND BATTLE SPIRITUAL PRIDE.**
- 14. THE WORD "BUFFET" IS A VERB AND IT IS IN THE "PRESENT TENSE AND THE ACTIVE VOICE".**
 - a. THAT MAY NOT MEAN MUCH TO YOU, BUT WHAT IT TELLS US THAT THIS THING WHICH AFFLICTED PAUL WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS CONTINUAL IN NATURE.**

- b. **IN OTHER WORDS, HE LIVED WITH THIS THING ALL THE TIME!**
 - c. **WHEN THIS PROBLEM CAME, IT CAME TO STAY!**
 - d. **HE EVEN ASKED GOD THREE TIMES FOR RELIEF, STILL THE PROBLEM ENDURED!**

- 15. **WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT IF WE ARE PLACED IN A VALLEY OF SICKNESS WE MAY BE CALLED UPON TO ENDURE THAT VALLEY FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR OR A FEW DAYS.**

- 16. **SOME PEOPLE, FOR GOD’S OWN REASONS, ARE GIVEN THORNS AND BUFFETINGS THAT SEEM TO ENDURE FOR YEARS.**

- B. **HAVE THE FAITH TO SEEK THE LORD’S HEALING. – [VERSE 8]**
 - 1. **IT IS THE LORD WHO HEALS ALL SICKNESS [PSALMS 103:3] “*WHO FORGIVETH ALL THINE INIQUITIES; WHO HEALETH ALL THY DISEASES;*”**

- C. **HAVE THE GRACE TO ACCEPT THE LORD’S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE – [VERSE 9]**
 - 1. **PAUL PRAYED FOR THE THORN TO BE REMOVED. THE LORD’S ANSWER WAS THIS “*MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE...*”**
 - a. **THE WORD “SUFFICIENT” MEANS “TO BE POSSESSED OF UNFAILING STRENGTH; TO BE ENOUGH”.**
 - b. **THE LORD IS SAYING, “PAUL, I KNOW YOU HAVE A BIG TASK TO ACCOMPLISH. I CALLED YOU TO THAT TASK.**

- c. **I KNOW YOU FEEL WEAK AND INFERIOR FOR THE NEED. BUT, PAUL, YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT I HAVE THE POWER YOU LACK.**
 - d. **YOU WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH, BUT I AM ALWAYS ENOUGH!"**
2. **HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE LOOKED AT OUR SITUATION AND SAID, "IF ONLY THIS PROBLEM WAS SOLVED OR THIS THING OVER HERE WAS SOMEHOW DIFFERENT, THEN I COULD REALLY SERVE THE LORD!"**
 3. **OR, "IF I COULD JUST FEEL BETTER, I COULD DO SOMETHING FOR JESUS."**
 4. **OR, "IF MY HUSBAND OR WIFE WAS ONLY SAVED, IT WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER FOR ME TO SERVE THE LORD."**
 5. **OR, "OH, I WISH I WAS YOUNGER, OR SMARTER, OR MORE TALENTED, THEN I COULD BE USED OF GOD."**
 6. **THE PROBLEM WITH THAT KIND OF THINKING IS THAT IT IS ALL WRAPPED UP IN SELF AND WHAT SELF CAN DO!**
 7. **IT SAYS, "I AM ALL I NEED AND IF I COULD JUST WORK OUT A FEW LITTLE DETAILS, THEN I COULD BE SO MUCH MORE."**
 8. **IN TRUTH, WE ARE NOTHING AND WE CAN DO NOTHING WITHOUT JESUS!**
 9. **IF YOU ARE SAVED AND YOU ARE WALKING IN THE WILL OF THE LORD, THEN YOU ARE RIGHT WHERE HE HAS PUT YOU, PROBLEMS AND ALL,**
 - A. **[PSALM. 37:23]; "THE STEPS OF A GOOD MAN ARE ORDERED BY THE LORD: AND HE DELIGHTETH IN HIS WAY."**

b. [PSALM. 40:2.] *“HE BROUGHT ME UP ALSO OUT OF AN HORRIBLE PIT, OUT OF THE MIRY CLAY, AND SET MY FEET UPON A ROCK, AND ESTABLISHED MY GOINGS.”*

10. **WHAT THE LORD SAYS TO PAUL, HE SAYS TO US: “I AM IN CONTROL! I WILL MEET YOUR NEED AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU!”**

a. **JESUS SAYS THAT “MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT”.**

b. **GRACE IS “THE UNDESERVED LOVE AND FAVOR OF GOD”.**

c. **HE WILL GIVE GRACE TO SUPPORT YOU AND SUSTAIN YOU REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU MAY FACE BEFORE YOU GET OUT OF THIS LIFE!**

11. **WHAT HE DID FOR OTHERS, HE WILL DO FOR YOU!**

a. **(ILL. 3 HEBREWS;**

b. **DANIEL;**

c. **THE WIDOW WHO FED ELIJAH)**

12. **THERE WILL BE GRACE TO STAND FOR HIM,**

13. **GRACE TO SERVE HIM,**

14. **GRACE TO LIVE FOR HIM,**

15. **GRACE TO DIE FOR HIM,**

16. **GRACE TO FACE LIFE FOR HIM.**

17. **THERE WILL BE GRACE, AMAZING, MATCHLESS, MARVELOUS GRACE FOR EVERY VALLEY EXPERIENCE WE FACE.**

18. **WHEN THE LORD SAYS THAT HIS “STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS”, IT SIMPLY MEANS THAT GOD GETS MORE GLORY FROM**

**USING THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD
THAN HE DOES BY USING THE THINGS OF
GREATEST STRENGTH AND POWER,
[1 COR. 1:27].**

- a. **BY MAKING PAUL WEAK, GOD COULD
DISPLAY HIS POWER AND STRENGTH!
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PARADOX, BUT
IT IS TRUE!**
- 19. GOD GETS FAR MORE GLORY OUT OF
WEAKER VESSELS!**
- 20. LOOK AT THE DISCIPLES.**
- a. **THEY WERE ORDINARY, WEAK MEN,
BUT GOD USED THEM TO ALTER THE
WORLD FOR HIS GLORY!**
- 21. LOOK AT THE CHURCH, ORDINARY, WEAK,
FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT IT IS THE VEHICLE
GOD HAS CHOSEN TO DO HIS WORK IN THIS
WORLD,**
- a. **[1 COR. 1:26]. *“FOR YE SEE YOUR CALLING,
BRETHREN, HOW THAT NOT MANY WISE
MEN AFTER THE FLESH, NOT MANY
MIGHTY, NOT MANY NOBLE, ARE CALLED:”***
- 22. THEREFORE, WHEN THE LORD ALLOWS THE
THORNS TO PIERCE YOU, AND WHEN HE
ALLOWS THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS OF
LIFE TO BUFFET YOU, REMEMBER THAT HE
HAS A PLAN AND HE IS GETTING GLORY OUT
OF YOUR WEAKNESS.**
- a. **YOU MAY NEVER KNOW, THIS SIDE OF
ETERNITY, JUST HOW THE LORD USED
YOUR PAIN FOR HIS GLORY!**

ILLUSTRATION

**(FANNY CROSBY WAS BLINDED AT THE AGE OF FIVE BY A
WRONG PRESCRIPTION GIVEN BY A DOCTOR. BUT, IN HER**

90 YEARS OF DARKNESS SHE PENNED SOME 8,000 GOSPEL HYMNS. HER PAIN HAS BROUGHT MORE GLORY TO GOD THAN SHE COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED!)

- D. ALLOW THE LORD WORK IN AND THROUGH YOU LIFE FOR HIS GLORY – V10**
- 1. PAUL REMINDS US THAT THE THORNS AND BUFFETINGS OF LIFE ARE NOT IN VAIN.**
 - 2. THERE IS MUCH BENEFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM THE VALLEY OF SICKNESS.**
 - 3. OF COURSE, PAUL DOES SAY, “...FOR CHRIST’S SAKE”.**
 - 4. THE THINGS HE ENDURED WERE NOT THE RESULT OF FOOLISH DECISIONS ON HIS PART. HE WAS SUFFERING FOR JESUS!**
 - 5. HOW MUCH OF WHAT WE FACE IS THE RESULT OF OUR OWN FOOLISH CHOICES AND FLESHLY DECISIONS?**
 - a. IT DOESN’T MINIMIZE THE PAIN OR THE NEED TO GET TO GOD, BUT IT DOES EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR US TO WALK IN HIS WILL AND NOT OUR OWN!**
 - 6. PAUL SAYS THAT WHEN THE INFIRMITIES OF LIFE HAVE HIM PRESSED BENEATH THEIR WEIGHT, THEN HE IS STRONGER THAN EVER!**
 - a. WHY, BECAUSE THE POWER OF GOD IS ABLE TO WORK IN HIS LIFE. HIS OWN POWER IS SUBDUED BY HIS SUFFERINGS AND THE POWER OF GOD IS ABLE TO MOVE IN A WAY THAT IT COULD NOT UNDER OTHER CONDITIONS!**

- b. **PAUL SAYS, “IT DOESN’T MAKE SENSE, BUT WHEN I AM AT MY WEAKEST AFTER THE FLESH, I AM THE STRONGEST SPIRITUALLY!”**
 - c. **MY, WHAT A TRUTH! WHEN WE ARE BROKEN BY THE BUFFETINGS OF LIFE, WE ARE BROUGHT TO A PLACE WHERE GOD CAN MOVE IN US, ON US AND THROUGH US IN EXTRAORDINARY WAYS!**
- 7. **DO YOU WANT THE POWER OF GOD TO REST UPON YOUR LIFE? THEN, PREPARE TO HURT!**
 - a. **YOU SEE, GOD WILL NOT SHARE HIS GLORY WITH ANOTHER, EX. 20:5!**
 - b. **AND, BEFORE HE WILL USE US IN A GREAT WAY, HE WILL FIRST PUT US IN A POSITION OF DEPENDENCE UPON HIMSELF!**
 - c. **IF YOU WANT THE POWER, THEN YOU HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE!**
- 8. **AS YOU READ THESE VERSES, PAUL USES WORDS LIKE “MOST GLADLY, GLORY, TAKE PLEASURE”.**
 - a. **THESE WORDS INDICATE THAT THE LORD, THROUGH GRACE, HAD TAUGHT PAUL THE SECRET OF REJOICING IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULTY!**
 - b. **MOST OF US CAN REJOICE WHEN THE BATTLE IS OVER, OR WHEN LIFE IS RUNNING SMOOTHLY, BUT WE HAVE REAL TROUBLE REJOICING WHEN**

**HEARTACHES, TRIALS, AND VALLEYS
COME OUR WAY!**

- c. PAUL'S SUFFERINGS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD TAUGHT HIM HOW TO PRAISE THE LORD.**
 - d. PAUL WASN'T ENJOYING WHAT HE WAS FACING, BUT HE LEARNT THE TRUTH THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL, HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING AND HE IS USING THE PAIN FOR HIS GLORY!**
 - e. PAUL WAS SEEING BEYOND THE THORN AND BEYOND THE BUFFETING.**
 - f. HE WAS SEEING THE POWER AND THE GLORY THAT WAS COMING BECAUSE OF WHAT HE WAS FACING!**
 - g. THAT IS WHY HE HAD PEACE AND COULD PRAISE THE LORD IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS VALLEY!**
- 9. WHEN WE COME TO THE PLACE WHERE WE CAN SEE OUR TRIALS FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE, THEN OUR WHOLE OUTLOOK WILL BE ALTERED.**
- a. WE WILL STOP SEEING OUR SITUATION AS BEING HARD, HARSH AND DIFFICULT, BUT WE WILL UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS GOD'S PERFECT PLAN FOR OUR LIVES.**
 - b. WE WILL SEE THAT HE IS WORKING OUT HIS WILL IN US.**

- c. WE WILL SEE THAT HE IS GETTING GLORY.
- d. WE WILL LEARN TO YIELD TO HIM AND HIS WILL FOR OUR LIVES.
- e. WHEN WE GET TO THAT PLACE, THEN THE LORD CAN WORK THROUGH US AND OUR SITUATION IN WAYS WE NEVER IMAGINED!)

E. ALLOW GOD TO USE YOU IN SPITE OF YOUR INFIRMITY – [VV 11-12]

1. GOD CAN SOMETIMES USE YOU BEST WHEN YOU ARE AT YOUR WORST.

- 1. MOSES
- 2. JEREMIAH
- 3. ISAIAH
- 4. PETER
- 5. PAUL - (SAUL)
- 6. ME —
- 7. HE SENT HIS SON WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS