

When Healing Doesn't Come

In recent months we have lost three close friends. The first was a very close friend in Denver who went to be with the Lord after a damaging stroke. I spoke at his service and more than once couldn't hold my tears as I shared a few of the touching and humorous times he and I shared over our fifty-five years of close friendship.

We lost another good friend to cancer of the heart, which is extremely rare. A neurologist and elder at our church here and friends for many years.

A member of one of our home groups in Colorado Springs, and a golfing partner for many years, also went to his eternal home recently. As a retired military officer his funeral was beautiful with the pomp and circumstance that the military conduct so well.

Just last week we returned to Colorado Springs to visit another close friend who has been dealing with esophageal cancer that has now become stomach cancer. He and his wife were also part of the home group I led through most of our twenty years in the Springs.

These losses and the ongoing agony of our friend in the Springs have caused me to dig pretty deep in my own heart and belief systems. Two considerations have been working through the "musings" of my mind.

First—in every case many people were, and are, praying. Persistent prayers from friends and relatives in numerous parts of our country. Heartfelt prayers for God to heal, to give insight to physicians, to cause medications and treatments to work above and beyond all expectations.

Yet, in each and every case thus far, God has selected to take three of the four home. So how do we reconcile that with the multitude of prayers that called on God for mercy? Ah yes; "The just shall live by faith." Does that mean our combined prayers lacked the necessary faith?

Another close friend in Denver wrote a note last week to one of his friends struggling with cancer. He addressed the fact that when healing doesn't come we must realize it is not because those involved didn't have enough faith. He pointed out that we must never put our faith in our faith! We must place our faith in Christ — in Christ alone. Of course our petitions will include wisdom for doctors and the effectiveness of prescribed treatments. But our faith remains subject to the will of our Lord and Father.

I agree with the point he made to his friend. Our faith, our trust, our hope, our reliance, and even our grief must be focused on Christ. All results rest in the mind and heart of our God whose "mercy endures forever."

Our Lord himself prayed in the garden, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."¹ Jesus immediately expressed his trust in his father's plan and purpose for him — and immediate deliverance from the suffering didn't come.

Paul's thorn in the flesh became a challenge for the Apostle, who ultimately accepted his Father's will as he was reminded that the plan called for a provision that did not include removal or healing. The Lord's response was, "**my grace is sufficient.... my strength is made perfect in weakness.**"² In other words, Paul's attitude of trust and assurance toward his Father through the limitations of his "thorn" would glorify God to the many who had eyes to see and ears to hear — and healing didn't come.

Timothy had consistent stomach issues but was told to "**drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often**"³ — and healing didn't come.

Still there are other examples like Epaphroditus who, "**...was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him...**"⁴ Paul went on to explain that the purpose for that particular man, in God's plan, was not yet completed.

We can conclude that we are to glorify God *in everything*. That is our purpose. Spiritually **we are complete, holy, righteous saints because our spirit is eternally joined to the Spirit of God himself.**⁵ He is Savior, he is Lord, and he is our Life. God's incredible plan was not just to provide for the forgiveness of our sins, but through that he was purposed to give us his Life.

For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear we are all called, during our brief life on this planet, to make God's glory and presence visible to the world around us.

When healing doesn't come, one of the fruits of the Spirit is **long suffering.**⁶ Each of my friends in their demanding process of suffering have displayed glory to God through a faith and trust that passes all understanding. There is a majesty in what I see in that incredible process.

As I walk our little dog every morning, we often pass through a field that opens up to the front range of the Collegiate Peaks of the Colorado Rockies. More often than not, I get a sensation of worship. No music, no voices, no crowds. I see majestic mountains. And even more real than the mountains is the awesome majesty of the one behind their creation — the Creator-Father who gave of himself that we might have an eternal presence in his kingdom, free of all pain and suffering.

And out of those moments are thoughts of my friends, their spouses, their families, the endurance, and the long suffering. The majesty of God was and is expressed in the core of each person living through the ordeal — their calling to suffer in ways many will never know — and giving glory to God in the process.

Blessings to those who glorify God in their suffering. Praise to our God, as perfect healing becomes the eternal reward that awaits us all in the presence of our loving Father.

- 1 Luke 22:42
- 2 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
- 3 1 Timothy 5:23
- 4 Philippians 2:27-30
- 5 1 Corinthians 6:17
- 6 Galatians 5:22