

Keeping the Faith When Prayers for Your Health Seem Unanswered

God is a Healer. That's His very nature.

And yet there are many believers who are still sick. If you're one of them, you know the internal heart struggle:

He has healed others. Why not me?

Am I doing something wrong? Should I pray harder?

It's my own fault. That's why I'm not healed.

Perhaps God really doesn't still heal today.

As a physician, I've seen believers struggle with chronic illness even while they kept on praying. As a wife, I continue to pray for my husband's healing while watching him fight his illness daily. As a minister, I've prayed for many people who are sick; some of them have been healed, but some have not.

One of the strongest impressions I hold in my heart came from an interview I watched some years ago between a middle-aged terminally ill woman and a healing evangelist. I don't remember the woman's name, but I know she died a few months later. She told the preacher, "Don't pray for me to get well. The intimacy I have found with Jesus through my illness is more precious than anything else, and I don't want to lose that."

The peace and glow in her face as she expressed her love for Jesus have stuck with me regardless of the theology behind her statements. I can think of many other living examples of how God works in and through those who are physically

challenged: Joni Eareckson Tada, John O'Leary, Bethany Hamilton and more. Their spirit echoes that of biblical characters who were not healed: Elisha (who suffered a long terminal illness, 2 Kin. 13:14), Paul (and his thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. 12:7-9) and others.

You may point to numerous Scriptures that reveal how God heals. And He does. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. I've experienced and witnessed God's healing power. This article isn't about that. This is for those of you who believe and pray—and pray and pray and pray—and still don't get well.

If You're Still Sick

Here are some things from God's Word I'd like you to know if you or someone you love is still sick after you have prayed.

1. God still loves you. The witness of believers throughout history confirms what the Bible says: God loves you—period. There's nothing you can do that would make Him love you any more or any less. He loves you the same whether you are rich or poor, young or old, “good” or “bad,” strong or weak, well or sick. His love for you is not dependent on you. He is love! (1 John 4:8).

2. God wants you well. One of my professors liked to say, “Jesus had only one attitude about sickness: He's against it.” God hasn't made you sick—not to punish you, not to discipline you. Whether as a result of your own actions or simply from living in our broken world, sickness, weakness and death is from only one place—the enemy, who steals, kills and destroys. Jesus came to give you life (John 10:10).

3. God can use your sickness for His glory. That doesn't mean God enjoys your suffering. He suffers with you. But God as the Creator can take what the enemy meant for harm and turn it into something good—for you and for others (Gen. 50:20). He may use it as a means to mature your character, as a vehicle

to minister to others who are hurting or to bring you closer to Himself. That's His creativity at work.

4. God can still heal you. Let's not get caught up in the debate about when. He may heal you now, or later or in eternity. But God is never untrue to Himself, and He is the Healer (Ex. 15:26) That's His very nature. And remember there are many parts of you that need healing. God may heal your heart, your relationships, your soul or any other part of you even as your body still struggles for the present.

5. God is with you. There are too many testimonies of those who have come closer to Jesus during their illness to believe anything else. Even in death, God's presence is near to those who believe (Ps. 116:15). Jesus promised never to leave you—regardless of whether you are sick or not (Heb. 13:5). If you're a believer, His Holy Spirit is real, alive and in you—regardless.

If in this life only we have hope, Paul said, "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). But this is not the end. This life is an opportunity to begin living the eternal life Jesus promised, but it's only the beginning.

So what can you do if you're still sick?

- **Keep praying.** Stay very close to Him. Keep on praying for healing. God hears you!
- **Listen to Him.** If He tells you to do something, do it.
- **Trust Him.** Know that He is with you always, that He is good, and that He cares.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

May I pray for you? "Dear Lord, I pray your healing presence minister to that one who is sick right now. May they know personally your heart of love. May they feel your strength in their body and in their soul. And most of all, may they know that You are with them—today. Amen."

Have you prayed for healing and are still sick? Have you learned anything about God in the process? {eoa}

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