

BEHOLD, HE WHOM THOU LOVEST IS SICK

By Henry T. Mahan

John 11:1-3

TV-497b

Henry Mahan T. Tape Library

Zebulon Baptist Church

6088 Zebulon Highway

Pikeville, Ky 41501

Now, I've prepared a message for you today, which I believe will be of great, great benefit and help to many, many of you. I'm going to speak to you from **John, Chapter 11**, the first three verses. Just three verses of **John: 11**, on the subject, "*Behold, He Whom Thou Lovest Is Sick.*" Now we begin at **verse 1**, and it says, "*Now a certain man was sick.*" Now this is not a parable, this is not a story; this is a fact. There was a certain man. His name was Lazarus. A certain man, named Lazarus, was sick. He lived in the town of Bethany. This was a town, about two or three miles from Jerusalem. It says in the next verse, "*Now, a certain man named Lazarus was sick and he was from the town of Bethany.*" It was a town of Martha, and her sister, Mary.

In Bethany, there was a little family, there was Martha the older daughter, and there was Mary, the younger girl and Lazarus, the brother. And these three were greatly loved of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ loved this family. It was a family that loved Him. Our Lord often came to their house. He was there several times in this little town of Bethany. Our Lord would come and eat with them. It says that Martha prepared the meal and Mary sat at His feet; and Lazarus sat at the table with Him. It should be remembered, as I deal with this message and scripture, that these people were special to the Savior. They were loved by Him. He loved them, and they loved Him. They had wonderful fellowship with Him. They believed on Him, and they believed His Word. Mary sat at His feet, and would listen to Him teach. One day she broke an expensive bottle of precious ointment, (perfume) and anointed His feet and dried His feet with the hair of her head. Martha served Him, and Lazarus sat at the table with Him.

It says that this man Lazarus was sick. The Lord Jesus was off somewhere else, and the two sisters sent word to Christ, and this is what they said to Him, they said, "*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" Lazarus is sick! He's very, very sick and ill. Now then, if a neighbor had been sick, these girls would not have been so astonished and amazed. They wouldn't have said, "behold thy neighbor's sick." A lot of neighbors got sick, and a lot of people in their little town of Bethany got sick and died. These girls were alarmed and astonished; they were surprised. They expressed it in this message that they sent to Christ, they said, "*Behold He whom thy love is sick.*"

I'll tell you how they reasoned. I know, because I have done this. I've reasoned this way myself, and I suppose you have. I know what they were thinking; they were thinking as they watched Lazarus lying there, dying; He was sickened to death. He did die the next day or so. As they watched Him there in his sickness and illness, this was going through their mind, "We love Him, if we had our way, He wouldn't be sick." If we had the power we would raise him up right now. That is what they were thinking about the Lord. They said, "Lord, you love him, why is he so ill?" You love him, he loves you, why is he so sick? (Why indeed)? "*Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" (Why is he sick)?

Well, that is what we are going to deal with in this message. If I can answer this question, Why, (why indeed), do God's people suffer? David, if you want to read something on this subject, read **Psalm 73**. He had a real problem with this, a real problem. If I can answer this question, I can be of great help to many of you listening to this program today, because that is why you are at home now, because you're not able to be out. Many of you are home right now listening to this program, because, you're not able, you're sick, not able to be out. You're sick, many of you for a long time. You love God and God loves you. You can say with Peter, I can say with the Apostle Peter, "*Lord you know I love you, you know all things, you know I love you.*" And I will tell you; we love Him because He first loved us. That's right! And you can say this morning that the Lord loves me because I love Him. And I love Him because He first loved me and I'm sick. Behold, you're sick, not only that, some of you are troubled and burdened and you're lonely and you are in sorrow and need. It can be said of you, "Lord, behold He or She, whom thou lovest, is sick."

Let's see if I can deal with this. **First of all**, these sisters were amazed because they used the word, "*behold.*" "*Lord, behold.*" The Lord knew he was sick. "*Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" We shouldn't be surprised if Lazarus gets sick or we get sick. After all, Lazarus is a human being. He is a son of Adam. He lives in the flesh, and this flesh is subject to all matter of sicknesses, diseases and old age and death. God's children are God's children, but they are still the children of men. Within our veins, flows the blood of fallen Adam. The scripture says, "*In Adam we die. By one man sin came into this world, and death by sin. So, death passed upon all men.*" There was death, disease, infirmities and afflictions came to us through Adam; it's in our veins, and in our blood.

The love of God does not separate us from the necessities of life or from the infirmities of life or from the afflictions of life. The Lord loved Lazarus, but he was sick. The blood of Christ delivers us from the diseases of the soul. Our sicknesses and disease is of the soul, sin is a disease of the soul and the blood of Christ cleanseth us, purifies us, redeems us and makes us Holy. As far as sin is concerned, we have no sin before God and His law and His justice. Our sins are paid for. The blood of Christ doesn't deliver us from heart ailments. It doesn't deliver us from cancer. It doesn't deliver us from asthma. It doesn't deliver us from pneumonia. It doesn't deliver us from the weaknesses of the flesh and bones. It doesn't deliver us from physical death; we're going to die.

Two years ago I had a serious case of pneumonia; I was sick for eight weeks. (Sick, so very, very, sick)! Just a while ago, my daughter went through this cancer thing. She had operations, surgery, and radiation. Behold, I love her, the Lord loves her, she loves Him,

but she's sick. You see, God said to Adam, **Genesis 3:17**, "Adam, you listened to Eve, you ate the fruit, now cursed is the ground, because of you and your sin." *"In sorrow you're going to eat of the ground, all the days of your life, thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth to you because of your sin."* In the sweat of your face, you're going to eat bread, you're going to work hard, and you're going to labor, bend your back, and bruise your hands. You're going to labor in the sweat of your brow, until you return to the ground, until you get sick and die. *"For dust you are and dust ye shall return."* Now, you may be a man of God, but you're still a man. You are subject to all of the necessities and afflictions and infirmities of this flesh. Lazarus is sick, but we shouldn't be surprised, that shouldn't amaze us. Lazarus is a man. If I get sick tomorrow, I don't know; I'm nearly 70 year old. This body is weak and frail; I have to die. (You do too)! If we never got sick, we'd never die.

Secondly, we should not be surprised when we have trials in the flesh. God promised us trials. God only had one Son without sin; He has no sons without suffering. If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he'll suffer persecution, afflictions, and infirmities. **John, 16:33** says, *"These things have I spoken to you that in me, you might have peace. In this world, you're going to have tribulation."* In this world, you're going to have trials and troubles, *"But be of good courage, I have overcome the world."* (I've overcome the world)! Paul, in **Romans, Chapter 8**, talks about the sufferings of this present life. It talks about the sufferings of this present life, this present time. *"The sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that we shall enjoy."*

Hebrews, 12, declares that afflictions, trial and chastisement are the mark of Sonship. *"Whom the Lord loves, He chastens."* *"Behold, Lord, He whom thou lovest is sick."* (That's a sign I love him)! *"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. If you be without chastisement, you're not sons, you're not children."* James talks about the sufferings of Job. Suffering is the lot of God's people. I'm a pastor, and I've been a pastor for 44 years. I've gone to the hospital, the homes, the bedside, the funeral parlor and the graveside, with people whom I love, whom God loves, which love God. They have afflictions and trials. To be without chastisement, you're not His child. He's promised us these things.

And **thirdly**, we shouldn't be surprised when the Lord brings afflictions and trials in our lives, (they're good for us)! Now, come on preacher! "Yes sir, they are good for us, they're good."

Do you know what David said in **Psalms 119:71**? He said, *"It's good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn His statutes."* That's right! How do we learn? We learn by paying, by suffering, by trial, and by experience; that is how we learn. Do you know what learning does? *"Learning brings experience, and experience brings patience, and patience brings hope."* That's right, *"Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience and experience, hope."* You see, let me tell you something, we need to learn something; we need to be taught. We need to be stripped, we need to be humbled, we need for God to cut the edges off of us, melt us, and mold us and make us like Christ. We need for Him to give us compassion, grace, love, faith, tenderness and try us. (Take us to the furnace and try us)! We need it; it's good for us. You see; there are strong men and women. You say;

“I’m strong.” All right, those that are strong are apt to be harsh, too harsh, unsympathetic, and unconcerned. So, God takes them to the furnace and melts them and gives them compassion. Strong, independent people are prone to be proud and self-righteous and self-sufficient. God has to make them know their frailty. He has to strip them, He has to show them their weakness, and show them their infirmities, and bring them (down) to tears, pain and agony seeking God. Helpless!

That’s the reason Paul had that thorn in the flesh. Do you remember, He said, “*God gave me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan to buffet me?*” I asked God to take it away and He says; I’m going to leave it, “*less Paul be exalted above measure.*” He thinks He’s somebody. I’ll tell you another thing. People who have great wealth, and great professions, gifts and talents are often critical of poor people. (Why don’t you do this)? They don’t have the means that you have. (Why are you so bashful)? They don’t have the gifts that you have. (Why don’t you stand up for yourself)? They’re weak. And when you’re so gifted and talented and rich, you are apt to be critical of the poor, the weak and the needy.

And so what does God have to do? He has to shut our mouths and break our bones, and crush us, take the pride out and bring us down to where we say with David, “*Lord hear me, I’m poor and needy.*” Paul said, “*Who’s weak that I’m not weak? “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of mercy and comfort who comforts us in our troubles that we may be able to comfort them who are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith God comforted us.”* That’s right! Did you get a hold of that? Troubles are troubles in the flesh. Just as long as I’m in the flesh, I’m going to have trouble. Troubles are promised of God. God said, “*In this world you’re going to have trouble.*” Troubles are good for me. Troubles bring me the comfort of God, so that I can comfort another fellow who goes through the same valley, the same trial and the same heartache. We have troubles and trials. Now, I’ll tell you this, these **troubles are for our good and they are for His glory and they are to accomplish His purpose.**

You know, when these sisters sent word to our Lord and said, “*Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*” And our Lord said, what did He say? He said, “This sickness, replying to His disciples, this sickness is not unto death.” (Well, Lazarus died)! Christ is saying that it is not unto (final death); “I’m going to raise Him from the dead.” “*This sickness is not unto final death, but it is for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified.*” Lazarus, whom the Lord loved, is lying there sick because it is going to bring God some glory. It’s going to accomplish the will and purpose of God. It’s going to be used by God to bless some people. Think of all the people who believed on Christ because of the raising of Lazarus. People down through the years who read the story, who have been blessed by it, as we’re being blessed by it right now. We’re being instructed because Lazarus suffered. “This particular sickness,” our Lord said, “is not the end of Lazarus on the earth.”

My pneumonia was not the end of me. By God’s grace, if He’s pleased, my daughter’s cancer will not be the end now. She will get sick and die some day. (I will too)! I often wonder how that I’ll leave here, don’t you? What will it be that God will send to take me away. Well, whatever it is, it’ll be good. It’ll take me to be with my Lord. But, all sickness, I didn’t say all sickness everywhere, is for good, because I’m saying, “*All things*

work together for good to them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose.” You get me now; all sickness in the lives of God’s people who love Him, and He loves them, is for (His) glory, to accomplish (His) purpose, and will be for their good.

John Bunyon spent 12 years in prison. Did you know that? He had a wife and several children. One of the children was a little blind girl. He was a preacher of the gospel. They put him in prison because of the gospel he preached. They said they would let him out, if he would quit preaching the gospel, but he wouldn’t quit. While he was in the prison, he wrote that book, “Pilgrims Progress;” which has been a blessing, I guess, to millions of people. His trial, 12 years, in jail, was for his good, God’s glory, and to accomplish God’s purpose.

Charles Spurgeon lived 58 years. He was one of the greatest preachers who ever lived. He spent a great part of his life, in the sickbed. He was in pain, and agony and sickness. He said, “To make me a useful vessel for the Master’s use, make me an able vessel.”

David Brainard was sick with tuberculosis and they called it (consumption) back then. It was back in the 18th Century, 1700 and something. He died when he was 29 years old. This man, David Brainard, was one of the greatest preachers and missionaries, whoever lived. He was in love with Jonathan Edwards’s daughter. Jonathan Edwards was that great preacher, of Massachusetts’s. He said, “That any system of theology that produces a David Brainard, is worthy of your study.” David Brainard had tuberculosis and rode a horse, ministering to the Indians up in the Northeast part of this country, for years and years. God used him mightily. He used his sickness, used his distress, used his trouble, and used his heartache, for God’s glory and the accomplishment of His purpose.

Listen to this point. “God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform, He plants His footsteps on the sea, and rides upon the storm. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread, are big with mercy and will break with blessings on your head. His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour, the bud may have a bitter taste, but wait until it opens up, and sweet will be the flower.”

In closing, I want us to look for a while at these sisters, who called to the Lord, their message and their word to Christ. I want you to look with me at this. Now, Lazarus was sick and these sisters sent for the Lord. They didn’t send for a neighbor, they didn’t send for a preacher, they didn’t send for human help, they looked to Christ. Now, I know we are to use means. You use whatever means God puts at your disposal. I know God’s going to feed me, but I’m going to eat. I know that God is going to clothe me, but I’m going to put my clothes on. I know God’s going to give me health, according to His will, but I’m going to take care of what I have. I’m going to use the means. But I look to Him, chiefly and firstly; He’s the physician. So, when Lazarus got sick, I know they had compassion on Him and they gave Him water and they bathed Him with cool towels, and they did all these things, but they sent for the Lord. Have you got it?

Secondly, you see, this is one good thing about trials and troubles, sorrows and sickness; they cause us to seek the Lord. That's right, they cause us to pray. Isn't it true? When do you pray the most? It is when you are in the most need. When do you search the scriptures with more enthusiasm and more hunger and more thirst? (When you're hurting, and when you're in need). I'll tell you the truth, when we are in trouble, that's when we call on God. That's when we cry and that's when we pray. "*Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, Oh God, hear my voice.*" When do you cry like that? When you're in the depths. Without the depths, you wouldn't cry. No, we wouldn't, no we wouldn't; that's us! We've got to have these valleys that we might seek His face. That's right!

Thirdly, the prayer of these sisters was based on the right foundation. They didn't say, "Now Lord, you know how Lazarus loves you." No, they said, "*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick.*" We're not pleading His love for you; we're pleading your love for Him. And they didn't plead their works. They didn't say, "Lord, you know how many times you've eaten at our table, you know how many times we've opened our home to you, we love you, we've done all these things." That's terrible praying isn't it? Lord, you know how I've given, how I've worked, how I've labored, and here I am sick. No, they said, "*Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" And they didn't tell the Lord, "Make Lazarus well; they didn't even tell Him what to do; they simply said, "*Behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick.*" We cast Him on you. What you do is according to your will; we leave it with you. The Lord may be pleased to heal us; He may not. But, one thing is true, if the Lord doesn't heal me; I'll be well forever if He takes me home to Glory. I'm well forever!

You know, when old King Nebuchadnezzar was going to throw the three Hebrew children into the fiery furnace, he ridiculed them first; he made fun of them. He said, "*Where's your God, is He able to deliver you?*" Do you know what they said? They said, "King, He's able to deliver us, but if He doesn't and is not pleased to deliver us, He's still God and we'll still praise Him, and we won't worship your false God." If the Lord is pleased to heal me, that'll be fine. If He's not, that is fine too!

"*Behold, He whom thou lovest, is sick.*" I leave Him with you; do what you will. I know the Judge will do right. He's too wise to make a mistake, He's too good to do wrong. I'll tell you, we're not informing the Lord of our sickness, and we're entreating His mercies.

When we pray to be healed; here's another thought. When we pray to be healed, there may be a prayer that is in conflict with ours. Our Lord prayed, "*Father I will, that those whom thou has given me, be with me, where I am.*" So remember, when you're praying for a loved one, His prayer may be in conflict with yours. It may be His will to take them all. So Lord, "*Thy will be done.*"