

222. God's Gracious Will when He Afflicts Us with Illness.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. *Matt. 10, 29, 30.*

No disease can come to our door, no illness can touch us, without the will and permission of our heavenly Father. When we are afflicted with illness, we may find some natural cause and even blame ourselves for not taking proper care of our health; but we must know that everything is done under the ruling and guidance of Him who taught us to pray: "Thy will be done."

It is principally our spiritual treatment which God has in view when He afflicts us with illness. His intention is that we should learn to trust in Him alone and expect help solely from Him. "Thy will be done," — saying this, we pledge ourselves to suffer the will of God, whatever He may send us, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. "If any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." "Thy will be done," this we must always say in our prayers, no matter how dark and dreary the prospects may seem. In the day of trouble we must think of something more than the mere earthly and temporal aspect of the trouble; we should think of God, who permitted it to touch us and who guides its course. Then amid our sufferings and afflictions we hear the voice of the Savior: "Be of good cheer, it is I."

And how graciously does He comfort us when He afflicts us with illness! Paul suffered from a physical ailment and prayed to be relieved from it. Thrice he besought the Lord that it might depart from him. But what was the response? "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And so you may have an ailment from which you desire to be relieved, but God deems it best for you to keep it. Then do not think that He does not mean well with you. You are His dear child in spite of that ailment. "All things work together for good to them that love God." It is His loving-kindness that leads us.

Prayer.

O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul. If it is Thy will, however, that we should bear the cross, help us to bear it that we may not despair in the day of trouble. When our heart is bowed down and our soul is heavy, may Thy Word and Spirit comfort us; let the example of Thy dear Son, who suffered so willingly, induce us to bear our own cross without murmuring; and finally lead us to pleasures at Thy right hand forevermore. Amen.

There shall we bathe our weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across our peaceful breast.

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