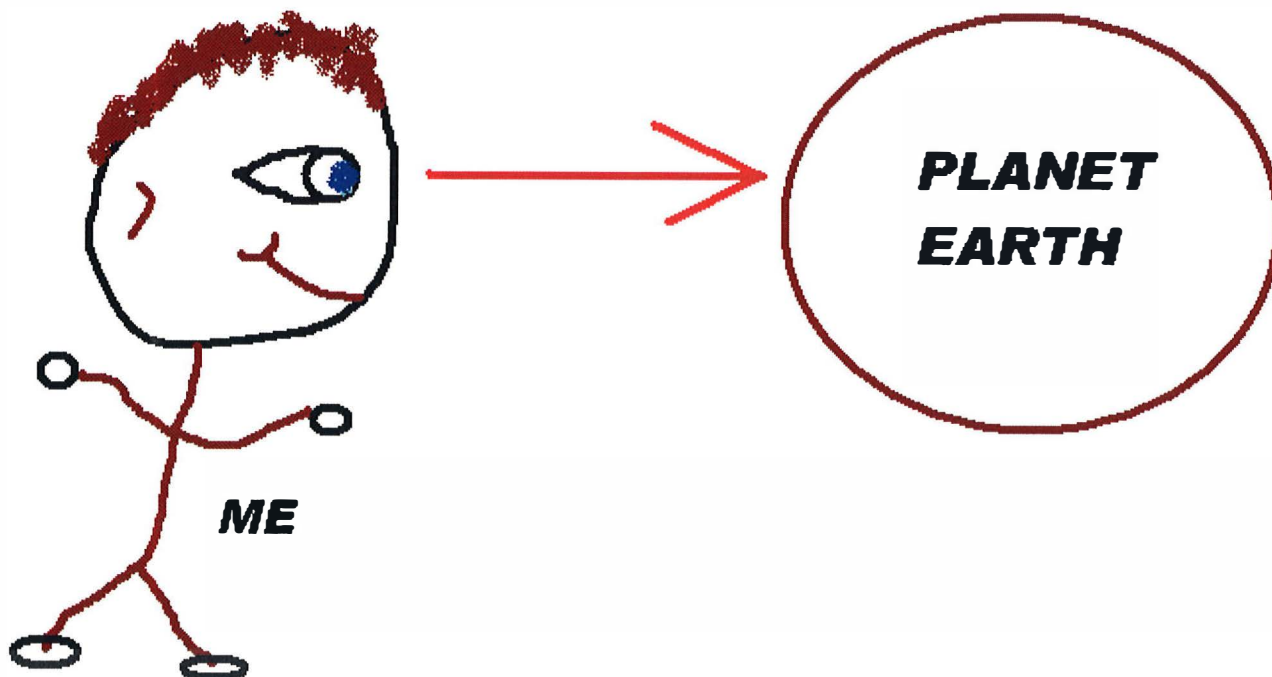


CHAPTER 8

THE PROBLEM OF DISEASE

What is disease? A *disease* is a sickness or an illness. A *disease* is some bodily trouble or problem that keeps a person from functioning in a normal and healthy way. In this chapter we want to think about disease and sickness and see what the Bible teaches about these things.

Looking at the World



As we have learned in previous lessons, we live in a sin-cursed world. We live in a world in which there is sorrow and sickness and suffering and disease and death. What kind of diseases and sicknesses are there in the world? Can you name some of them? Is there a cure for some of these things? Are there some things that doctors are not able to cure?

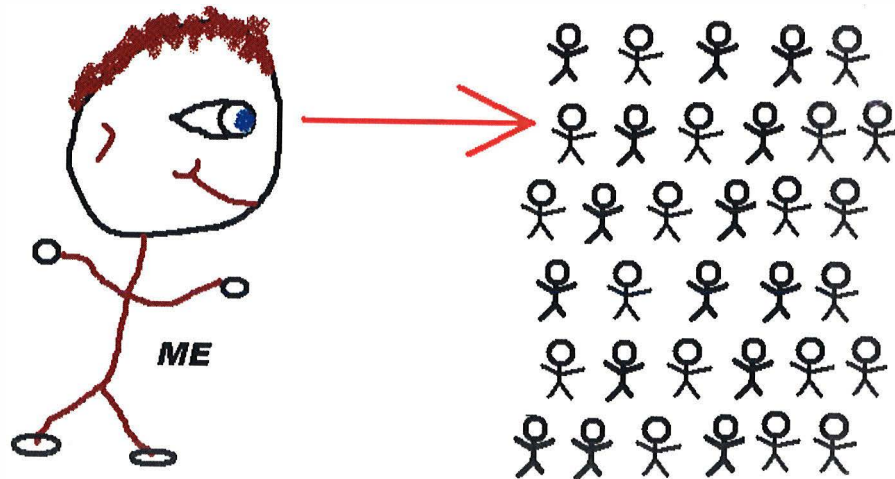
What are some things which we see that remind us that disease and sickness and death are very real?

Hospitals

Cemeteries

Drug Stores

Looking at the People in the World

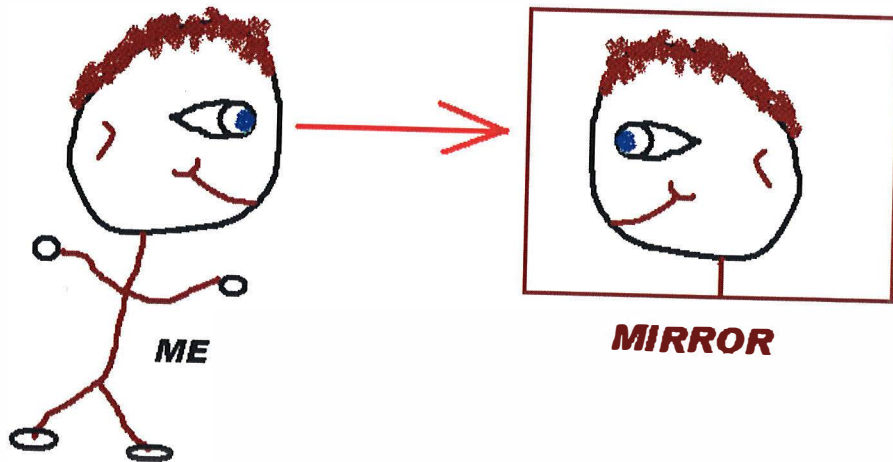


As you look at the people around you, what do you see? Are some of these people suffering because of disease? Do you know anyone who has cancer? Do you know anyone who has had a heart attack? Do you know any young people who have had leukemia (a disease of the blood that is often fatal)? Do you have grandparents who are suffering because of disease or sickness?

Do you know of anyone who has died because of an illness? Have you ever been to a funeral home to see the body of someone who has died? Have you known a person less than 20 years old who has died? What was the cause of death?

Yes, disease and death are very real. People are dying every day. The next time you see a newspaper, look for the **obituary** page and you will read about the people who have recently died. All men and women have an appointment with death: "And as it is appointed unto men once to _____, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Looking at Myself



Take a good look at yourself! Are you in good health now? Have you missed any days of school this year because of sickness? Have you ever been in the hospital? What for? What is the worst sickness or illness that you have ever had? Are you going to get sick in the future?

Sometimes when we think about disease and sickness we begin to worry and become fearful. We might even ask ourselves questions like these: Am I going to get sick? Will I get some disease such as cancer or leukemia? Will I ever have a heart attack or a stroke? Will I have to suffer and be in pain because of sickness or disease? Will the doctors and scientists be able to find a cure for cancer? Will I be able to live a long and healthy life? Will I ever lose my eyesight and become blind? Will I ever lose my hearing and become deaf? Will I ever lose my ability to talk and communicate (this sometimes happens to people who have strokes)? Will I ever lose my memory and forget many things? An old man once said this: "There are two things that happen when a person gets old. The first thing that happens is that the memory begins to fail." The old man paused and then said, "I forget what the second thing is."

When is the last time you thanked God for a healthy mind and body? When is the last time you thanked God for good eyes and ears and memory? Most people forget how wonderful it is to be in good health until they become sick! Every believer should bless the LORD every day and not forget all His _____ (see Psalm 103:2 and also read verse 3).

Looking at God



God is the greatest Doctor of all and He greatly cares about His patients (1 Peter 5:7; Matthew 10:28-31). God knows all about the problems of disease, sickness and death.

1) *God can cure any disease.*

Sicknesses and diseases are no problem to God. There are many things that human doctors cannot cure. Human doctors, in most cases, are not able to make blind people see. There are many diseases that have no cure. But God can cure anything!

Read Matthew 4:23-24. Did Jesus heal **all** kinds of diseases and illnesses? _____ The Bible tells us that when the sick and diseased and blind and crippled came to Jesus "He healed them _____" (Matthew 12:15). Did Jesus ever turn someone away because He was unable to heal the person? Did Jesus ever say, "Sorry, I do not know how to help you. I have no cure for you." ? _____

Is any sickness too great for God to heal? _____ "Is anything too _____ for the _____?" (See Genesis 18:14.) Even the problem of death is not too great for God! Why didn't Martha want Jesus to take away the stone from the front of the tomb of dead Lazarus (John 11:39)? _____ Did Jesus have power even over death (John 11:41-44)? _____ Eight times in the Bible (three in the Old Testament and five in the New Testament) individuals were brought back to life after they had died, showing that God has no problem with death. He's the God of life (John 11:25-26; 14:6).

God can cure any disease **if** it is His will. But is it always God's will that a person be cured and healed?

2) *God allows disease and sickness.*

If God wanted to, could He remove all disease and sickness from the face of the earth? _____ If God so desired, could He keep everyone perfectly healthy?

God allows sickness and disease, and God knows what He is doing. Read Job chapter 2. Did God allow Job's body to be covered with painful boils? _____ Did God allow Satan to do this to Job's body? _____ Did God allow Satan to take Job's life (see Job 2:6)? _____ God was in complete control of everything that happened to Job and nothing happened to Job without God's permission.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-8 we learn that Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" which was a very painful and difficult physical problem. Three times Paul asked God to take it away (verse 8). Did God heal him and take it away (verse 9)? _____ God wanted to teach Paul something! It is true that God is able to heal a person. But it is also true that God is able to give a person strength to go through pain and suffering!

3) *God can comfort.*

In the middle of pain and sickness God is right there! The Bible says that He is the "God of all C _____" (2 Cor. 1:3). God may not always cure us right away, but He is able to take us through any problem. God is greater than any problem or sickness we will ever have.

4) *God has a purpose.*

We do not always understand why people must suffer with sickness and disease. But God understands and God has a reason for everything He does.

Suppose there is a believer who is paralyzed from the neck down. This person cannot move his body. There is very little this person can do. He cannot walk or work. He cannot drive a car.

What purpose does God have for this believer? He may not be able to go to church. Can he go around to his neighbors and tell them about the Lord? _____ Can he hand out tracts? _____ There is very little this man can do, but **this man is important to God!** This man may be the only believer living on his street, and as the angels look down they know that there is someone who believes in the true God! Even though he is paralyzed he still can be a testimony and a

witness for God. He can have a thankful heart and he can "Amen" (agree with) what God has said in His Word. The same thing is true for you. You may be the only believer in your class at school and God can point you out saying, "There is someone who knows that I am God. There is a person who loves Me and believes in Me and obeys Me!" You too can be a testimony and a witness before men and angels!

5) *God has allowed medicine and doctors.*

God is not against doctors. The man who wrote the gospel of Luke was a doctor (see Colossians 4:14). In fact, Jesus once said that those who are sick need a P _____ (Luke 5:31). God has given men the minds and abilities to do and to discover many things. We should thank God for doctors, nurses, hospitals, medicines and drugs!

Before Death

Dying is usually not a pleasant experience. Most people suffer before they die, unless they die quite suddenly and quickly. Some may suffer much and some may suffer little, but usually there is some kind of suffering. What is dying going to be like for me? Someday I must pass through death's door. Some people die suddenly in their sleep. Some people suffer for months with cancer before they die. Will my dying be fast or slow? Will it hurt or not? Will it be very painful? Will I die of cancer? a heart attack? from a fire? from drowning? a car accident?

What do you think would be the worst way to die? _____ What do you think would be the best way to die? As we think about dying, we should always remember two things:

1) *The Lord already knows all about my death.*

Did Jesus know all about Peter's death long before Peter died (John 21:18-19)? _____ God is in complete control of our living and our dying. Nothing can happen to us without God's permission. If God can help us to live, is He also able to help us to die (Hebrews 13:5-6)?

2) *The believer cannot die until it is the Lord's time.*

The word "**immortal**" means "can never die, incapable of dying." George Whitfield, the great preacher, once said, "I am immortal until my work is done!" The believer cannot die until God is finished with him. When the believer has finished all that God wants him to do, then God will allow his life to come to an end. Was Paul afraid to die (Philippians 1:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:8)?

_____ For the believer death is the door that brings one into the very presence of Christ (Psalm 116:15). For the unbeliever death is the door that brings one into a state of being separated from God and punished by God forever (Rev. 20:15). Is God pleased by the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23,32)? _____ God does not want wicked men to die in their sins; He wants them to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

After Death

We have thought about what it will be like before death. We should also think about what it will be like after death.

1) For the unsaved person: What is on the other side of death for the unbeliever? Will he have less suffering or more suffering (see Luke 16:23-28; Mark 9:43-48)? _____ No matter how much the unsaved person suffers in this life, he can be sure that hell will be worse!

2) For the saved person: What is on the other side of death for the believer? Read Revelation 21:4. Will there be any more sorrow? Will there be any more disease or sickness? _____ Will there be any more crying? _____ Will there be any more pain? _____ Will there be any more death? _____ No matter how many joys and pleasures the saved person experiences in this life, he can be sure that heaven will be better!

The Greatest Disease of All

There is something much worse than cancer or leprosy or leukemia! There is something that is much more deadly than any of these things. The greatest killer of them all is SIN, because "sin when it is finished bringeth forth _____" (James 1:15). See John 8:24. The greatest disease of all is called sinful heart disease: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately _____" (Jeremiah 17:9--"desperately wicked" means "incurably sick," there is no human cure). If you want to see how sinfully sick man really is, read Isaiah 1:4-6.

How many of us have sinful heart disease (1 Kings 8:46)? _____ How many of us deserve to die (Romans 6:23; 1:32)? _____ But there is good news! There is a cure for sinful heart disease! We learn about this cure in 1 Peter 2:24-25. Christ died on the cross so that we could be healed! Christ died on the cross so that we can live an abundant life now (in this life--John 10:10) and so that we can live eternally with Christ!

The story is told of a mother who was horrified when her young child was suddenly bitten by a snake. Out of love for her child she put her mouth to the wound and sucked out the poison. The child lived but the mother died because she had a cut in her mouth and the poison went into her blood.

Every person born into this world has been bitten by SIN. The Lord Jesus Christ took the poison upon Himself and was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He died so that we might live! Do you believe that Jesus did this for you? Have you asked Christ to be your Saviour from sin? Read Romans 10:9-13.

I can trust God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to take me through all the years that are ahead for me, whether they will be easy or hard or whether I am healthy or sick—whatever, whenever, however! I know that the LIVING GOD is all I need to assure me of success and He is always there right when I need Him!

"Trust ye in the LORD _____" (ISAIAH 26:4)