

God is Sovereign Over Sickness

Introduction

In these days where mass-hysteria reigns around the world, ignited by a disease that has killed fewer people than a bad season of flu, it behoves us to freshly consider that God is Lord over all.

God is sovereign. God is Lord. God has dominion over all things. Christians sing such things but sometimes do not believe them. If God is Lord over all, then he is Lord over all sickness.

Sadly, there are many otherwise good Christians that do not believe this. I have lost friends, including pastors, because I have affirmed that God is in control over all sickness – all without exception. I have had a supposed Calvinist¹ pastor say to me, ‘*How dare you say that God is in control over cancer*’. But if God does not control cancer, then he is not God. If there is one thing outside God’s control then God is not in full control; God is no longer God.

I will die in a ditch to defend the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. I will continue to lose friends and alienate people if needs be. If I am the last man left alive on Earth I will still declare that God is Lord.

I am a very medically compromised person; indeed, I am currently under eight specialists. One of my conditions is terminal and deeply undermines all my organs (by God’s grace I have continued thus far for over ten years with this). Yet I will still shout that God is in control over all sickness. I am not angry with God about my ailments. I believe that God controls my life and planned it before time began (Ps 139:16). In God’s plan, my sicknesses were necessary for me to fulfil my ministry. That’s all I need to know.

I will prove that God is sovereign over all diseases by examining the teaching of the Bible on sickness.

God is not vindictive

God is good. God cannot do anything except good. God is also just and impartial; he does not favour but acts on truth. God is also righteous and wise and only does the right thing. So when God condemns a person to sickness or untimely death there is always a good reason.

One of God’s testimonies is that he heals. Indeed, he heals, throughout history, certain individuals from all the things that he also punishes with: blindness, fever, death and so on.

The LORD opens *the eyes of* the blind. Ps 146:8

¹ John Calvin was the chief articulator of God’s sovereignty in history. Calvinism is based upon the foundation that God is Lord over all.

Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. Matt 8:14-15

Then he cried out to the LORD and said, 'O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?' And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, 'O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him.' Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, 'See, your son lives!' 1 Kg 17:20-23

Indeed, in the Bible, the number of people that God heals far outweighs the number that he afflicts.

God does not delight in people being sick just as he does not delight in death: 'Say to them: "As I live", says the Lord GOD, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"' (Ezek 33:11). God is not vindictive like the Hindu goddess Kali (Shakti).

God only acts in accordance with his attributes. One of these attributes is justice and in God's wisdom, justice sometimes demands immediate punishment as well as final judgment. Extreme cases where this is logical are Judas, who betrayed the Messiah, and Herod Agrippa, who publicly accepted worship as God. In every case there is a good reason for it.

Sometimes the sin is not as great as others, but it necessitates immediate divine judgment. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed in temporal judgment by fire, yet the population of Capernaum was more sinful in rejecting Christ (Matt 10:15, 11:23-24). Sodom and Gomorrah were not only due divine punishment for appalling wickedness but also served as a testimony for all time to the inevitability of God's justice.

So there is no caprice² when God brings sickness upon a person, nor vindictiveness.³ God is wise and impartial.

Originally, there was no sickness

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were holy, pure and fully healthy; all was good (Gen 1:31). Indeed, if they had continued to obey God they would not have died because death comes from sin (Rm 5:12). Thus Adam and Eve were very healthy in body and mind. No person has ever been as intelligent or as fit as Adam was before sin.

But Adam and Eve fell from grace and holiness and committed sin by disobeying God's clear command. This act of rebellion plunged mankind into sin; the results of which were ultimately death but also included a propensity to sickness.

Immediately women would experience pain in childbirth and men would have to strive and sweat to make a living. This was the judgment of God for the initial fall.

From this we may determine that God does not plan for man to be sick or to die in the finality of his purpose. God does not enjoy people being sick and in the eternal kingdom there is no sickness. Once redemption has been fully consummated, sickness and death are destroyed for believers. God's eternal purpose for men is that they are fit and healthy.

² A sudden unaccountable change of mind, mood or behaviour.

³ An unreasoning desire for revenge.

He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces. Isa 25:8

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isa 35:10

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Rev 21:4

So, God's final plan does not include any sickness, nor mourning, nor crying, nor death.

Sickness and death emerged in creation as a result of sin. However, this does not mean that sickness is sovereign or that the devil is sovereign over sickness. Just as God controls evil men in history according to his purposes, and as God has Satan on a leash, so also God controls sickness. The God who is Lord of the sun is also Lord of the snow, tempest and thunder. Nothing is outside God's control – or there is no control.

Doctrine

God is sovereign over bad things as well as good things

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? Job 2:10

I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*. Isa 45:7

If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it*? Amos 3:6

Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that woe and well-being proceed? Lam 3:38

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. *His* brightness was like the light; He had rays *flashing* from His hand, and there His power *was* hidden. Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet.

Hab 3:3-5

In these texts the words 'adversity', 'calamity' and 'woe' are all translations of the Hebrew word *Ra*', which means 'evil' or 'something bad'.

If God did not control evil events under his long-suffering then God would not be the Lord of history. All things must be under God's dominion if God is to rule over all.

Previous generations understood this and praised God in bad times as well as good times. Sadly, many modern churchgoers hate this idea and make up the deceitful heresy that bad things come from Satan. If that were true then God could not be Lord of all.

God is sovereign over sickness and death

So the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the LORD?' Exod 4:11

The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumours, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. Deut 28:27-28

'In that day', says the LORD, 'I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.' Zech 12:4

Angels, God's servants, destroy as well as protect

We will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it. Gen 19:13

For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike *you*. Exod 12:23

And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'It is enough; now restrain your hand.' And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 2 Sam 24:16

And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses -- all dead. 2 Kg 19:35

Then the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valour, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. 2 Chron 32:21

Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. Acts 12:23

God's word is unequivocal. The Lord God is sovereign over all sickness and death. The doctrine is clear. Now we will look at examples of this being worked out in history.

God sometimes smites sinners with sickness and death in temporal judgment

All sinners will face the final judgement of God for their sins. No one will escape. Sometimes, in God's wisdom, he also issues a temporal judgment on the Earth at this time. Sinners suffering this judgment will still face the final judgment but they receive temporal judgment as a lesson to others. Their final judgment will take this into account.

Sodom and Gomorrah

They struck the men who *were* at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary *trying* to find the door. Gen 19:11

Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. Gen 19:24-25

Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly. 2 Pt 2:6

As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 1:7

The Egyptians

When He worked His signs in Egypt, And His wonders in the field of Zoan; Turned their rivers into blood, And their streams, that they could not drink. He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them, And frogs, which destroyed them. He also gave their crops to the caterpillar, And their labour to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, And their sycamore trees with frost. He also gave up their cattle to the hail, And their flocks to fiery lightning. He cast on them the

fierceness of His anger, Wrath, indignation, and trouble, By sending angels of destruction *among them*. He made a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, But gave their life over to the plague, and destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt, the first of *their* strength in the tents of Ham. Ps 78:43-51

The relevant facts here are the judgment of sickness by the plague and the death of the firstborn.

The Philistines

Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, 'What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?' And they answered, 'Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath.' So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away. So it was, after they had carried it away, that the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and great, and tumours broke out on them. 1 Sam 5:8-9

Note that here God is specifically stated to be sovereign over tumours. God does control cancer.

The Assyrians

And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses -- all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home*, and remained at Nineveh. 2 Kg 19:35-36

Then the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses -- all dead. Isa 37:36

King Uzziah

So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD -- valiant men. And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honour from the LORD God'. Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. 2 Chron 26:17-21

The Syrians

So when *the Syrians* came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, 'Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.' And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. 2 Kg 6:18

Emperor Nebuchadnezzar

While the word *was still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your

dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.' That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured Him who lives forever. For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. Dan 4:31-34

This condition whereby Nebuchadnezzar lived like a wild animal for seven years has been called lycanthropy. This is usually seen as the supernatural transformation of a person into a wolf, as recounted in folk tales (the basis of the werewolf sagas). However, insane patients have displayed similar symptoms and this has been called lycanthropy.

The amazing grace of God is seen in that Nebuchadnezzar appears to have genuinely repented and believed in the God of Israel at the end of his judgment. He certainly affirmed a strong belief in God's glorious sovereignty.

This shows that God sometimes afflicts a person with sickness to bring them to repentance.

Judas Iscariot

Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. Matt 27:5

(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out). Acts 1:18

This is an example of anxiety, guilt and depression leading to suicide.

Technical note: The field was purchased indirectly with Judas' wages by the priests for a pauper's burial ground (they could not keep blood money). Judas hanged himself and subsequently the rope broke and Judas fell forwards to the ground and burst asunder. An appalling end was fitting for so great a crime.

Herod Agrippa

So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!' Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. Acts 12:21-23

Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*. XIX. 8, 2) says that Herod Agrippa lingered for five days and says that the rotting of his flesh produced worms, in harmony with Luke. Various diseases are postulated for this condition.

Note that God sent a disease that caused torment and a lingering death over five days.

Elymas the sorcerer

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time'. And

immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Acts 13:8-11

God sometimes smites Old Covenant believers with sickness and death in temporal judgment or discipline

Jacob

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. Gen 32:24-25

Jacob walked with a limp from that day onwards: 'By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff' (Heb 11:21). 'So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed' (Gen 47:31; 'bed' = staff in LXX).

To teach Jacob submission and faith God put his hip joint out of socket.

Miriam

'My servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?' So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam *became* leprous, as *white as snow*. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. Num 12:7-10

Note that Miriam, sister of Moses, was used as a minister of God. Rebellion necessitates discipline amongst all people. After seven days of purification Miriam was healed (Num 12:13-15).

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: 'Sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!' Exod 15:20-21

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Mic 6:4

Israel at Baal of Peor

They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead. Thus they provoked *Him* to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stopped. Ps 106:28-30

Nadab and Abihu

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Lev 10:1-2

Dathan and Abiram plus Korah

'But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.' Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the

ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

Num 16:30-33

The sons of Eliab *were* Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These *are* the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. Num 26:9-10

What He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their possession, in the midst of all Israel. Deut 11:6

David's baby

So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'. And Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die'. Then Nathan departed to his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. 2 Sam 12:13-18

It does no good trying to understand God's reasoning in this as the child was innocent of the judged crime. The fact is that God is good, wise and impartial; therefore, the death of this baby was necessary for godly reasons. We must simply accept the facts as they are and trust in God's attributes.

On the basis of Matt 19:14 I presume that the child was taken to Abraham's bosom (Lk 16) to await God's kingdom.

David sin

And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.' Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 'Go and tell David, "Thus says the LORD: I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you."' So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, 'Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.' And David said to Gad, 'I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.' So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'It is enough; now restrain your hand.' And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 2 Sam 24:10-16

Israel's sin

'I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me,' says the LORD. Amos 4:10

Gehazi and his descendants

Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, 'Where *did you go*, Gehazi?' And he said, 'Your servant did not go anywhere'. Then he said to him, 'Did not my heart go *with you* when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? *Is it* time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever'. And he went out from his presence leprous, *as white as snow*. 2 Kg 5:25-27

Zacharias

And the angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.' And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. Lk 1:19-22

The lesson of Job: God fully controls the sickness of believers for a purpose

And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*.' Job 1:12

And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life'. Job 2:6

We need not spend too much time on this, as this matter must surely be understood by all believers.

Job teaches us that, though Satan may smite believers, this is done under God's full control and permission for a good reason. In the case of Job the reason was the righteous testimony of Job. Satan could only injure Job to the limit set by God.

God sometimes punishes New Covenant believers with sickness and death

The lesson of Ananias and Sapphira

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.' Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?' She said, 'Yes, for so much'. Then Peter said to her, 'How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.' Then immediately she fell down

at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. Acts 5:1-10

The lesson of the Corinthians

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep [i.e. have died]. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor 11:28-32

God sometimes allows good ministers to be sick for some purpose

Paul

Paul's blindness

Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Acts 9:8-10

Paul's thorn

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness'. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Cor 12:7-9

Timothy

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 1 Tim 5:23

Note that a godly minister had frequent illnesses.

It has often been the case in history that very godly men used by God have been very sickly and died young. This was certainly true of giants like Martin Luther (died at 63) and John Calvin (died at 55), but also other godly men like Murray McCheyne (sickly and died at 30), Augustus Toplady (died at 38) and David Brainerd (very sickly and died at 29). God allowed Jonathan Edwards to die young at 55 from a smallpox vaccine.

Epaphroditus

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Phil 2:25-27

Trophimus

Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. 2 Tim 4:20

Promises of ailments

Promise of illness as a judgment

If you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, *but* break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. Lev 26:15-16

The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. Deut 28:21-22

Remove your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When with rebukes you correct man for iniquity, you make his beauty melt away like a moth; surely every man *is* vapour. Selah. Ps 39:10-11

Therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send leanness among his fat ones; and under his glory He will kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. Isa 10:16

And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths. ... Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be. Zech 14:12, 15

And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. Rev 16:21

List of ailments said to have been caused by God

- Sickness in general, weakness, debility.
- Being eaten by worms (rotting intestines).
- Blindness.
- Sudden death.
- Leprosy.
- Cancer (tumours).
- Burning by fire from heaven.
- Death by earthquake.
- Dislocated hip.
- Fever.
- Wasting disease.
- Consumption (pulmonary tuberculosis).
- Pestilence.
- Plague. [This refers to a number of epidemic diseases, particularly the bubonic plague (caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*).]
- Lycanthropy.

- Dumbness.

Purposes of God's afflicting judgment

- To bring a person to repentance (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar).
- To humble.
- To prevent a person from being puffed up (e.g. Paul).
- To teach patience.
- To punish sin as a warning to others (e.g. Sodom).
- To discipline a child (Heb 12).
- To train in faith (e.g. Jacob).
- To bring enforced rest in overworked ministry.
- To make a saint mature in some area. (Jesus was made perfect [*teleioo*, complete] through suffering; Heb 2:10.)
- To serve as a warning and example (e.g. Sodom).

Conclusion

It is sadly tragic that I have known formerly devout believers who fell into some gross sin, or rebellion or disobeyed God in some severe way, that died shortly afterwards quite young (usually of cancer). In one or two cases I warned them about the danger of their actions; but they ignored me. In some cases other brethren sided with them against me because they thought that admonishing gross sin was too severe (it was not). Sometimes the testimony of these brethren also diminished as a result.

I have known great saints get sick and glorify God; note the example of the hymn-writer Francis Ridley Havergal or the evangelist David Brainerd. But I have also known other seemingly good believers get sick and completely apostatise. Prolonged sickness brings out the true experience of a person.

I have known excellent, faithful believers with godly ministries get very sick and their mobility severely curtailed. I have also known supposed saints turn to sin and get sick or die. We cannot judge why people are sick; that is in God's hands alone. Sickness can be used to good and also to judgment. Sickness can come upon a sinner in judgment, like Elymas; it can affect a believer that made a mistake, like Ananias; but it can also affect a godly minister pursuing good, like Timothy or Paul.

The lessons of Miriam, Ananias, Sapphira, David and others ought to cause believers to remember that God is a consuming fire (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29). The superficial frivolity by which some modern believers treat God in public services is frankly shocking. God is God. We need to remember that God is not only love and our Father, he is also terrible in majesty.

The great and awesome ['terrible' KJV] God. Deut 7:21

For the LORD your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. Deut 10:17

With God *is* awesome ['terrible' KJV] majesty. Job 37:22

LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God. Neh 1:5

O Lord, great and awesome God. Dan 9:4

God *is* jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and *is* furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves *wrath* for His enemies. Nah 1:2

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:31

You, yourself, *are* to be feared; and who may stand in your presence when once you are angry? Ps 76:7

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all *those* around Him. Ps 89:7

For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised; He *is* to be feared above all gods. Ps 96:4

'For I *am* a great King', says the LORD of hosts, 'and My name *is to be* feared among the nations'. Mal 1:14

God controls sickness, as he controls everything else.

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