

Because we've been away from John's gospel for a few months, let me begin by reminding you the purpose of John's gospel is to portray Christ as the Son of God, that sinners would be saved, and saints strengthened—to this end, John records 7 I AM statements, and 7 sign miracles...

[1] Seven I AM statements—these 7 statements are made by our Savior, and relate back to what God told Moses at the burning bush—"I AM WHO I AM"—thus our Savior uses this title, and connects it with 7 phrases that underscore His work as Messiah—I AM the Bread of Life (Jn.6), I AM the Light of the World (ch.8), I AM the Door (Jn.10), I AM the Good Shepherd (ch.10), I AM the Resurrection and the Life (ch.11), I AM the Way, Truth, and Life (ch.14), and I AM the Vine (ch.15)...

[2] Seven sign miracles—John selects 7 miracles to serve as signs, to underscore His identify as God's Son, and illustrate His salvation—the changing of water into wine (ch.2), the healing of the officers' son (ch.4), the healing of the lame man (ch.5), feeding of 5000 (ch.6), walking on water (ch.6), healing of the blind beggar (ch.9), and raising Lazarus from the dead (ch.11)...

Now—in coming to verses 1-6, I largely want to focus upon two facts that seem to contradict each other—on the one hand, Christ loved Lazarus and his sisters, and yet, on the other hand, He purposefully delays His coming—He intentionally allows Lazarus to die, and his sisters, Mary and Martha, to suffer for three more days—WHY...

This is the question I desire to answer, with the help of two main headings—Those loved by Christ still suffer and die, and, Those loved by Christ suffer for His glory...

- I. Those Loved by Christ still Suffer and Die
- II. Those Loved by Christ Suffer for His Glory

- I. Those Loved by Christ still Suffer and Die

1. Here I want to briefly suggest two things that seem conflicting—Jesus loved them, and yet, they all suffered...
2. [1] Jesus loved them—that is, Lazarus, Mary and Martha—this is expressly evident from three texts within the chapter...
3. Verse 3—"Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick"—the sisters knew He loved Lazarus...
4. Verse 5—"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus"—this is the commentary of John the apostle...
5. Verses 35-36—"Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, See how He loved him"—this was the conclusion of the Jews...
6. Thus—it is evident from these three texts that Jesus loved all three—He loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha...
7. But—I want to suggest that our Savior not only loved them, but there's evidence He especially loved them...
8. That is—while our Savior loved all of His disciples, there were some that He seemed to spend more time with...
9. This of course was true with regards to the twelve apostles—our Savior often selected out three from the twelve...
10. For example, when He transformed Himself, He took only Peter, James, and John, and they themselves witnessed it...
11. The same was true in the garden—only Peter, James, and John, were taken with Him as He poured His heart out to His Father...
12. So too, it seems whenever our Savior came to Bethany, He chose to stay with His dear friends, Lazarus and his sisters...

13. Jn.12:1—"Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead..."
14. We know from Luke 10:38-42, the last time He was in Bethany, He also stayed with this dear family of three...
15. Thus—we learn that Christ loved all three of them greatly, and likely considered them close and intimate friends...
16. [2] They loved Jesus—this can be illustrated in Mary, v2—"It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair..."
17. John, the author of this book, mentions this here, even though, the actual event doesn't take place until chapter 12...
18. Thus, no doubt Mary anoints our Savior's feet with costly oil, in part, out of gratitude for raising Lazarus to life...
19. But—here is my point—Mary didn't begin to love Christ then, no, she along with her siblings already loved Him...
20. And I suggest this is in part, why John mentions this incident here—he want us to know the character of Mary...
21. The Mary and Martha, whose brother is dying and they are grieving, were deeply pious women who loved Christ...
22. To anoint His feet with oil and wipe it with her hair, was a costly act, a loving act, and a deeply humble act...
23. Oh, brethren, keep this point in mind—these three people in Bethany, were not only loved by Jesus, but they loved Jesus...
24. [3] They all suffered—by ALL I mean all three siblings—Lazarus, Mary, and Martha—they ALL suffered...
25. [a] Lazarus was sick unto death, v1—"Now a certain man was sick," v2—"whose brother Lazarus was sick," v3—"Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick..."
26. The word renders "sick" literally means "to be weak, feeble, or without strength"—He was physically failing or dying...
27. This word doesn't so much focus on the sickness, but on its effects—the sad consequences that result from it...
28. In other words—Lazarus was in pain and weakness due to sickness—he was fast sinking from life to death...
29. It seems evident Lazarus died soon after his sisters sent word to Jesus—this would account for the four days in the grave (one day to reach Jesus, two days He waited, and the fourth day He journeyed to Bethany)...
30. [b] Mary and Martha were grieved—that is, Mary and Martha both grieved and sorrowed because of their brother...
31. We are left to assume, that Mary and Martha never married, and very possibly their parents have already died...
32. Thus—it seems for these reasons they lived with their brother Lazarus—he may have been their only family...
33. Some of that is speculation—but what is clearly revealed is—both Mary and Martha were suffering great grieve...
34. V19—"And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother..."
35. V33—"Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled..."
36. Thus—all three of them suffered—but what I want to point out is this—our Savior purposefully extended this suffering...
37. V6—"So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was (Bethabara, about 30 miles from Bethany)..."
38. Thirty miles was approximately a one day journey—thus it seems Lazarus died soon after the sister sent for Him...

39. It took one day to get to Him, He waited two days, and it took Him one day to arrive—thus, Lazarus was dead four days (v17)...
40. But—here's my point—He purposefully waited two days before leaving, knowing this would prolong their suffering (and I want to answer the why under the next heading, but before that, I want to suggest three simple lessons from what we've seen thus far)...
41. [a] Suffering and sorrow are realities all men face even Christians—such afflictions are common to mankind...
42. All men, both the wicked and the righteous, live in a fallen world—a world filled with sickness, sorrow, and death...
43. Gen.3:16-19—"To the woman He said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children...Then to Adam He said...Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life...In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground..."
44. My friends, surely we understand, Christian ladies have just as much pain in childbearing than nonChristian...
45. Furthermore, the Christian farmer faces the same opposition, thorns and thistles, as nonChristian farmers face...
46. My friends, the loved-ones of Christians, get sick and die, just as much as nonChristians—there's no difference...
47. Furthermore, Christians get just as sick as nonChristians—with the exception of certain diseases they avoid...
48. Ps.34:19—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous"—notice, not many are the afflictions of the wicked, but righteous...
49. Christians live in a fallen world, and thus experience all the generic suffering, pain, and death, just like everyone else...
50. Ecc.9:2—"All things come alike to all: one event happens to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean..."
51. [b] Suffering and sorrow do not argue the absence of Christ's love—this is a very important point to underscore...
52. There have always been some Christians who believe, it's God's will for His people to be healthy and wealthy...
53. Thus, those Christians who are sick or suffer, they necessarily lack faith, or possibly, they are secret sinners...
54. Now—let me clarify, it is true that God sometimes chastises us, because of certain sins, with sickness and suffering...
55. But, even then, such chastisements are the result of His love, Prov.3:12—"For whom the LORD loves He corrects..."
56. Thus, the presence of sickness (suffering), does not prove the absence of love—"He whom You love is sick..."
57. [c] Suffering and sorrow are experienced by Christians for their spiritual good, v6—"So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was..."
58. If Christ loved Lazarus and his sisters, why did He delay two days before coming—why not come right away...
59. Well, as we shall see eventually—He wanted all doubt about Lazarus' death to be removed—to make His power known...
60. But—this wasn't the only reason He waited—for surely brethren, Lazarus didn't have to be dead four days to manifest His power...
61. But I also suggest—He delayed His coming for two days to intentionally extend the suffering of Mary and Martha...
62. Dear friends, Christ was able to heal Lazarus with a mere word—He didn't need to be present to heal His friend...
63. But—He intentionally delays—He purposefully waits—He chooses to prolong their sorrows—but—WHY...

64. Well, v5 tells us—"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus"—the delay of our Savior was a delay of love...
65. In other words—He intended to use this time as a means, to wisely and lovingly work within Mary and Martha...
66. A.W. Pink—"Christ designed to strengthen the faith of these sisters by allowing them to endure the bitterness of death, in order to heighten their subsequent joy...Let us learn from this that when God makes us *wait*, it is the sign that He purposes to bless, but in His own way – usually a way very different from what we desire and expect..."

II. Those Loved by Christ Suffer for His Glory

1. V4—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it..."
2. By "this sickness is not unto death" is meant—his death would not last—our Savior knew He would raise him up...
3. The purpose of the sickness, suffering, and death is then given—"but for the glory of God"—this was the main point...
4. Our Savior says—this sickness came for the express purpose for God to glorify Himself, and His beloved Son...
5. The word rendered "glory" here means "praise"—the sickness came for the glory, praise, and honor of God...
6. To glorify God is to make God's glory known—to declare His beauty before men, and to praise and honor Him...
7. Notice, this glory is shared by the Father and Son—"that the Son of God may be glorified through it"—both would be glorified through this sickness...
8. Or perhaps I could put it like this—God in Christ would be glorified in this miracle, just like the other miracles...
9. Jn.2:11—"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him..."
10. This was the primary purpose of every miracle—that God, in Christ, would be glorified, and sinners believe...
11. Thus—here I want to suggest five ways our sickness, suffering, and sorrow—brings glory and praise to Christ...
12. [1] We glorify Him as we put His glory first—that is, when we think less of ourselves and more of His glory...
13. Shorter Catechism—"What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever..."
14. I think most of have to confess, during times of sickness and suffering, we tend to become very self-focused...
15. V5—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it..."
16. [2] We glorify Him as we receive suffering from His hand—that is, it ultimately comes from His wise and sovereign hand...
17. My friends, there are many reasons Christians get sick and suffer—sometimes it's because of our own folly...
18. And thus, it's obviously not wrong to seek to alleviate sickness and suffering—these are not in themselves good things...
19. But—Christians must patiently endure sickness and suffering, as ultimately from God, to serve His purposes...
20. Ps.39:9—"I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it"—that is, the affliction he was enduring...
21. By "mute" means "silence"—which means he humbly submitted to God's dealings with Him without complaint...

22. As we shall see, this doesn't exclude crying to God in fervent cries and prayers—but it removes all grumbling...
23. [3] We glorify Him as we bring our needs to Him—this is precisely what Mary and Martha do—they send word to Jesus...
24. Their beloved brother was dying—their hearts were heavy with sorrow—who can they appeal to but Christ...
25. v3—"Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick"—notice three things about this appeal...
26. [a] Its urgency—the appeal made to Christ was urgent—it was driven with a sense of desperation and need...
27. Now—let me clarify what I trust is obvious—Mary and Martha appeal to Christ physically as He was on the earth...
28. But—brethren, just because our Savior is now in heaven, does not mean we should not make our appeals to Him...
29. But instead of sending a servant, as did Mary and Martha, we must send our appeals through humble prayers...
30. Ps.39:9-10—"I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it. Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand..."
31. Notice—remaining "mute" before God while enduring suffering, does not exclude crying to God for mercy...
32. Again, this goes back to what I said earlier—Christians suffer, and thus, it's proper to cry to God with groans...
33. Where else can we go, brethren—who else perfectly cares for us, and has the ability to truly help and comfort us...
34. 1Pet.5:6-7—"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you..."
35. This letter is largely given over to the subject of suffering—over and again, Peter teaches them about suffering for Christ...
36. Thus, by humbling yourselves under the mighty hand of God, means—to see His hand in all of our sufferings...
37. But brethren—notice Peter doesn't stop there—"casting all your care upon Him, FOR HE CARES FOR YOU..."
38. This is precisely what Mary and Martha are doing—they are casting all of their cares upon the ONE who cares...
39. And oh brethren, don't think for a moment, that simply because Christ delays in coming, He doesn't care for you...
40. Kent Hughes—"John 11 elevates our perspective. It explains to Christ's praying, devoted children that no matter how it may appear, these inexplicable delays are delays of love. That is what our text says! When we are being ravaged by the events of life, it is very difficult to believe that God really loves us. But John 11 and many other Scriptures clearly claim that these delays are delays of love. God is all-powerful. He can do anything. He knows all. He even knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. He knows our plight, and he cares..."
41. [b] Its basis—what was the basis of their appeal, v3—Lord, Behold, he whom You love is sick"—Christ's love for them was the basis of their appeal...
42. This is important to remember—they didn't appeal to Christ based upon their love to Him—"he who loves You is sick (though that would not have been wrong)..."
43. But instead they appealed to His love for them (and esp Lazarus)—this was the basis or grounds of their prayer...
44. J.C. Ryle—"To look inward to our love towards Christ is painfully unsatisfying: to look outward to Christ's love towards us is peace..."
45. Oh brethren, what a beautiful lesson on prayer—we don't come before God confident because of anything that we've done...
46. We don't come before God in times of suffering (or otherwise), and ask for mercy, based on what we've done...

47. But—we come to God, readily admitting, all that we are and have, is the result of His love for us in Christ...
48. [4] We glorify Him as we trust and rest in His love—that is, when we don't complain or grumble, but trust Him...
49. Dear brethren, we must remember, any perceived delay in Christ, is nothing more than a delay of perfect love...
50. For remember—having sent word to Jesus by way of messenger, Mary and Martha heard nothing back for two full days...
51. Finally, His response comes, v4—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it..."
52. Our Savior doesn't specifically say—"Don't worry, when I get there I'll resurrect Him, and all will be well..."
53. But what He does say is—"Everything will ultimately work out for you good, and for the glory of My Father and I..."
54. In other words—our beloved Savior, intended for Mary and Martha to TRUST His plan and REST in His love...
55. Kent Hughes—"The general principle is this: Christ delayed coming to his faithful, loving followers in Bethany in order to strengthen their love and their faith..."
56. [5] We glorify Him as we learn from our sufferings—suffering is a school in which every Christian is enrolled...
57. Again, remember our Savior purposefully delayed His coming to Bethany, to extend their time in this school...
58. In other words—Christ extended their lesson for three more days—He wanted them to remain in class longer...
59. Ps.119:71—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes"—affliction is a tutor that teaches us...
60. Thus—and this is very important to remember—it's not suffering that honors God, but learning from our suffering...
61. I mean think of it—many nonChristians suffer every day but they don't glorify God in and through that suffering...
62. [a] The nature of sin—though not all sickness and suffering is the direct result of our sin, it can all be traced back to sin...
63. All sickness, suffering, and death—are the results of SIN—oh, how this should cause us to hate and flee from sin...
64. [b] The brevity of life—sickness, suffering, and death, should teach us, that this life, and all it contains, is temporary...
65. to put it plainly—all of our Lazarus—everything within this world—is temporary and must be held loosely...
66. [c] The hope of heaven—sickness, suffering, and death, should all teach us, that this temporary world is not our home...
67. And this is without doubt, one of the great lessons of this chapter—there is soon coming a physical resurrection...