

# OpenTheo

## Lazarus (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg analyzes John chapter 11, focusing on the story of Lazarus. Gregg addresses the differences in the accounts of Lazarus in Luke and John, and questions their historical accuracy. He highlights the lack of witness accounts from Lazarus himself and argues that his resurrection does not seem to be a significant factor. Gregg also comments on Jesus' delay in responding to Lazarus' sickness, emphasizing that God does not always fulfill our desires for health and wealth, but may have higher plans for us. Overall, Gregg stresses the importance of seeking spiritual rather than earthly treasures.

### **Transcript**

In today's session, we will be looking at John chapter 11 and we will take almost the entire chapter. The first 54 verses are all part of what we have to cover today. It leaves only three verses at the end, but we will leave them for a little bit because they are not chronologically the next thing to take after verse 54.

We have in this chapter and in these verses the story of Lazarus, another Lazarus. Just a couple of days ago, a few sessions ago, we were talking about Luke 16. In that place, there was a story that Jesus told.

Some feel it's a parable, others feel it's a true story. It's not easy to determine, although my thought is, on balance, it seems like the evidence would favor it being a true story. But in that story, a beggar was named Lazarus and died.

In the way the story was told, another man, a rich man who had known Lazarus in his lifetime and had done very little to help him as a beggar, requested that Lazarus might be sent back to warn this rich man's brothers of the spiritual dangers of such neglect. He was told that Lazarus would not be sent back and that the man's brothers should consider the scriptures. They had Moses and the prophets.

Let them hear them. The man said, No, Abraham. They don't read Moses and the prophets, but they would listen if someone rose from the dead.

Abraham said, Those who do not heed Moses and the prophets would not be persuaded, even if one rose from the dead. It's interesting that only chronologically, a few stories later, we have the story of a man rising from the dead. And even more remarkable is his name was Lazarus, the same name as the man in the parable, although we should not mistakenly think that both passages are talking about the same Lazarus.

Of course, liberal scholars who are always looking for something other than history behind the way the Gospels are written, that is, they're always trying to explain things away as if it's not historical and try to find sources for the myths and so forth that they think are found here. They would say that Luke chapter 16 and John chapter 11 present differing accounts of the same story, that Luke told it a certain way and John got it wrong and changed it so that Lazarus, in fact, was sent back. However, there's absolutely no reason to hold to this view except for the coincidence of the names of the two parties.

Lazarus is the name of the man in this case and Lazarus is the name of the beggar in the other, but there's no reason to believe that there couldn't have been many men named Lazarus just as there were many men named Jesus in those days, and many men named John and James and so forth. So let us not be confused about this. This is a different Lazarus and everything about the story is different.

This Lazarus is not a beggar. This Lazarus would appear to be a man of, well, I'd just say at least middle class substance, maybe above. I don't see as much evidence as some have to suggest that Lazarus was a rich man.

He may have been, but I don't know where scholars get this idea or preachers. Many times if you find a preacher trying to defend an affluent lifestyle, they'll point out that Jesus had affluent friends like, well, like Lazarus, for instance, and they'll point this out as one of Jesus' affluent friends. I don't know, maybe I'm missing something.

There's not that much told us about Lazarus and what is there doesn't say anything about his level of affluence as near as I can tell. Therefore, it seems like preachers sometimes read more into the passages than is there. Lazarus did, it would appear, have a home which he shared with his two sisters.

We've encountered them before in Luke chapter 10, Mary and Martha were his two sisters. We are not anywhere told that they were affluent, although it may be perhaps that some have inferred this from the fact that they were able to accommodate Jesus and the apostles in their home. And that is, you know, that might point in that direction.

And anyone who could accommodate 13 guests in their home and feed them, we might suggest that would say they have a large home and maybe a lot of money to feed such a large clan. Although we can't be sure that even in their poverty they might not have shown the same hospitality to Jesus and his disciples. It is often the case that poor people who can hardly afford it show great hospitality and rich people who can easily

afford it often never, it never occurs to them to do so.

And so we can't really, in my opinion, deduce anything about whether this Lazarus was a rich man or no. But there's certainly nothing to suggest that he was a beggar like the Lazarus in the other story who was totally impoverished, laid at the gate of his rich neighbor, begging for crumbs that fell from the table and so forth. That does not appear to be the same person in any way.

Furthermore, of course, this story is quite the opposite, has the opposite result from that which is in Luke. Not only is it different, it's opposite. In Luke chapter 16, the story there specifically states that Lazarus will not be sent back to the land of the living.

Whereas this Lazarus is one of the few cases that we know of where a man was. And therefore, obviously, we're talking about different cases. And one other thing I'd suggest too is that the Lazarus in the story of Luke chapter 16, the rich man requested that Lazarus be sent back to warn his rich brothers.

If we were to deduce that that was this Lazarus and that this story shows that Abraham changed his mind and said, well, I guess you got a good point there, we will send Lazarus back after all. And this story records it. It's interesting, there's no reference at all here to this man Lazarus testifying to the terrors of Hades or anything like that.

There's no warning. We have no record of this Lazarus becoming a witness, going out on a circuit, talking about his death experience and his return from death, which many modern people claim to have died and come back are doing. He didn't write a book or have a tape ministry or anything like that as far as we can tell.

He just rose from the dead. Nothing more is said of him except that because of his having risen from the dead, many were coming to believe in Jesus. And we're told that later on in chapter 12.

And because of that, the enemies of Christ even attempted to put Lazarus to death a second time. Whether they succeed or not, we are never told. So here we have another Lazarus, an entirely different situation with the only thing that has in common is that both men died.

Both Lazarus has died in the two stories, but that's not unusual. Everybody dies. And so that doesn't seem to be a great identifying factor.

Let's go ahead and read part of the story at a time. We'll take it in parts and then comment on each individual part. Now, a certain man was sick.

Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, the sister is sent to Jesus saying, Lord, behold, he whom you

love is sick.

When Jesus heard that, he said, apparently either to the messenger or to his disciples, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister Lazarus. So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was.

Now, there's some things we need to comment about here. First of all, verse one presents these characters as if we were already familiar with a couple of them. It says a certain man was sick, Lazarus.

Now, it does not talk as if we have already been introduced to Lazarus, because it says a certain man and gives us his name as if it's introducing a new character. But it says he was from Bethany, which was the town of Mary and her sister Martha, which has the sound as if we've already been acquainted with these women. Furthermore, he says in verse two, it was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair.

So he clearly suspects that his readers know who Mary and Martha are, at least Mary. She's the one who poured oil over Jesus' head and wiped him with her hair. Now, it may seem from reading this that we are to identify this Mary with somebody that we've already encountered in a previous story.

Now, there is nobody in the Gospel of John prior to this named Mary who did anything like this. Of course, there was Mary, the mother of Jesus, mentioned a few times earlier in John, but I don't even recall that it gives her name as Mary in those cases, though we know her name to be Mary from other sources. It's just Jesus' mother, I think.

Anyway, we can look back and see for sure, but it doesn't matter a great deal. The point is, there is no place in the Gospel of John previous to this verse where we have really been introduced to this Mary and Martha. However, some might think, having also read the Gospel of Luke, that maybe it's referring to this sinful woman who came into the house once when Jesus was at a feast in a Pharisee's house named Simon, and this woman cried and washed his feet with her tears and her hair.

And, of course, for this, Jesus was criticized because he let a sinful woman touch him. Now, I feel there's certainly no suggestion at all that this is the same woman. First of all, Mary is never suggested to be an exceptionally sinful woman.

The only time we've encountered these two sisters before in Luke was in Luke chapter 10. And in the closing verses of Luke chapter 10, Jesus and the disciples were in the house of these two women, and we recall that Mary sat at Jesus' feet, listening intently to what he was teaching, and Martha was busy in the kitchen. In fact, it's interesting how much support for the character of these two women this independent account in John

gives to the portrait we have of them in Luke.

People often say that there's discrepancies between John and the other Gospels in terms of the way the character of Jesus is portrayed. I disagree. I profoundly and adamantly disagree with that suggestion.

But one thing is interesting, that Mary and Martha, who have bit parts, that is, they're not major characters in the story of Jesus, and we only have really a short story about them in John and a short story about them in Luke, it's interesting how in so few verses and so little attention they receive, we can get such a vivid portrait of their personalities, and that both accounts, the one in John and the one in Luke, portrays them in such similar terms. I mean, you definitely can see you're talking about the same people in both stories. Now, in Luke's version, which is in Luke chapter 10, it doesn't mention they lived in Bethany, but we're told that here.

The assumption of prior familiarity with Mary that we see in John 11, 2, where it says, It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair. There is the assumption of prior knowledge of this woman to the reader. However, the story he's referring to isn't recorded until John 13.

In John 13, excuse me, I think John 12, I've got to get this right here. Yeah, it's John 12. It says in verse 1, In six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus, who had been dead, clearly the story of Lazarus precedes this account, whom he had raised from the dead.

So it acknowledges that the story we've just read in chapter 11 is in the past from the vantage point of chapter 12. Verse 2 says, There they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with him. Now, Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Now, verse 3 clearly tells the story that chapter 11, verse 2 is alluding to. Chapter 11, verse 2 says, It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair.

That's exactly what we're told in chapter 12, verse 3. So it's clear that John 11, 2 presupposes a knowledge of what the reader has not yet read in John. They will come to that in the next chapter. So why is it that John thinks the reader will already be acquainted with this Mary, and that's what she did? Well, I believe it's for this reason.

That Jesus in one of the places that records this story of Mary anointing him with oil, he defended Mary against criticism, saying that wherever the gospel is preached, this story of what she has done will be remembered to her credit. Now, that's not a statement of Jesus found in John's gospel. But you'll find that the synoptic gospels in recording the

same story have Jesus defending her action when she's criticized by Judas, actually, and the other disciples.

And he says, this woman has done the right thing. See, almost both times that we find Jesus interacting with Mary and Martha, Jesus has to defend Mary for doing things that were contrary to what was expected socially. And in both cases he does so, indicates that her heart was more right than her critics.

Now, the point I'm making is that Jesus did, on the occasion of Mary pouring oil over his head and anointing him like that, he did comment that wherever the gospel is preached, this thing she's done will be remembered. Therefore, John assumes, even as early as chapter 11, before he's told the story in chapter 12, that his readers will have heard the story about Mary. After all, they've heard the gospel before, and presumably the story of what Mary did will have been told to them, because wherever the gospel is preached, Jesus said it will be.

So, even though he hasn't told the story himself yet in chapter 11, he assumes a knowledge of that story in chapter 11, verse 2. It was that Mary. Okay? Now, it says, their brother Lazarus, at the end of verse 2, was sick. Therefore, verse 3 says, the sisters sent to Jesus.

Meaning they sent a messenger. They didn't go to Jesus personally. He was probably in Perea, judging from the Synoptic Gospels.

He was probably on the other side of the Jordan, in a place that was safe from those who were plotting to kill him. There were already those in Judea who had been plotting to kill him since the last time he'd been there. In fact, even from before that.

And therefore, he had been studiously avoiding going into Judea until the time would come for him to die. And he'd been hanging out outside of Israeli territory. He was over in Perea, in Transjordan.

And it was likely that those who were Jesus' friends were aware of his whereabouts. In fact, even his enemies might have been aware of them. Some of them, I guess, were because we're told in a previous story, that while he was there in Perea, the Pharisees came to him and said, you know, Herod wants to kill you.

And they were trying to persuade him to leave Perea to get down into Judea, where they could get their hooks in. So, obviously, Jesus wasn't being secretive. He just happened to be politically immune, because he was out of the country and they had no political teeth there.

So, apparently, it was no secret to Jesus' friends or enemies where he could be found and where he was operating. And so there, I think it is, that Mary and Martha sent a messenger to Jesus to let him know that his friend was sick. And, of course, while they

don't ask it outright, there is implicit in the information a request that Jesus would come and heal him.

Or maybe just do something from where he is. It was known Jesus could heal from a distance. It's obvious that Mary and Martha would never have sent this information to Jesus except to solicit Jesus' healing of their brother.

Now, that is, I think, important. The fact that the sisters felt that way is seen later on in the story when Jesus finally does come after their brother has died. And they both complained, Lord, if you had come, if you'd been here like we, you know, implied in our message to you, our brother wouldn't have died.

They're clearly a little upset with him because he seems to have ignored their implied request. So, we know that in their hearts, they were, in sending this message to Jesus, asking him to heal their brother and preferably to come and do it in person. Now, what's interesting here is that Jesus didn't do it.

There have always been those who, because, I guess because of their emphasis in healing, have tried to misrepresent the situation of Jesus' life. And I hear them do it frequently. They're saying that Jesus never denied healing to anyone who asked him.

You ever heard that one? I've heard people say that a lot. You know, Jesus never on record, there's no record of Jesus ever denying a healing to anybody who asked him for one. Really? Maybe the Gospel of John is not being considered as canonical.

It's very clear that Lazarus' sisters were implicitly asking Jesus to come and heal their brother. And Jesus did not do it. Now, it's possible that some people who still want to defend the idea that it's always God's will to heal, they might say, well, this was an exceptional case, but in this case, Jesus raised him from the dead, which is a healing of another sort.

But to this, I would answer, yes, that's true. Raising from the dead is healing of another sort. And if God doesn't heal you before you die, he'll raise you from the dead, and that's a healing of another sort.

But in that case, I can say it is always God's will to heal his people, because either you will be healed of sicknesses that you possess, or you'll carry them with you to your grave. But if you are a believer, you'll come out of your grave someday. And when God does that, that'll be, I guess, your healing.

But that is simply to say that God doesn't always heal before the grave. He does always raise his people from the dead, ultimately. I mean, he will, I should say.

It hasn't happened yet. It's future, when Jesus comes back. We are all going to rise, just like Lazarus did.

The only difference between Lazarus and us is that Jesus used this case as a foretaste of what will be generally the case. Of course, Lazarus didn't rise in a glorified body, and we shall. And there is a difference there.

But that Jesus is the resurrection of the life, and those who believe in him, though they were dead, yet shall they live, is what Jesus declares to be true on this occasion, and will be found to be universally true at the time Jesus comes back. So, Lazarus becomes a picture of what will generally be done. And it's interesting that Lazarus died sick, in spite of the fact that Jesus had been notified that his sisters would like him to come and heal their brother.

Now, some might say, but Lazarus didn't ask for a healing, and therefore he didn't have the faith to be healed, and that's why he didn't get healed. No, that's not what Jesus said. Jesus said this all happened so that God would be glorified.

He didn't say that it happened because Lazarus didn't have faith, or that his sisters didn't have faith. He didn't even say that they didn't quite frame their question specifically enough. None of that is the explanation of what happened.

The explanation Jesus gives of what happened in Lazarus' death is that this was for the glory of God. Which means that there were cases, we don't know how many others there may have been, but we know of at least one, and there may be other cases too that we don't know of, but one is enough to prove there is no universal rule here. We know of at least one case where Jesus did not heal somebody who wanted to be healed, and this was even a friend of his, a good friend of his.

And the failure to heal this man not only caused his friend to die, but caused his other friends, Mary and Martha, to grieve. It even became a test of their faith in him. It caused them to become maybe tempted to be bitter at him, maybe even to have succumbed a bit to that temptation.

So, here we have a case which is fairly remarkable in the gospel accounts, because we have a case where Jesus didn't heal a man. And the fact that he raised him from the dead is not really that remarkable because he's going to raise all believers from the dead, eventually. Now the fact that he raised Lazarus from the dead four days after he died, and with us it may be thousands of years after we die, is in principle no different.

It doesn't matter whether a person is dead four days, or 40 days, or 40 years, or 40,000 years. The fact is that Jesus raises them even after decay has become a factor. And that's something that was mentioned here, that before Jesus raised him, someone pointed out he'd been dead four days, he's already starting to stink.

Which shows that even after decay has become a factor, Jesus is quite capable of raising the dead. And so, what we have to understand about this story is it gives us at least one



example of Jesus being asked to heal someone and preferring not to. Choosing not to.

Deliberately choosing not to, as we'll see. And, you know, you might say, or someone could easily say, well, but that's a rare case in the Gospels. Yeah, it's a rare case, because for someone to die of sickness is the rule, and it's not so extraordinary.

The Gospels record mostly miracles of Jesus. They record mostly times when he did heal people, because those are extraordinary and noteworthy events. If there had been 10,000 cases where Jesus chose not to go someplace where someone was sick and not heal them, it's not certain why that would be recorded, unless something else remarkable, like him raising from the dead, occurred to make it noteworthy in something that the Gospels would write.

Anyway, it may seem like I take occasion to discredit healing, and I want to make it clear that I don't. I believe in healing, obviously. I believe Jesus healed an awful lot of people, as the Bible records, and I believe he still heals people.

What I'm against is people taking that data and twisting it to suggest that there's never any case where God would want someone to be sick or even to die sick. Lazarus died sick, and this was for the glory of God. And that means that we've got to expand the horizons of our thinking, if we haven't already done so, to realize that God can be glorified in healing the sick.

He can also be glorified in not healing the sick. And that second point is one that many people have never been able to realize, and they still stumble about. Now, it says in verse 4, Jesus said that when he heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Now, this statement was apparently made to the messenger who brought him information about the sickness. The reason I say that is because later, when Jesus did show up, after Lazarus was dead, and he was speaking to Martha, in verse 40, Jesus said to her, Did I not say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? Well, actually, there's no record of his having said anything like this prior to that verse, unless it was through the messenger that he sent back in verse 4. Essentially, he said, This is going to result in the glory of God. And if this message was taken back to Martha, Jesus could say, Didn't I tell you that if you would believe, you're going to see the glory of God in this situation? I said, This is going to be for the glory of God.

Why didn't you believe me? So, I personally think that verse 4 records a statement Jesus made to send back to the messenger. However, the statement could easily have been misinterpreted, and I'm sure it probably was. He said, This sickness is not unto death, which most would probably assume means he's not going to die.

What it obviously really means is that the final issue of this particular sickness will be the

glory of God, not death. And we can see from the sequel, when Jesus was raised from the dead, he said that in the last chapter of the story, Lazarus was not dead. He was alive.

And the final result and the final issue of this whole sequence of events was not a dead Lazarus, but a living Lazarus, who was raised for the glory of God. However, without seeing that, and in all likelihood, the sisters did not perceive that Jesus intended to let him die and rise from the dead, yet. This was something they didn't quite expect.

They probably interpreted, This sickness is not unto death, to mean it's not going to be fatal. Lazarus is not going to die. Jesus didn't say that.

But it's easy to see how some might have interpreted it in that way, which only makes it harder for them to see Jesus aright in the situation after Lazarus died. Didn't Jesus tell us this wasn't going to happen? Well, he didn't tell them that wasn't going to happen, but they may have interpreted him as telling that. That's something that we need to consider very carefully.

And that is that we may become embittered against God because we have misunderstood what he promised. We may have doubts about God because he doesn't do the thing we expect, but our expectation is based on a misinterpretation of what he said. And since we're on the subject of healing, that makes a good example, although there are other areas where this could be the case as well.

That, you know, people believe, many people believe that the Bible teaches that if you just have enough faith, you'll be healed. Well, a heck of a lot of people have had a lot of faith and didn't get healed. And some of them have become bitter against God or disillusioned or lost their faith in the Bible, not because the Bible was wrong, but because they interpreted wrongly what it said.

They thought it was promising something it wasn't. That's almost parallel to what Mary and Martha no doubt did when Jesus said, this sickness is not unto death. He didn't mean they're not going to die.

He didn't mean that Lazarus won't die. If he did, he lied. And they had reason to be concerned about his integrity and his concern for them.

But obviously he wasn't lying. He meant something different than most people would take it to mean. And, you know, if we look at some of the statements in the Bible and interpret them to say God will not ever allow a Christian to die sick, and then some Christians do die sick, even while trusting God, it's going to hurt our faith in the final analysis.

Unfortunately, those who profess to have the most faith in this issue often cannot even by their faith produce the results they say God has promised. I've known many, many people who say, well, if you just have enough faith, you can be well as soon as you have

enough faith. And many of these people have a fair amount of faith themselves.

But it has not resulted in perfect health in their lives. And, you know, what do you do? You either have to critique God or critique them for their lack of faith, or many times a much more fair thing to do, rather than saying they didn't have enough faith or that God didn't keep his promises, is that their faith was misplaced, that their faith was in a misunderstanding of what they thought God promised. And that is, I think, many times the case.

Jesus said this sickness is not unto death, and if we didn't know the rest of the story, we probably would understand it to mean that Lazarus wasn't going to die also, but he did. But what Jesus said was that it was going to result in the glorification of the Son, and that God might be glorified through the Son and through this experience. So we know that that did happen, and Jesus' promise came true, albeit his statement was cryptic enough that they didn't fully understand what he meant when he said it.

Now it says in verses 5 and 6, which we read, Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was. And as we read in the following verses, he waited where he was long enough for Lazarus to die.

He made no moves in the direction of going to Bethany until he knew Lazarus to be dead. Now what's interesting about this is the connection between verses 5 and 6, because verse 6 begins with, which means that because of what verse 5 says, Jesus did the things in verse 6. Now what does verse 5 say? But that Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus, therefore he didn't answer their request. Therefore he disappointed them.

Isn't that an interesting connection there? Because he loved these people, he didn't do what they said. He waited for Lazarus to die instead. Now it would have been possible to write those two verses in such a way as to not connect those thoughts.

If the word soul was not present in the verse, we could understand it to mean Jesus loved these people, even though he waited around for their brother to die, he still loved them, in spite of the fact that he didn't answer their request. John might be affirming, but I want you to know that he really did love these people, even though he didn't do what they wanted. But that's not how John writes it.

John indicates that Jesus didn't do what they wanted because he loved them. This agrees with the way Mark tells the story of the rich young ruler in Mark chapter 10. In Mark chapter 10, verse 21, after the rich young ruler said that he had kept all the law from his youth, and what else need he do, Jesus looked at him, verse 21, Mark 10, 21.

It says, Jesus looking at him loved him and said to him, One thing you lack, go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven, and

come take up the cross and follow me. A lot of people consider this one of the hard sayings of Jesus. However, Mark doesn't say he said this to be hard, he says he said it because he loved the guy.

It's interesting that Mark emphasizes that because, I mean, if you just wanted to be plain factual, you could say that about everyone Jesus ever spoke to. Jesus loved this guy and said so-and-so. Jesus loved that guy and said so-and-so.

Jesus loved that woman and said so-and-so. But we're not told specifically, in every case where he spoke to someone, that he loved them, although he no doubt did. Mark has a reason for inserting Jesus looking at this man loved him.

Why? Because to the natural mind, what Jesus asked him to do seemed severe. It seemed maybe even unloving. However, Jesus said it because it was the loving thing to say to this man.

Is it unloving to say, give up all that you have? Well, it depends if you leave it at that. He said, however, if you do this, you'll have treasures in heaven. Now, isn't that a loving thing to do, to tell people to have eternal treasures that they'll never regret and never lose? That sounds like a loving thing to do.

That the man could not have them without surrendering all that he had might have been unwelcome news, but it was still loving information. It was information calculated for his benefit. And love isn't always giving people the strokes and the gratification that they want.

Sometimes people's desires are carnal. Sometimes their desires are totally out of sync with what is both the will of God and what is good for them. And God, out of his love for us, may say no, or may tell you to do the very thing that you least want to do.

And when God does say no, and the outcome of your request to God turns out to be a negative, and you don't get what you want, or you find that God takes from you something that you would rather not have given up, the temptation that the devil brings is to accuse God. Well, what's wrong with God? Isn't he on your side? And what the Bible points out in cases like this is that it's because he is on your side. It's because he does love you that he says no.

It's because he does love you that he takes the toys from you that are hurtful to your soul and are going to damage you forever and are going to deprive you of eternal wealth, and so forth. But the interesting thing is how clearly this illustrates that God doesn't savor the things of man. In Luke 16, I think it was verse 15, Jesus said, The things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God.

I think it's Luke 16, verse 15, or it might be verse 17, but in another place, in Matthew 16, Jesus rebuked Peter because he savored the things of man and not the things of God.

Isn't it interesting that with reference to earthly circumstance, there's nothing that man wants more than health and wealth. There's nothing carnal man values more than his physical comfort and well-being, his health, and his material security, his possessions.

In the flesh, there's nothing more attractive to the carnal man. And, no doubt, a doctrine that teaches that God always wants you to have plenty of both, health and wealth, is going to appeal to a great number of people who have never been broken in terms of their carnality, who have never really had their desires changed, who have never come to a place where they seek not the things of earth, but the things above, where Christ sits. Those who remain carnal, unsanctified, and uninstructed from the Bible are always going to wish for wealth and health, above all things, because an earthbound mind is going to be concerned about these earthly things more than anything else.

But what's interesting is, twice we are told in the Bible that Jesus denied requests in this very area. Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to heal their brother, to restore him to health, and Jesus, loving them, didn't. Because he loved them, he said no.

He didn't say no, but he acted out his response. He didn't come. And he let his friend die sick instead of healing him.

He denied them their request, but the gospel goes out of its way to say he loved them. It was out of love that he did this. Likewise with the rich young ruler, the other case I mentioned.

That had to do with his wealth, his financial security. We're specifically told in Mark 10, 21 that Jesus, loving this man, told him to give it all up. So love of a carnal human sort is just the opposite of God's love.

And if one ever wonders, why didn't God relieve me? Why didn't God heal me? Why didn't God provide for me? Why has God given this sinner all these blessings, and I've been deprived of them? Maybe it's because he loves you. That's what the Bible suggests. And that's what I would suggest we need to have in our mind.

That God loves us even when he doesn't do the thing we think we want. Many times he doesn't give us what we want because he loves us. There's a scripture I was thinking of, and I think I can find it quickly, though I don't know the reference just off the top of my head, but I'll find it here pretty quick, I think.

I think it's in Psalm 115, but I could be wrong. I could be way wrong. I don't have time to go on a search for it.

But I'll tell you what it is. One of the Psalms is telling of God's leading the children of Israel through the wilderness. And it talks about how they grumbled and complained and begged for meat and stuff instead of just the manna.

And it says, He gave them their request, and with it, leanness of soul. It's a little different than New King James. I'm quoting the King James, with which I'm more familiar in that particular verse.

And I'm afraid I can't tell you the... I thought it was around Psalm 115, but I'm afraid I just don't remember exactly. So I'm not going to be able to find it for you, but you may be able to find it if you're looking for it. It says, He gave them their request, and with it, leanness of soul.

106, verse 15. Thank you. Okay.

Psalm 106, verse 15. That'd be it. It's different than New King James.

It says... Well, not too different. It is different in some translations more than this is. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.

When John and James, through their mother, asked Jesus if they could sit the right and left hand of Jesus in the kingdom, Jesus said, You don't know what you're asking for. They thought they did. They thought they were asking for something desirable.

Glory, honor, power, in the earthly sense of that word, that's what man values. That's what man desires. And Jesus says, Well, you know, a stiff price tag comes along with that.

Can you drink the cup I'm going to drink of and be baptized with the baptism I'm going to be baptized with? He said, Even if you can't, I can't guarantee you that seat. But the point is, many times when we ask for things that seem obviously to be for our good, Jesus may in fact be saying, You don't know what you're asking for. I'll say no because I love you.

It's like if my children, if Timothy wants to play with razor blades, you know, sometimes he may want to do that kind of thing. I'd just have to say no. He may throw a fit and cry and think I'm the meanest papa there is, but he'll know later on.

Someday he'll understand. In the meantime, I have to live with being thought to be an ogre. And God has to live with that too, to a certain extent, unfortunately.

We have some of his children who are too immature to value what God values. Think God an ogre if he doesn't heal, if he doesn't provide, if he takes away our material things. This can be the most merciful thing God can do, in some cases, and he does it in some cases, the Bible says.

By the way, and this is related to this, a long time ago, I mean, weeks ago, we were talking in Isaiah about something about healing and stuff. And remember I said, somewhere in the Bible, God takes credit for making the blind blind. Do you remember

that? And there was this search that went out for it, and no one ever found it.

And I said, Well, I'll find it. I haven't looked for it, but I came across it anyway. And it's back in Exodus.

I'll give it to you now, just because I probably forget to give it to you sometime in the future, and it's roughly relevant to the present topic. Back in Exodus chapter 4, in verse 10, when God was calling Moses to the burning bush, it says, Then Moses said to the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. So the Lord said to him, Who made a man's mouth? Or, Who made the mute, the deaf, the seen, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Who made people handicapped? God says, I did.

Wasn't it I that did that? Made people blind? Made people mute? Good scripture. Because, of course, there's a number of people out there who think, No, God doesn't do that kind of thing. That's the devil does that.

So they don't want to give God the credit for what he takes credit for himself. Now, is it an unloving thing? My wife and I know a family, and my wife and I were just talking about it today, a very sad situation. The midwife who delivered Timothy a couple years ago, I say delivered him, caught him, that's the better word for it.

Kristen delivered him. But, the midwife who caught our baby Timmy when he was born a couple years ago is a young lady, probably in her late teens, probably in her early twenties now, and she, her mother, who's only 48, is dying of cancer. It's a terrible, terrible situation.

Of course, they're Christians, and they're praying, and things got better for a while, and then they've turned for the worse, and it doesn't look good. I'm hoping, of course, I still hope the woman is healed. It would be a very, a very great trial to the family, although all the children are grown, and there's no young children in the family who need their mother around.

Obviously, it's always hurtful to lose a family member, especially to see them suffering. But, my wife was talking on the phone just today, I guess, or yesterday, sometime very recently, with this girl who was our midwife, and her mother is the one in this condition. And Kristen was saying, you know, well, you know, God sometimes has a purpose in people dying young.

Now, that's not what people in this situation want to hear. But, the young girl responded and said, but God's not cruel. And this reflects an attitude that Christians often have.

If God lets somebody die young, he must be cruel. He certainly would never want this to happen. And people would feel like, if God allows somebody to be born blind, that's cruelty.

Really? It depends on what you value. If your heart is set on the things of the earth, then I'd say to be deprived of your eyesight, or to die young, or to have a lifestyle of poverty. By the way, this is a very rich family that's in this condition.

Or to have a life free from pain and sickness, then I'm sure. I guess if those are the things that really matter to you, then you'll have no choice but to see God as cruel. But that's just the point.

How can your values be correct if they compel you to see God as cruel when he's not? The fact that God himself allows these things and brings them himself and takes credit for it himself suggests that there's not any cruelty in this at all. And that if we view it as that, then we are thinking like men and not like God. We're valuing the things of the earth and not the things above.

The only tragedy I can see in someone dying young would be as if they left little children, unraised, to be raised by a single parent. Even that may not end up being a tragedy. But just to die young rather than dying old, what's the big deal there? I mean, why is that a problem? Everyone's going to die sometime.

What's the difference whether they die young or old unless there's some people who are dependent on them who are going to be inconvenienced? But frankly, I must confess, there's a very, very pampered, a very spoiled attitude among modern Christians in the West. They've known so little persecution. I mean, if some of these people lived during the Dark Ages, during the Spanish Inquisition, where their babies were taken from them and dashed against the stones, or even in Old Testament times where that kind of thing happened to people who were conquered by the Assyrians or the Babylonians, I mean, these people no doubt would have to assume that God is very, very cruel because he didn't stop these things from happening.

But that is earthbound thinking. If you suffered miserably every day of your earthly life and your life was extended to a hundred years and then you enjoyed permanent bliss and reward in heaven for the endless millennia of eternity, it's hard to say that God was cruel to allow you to go through that, through those paces, to get to what he wanted to give you. Remember, Paul said, Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, and by the way, he's a guy who suffered more than almost anyone I know has, and yet he spoke of his own affliction as light.

He said, Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us in exceeding an eternal weight of glory. That exceeding an eternal weight of glory sounds like a good deal to me. I'd rather have an exceeding an eternal weight of glory.

Even if it means light affliction, which is but for a moment, I'd rather have the glory than temporary comfort here and have to forfeit the glory. Whatever is eternal is going to be of greater consequence than what is temporary. And therefore, Christians need to



rethink their wimpy ideas about what God owes them if he's going to be a good God.

We need to set our values on the things the Bible tells us to set our values on instead of thinking like pagans, which is unfortunately what Christians often do. Jesus had to rebuke his disciples. He said, Why do you take thought for what you're going to eat or what you're going to drink or what you're going to wear? He says, These are the things the pagans seek after.

A statement which I think was calculated to shame his disciples for thinking that. Why should we think like pagans? It seems like we're supposed to be a little better informed than they are about what matters. Okay, now.

Yes. No, I'm not going to set your midwife. We're talking about healing.

Uh-huh. Yeah, we know Sylvia. She delivered Elizabeth.

I shouldn't say delivered. She caught her. I used the wrong word there.

No, a different one. We've had different midwives for each child. Yeah.

All righty. Let's go on here. He stayed two more days, which is how long it took for Lazarus to die.

If Lazarus had taken a week to die, Jesus probably would have waited a week. The number, there's no magical number about the two days. It's just he had to wait for Lazarus to die for the desired effect of the miracle.

Okay, now verse 7. Then after this, he said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again. The disciples said to him, Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone you and are you going to there again? They're referring back to chapter 10. Last time he was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication.

He said, I and my father are one and they took up stones to stone him. Though he seems to walk out of it. But the disciples are reminding him that last time he was there, there was a plot against his life and almost a riot.

Almost a, like a, what do you call it when an illegal vigilante group breaks into the jail and takes a guy and hangs him. Yeah, lynch mob kind of deal. So they say, Rabbi, I think you're making a mistake about going down to Judea.

Now at this point, they didn't know, they didn't know that there's a connected Lazarus or not. Because two days earlier they'd heard about Lazarus and Jesus had done nothing. So they had no reason to connect his going to Judea with what they heard a couple of days ago about Lazarus being sick.

And Jesus answered, are there not 12 hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he

does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him. Now that's a strange thing to say on this occasion.

He's obviously giving this comment about night, day, light, stumbling, darkness and so forth in connection with his rationale for going to Judea.