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## *Pushing and Pressing through Sickness, Illness*



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# ***Pushing and Pressing through Sickness, Illness***

How does **WHO** define illness?

Illness is defined as the ill health the person identifies themselves with, often based on self-reported mental or physical symptoms.

What's the difference between 'sickness' and 'illness'? Do they mean the same thing or is there a difference between these words? When you say one has fallen sick, same as someone who has



does it mean the fallen ill?

## **The Britannica Dictionary**

*Sick* and *ill* are words that are similar in meaning but have clear differences in usage.

*Sick* is the less formal of the two words. It usually describes short-term diseases or ailments, like the flu, and is commonly used to refer to a feeling of nausea. Think of a *sick* child that stays home instead of going to school or a person who feels *sick* to their stomach after a roller coaster ride.

*Ill* is more formal and is used to describe long- and short-term diseases or ailments. A person who is not in good health because of something serious like cancer or pneumonia might be said to be *ill*. On the other hand, a person who is affected with a minor fever or cold can also be called *ill*. Like *sick*, *ill* also refers to a feeling of nausea.

Two common combinations of *ill* are "ill health" and "mentally ill." *Ill* is the preferred word in such cases, though *sick* can be used in its place.

There are others who believe that these terms are not synonymous and cannot be used interchangeably.

**Table Summarizing the Difference between Illness and Sickness**

	<b>Sickness</b>	<b>Illness</b>
<b>Meaning</b>	The word sickness is any condition that might not be a medical condition. It also means being affected by a sense of discomfort.	The word 'illness' means an ailment that affects one's mind and body.
<b>Usage</b>	It is used as a Noun.	It is used as a Noun.
<b>Example</b>	Sai suffers from motion sickness. Morning sickness is a common problem noticed among pregnant women.	My grandfather suffered from a long-term illness. Mr. Charles was suffering from a long term illness before he succumbed yesterday.

When you use the word '**sickness**', it can refer to both a non-medical and a medical ailment depending on the context. Pregnant women get morning sickness, meaning, they are overwhelmed by nausea in the first few months of pregnancy or throughout the pregnancy. Sometimes a person is said to be suffering from sickness from a society's point of view, for example, 'The people in Mrs. Scott's neighborhood thought she was mentally sick as she didn't talk with anyone.

However, when you use the word '**illness**', it might refer to a short term or a long term ailment that affects someone's body as well as mind. Illness can be chronic (long-term) or acute (short-term) or can

be treatable with medicines. Headaches, the common cold, and stomach aches are common types of illnesses that are generally short-term and can be treated with medication at home. A person can also suffer from mental illness and may need to see a psychologist or a counselor. All of these are medical conditions.

Let us look at 2 passages in the bible and the outcomes

### **1. 2 Kings 20:1-6**

20 In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.”

2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, 3 “Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: 5 “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. 6 I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’”

### **2. 2 Corinthians 12:7b-9 NIV**

<sup>7b</sup> Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

The church in Corinth thought they had it all together and boasted about what they had. Paul is showing them the foolishness of that outlook. Rather than boasting about their supposed strengths they should boast about their weakness.

**QUESTION:** What was Paul's thorn in the flesh?

ANSWER - Paul speaks of a "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12:7. He calls it "a messenger of Satan" that had a purpose of "torment." Many people tried to explain this, but whether Paul is referring to a physical, spiritual, or emotional affliction is not quite certain. Paul was not speaking of a literal thorn but speaking metaphorically.

Some theories of what the thorn could be include temptation, a chronic eye problem, malaria, migraines, epilepsy, and a speech disability. Some think the thorn refers to a person, such as Alexander the coppersmith, who did Paul "a great deal of harm" (2 Timothy 4:14). It is obvious that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a source of pain in his life.

**QUESTIONS:** What was the purpose of the thorn?

What was Satan's motivation for sending it?

What was God's motivation for allowing it?

How did Paul respond to this thorn?

Paul clues us in concerning the thorn's purpose: "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations." So, God's goal in allowing the thorn in the flesh was to keep Paul **humble**. Anyone who had encountered Jesus and was commissioned personally by Him (Acts 9:2-8) would become "puffed up." Additionally, Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to write much of the New Testament, so he could easily become "too proud."

Paul also says that the affliction came from or by a “messenger of Satan.” Paul accredits the thorn to Satan, not God. Satan is the one causing the pain, God is allowing it. Paul has asked God three times to remove the thorn, but God did not. However the pain is not in vain, God is turning his weakness into something good.

When God sends or allows some unexpected trial, affliction, sickness/illness, etc., in our life, do we receive it as a manifestation of His loving **AFFECTION**, or as an **INFLECTION**? Do we see it as something to make us "**BETTER**" or "**BITTER**?"

What lesson can we learn from this about how God views pride?

**OTHER QUESTIONS: Why** might God allow obstacles or difficulties in our own lives?

**Can you share** an example of a time when God used a difficult situation to humble you?

How did God answer Paul’s prayer?

What do we learn from this about prayer?

Can you share an example of a time when God’s grace was sufficient for you?

**Explain this phrase**, “my power is made perfect in weakness.”

When we tend to focus on all the needs we have in our life, we are focused on the wrong things. Instead we should shift from our thorn to God’s grace, which is enough for us.

God looks at us today and says, “My grace is sufficient for YOU.”

When we shift our focus from our “thorn,” our weakness, to God the result is our weakness becomes a strength. Paul is not saying HIS strength, but rather GOD’S strength.

Our weakness cannot compare to the overwhelming power that Christ has. Where we are weak God is strong. His strength is made perfect when we look to him rather than trying to accomplish it on our own. When we rely on God for our strength we can find joy in our

troubles and weakness because God will use them to bring his goodness into our life.

## **How do we push and press through sickness, illness?**

### **James 5: 14-15**

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.



It is obvious that prayer is important. As you can see there are 2 different outcomes in Hezekiah's prayer and Paul's prayer.

Hezekiah's prayer and weeping caused God to change his mind, God healed him and gave him fifteen more years to live.

However, after Paul prayed three times, God still did not take away his thorn.

God may not always remove your thorn but Romans 8:28 reminds us that God can bring about good from any situation.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of sickness is always a difficult one to deal with. The key is remembering that God's ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:9). When we are suffering with a sickness, disease, or injury, we usually focus on our own suffering, and it is very difficult to focus on what good God might bring about as a result.

Many people look back on times of sickness as times when they grew closer to God, learned to trust Him more, and/or learned how to truly value life. This is the perspective God has because He is sovereign and knows the end result.

In a world stained by **sin**, sickness, disease, and death will always be with us. Our bodies are prone to disease and illness. Some sickness is simply a result of the natural course of things in this world. And as we get older our bodies tend to wear down.

Sickness can also be the result of a demonic attack. The bible describes several instances when physical suffering was caused by Satan and his demons (Matthew 17:14-18; Luke 13:10-16). So, some sickness is not from God, but from Satan. **Even in these instances, God is still in control.**

Even when sickness is not directly from God, He will still use it according to His perfect will. It is undeniable, though, that God sometimes intentionally allows, or even causes sickness to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

**Reflect:** What affliction do you face which you can turn into a testimony for God? God's grace is greater when we serve Him even in the midst of afflictions. Rather than growing bitter when we experience such "thorns," let us instead learn to depend on God. Perhaps such an affliction is an opportunity to witness for Him or share a testimony with others.

Remember that **God is always with you** as you go through

All researched and adapted for this Bible study.