Sickness for the Glory of God
Scripture: John 11:1-16
Code: 1531

INTRODUCTION

The first sixteen verses of John 11 set the background for the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. In verse 4, Christ reveals that Lazarus's sickness was "not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified by it." God desired to receive glory through that miracle. Its purpose was not so much for the life of Lazarus, nor for the love of Mary and Martha, as it was for the glory of God and His Son. It is the most astounding of all the miracles Jesus had performed up to this point and the greatest manifestation of His glory yet seen. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead so men might recognize Him as God through His display of divine power.

A. The Rejection of the Lord

It is fitting after the intense rejection Christ had experienced in John 10 to see His glory still blazing amidst the resistance of the religious leaders. In John 11, Satan again fails to dim the light of Jesus Christ. The third chapter tells us that light came "into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (v. 19). In the first chapter, John recorded the fact that even though the world rejected the light (vv. 10-11), the world could not overcome it (v. 5). Satan couldn't stop the plan of God from being carried out by Christ-- and he still can't. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "... I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Nothing can dim the blazing glory of Jesus Christ. Even though He met with incessant opposition and hate, His glory was still obvious. Chapter 11 gives the impression that the Father is so jealous for the Son's glory He makes this miracle happen so He can vindicate Jesus' honor and glory in view of the world's hatred. He jealously guards the honor of the Son. Anyone who refuses to honor the Son is removed from the presence of God to spend the rest of eternity in hell. That is a solemn reality. In fact, Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

B. The Resurrection of Lazarus

1. Its Importance

By chapter 11, there already have been six miracles in John's gospel: Jesus turned water to wine (Jn. 2:1-11), healed a nobleman's son (4:46-54), healed a lame man (5:1-9), multiplied loaves and fishes

to feed over five thousand (6:5-13), walked on water (6:16-21), and cured a man born blind (9:1-7). The raising of Lazarus is number seven. Since seven is the perfect number in Hebrew thinking, it is no coincidence that this seventh miracle is climactic. The resurrection of Lazarus was the greatest demonstration of Christ's divine power during His ministry. Although He had raised Jairus's daughter (Mk. 5:22- 24, 35-43) and the son of a widow who lived in Nain (Lk. 7:11- 15), those resurrections occurred immediately after death. In the case of Lazarus, the miracle is even more monumental because Lazarus had been in the grave four days and the process of decomposition had begun.

2. Its Intentions

The miracle of Lazarus's resurrection revealed God's glory. That was always the primary purpose of miracles. In chapter 9, the disciples asked about what had caused a particular man to become blind: "... Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (vv. 2-3). The miracle of chapter 11 gives glory to God for three reasons:

a. It Points to the Deity of Christ

Only God can give life. Jesus had been claiming to be God and now He gives life. He had said, "I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35) after He had multiplied bread and fed a multitude (Jn. 6:5-14). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5), and then He gave light to blind eyes and a darkened soul (Jn. 9:6-7, 35-38). In John 11, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (v. 25), and then He gave life to Lazarus, who had died (vv. 41-44). This miracle glorifies God because it vindicates all the claims of Christ's deity. He was not just a man, or merely a sub-god; He was God Himself in human flesh.

b. It Confirmed the Faith of the Disciples

Jesus was glad Lazarus had died because Lazarus's resurrection would cause the disciples' faith to take a giant leap forward as they witnessed His power over death.

c. It Led Directly to the Cross

You ask, "How could the cross bring glory to God?" The cross brought the greatest glory to God of anything in the life of Christ. Jesus said, "... The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (Jn. 12:23). When the Jews and Romans put Him on a cross, the world thought that was the end. Yet Christ's bearing the sins of the world on the cross brought Him glory.

John 11 falls into four parts: the preparation for the miracle (vv. 1- 16), the arrival of Jesus (vv. 17-37), the miracle itself (vv. 38-44), and the results (vv. 45-57). Let's begin with the preparation as we

examine four sets of characters: the critical man; the concerned sisters; the cringing disciples; and the confident Christ, who remains in calm control while everyone else is in an uproar.

I. THE CRITICAL MAN (vv. 1-2)

A. His Illness (v. 1a)

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus ..."

The fact of this man's sickness is mentioned first because it was the necessary vehicle for bringing glory to God. This is not the story of Lazarus; it is the story of Jesus and His resurrection power. Lazarus just happened to be the person who was raised. So the emphasis in the verse is the sickness of Lazarus. The verse doesn't say, "There was a wonderful man named Lazarus who was sick." Rather, it says, "There was a man who was sick--he just happened to be Lazarus."B. His Identity (vv. 1b-2)

"... Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister, Martha. (It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)"

1. His Name

Lazarus is a significant name for this man. It comes from the Hebrew name Eleazer, which means "one whom God helps." It is a fitting name for Lazarus because he got as much help as one could possibly get from God: resurrection.

The Lazarus of John 11 is not the Lazarus of Luke 16, who was a beggar. They just happened to have the same name, which was a very common one.

2. His Residence

Lazarus lived in Bethany. There were two Bethanys--one a couple of miles from Jerusalem, and another (also called Bethabara) on the east side of the Jordan River. In fact, it's very likely Jesus had returned to the Bethany that was east of the Jordan (Jn. 10:40; cf. 1:28), where he was when the message of Lazarus's sickness reached him.

The Bethany where Lazarus lived was the same town Mary and her sister Martha lived in. It was less than two miles from Jerusalem. That little, insignificant village was about to be the stage for a display of blazing glory. The greatest attestation to the deity of Christ that had yet been done was going to take place in the village of Bethany.

3. His Sisters

It is unusual that Mary is mentioned before Martha since Mary was the youngest. Normally the oldest was mentioned first. But in this case the youngest was, since Mary was the most well- known. Verse 2 reminds the reader of her identity: "It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick." John alludes to that humble act of love for Jesus in chapter 11, although he doesn't explain it until chapter 12. You ask, "Why would he allude to something he hadn't told them about?" John wrote his Gospel several years after Matthew, Mark, and Luke had written theirs. The readers were already familiar with the story of Mary anointing Jesus.

Jesus spent many hours in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Their house served as a haven from the hatred of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. It was probably the closest thing to a home that Jesus had in Judea. He loved Lazarus and his two sisters, and they loved Him.

Lazarus was critically ill. But he was critical in another sense: He was going to be instrumental in manifesting the glory of God, strengthening the testimony of doubting disciples, and being the object of the miracle that led to the cross (Jn. 11:53).

II. THE CONCERNED SISTERS (vv. 3-6)

A. The Request (v. 3)

"Therefore, his sisters sent unto [Jesus], saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

1. Its Cause

Lazarus was dying. The Greek word for "sick" implies that his sickness was very serious. Death threatened, so the sisters immediately thought of Jesus, who had healed many strangers and certainly would come to the aid of one He loved. The wicked plotting of the Jewish leaders had caused Jesus to escape for His life to the east side of the Jordan. Realizing He could heal Lazarus, the two sisters sent a message to Him. Their faith in His healing power is evident from John 11:21, where Martha said, "... Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother [would not have] died." In verse 32, Mary said the same thing. Both of them wanted Him there because they knew what He could do.

2. Its Character

a. The Attitude of Humility

The message Mary and Martha sent to Jesus is beautiful. Their statement about their sick brother, who was loved by the Lord, had a tender, humble simplicity. There was no mention of symptoms. They didn't even ask Him to do anything, as though they said, "Here's the problem, Lord. Please do something about it." Rather, they merely informed Jesus that the one He loved was sick. They didn't tell Him what to do. They exemplified a surrender of love and faith that presented only the need. What humility!

How do you talk to God? Do you say, "God, I have a need. Now let me tell You how to work it out: If You'll do so-and-so, things will turn out all right." You don't need to do that. Just tell Him your need. That's all it takes. Like Mary and Martha, surrender your needs to Christ's love, saying: "Here's my need, Lord. I'm going to leave it with You."

b. The Assurance of Love

Mary and Martha didn't say, "Lord, You know that guy who really loves You? He's sick." They didn't try to put Him on the spot. Rather, they said, "Lord, the one You love is sick." The latter statement carries much more weight. If your love for Jesus activated His blessing on your behalf, you would be blessed on an irregular basis. If Christ operated in my life on the basis of my love for Him, I would be in sad shape because my love is inconsistent and at times self-centered.

Jesus is not motivated to come to your aid because you love Him; He helps you because He loves you. That's good to know! No matter what our problems might be, He always operates in our lives on the basis of His unconditional love. (However, that's no excuse to exploit His love by intentionally sinning.) It's a comfort to know that God does not bless us in proportion to our love to Him. Rather, everything we have is because He loves us, even though we don't deserve it. What a thrilling thought! In fact, even when our love wanes and we sin, He continues to love us by chastening us. He loves us so much, He blesses us even when we don't deserve His blessing. If He acted on the basis of our love, we would be powerless and without resource or blessing. Fortunately, He doesn't.

c. The Acknowledgement of Humanity

1)The Expression of Christ's Love

There's are several words for love in ancient Greek: eros, which means "sexual love"; agape, which means "divine, supernatural love"; and philia, which means "human affection" or "brotherly love." Verse 3 uses the verb form of philia, which implies that not only was Jesus God, but He was also a man. He affectionately loved Lazarus, and the sisters knew that.

There are probably many people you love as friends. Jesus also needed to express and receive love like that because He was a man. It's obvious that Jesus expressed a divine love as the Savior of the

world. But from a human standpoint, there were certain ones He had a special affection for. As a man, Jesus loved the companionship of Lazarus. John 11:35-36 records an expression of that love: "Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!"

2) The Empathy of Christ's Love

You say, "What's the significance of knowing Christ can love on a human level?" Jesus needed the fulfillment of human love. As a man, He needed to love and be loved. Consequently, He understands our need for that. When you're lonely and you feel there's no one you can love or anyone who loves you, know that you can say, "Lord, You know how I need love." He'll understand because Lazarus filled His need for love. Whatever you are facing, realize that He experienced the same kinds of things (Heb. 4:15-16). Trust in Him. Somewhere there's a Mary, Martha, or a Lazarus for you to love and be loved by. Jesus knows you need that. You say, "How do you know He'll do that for me?" Because He holds back no good thing from His children (Ps. 84:11). He became a man so He might feel what we feel. Hebrews tells us that we have a sympathetic high priest in the person of Christ (Heb. 4:15).

Verse 3 also reveals that Mary and Martha went right to the source for help. They knew where to go. If you have a problem, go straight to the Lord. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). When the Israelites murmured in the wilderness, Moses prayed to the Lord (Num. 11:11). When John the Baptist was beheaded, John's disciples went to Jesus and told Him what had happened. They knew where to go: Jesus, the source of all our help.

Those are good examples for us to follow because "we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Wherever you are, He's been there in terms of understanding human life. Peter says you should be "casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Trusting Without Tension

The sisters of Lazarus, well aware of their brother's critical condition, appealed to Jesus and left the problem in His hands. Their response reminds me of Psalm 37:5: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him ...." You say, "Why does it say trusting in the Lord involves committing our ways to Him?" Because most people don't. They say, "Lord, here's my problem," and then they get an ulcer. They commit their way unto the Lord, but they don't trust Him. We get on our knees saying, "O God, I have a need; here's my problem," and then we worry about how we're going to solve it. That's why those two have to go together. Commit your way to the Lord and then trust Him.

B. The Reply (v. 4)

"When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified by it."

1. The Stated Purpose

Jesus said, "The whole point of Lazarus's sickness is not death, but the glory of God." Notice it was for the glory of God and the Son of God. You do not glorify the Father unless you glorify the Son and you do not glorify the Son unless you glorify the Father (Jn. 5:23). The idea of believing in God apart from Christ is not scriptural. God does not receive glory from one who is not also giving glory to the Son. They both deserve glory because they are both God.

2. The Sovereign Prerogative

Sometimes sickness is designed for the glory of God. Many people who are in the faith-healing movement feel that sickness is always a result of sin. That isn't always true. In John 9 and 11, sickness had nothing to do with sin. It was for the glory of God. Faith healers may reply, "But the glory of God is always greatest when there's a healing." That's not always true either. Although God can receive glory from a healing, there are other times when someone gets sick but is not healed. God still can receive glory in such a case because suffering often produces a stronger servant. Consider the Apostle Paul: God never healed him. Although his infirmity in the flesh was never cured, he was a better man for it, a stronger apostle in God's service. God received more glory by Paul's illness than by his health (2 Cor. 12:7-10). So, being sick can be for the glory of God just as well as being healed.

C. The Response (vv. 5-6)

1. The Defense of Christ's Love (v. 5)

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

That interjection by John in the flow of the story is important because of what comes in the next verse. It was necessary that Jesus' love for them be established before His recorded response in verse 6. Incidently, the nature of his love for them here is revealed as divine love (agape), rather than an affectionate love (philia).

2. The Delay for God's Glory (v. 6)

"When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was."

If you had left out verse 5 and read verse 6, you might have wondered if Jesus loved them because of His apparent lack of concern. But verse 5 affirms that Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. That helps to reassure us of Jesus' love in spite of the two-day delay. You say, "That's a strange kind of love that waits for two days before going to heal a friend who's dying." But His delay did not mean He didn't love them. Can you imagine love on the basis of time? You wouldn't say, "God, You have twenty minutes to fulfill this need and if you don't, it's clear You don't love me." That would be ridiculous. You don't measure love on the basis of time. Verse 5 tells us that the delay of verse 6 wasn't a delay of love; it was only a delay of time.

Human love would have manifested itself by hurrying to Bethany with heart pounding, but divine love wasn't in any hurry at all. What does the omnipotent Christ have to worry about? Jesus knew the delay would make His love all the more real and would bring more glory to God and more joy and faith to Mary, Martha and the disciples. He knew a resurrection would be a better testimony to the people than a healing. The delay--based on His love--was important to His purposes. He wanted to wait until Lazarus was dead so His power might have an even greater impact. The disciples didn't understand the delay, but Jesus did. He was setting up the great miracle He was going to perform.

Don't worry about the wait

It's interesting how God makes us wait. When you worry because God doesn't immediately come to the rescue, realize that He often makes us wait before His love becomes visible. Although He won't stop loving us, the fact that His love may not be visible indicates that we may have to wait. But remember: If you're waiting for God, that's a gilt-edge guarantee that blessing is on the way--although it might come in a package you're not expecting. When you pray expecting an immediate answer but nothing happens, you can be sure that God is preparing a blessing you might not initially recognize. Just hang on! Isaiah 30:18 says, "And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted ...." You say, "Now wait a minute; if He really wanted to be gracious to me, He wouldn't wait so long." Not always. Sometimes God takes awhile to wrap up all the packages the way He wants them delivered. Don't rush Him. He loves you so much, He may make you wait for something better than you ever dreamed you were going to get in the beginning. Don't settle for the second best--wait. The Lord knows what's best and He knows the right time, so don't ever interpret His love by time. The poet said, "His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour; the bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower" (cited in William Hendriksen's The Gospel of John [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981], 2:141). The last phrase of Isaiah 30:18 says, "... blessed are all they that wait for Him."

III. THE CRINGING DISCIPLES (vv. 7-10)

A. The Fear that Was Fostered (vv. 7-8)

"Then, after that, saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou there again?"

The disciples were confused about Jesus' intentions. They didn't understand why He wanted to return to the very place He had just escaped from with His life. In addition, John 10:42 records that "many believed" in the area beyond the Jordan where He and His disciples had retreated to. It made more sense to them to build up their new area of ministry rather than go back to the area of Jerusalem and be stoned. Furthermore, they may have thought that when Jesus said the sickness was "not unto death" (v. 4), it meant Lazarus wasn't going to die physically. If Lazarus wasn't sick enough to die, they probably wondered what was the point of going back to Jerusalem in light of the opposition there.

B. The Reassurance that Was Required (vv. 9-10)

"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

Jesus replied with a fantastic illustration. As a Christian, you don't need to fear death if you realize that God is in control of when you die. To the Hebrews, every day was arranged around a period of daylight and a period of night. Jesus was telling His disciples, "Don't you realize that a day can't finish until it's over with? God has prescribed the bounds of My life. By all your concern for My safety, you can't lengthen it for the same reason the rejection of the Jewish leaders can't shorten it. What have we got to fear? God has fixed the calendar. Let us live out the day to the fullest because night is coming, during which no man can work (Jn. 9:4). Jesus often said, "Mine hour is not yet come" (e.g. Jn. 2:4), referring to the climax of the crucifixion. He knew His time wasn't up yet; He was on a divine time schedule.

Do you fear death?

Jesus' reply has great application for us. God has set the boundary on our lifetime; we'll not live a minute after or die a minute sooner. If a man is serving God, he must utilize the prescribed bounds that God has allotted for him. He need not fear any opposition if he is operating according to God's will. As a Christian, you don't need to fear death because you're not going to die before God says your ministry is through. That's a fantastic assurance. You can walk into the face of opposition with

confidence.

However, there's also a serious application to an unbeliever. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to realize that time is extended for no man. God set boundaries on your life too. There's just enough time to receive Christ, but no time to spare.

In the legend of Dr. Faustus, which was made into a drama by sixteenth-century English dramatist Christopher Marlowe, Faustus struck a bargain with the devil. If the devil would serve him for twenty-four years, he would give his soul to the devil forever. At the end of those years, Faustus knew he had made a bad bargain. He regretfully addressed himself, saying, "Oh Faustus, now hast thou but one bare hour to live, and then thou must be damned perpetually .... The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike, the devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd" (V.ii.127). Time had run out for Faustus--and it can run out for you too.

IV. THE CONFIDENT CHRIST (vv. 11-16)

A. The Comment About Death (v. 11)

"These things said He; and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

Confident of His power, Jesus spoke metaphorically of Lazarus's death as only sleep from which His friend would be awakened. Jesus knew Lazarus was dead, but He was confident He could raise him up.

B. The Confusion of the Disciples (v. 12)

"Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well."

The disciples didn't get the message. They thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was resting so he could get better.

C. The Clarification by Christ (vv. 13-15)

"However, Jesus spoke of his death; but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him."

Jesus clarified that Lazarus was actually dead. He stated He was glad He was not present while Lazarus was sick. His absence allowed Lazarus to die so He could perform the miracle of

resurrection and increase the faith of His disciples. They needed to have faith in Jesus' ability to give life because they would soon see their beloved Savior hanging on a cross. At that point, they would need to reach back into their reservoir of faith to believe He had power over death. They needed to learn that Christ's omniscience and omnipotence freed them from worry. Resurrection from the dead posed no problem for Jesus.

That Jesus intended the miracle to cause His disciples to "believe" (Jn. 11:15) doesn't mean they had no faith. It means He wanted their faith to increase. An interesting thing about faith is that as you move one step up, the step you just left seems like unbelief. The disciples had some faith, but they needed more, and this miracle was going to be part of that process.

D. The Commitment of Thomas (v. 16)

"Then said Thomas, who is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

1. Analyzed

Realizing that Jesus was determined to go back to Jerusalem, Thomas was ready to return with Him. I admire his love, but I can't say much for his faith: His love was so strong, he was willing to die for Jesus, but his faith was so weak, he was sure he would. Thomas had great devotion, but little faith. Before you knock his faith, however, see if you can match his love.

When Jesus was crucified, Thomas didn't die with Him. He fled like the rest of the disciples, although at this point he had good intentions. Later on, however, he did die for Christ as a martyr. He was willing to go back into the face of hostility.

2. Applied

Are we as willing to die for Christ as Thomas was? The sad fact is that most of us haven't even been willing to live for Him. Most of us live for ourselves--for pleasure, possessions, or physical cravings. Such misdirected effort is as remote as it can possibly be from dying for Jesus. Thomas said, "Let's go die with Him." We say, "Let's live for ourselves." We claim to be Christians but knock Thomas's faith when our love can't even match his.

If you want to match his love, you need to be willing to die to self; then you'll move a little closer to the goal of being willing to die for Jesus. The measure of Thomas's life was his selfless sacrifice. That's the measure of your life too. Don't tell God you love Him, and then live for yourself. That kind of love is a lie. Live for Jesus Christ and be willing to die for Him. Your love won't even need to speak because it will be obvious. The measure of your love is your selflessness. We should be able to say,

"Whatever the cost, my love is so strong, I'll die to self and live for Christ.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What was the resurrection of Lazarus designed to help men recognize about Christ?

2. How was the resurrection of Lazarus different from the other resurrections Jesus had performed?

3. What was the miracle of Lazarus intended to reveal? What are three ways it does that?

4. Where did Lazarus live? Where was that town located in relation to Jerusalem?

5. Who were the sisters of Lazarus? What was the youngest known for having done?

6. Why had Jesus retreated to the east side of the Jordon River?

7. How did the sisters express an attitude of humility regarding Lazarus's illness?

8. What motivates Jesus to come to a Christian's aid?

9.What's the significance of knowing that Christ can love on a human level?

10. What did Mary and Martha recognize Jesus as a source of? Why can we be quick to confide in Him in times of trouble, according to Hebrews 4:15?

11. What was to be the point of Lazarus's sickness? Explain.

12. Can the Father be glorified apart from the Son? Explain.

13.Is sickness always the result of sin? Support your answer with Scripture.

14. How did God receive glory from the Apostle Paul's infirmity?

15. Why was it necessary for John to assure his readers of Jesus' love for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in verse 5?

16. Explain how the two-day delay was important to Jesus' purposes.

17. Why were the disciples confused about Jesus' intention to go back to the area where He had been persecuted?

18. Why do Christians not have to fear death?

19. Why was Jesus glad that He was not present while Lazarus was sick (Jn. 11:15)?

20. Although Thomas is often criticized for his lack of faith, what did he not lack (Jn. 11:16)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Jesus responded to the urgent request of Mary and Martha because of His love for them--rather than their love for Him. If Jesus were to respond to your requests based on your love for Him, would many of them get answered? Why? Read Romans 8:35-39 and praise God that you cannot be separated from His love in Christ.

2. When you are faced with a problem, do you tell the Lord but worry about the outcome? Psalm 37:5 says, "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him ...." When you pray about something, believe that God will answer. However, give Him time to respond according to His plan. Do you remember ever getting impatient while waiting for an answer to your prayer? Have you ever discovered it was actually a blessing that your prayer wasn't answered when and how you had expected? As you wait for an answer, trust that God will work for your good and His glory. Meditate on 1 John 5:14-15.

3. When was the last time you sacrificed time or money for the sake of Christ? How does your love for the Lord compare with that of Thomas, who was willing to die with Him? Meditate on Romans 12:1-2. Although it is difficult to hypothetically determine whether you would die for Christ in a given situation, at least consider how you are living for Him in the present. Are you willing to live for the One who made the ultimate sacrifice for you?

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