

# Lord, I Thought You Answered Prayer

by Glenn Lawrence



**J**ohn 11:3, “So the sisters sent word to Him (Jesus), saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’”

Think about it. The sisters didn’t really “ask” for anything specific but we can read between the lines and fill in the blanks. Lazarus was sick. So sick that his sisters were unwilling to leave his side and within a few days he would be dead. They realized that the best thing to do was send word to the Healer. So, they called out to Jesus, asking Him to come and heal their brother. In essence, they prayed.

We can guess what happened next for the sisters. How so? Because most of us have been there. We have sat beside the terminal loved one as they fought for their next breath. We have waited patiently as a family member underwent high risk surgery. We have seen the look in the doctor’s eyes as he told us there was nothing else he could do. We understand the long hours and the sleepless nights. We know the feelings of impotence. We have wrestled with the fear and frustration. And just like Martha and Mary we too have prayed to God.

At some point the sisters decided to send word to Jesus. They appealed to Jesus’ sovereignty (“Lord,...”). They reminded Jesus of the special relationship that he possessed with Lazarus (“...he whom You love...”). Finally, they stated their need in clear, simple terms (“... is sick.”). I cannot imagine the days that followed. With every knock at the door their hearts must have jumped in anticipation. But each time their joy only plummeted further into despair as they realized it was not Jesus. Minutes became hours. Hours became days. All the

while they were harassed by thoughts of despair and abandonment. “Where is He? He said that He loved us. Why isn’t He here yet?” They needed His help but He was not responding. They had asked but they were not receiving. They had prayed but He was not answering.

Maybe you’re there now. If so, here are some things to remember:

**Providence:** God is sovereign. All things serve Him and work according to His counsel. He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him. The situation with Lazarus was never out of control. In His sovereignty God had allowed the sickness to occur. In His goodness He had already prepared for it. Before the word of Lazarus’ need ever reached Jesus He already knew the final outcome. He saw the end from the beginning and He knew that it would all be for the good. Sickness and death would not prevail. In the end it would all be for the good.

**Patience:** Too often we confuse the present problem with the final outcome. Yes, Lazarus would die. But no, that was not the end of the story. The trial was setting the stage for triumph. Death would give way to life. Cries of despair would be replaced by shouts of joy. The sisters mistakenly closed the book before they reached the final chapter. Repeatedly, the Bible tells us to wait on the Lord. When praying, be patient. God will have the final word.

**Purpose:** The sisters’ concern was their need. Jesus’ concern was God’s glory. For the sisters the issue was their sick brother. For Jesus there was a greater purpose. In time God used Lazarus’ sickness as a catalyst for salvation. Too often our prayers are too self-centered. We are thinking only about the problem but God sees the bigger picture. And He always has two goals in mind when He answers prayer... our good and His glory.

Initially Martha and Mary questioned Jesus’ love and compassion. They had asked for help. He had seemingly ignored their need. But in the end they realized that God does answer prayer. Their brother was healed. Their pain was erased. And through it all God was glorified.

Take heart. Your prayers have not been ignored. God will answer you. Trust in His providence. He is in control and He has a plan. Be patient. God is faithful. He will not fail you. Finally, remember that He has a purpose. In time you will see it. No matter your problem, God is going to use it for His glory and your good.