

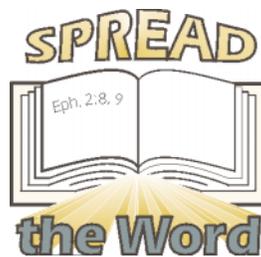
CANCER TO CHRIST

by

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In the memory of one brave lady who, while suffering, never lost her faith in God and through her, and God's Grace, I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved.

CANCER TO CHRIST

It was a warm day in May. Funny, for most days in Miami, in May, are warm. But this was a special warm day in Miami in May. It was one of those times in a person's life that you don't have to ever remember because you can never forget it, as hard as you might try. It was like an experience you have once in your lifetime, that you know so well, you can't forget. I remember that specific warm day in May in Miami, because it was my birthday. When you get as old as I am, you lose track not only of your birthday, but almost all the days that seemed to have just flown away, as a vapor or a cloud.

Because of the event that took place on my birthday, I can count back from this year in our Lord, 2000, and I was at that time celebrating my 45th birthday. I can't say that it was my birthday party, but I can say that it was a fulfillment of one of the greatest of all promises in the Word of God. One of the most famous of all promises of God, one which every Christian and non-Christian all know almost by memory, even though they may not be able to explain it or understand it. The promise is that *"all things work together for good."* All things are not good, but *"all things work together for good."*

And if you know that promise, you will recognize the qualifications for appreciating that promise, it has a preface and a conclusion. *"We know* that all things work together for good, to them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." *"We know."* I didn't know before my birthday on that warm May day, but since then I have come to learn and now I do know that all things work together for good.

My wife, one of the most remarkable Christian women in this world, had been suffering with cancer for many years, and finally, on that warm sunny day in May, on my birthday, she went home to be with her Lord.

So, May 20, 1967, will always be one of those days which I can never ever forget, for many reasons, not only the departure of my wife, but for her, by her departure, gave me the opportunity not only to become a Christian, but also to come to know and experience the fact and the fulfillment of God's precious promise.

"All things work together for good."

All things are not good. She left me all alone, and that was not good, but it certainly did work together for good. As a result of her testimony to me personally, I not only became a Christian and I not only learned and experienced this fabulous principle, but God gave me the gift of Pastor-Teacher. A bartender from Philadelphia became a Pastor and has been teaching the Word of God for the past 30+ years, even to the tune of five or more classes a week.

While my wife suffered so severely with cancer, she continually insisted on my not using her and her illness to keep me from Bible Study and Church service. She insisted time and time again that she wanted me to leave her all alone so that I could *"grow in Grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."*

I always have had the feeling that I was now serving the Lord for the both of us, because before I became a Christian, she was the only one in our marriage who was interested in the Lord and spending any time studying His Word and witnessing for Him.

As we were both orphans, we only had each other and the Lord. I had to take care of her and do all the duties that are necessary around the house and to go school and still come home and take care of her bed-ridden condition.

She often remarked to me, *"As I get weaker, you get stronger."*

I had no idea that I was getting stronger. I was just doing whatever was necessary and had to be done, not knowing actually what I was doing from one time to the next.

Her faith was so strong, that she made me promise her that I would not give her any drugs to deaden the pain, because she wanted her mind to be clear so that she could concentrate on the Promises of God, which I had pasted all over the walls and ceiling of her room.

"Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you."

"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee."

"Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."

I met a doctor in Miami, who was the doctor for the *Miami Dolphins*, and he told me when he found out about my wife's condition and my promise to her that he had some drugs that were not addictive.

I remember that night when I came home I was so happy because I found some pills that would relieve her tremendous pain and yet not be addictive and leave her mind clear so she could get her *"comfort from the Word."*

I gave her the pills and laid them on the table by her in the bedstand and left the room. When I came back into the room the next time, she had fallen, and I looked over on the bedstand and saw the box of pills and she had written something there.

"In case of faithlessness take one."

Well she never did take any pills even up to and including that warm day in May, in Miami, on my birthday.

Chapter 2

She not only kept her faith in the Lord and in His Word, but she also kept a great sense of humor with it, which did help me, because it is unbearable to watch someone you love, suffering with cancer and you are unable to be any help to them. It was utter hopelessness for me.

It was too hard for me to take and many times I went into the next room and cried out to the Lord to help me make it, and not fall apart, and show her some stability and confidence.

Because her illness was so severe I could no longer sleep or even lie in the same bed with her. I moved into a separate bedroom down the hall, and since it was at the other end of the house we strung up a cowbell so that when she needed me I would wake up and help her with whatever it was that she needed.

That is the system that she established for us as far as communication was concerned during the evening when I was trying to get some rest, because I was on a busy, tight schedule.

One evening I woke up because of hearing the cowbell ringing and I ran into her room and opened the door and she was awake and as I came into the room she said.

"What are you doing here?" And I said, *"I heard the bell ringing."*

She laughed and said to me. *"I didn't ring the bell. You were just trying to steal a blessing."*

And then we both laughed and we both needed that laugh, because her condition was anything but funny. The cancer had eaten up almost every area of her body and her hair fell out and she lost her teeth and she was extremely embarrassed and wouldn't let any one see her, and tried to even hide it from me.

She was a beautiful young woman and at this point she no longer looked like that young lady that I married. She felt so badly about her appearance that she made me burn all her pictures so that I couldn't remember what she looked like.

Thank God that Christians are more than gorgeous bodies, and that inside of Christians there is a soul. Ellyn had inner beauty, in spite of the horrible appearance of cancer on the outside.

We had many occasions to rejoice in the fact that someday when the Lord returns to catch us out of here, we will receive resurrection bodies exactly like His.

What a source of comfort that was to a person whose physical body had become so devastated by cancer. How thankful we are that the real you, the real person, is the soul and the soul lives forever with the Lord.

When we were married for only a short time, my

wife always had this idea that she always thought that she would like to have larger hips. I remember even in those days they were selling "hip pads" for ladies and not for football players. But she always wished that she had larger hips. I keep on assuring her that she didn't need any larger hips, that I was having enough trouble with the ones that she already had. There was nothing wrong with her hips. She had symmetry.

One day, years later, when she was near the end of her suffering with cancer, she was standing up beside her bed, and she paused as the sun came in through the window just as she was trying to go into her bathroom. (I tried to give her as much privacy as I possibly could, and knowing her condition and her needing constant attention, that was sometimes hard to do.) As she stood there with the sun forming a shadow of her figure on the wall, she called out to me, and I came into her room and she said, "Honey, the Lord answered my prayers, see, I have larger hips." We both laughed once again, and thanked God for a sense of humor, especially in a time of great suffering like she was going through.

Proverbs 15:13, *A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*

Proverbs 15:15, *All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.*

Proverbs 17:22, *A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*

We thanked the Lord for His sense of humor which He transferred over to us.

That was a wonderful day in May, in Miami, on my birthday. I remember that on my wife's birthday one year something else happened that was very interesting, not as traumatic as my birthday was, but nevertheless very important for both of us. I got up one day and she reminded me that this was her birthday and I went to school and work and I was driving home and I saw this flashing sign by one of the stores along the highway advertising driver's licenses. On my wife's birthday, in that particular year, her license was expired and it had to be renewed. At this stage in her illness I knew she would never drive again, and in fact we had very little money to spare even for driving licenses.

As I drove down the highway, I had a strong desire to turn around and renew her license which I finally did on her birthday. When I came home immediately my wife said, "Do you know what day this is?" and I said, "Yes." And she said, "What did you get me for my birthday?" and I showed her a gift I bought for her. She said, "Did you forget what else has to happen on my birthday?"

I didn't know what she was referring to and I guess I looked puzzled. I was so concerned with her illness and discomfort that there wasn't too much else I could think about. She finally told me how she was expecting me to get her driver's license.

My heart fell to the floor I felt cold all over and

ashamed of myself. I finally pulled out her new driver's license and she said, "I am so glad you remembered it. If you didn't get it, then that would mean that you didn't think I would ever drive again, and if you lost confidence, I don't think I could of gone on." And she rolled over and cried. I felt just like the rat that I was.

Chapter 3

Because my wife was bedridden she had received some information from her Christian friends that since she couldn't get out of the house and hand out tracts and witness for the Lord she had no purpose in life. Those are the kind of friends Job called "*miserable comforters*." Being a new Christian and not knowing all the answers to life's problems even to Christians, I tried to console her with the fact that she still had a purpose and she could pray, be a prayer warrior. She replied to me one day, that she hurt so badly and was so uncomfortable that she couldn't even pray. And I was beside myself because I had no answers to why Christians suffer.

I searched high and low, from south Florida to north Florida and from church to church and it was always the same answer, "pray" or "we will pray for you." Sometimes it was, "things will get better," but they didn't, they got worse. At that particular time when I was searching for some answers to her suffering, I was asked to speak in a church in Gainesville, Florida, and after the service I went home to lunch with a couple and they gave me some tapes to listen to. The tapes were called "*The Angelic Conflict*." When I brought those tapes back home and I greeted my wife with the fact that I had the answer to the question we had all been trying to find. I told her of the tapes that this couple in Gainesville, Florida, let me borrow. She asked me what the name of the tapes was and I told her they are entitled "*The Angelic Conflict*." She told me that she had enough conflict already and she didn't want to hear of any more conflicts, so I didn't play them for her.

I took them in my room and put them on the tape player and there was nothing on them. I tried the next and the next, and I couldn't get a sound on any of them. I thought that was very strange because the couple said that they had just received them and they heard them and it was exactly what my wife and I needed. I took the tapes over to a friend's house and they played there, and I figured maybe it was my tape recorder. I brought my recorder to their house and they played on my recorder in his house. I listened to a part of them and they were truly the principles that I was looking for and exactly what my wife and I needed. I

came back home and I convinced her to listen to them, and we did and it solved one of the greatest problems we had ever had and probably a problem that most suffering Christians have. We learned from these tapes that if you are a Christian and you can't get out of bed for one reason or another, you can still serve the Lord. If you will think it through,

"As a man thinketh in his mind so is he."

The mental attitude is where the dynamics in the Christian life really is. When you first get into the plan of God, it is by thinking, not doing.

"What think ye of Christ?"

Romans 10:10, *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Literally, with the mind man believeth unto righteousness.

So when we believe in Christ as our personal Saviour, we have eternal life. Now, as a result of being a believer in Jesus Christ, again it is the mind believing the promises of God. So that my wife, lying in bed, and bedridden for years, can lie there in bed and serve the Lord by claiming the promises of God and resolve the angelic conflict. The study of the doctrine of the angelic conflict answers the questions "*Why man?*" "*Why sin?*" "*Why suffering?*" We were receiving these tapes and I don't think my wife or myself could have continued any longer without knowing this principle.

It is a horrible thing to be told that while you are suffering and are bedridden that you have no part in God's plan for your life. That is not God. That is not Grace. And if it is not Grace, it is not God.

During my wife's suffering, I was going to Seminary and the young people in the Seminary were praying for my wife and myself and she was a testimony to those young people. She came one day and gave a testimony to the students in chapel. It was a source of encouragement to them and it also helped my wife feel that there was a purpose for her, and that she still had an impact as a Christian.

The president of the school didn't believe that my wife was eaten up by cancer and he came to the hospi-

tal one night unannounced to disprove that she was seriously ill. He didn't believe that a person that sick with cancer could look so cheerful and be so positive to the Word of God. When he came to the hospital, he really upset me simply because of his doubts and unbelief. He asked my wife to open her gown so that he could see with his own eyes that she was eaten up with cancer. I screamed out, "don't show him anything! You don't have to prove yourself or display yourself to anyone." I knew how sensitive she was about her appearance and, bless her bones, she opened her gown and showed him how eaten up and black she was with cancer. I was beside myself. I couldn't take it. I was totally disgusted with him. Later on in his life, the Lord handled him in his very own way.

I tried everything to help her. I had to bathe her, comb her hair, and try to rub some ointment over her

burnt spots and the odor reminded me of the military where you can smell that distinct smell of burning flesh. It was horrible and yet you had to make it seem like it wasn't unpleasant. I tried to keep my composure and not let her know how awful it looked and smelled. She always complained, not about herself or her pain, but she constantly complained about, "I can't believe I am putting you through all of this."

She was a very remarkable woman and if they were completing the Canon of Scripture now, I am sure that the Lord would include her in it with all the great women of Scripture.

Later on in my ministry I wrote a book called *"The Women in My Life."* The book was about Ruth, Deborah, Esther, Mary, etc., and I ended the study and the book with the conclusion that all these women of Scripture reminded me of my wife.

Chapter 4

"We know, that all things work together for good for them that love the Lord."

I don't think I would be in the ministry today if it were not for her.

It is funny, because when I went into the service, they tried to make me put some description of my religion on my dog tags. But I insisted that I was not religious and I didn't belong to or believe in any church. So when you read my dog tags, it says "Religion" ... NONE. Little did I know that I would not be interested in religion, but I became interested in a Personal Relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Billy Graham came to Miami only once and it was in 1961. I remember that date also. Not only because it was the only time he came to Miami, but it was when my wife was suffering and she begged me to take her to hear him. I was not interested and I was reluctant about going to see a preacher. But because of her illness I couldn't refuse her anything. I told her I would take her only if we sat way up top, not near the stage, so that I wouldn't be embarrassed. And we did. When Billy Graham walked across the stage I noticed he had a banner across the back of the stage and it was one of the verses that my wife had been studying and I remembered seeing it.

John 14:6, *Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*

When I got home I told her that I was impressed with Billy Graham and he was more than I had thought, even though I didn't believe in what he was saying, but I did remember that verse.

My wife, because of her illness, began a concentrat-

ed correspondence course of Bible study. All the time she was studying she sat in the kitchen and I watched the television. One day I told her that she spent so much time in the kitchen we were hardly ever together, whereupon she said, "Well, if you came in here and helped me, we would be together."

She not only had a sense of humor but she was also pretty sharp. She had some cards made up with the address of the Bible verse on one side, and on the opposite side she had the verse spelled out. As a part of her memory work, she held the part with the address facing her and the actual verse facing me. She then proceeded to quote the verse blindly asking me if she got it right. She misquoted it purposely so that I would correct her, and I would be right and she would be wrong and we continued this for quite a while and I guess through this clever process I got hooked.

At this time I was still an unbeliever and I was working in a bar as a bartender and one day a man came in and ordered a drink and left me a tract on the bar. The tract on the bar was a tract that said *"Am I Going to Heaven?"* The key verse was the same one that Billy Graham had over his stage,

John 14:6, *Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*

Years later, after my wife had departed to be with the Lord, I wrote Billy Graham and told him about the impact that he had in my life and also in my wife's life. It was the only time that he ever came to Miami, and I told him, maybe he came there just for me. Because it wasn't long after that I became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:31, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*

He wrote about me in *Decision Magazine*, and I appreciated the fact that he thought enough about us to tell others about our relationship with the Lord.

Not only have I been a Pastor of a local church in Miami, in Houston, and in Indiana, but I was also a Chaplain for the Houston Astros for a year. That was a thrill to get to talk with all those big league ballplayers, some which had some interesting questions about the Lord and salvation and prayer. It is every boy's dream to make the *big leagues*, and I made it, not as a ballplayer but as speaking to all the ballplayers both the Astros and the visiting teams.

I, for a time, was given the opportunity to be a chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol, which is a part of the Air Force. I have been given many, many opportunities to express my Christianity and what the Word of God means to me through the years. Again I don't believe it would have all happened if it were not for that wonderful young lady suffering from cancer. So all things do work together for good, and we went from "*Cancer to Christ.*"

During the last few days of my wife's life here on this Earth, I was able to take care of her, but finally it got to the point where she was so sore all over that I couldn't even touch her to help her. Finally, I could no longer take care of her at home and she had to go into the hospital. But she didn't remain in the hospital very long, maybe just a couple of days.

Saturday morning, May 20, 1967, it was a warm day in Miami. I was sitting in the hospital room and for the first time in our lives we lost contact with one another. She went into a coma, and we could no longer communicate. I felt entirely alone, and isolated and without my better part. My partner in Christ was no longer able to talk with me. I didn't know what to do. I was beside myself. I knew that she would be better off with the Lord than she would be here continuing to suffer. I keep repeating the promises she gave me. "*Absent from the body, face to face with the Lord.*"

Revelation 21:4, *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be, for the former things are passed away.*

John 14:1-3, *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

But you just miss a person like her and there is no way in which you can ever relax over not having her with you any more. I prayed and I prayed that the Lord would sustain me. I remembered some of the promises of God and I began to recite them in my mind for a source of comfort and encouragement. I decided to go over to her bedside and I picked up her limp hand. She was still in a coma. I wondered if she could hear me possibly, although she couldn't speak, and I leaned over holding her hand and whispered in her ear her favorite verse and I knew that if she could hear me, she would give me some indication that she did. So I leaned over and whispered in her ear;

Isaiah 41:10, *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.*

When I finished quoting that verse, she grunted and squeezed my hand. I broke out crying. I couldn't hold it back. I knew that she was still with me. The Word of God is truly alive and powerful and sharper than two-edged sword. At that moment the nurse entered into the room and her procedure was to change the sheets, as she came through the door my wife sat straight up in bed for the first time in a couple of days. I could see her blue eyes and to me they were shining, and she said to the nurse, very clearly, "Don't worry about me. I am going home to be with the Lord. You had better accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour now." With that she laid back down and went home to be with the Lord.

It was a warm sunny day in May, in Miami, and it was my birthday.

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