

My *is* GRACE SUFFICIENT for thee...



2 Corinthians 12:9

One of the most dreaded sentences one will hear is: “You have cancer.” This pastor has witnessed the way that cancer has ravaged the bodies of loved ones during nearly 30 years of pastoral ministry. Cancer will also touch the lives of the Lord’s servants. This writer was recently diagnosed with cancer and has already undergone two major surgeries; the extraction of a tumor in the lung and most recently one in the base of the tongue.

It is an understatement to say that cancer changes one’s life. In the writer’s case, his own family and church family have been affected by this trial. May these thoughts, which have ministered to this pastor and his people, deeply encourage your heart. Must the news of cancer be devastating to one who knows and loves the Lord? The following four axioms can give you or a loved one confidence when cancer enters your life. They are omni-temporal and will encourage the weary soul that is confronted with the news of cancer.

GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD!

This is at the very nature of God’s character. “Thou art good, and doest good” (Psalm 119:68). Scripture is clear: God is good and does good. The familiar 23rd Psalm states “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow

me all the days of my life” (23:6). Further, the Psalmist writes “The LORD is good” (Psalm 100:5). This intrinsic goodness in God implies that He has never been unkind to His children. Even in affliction, God is good. The very context of Psalm 119:68 is indeed affliction; the word itself occurs twice in the paragraph. This paragraph of the 119th opens with the sentence “Thou has dealt well with thy servant, O LORD” (119:65). The phrase *dealt well* is the very same word translated *good*.

It is interesting to observe how the term good can be relative. For the child of God, from heaven’s perspective, your affliction is good for you! A large ice cream sundae may be good, but in what sense? It may taste good, but is it good for you? The LORD spoke to His people just prior to the days of the Babylonian captivity and said that they were being carried away to a foreign land for their good (Jeremiah 24:5-7). From the perspective of heaven, it was good for them.

We usually do not see how something like cancer could be good for us, but we must believe it to be so because of the character of God. Do we believe the truth of Romans 8:28? Does not the all things of that verse include cancer? The margin of the Geneva Bible on this verse reads we are not afflicted by *chance*, but by *providence*. Think of the hand of God in Joseph’s life—the story ends with God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20).

GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER!

Prayer is often one’s first recourse when the news of cancer comes to a family. Will God work a miracle? Will the Lord heal? These are frequent questions. There are many testimonies on the subject of the Lord lifting up various ones from the bed of affliction. At times, God does heal. This pastor stood in his pulpit on Sunday after hearing the news of his own cancer and said “I will beat cancer, by life or by death!” The Apostle Paul made reference to having the sentence of death upon him (2 Corinthians 1:9-10).

He was wondering — am I going to come out of this alive? Today, when one hears those words “You have a mass, the report has come back that it is cancer,” it feels like the sentence of death is upon you. This pastor experienced this first hand. Observe that deliverance is mentioned three times in verse 10. The Lord has delivered, does deliver, and will yet deliver! While the world may be terrified at the thought of death, the child of God has confidence because his hope is in the Lord.

The Lord wants His children to Rest in Him, not in the doctors; to Rely on Him, not on statistics; and to Read His Word, not the Internet. Some trust in doctors, others in treatments, may the child of God remember the Name of the LORD. Regardless of what happens to a friend or family member who is diagnosed with cancer, God does hear and answer prayer. Pray for one beyond “Lord, take away their cancer.” God has allowed that cancer for His purposes. Pray for that one to fulfill the purpose of God and to be a testimony in the context of their trial of their faith. Pray for strength and encouragement, for wisdom for the doctors, for the right decision regarding treatment.

GOD WILL ACTIVELY WORK!

Suffering and affliction is designed by God to perfect us. Consider a text— “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you” (1Peter 5:10). What a verse! Peter uses a unique phrase “after that ye have suffered for a while.” Such affliction will wean us from sin and strengthen one’s faith. While one may never know the reason for a given trial with cancer, he can take comfort in knowing that God does. The content of this verse includes a unique title of God—the *God of all grace*; a statement that we

belong to Him and a reference to the heavenly perspective.

God is doing His heart work in the life of a cancer patient who belongs to Him. Four verbs are used in this verse in 1 Peter 5:10 (*perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle*). The first calls attention to the need to mend or set in order something. This is God's work in the heart, setting things right. The second term, *stablish*, means to fix firmly, to strengthen. This word may suggest an inherent weakness prior to God's work in one. The third, *strengthen*, simply means to make strong and suggest that we will be spiritually stronger after the trial than before. The final verb *settle*, calls attention to a solid foundation and suggests the idea that one is now firmly grounded in the truth of who God is and what He has said. An illness is a time to learn some very special things about ourselves and our relationship with the living God. One must be convinced that God will in some way use this for His glory and our good. In your cancer, God will actively work!

GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN!

Consider God's absolute knowledge—"He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee" (Job 36:4). God knows the results of all medical testing before we do; He has never been surprised. He is aware of cancer cells that develop in one's body and can stop them in an instant. This truth is particularly comforting to the one who belongs to the Lord. God knew all about it before the pathology report came back. He not only knew about it, but allowed it in the life of one He loves. In light of this, one must stop asking, "Why?" and begin asking, "Lord, what will you teach me?" "How can I be used of you in this trial?" May the Lord grant us such a perspective! Secondly, consider God's perfect will. The beginning and ending of the

Book of Job both states that Job received evil from the Hand of the Lord (2:10, 42:11). While Scripture is clear that Satan afflicted Job, God was in control all the time. Chapters 32 – 37 of the Book of Job record the response of Elihu to Job and his friends. There are rich statements in these chapters that underline God's absolute sovereignty and knowledge of all things. Your life will be enriched by looking up the following passages: Job 33:12-13; 34:10; 34:21; 35:10; 36:4-5; 36:26; 37:5; 37:13-14; 37:16; and 37:23.

God is in control of one's cancer. He is fully aware of all that is unfolding and He wants you to trust His infinite wisdom. Is your confidence in Christ when cancer comes? In the life of your loved one or with you personally — your hope must be in the Lord. We must trust the one who has declared the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). The Lord is always good and He cannot be unkind to you. He does hear and answer prayer and will actively work all things according to His good pleasure in your life. He who knows all things actual and possible wants our trust in the most difficult trials of life, especially when you hear those words: *You have cancer.*

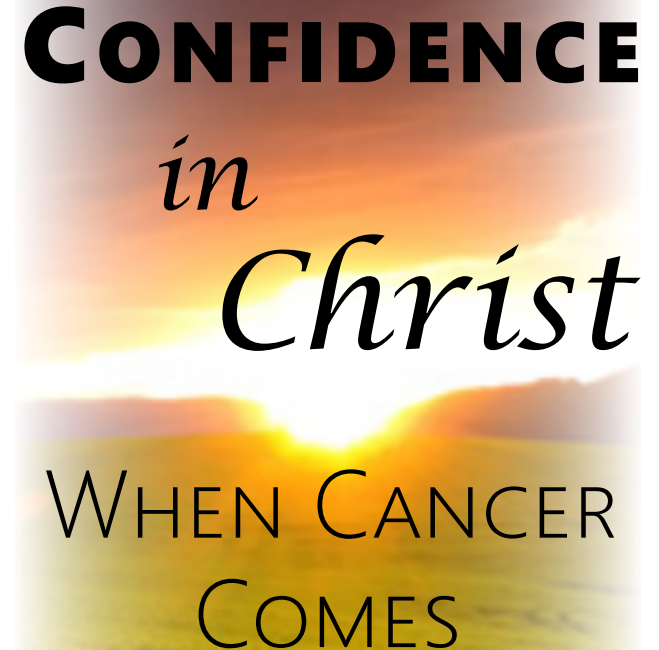
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CONFIDENCE *in* **Christ** **WHEN CANCER** **COMES**

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