

SPEAKING LIFE TO CANCER
June 11, 2017 –Psalm 91: 1-16
The Church of the Covenant

Having visited countless people facing cancer over the years, observed and prayed with them, I believe this: healing is the combination of three things. 1) The scientific application of medical treatment to diseases; 2) The healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ; 3) The positive attitude of the person who is to be healed. When all three of these factors intersect there is healing, there is prolongation of life, there are things which happen which are miracles of science, Jesus, and the resiliency of the human spirit.

Honestly, there is not much the patient can do in relation to their medical treatment, other than to get the best doctors and have state of the art treatment. Honestly, there is not much the patient can do in relation to the intervention of God into their situation other than to pray –the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh, Blessed be the name of the Lord. “The Lord has mercy on whom the Lord has mercy.” But we do have a great deal of say about our attitude and our expectation and our hope. The positive, hopeful, expectant attitude of the patient, over which we do have a great deal of control, is what we bring to the table. We can, say, believe cancer to be a death sentence (and this is a self-fulfilling prophecy). Or we can believe it is an opportunity for our faith, and inner strength, and our positive spirit reinforced by the Spirit of the Living God, to do a mighty work far greater than just medicine alone. Three things come together for healing to occur –state of the art medicine, the healing power of the Holy Spirit of the Living God, and our positive attitude.

There is a wonderful younger pastor who I had the privilege of knowing when I served as Assistant to the President at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Eugene Freedom Blackwell. He is a dynamic African American Pastor who felt called to go into ministry as a second career person, finally began the Mosaic Community, a multicultural, inner city church in Pittsburgh, and was well known as a force in the community for good and for God. Freedom, as he is known, also interestingly, was very involved in the New Testament Mission in Lacroix, Haiti, and all the younger men at the mission looked up to him and emulated him and want to become pastors because of Freedom Blackwell. Freedom was diagnosed with cancer many years ago. When he was diagnosed another friend of mine, an African American Pastor, Ron Peters, sat down with Freedom and gave him the Bible verse of Psalm 91, to use against, you might say, the cancer, to learn by heart, to speak it out loud to the cancer, to remind one’s soul ultimately who is in charge of the universe. There is power in the Word of God. There is POWER in the WORD. When we speak it we invoke its POWER. When we learn it by heart we tuck it away in our heart as a source of POWER. It has POWER to refocus our thoughts in positive ways. The WORD is creative. The WORD is life-giving. The WORD invokes the POWER of God and brings it to bear in any situation.

The battle in the soul with cancer is that it seeks to speak death into our heart and mind and soul. But the WORD speaks LIFE. Jesus speaks LIFE. The battle in our thoughts and hearts is what are we speaking to our own souls –LIFE or DEATH? We can despair when we hear the word “cancer”. Or we can speak LIFE to it in Jesus’ name. Speaking the WORD to our own hearts is the best way to have a positive attitude, the best way not to despair and give up and allow cancer to have its way with us. This is our part in the equation of healing for our own bodies. It is a battle to be sure, but we are to wage it within our own souls with the Word of God.

So Ron Peters advises Freedom Blackwell to use Psalm 91 in his battle in his own soul against cancer. And Freedom learns it by heart and uses it each day in his devotions and when he is tempted to despair he speaks Psalm 91 aloud to his own cancer.

+It begins: “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, (we who love Jesus live sheltered by the love and power of the Most High God)...will say to the Lord (notice please we are to speak it out loud) “My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.” (Psalm 91: 1-2) So we begin by acknowledging we want to live in the shelter of God; we want HIM to be our refuge and strength, an ever present help in time of trouble; we want HIM to be our mighty fortress, a place where we may run in time of need, a place of shelter in a time of stormy blasts against our soul. A mighty fortress is our God. Speak it out loud and believe it is so!

+It continues: “You will not fear the terror of the night...You will not fear the pestilence that stalks in darkness” (Psalm 91: 5-6) Cancer is a terror and a pestilence. But God is our mighty fortress and we dwell in the shelter of his refuge, strength, love and power. Fear has the power to rip our hearts away from God. Fear has the power to keep us in the grip of cancer. Fear has us be dead long before we are. The antidote to fear is faith, is speaking the WORD, speaking words of trust and hope to our soul. Our positive attitude that we bring to the battle comes from our faith and speaking the Word of God.

+It continues: “He will give his angels charge of you...” (v. 11) We are not in the battle alone. There are mighty forces in the heavenlies doing battle for us and on our behalf. Our faith and our speaking the Word invokes these heavenly forces for good.

+It concludes: “When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.” (Psalm 91: 15-16) When we call upon the name of the Lord we shall be saved. There is POWER in the Word and there is POWER in the name of Jesus. Lives that trust in the Lord in the middle of cancer have their lives extended by God. Often the miracles wrought by God as we bring our faith to bear are miracles of extending our lives. O and by the way, this promise is also a promise of eternal life in our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no longer life than eternal life. Freedom Blackwell passed away this past year, having impacted countless young African American young people for the good, having demonstrated in his person the way to battle against cancer, trusting in God, using the WORD of God, bringing every resource of faith to bear. He lived eight years longer than any doctor said he should.

I remember when my own Father was diagnosed with cancer some 26 years ago now. The doctor frankly did not give us much hope and suggested that he might live only 6 more months. I remember being quite upset by all this, but then returning to God and asking HIM to be our mighty fortress. I used Psalm 27: 1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold (the mighty fortress) of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Of whom and of what shall I be afraid when YOU LORD are the mighty fortress of our lives???? And I wrote down on a slip of paper and put it in front of my favorite picture of my parents on the dresser in my bedroom, and I prayed this every day: “Lord, cancer cannot have my Father; only YOU have my Father –You have given me my Father, and Lord, only You can take him away.” I am not boasting in myself, but I am bragging in the power of the Lord and the POWER in the Word of God. Because my Father lived 25 more years from the death sentence he had been given. 25 more years of grace and mercy given by God. And the thing that precisely delights my heart is that what finally took my Father was not the cancer, it was his kidneys shutting down. Cancer, you can’t have my Father. Because only the Lord God Almighty has him! Speak LIFE to CANCER. I speak LIFE to cancer in Jesus’ powerful name! I speak the life of Jesus to cancer. I speak LIFE to cancer from the WORD of God. Lord, you are our strong tower, our refuge, our mighty fortress. LIFE, LIFE, LIFE, I speak LIFE in Jesus’ powerful, wonderful, matchless name. Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**