Margaret’s Journey to Health

In September last year despite looking so well in August, I started to feel very ill. For two weeks I could not sleep or eat and consequently lost lots of weight. I saw five different GPs and eventually one of the doctors, after I begged him, sent me to hospital. Although I told him that I was having terrible bouts of pain and had lost two and a half stone (35 lbs) he was somewhat reluctant, saying that they would probably think he was being rather silly. Perhaps I just sounded too calm, too matter of fact, to be taken seriously!

The pain I was having turned out to be gallstones and in hospital I was very glad to find that morphine dulled the pain. However, after an MRI scan a consultant came to me and said:

*“We think you have Lymphoma*.” Utter disbelief filled my mind and I said, “*No, surely not*?”

I was offered a biopsy and the biopsy confirmed the shocking news that indeed I had, Stage IV non-Hodgkinson’s Lymphoma.

This is not what anyone wants to hear when they have taken every step to keep healthy, and apart from some kidney stones, which had given me trouble from time to time, I had no physical problems I knew of ... I was seemingly fit and healthy and I was on no regular medication. Looking back, there were some tell-tale signs that I was unwell. For a few months I had been feeling a lack of enthusiasm for things I had previously enjoyed and a greater tiredness than normal. One day as I was loading shopping into the car I thought that I would collapse, I felt so weak and tired

When I saw Dr Follows the oncology consultant, he was very honest, but very kind and sounded very positive. He said about the lymphoma,

“*You are very seriously ill, I can kill it, I can cure it and give you your life back, although your age is against you, I have been doing it for thirty years with great success. If you don’t have the treatment I could keep you going on steroids for a month, maybe two but you will get weaker and weaker and die.*

He offered me six treatments of R-CHOP each 21 days apart. I told him that I couldn’t agree to have the treatment straight away and that I needed a week to consider it. I knew that it must have sounded ridiculous to someone who thought that I had very little time left, but I knew that I couldn’t undertake any treatment unless I had peace about it and had faith that it was the right thing to do. However, something about the man, his honesty, coupled with kindness, touched my heart that day and I thought,

“I think I can trust this man”. As I hesitated he said;

“*I think you are a very brave woman and you are a lot sicker than you care to admit”*. However I did know I was indeed very sick and had been trying to convince several doctors for some weeks that I was sick.

To say that I was devastated by this diagnosis would be an understatement and when he had left the room, I sobbed uncontrollably over the nurse for a few minutes. When I had calmed down she said;

“*Perhaps you could think of it like this – think how many people you will be able to help when you are out the other side of this”.* Although she knew we were Christians he had no idea of our lifestyle of involvement in helping people, and that we had been pastors of a church for 25 years, After telling her how we had lived our lives for almost 50 years, having over 60 people to live with us she said;

“*You certainly do know the score don’t you*!”

When considering whether to take this treatment, I knew that I had a big hurdle to jump. I never thought of chemotherapy being the best option, preferring natural remedies, and I had often said that I would never consider doing it. I believed in the healing power of God’s Holy Spirit. In our 25 years of ministry I had known people healed medically of cancer, I had known others who refused treatment and were healed. I knew many who accepted treatment, believed in God’s healing power and still died. We walked through it with them all so I knew the difficulties and the agonies of the sickness and the treatment.

I did not want to accept treatment because of unbelief or fear; neither did I want to want only refuse treatment as a ‘faith’ issue.

I was not afraid of dying. As I felt so ill, I briefly considered it as an attractive option. Going to be with Jesus sounded great rather than pushing through to the place of healing, but I rejected it immediately because felt that God had promised me a future and a hope.

However, I knew that I was unable to make the right decision by myself simply on the natural circumstances or others advice or experience. I had to know what God thought. There have been very few times since I became a Christian when I have not taken time to listen to what God wanted to say about an important issue. When I had failed to listen to what He had to say, things had not turned out well at all. But I knew that I could trust Him to speak to me clearly about what I should do in this instance. I felt that this sickness was a direct challenge not just to my life but to my ministry. I had ministered and preached about healing for over 30 years. I had run healing Rooms in Ely for ten years I had a few times in recent months been preaching and teaching on healing, once to some of the ship’s crew during our Caribbean cruise which was most exciting. Although initially I had felt distressed I was definitely ready to counter this challenge

There are many ways in which I knew God could speak to me. He could use the still small voice within, He could give me dreams and visions and occasionally I have heard Him speak in an audible voice. Sometimes He simply given me a deep inner peace about things and many times He has spoken to me through His Word. For more than thirty years I have learned to listen and journal ...I ask God a question get my heart quiet and then write down what I think He is saying. So during this week I was determined to journal and also stay alert to any of those means that He might use to speak to me. It is my custom when I sit down to journal to ask God to give me a picture. I would say;

“*Where are you Jesus and what are you doing?”*

One day as I focused my attention on Him, and wrote from my heart.

*Lord I find myself in the valley of decision – but not torn between two decisions as I thought i might be..I feel suspended. But I’m not afraid or anxious in any way. I know that I am safe in the palm of your hand and that your hand is upon me. In your presence I have such security and almost feel that whatever I decide to do ...you will take care of it. I am overwhelmed by people’s response to my news and never believed that this would happen to me. I am looking for a strong inner witness about my choices, as I know I cannot be persuaded by natural circumstances. Of course I would like you to heal me without the treatment, as I know that you are greater than lymphoma and it must bow the knee to you*

*Ringing in my heart right now I have the words “I am not longer a slave to fear...I am a child of God and I can only picture you Jesus fast asleep in Peter’s boat totally unfazed by the storm*

The picture I saw of Jesus fast asleep in the back of Peter’s boat with the storm raging all around was so powerful. He was at peace and obviously not bothered by the storm. I thought to myself; if Jesus is at peace about my storm, then so can I be! At that moment, I let go of the all the care of it and never worried about it again. So apart from a few occasions during the following months, although things were very hard I stayed positive. Of course fear tried to come but I knew what to do about it. Sometimes I felt miserable about the effects of what was going on in my body, but I had perfect peace in my heart and never doubted that whatever I went through, in the end all would be well.

As I waited for God to speak to me again, He replied;

*I am love my child and there is no fear in love. This is why you have peace, because my love is within you as well as surrounding you, holding you steady from the outside. Always be conscious of who I am in you – you are my temple my dwelling place where you have made a home for me. Be assured that I will not see my home destroyed by a disease that I took upon myself on the cross...that I personally bought at such a great price. I paid dearly for it. It is my privilege and my joy to cleanse the temple and restore you to perfect health.*

During that week as I prayed I felt that surprisingly God was saying I should take the treatment and trust him to work with it. When I had told the consultant I was trusting God, He had said;

“*Perhaps God will use me to do it.”*

That week I felt God planted in my heart two clear scriptures. The words of Jesus in Mark 16:18

***If I drink any deadly thing it will not hurt me.***

Then God led me to the passage in Acts 28 where Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake and shook it off having no ill effects. As I knew I knew I that the treatment would mean allowing terrible poisons into my system, these seemed very pertinent scriptures. Two friends whose spiritual judgement I trust confirmed this, that if I took the treatment I would suffer no permanent harm.

Then one morning as I got up, walking through my bedroom I clearly heard God say in an audible voice;

***“When you go through the fire you will not be burned”.***

During this week, Tony was obviously exercising great self-control and wisdom as he said nothing to influence me, wanting me to have the freedom of hearing God for myself, but he was greatly relieved when I told him that I had decided to take the treatment.

The date was fixed and the journey began.

I never had a moment’s doubt that it was God’s will to heal me but it was a not straightforward journey. After the first treatment I began to feel very poorly with a high temperature and flu symptoms and had to spend four days being barrier nursed in Addenbrookes Hospital and having huge doses of antibiotics. On Boxing Day I developed a huge lump behind my knee that turned out to be a blood clot. This resulted in me having blood thinning injections into my belly until the treatment was over. God bless Tony who administered most of them for me as I was too cowardly to do it myself!

After the third treatment I woke one morning completely deaf! I rang the emergency number and asked if this was a side effect of the treatment. I thought it could be as I was being given chemo injections into my spine so that my brain got a dose too! The first time I had this injection I have to admit that I felt momentarily terrified at the thought that this had the potential paralyse me if it was administered incorrectly! A kind nurse held my hand and all was well. However the consultant suggested I visited my GP about this mysterious deafness and he diagnosed a clogged Eustachian tube, which soon cleared

Despite all these extra difficulties I want to share with you why it is that I could have great peace in my heart and stay mostly joyful and positive, and how you can walk the same walk, with the same confidence and the same peace that I have had. There were two occasions when I briefly lost that peace which I will tell you about later.

First of all I asked the Lord, how did I get sick? How did I allow Satan to put this in my body? God began to speak to me about getting rid of any hurt of pain in my heart, dealing with it and then actively cultivating joy. He showed me four decisions that Tony and I made that I felt it was right to make by the Holy Spirit, but actually those decisions were very painful, and my soul was not happy with them. I talked to Tony about these things and as he hugged me I wept copiously until I could weep no more. I felt the pressure of the pain leave, the pressure and the terrible grief that these decisions had caused me to feel. Then I considered the many painful experiences that I had had a couple of years previously to do with my mother’s care, leaving our church in Ely, and the breakdown of some of our family relationships. Allowing God into these painful moments as I thought about them was very difficult, I already felt weak and unable to face much at all and as I began to consider these events I began to feel the pain of them. However I knew that I had to surrender them to the Lord and allow his peace and love to overwhelm them. I then asked the Lord to show me if there is anyone I needed to forgive and even reiterated my forgiveness for those whom I’d already forgiven, just to be sure.

I know that I am very blessed that I did not have to start building my faith from scratch , because for over 40 years I had read the bible right through about 20 times, meditated on the word, and taught the word. I truly had it hidden in my heart. What is more I believed that God loved me unconditionally and I also believed that the word of God was true, and powerful, truly believed that God had already provided all I needed to be made completely well: I knew that it was God’s will to heal me and had been wonderfully healed many times before, sometimes by simply listening to a recording of healing scriptures.

People have been surprised how positive I have been, but bearing in mind my previous experience, it would have been more surprising to me if I had been in turmoil.

Also I knew that I was not alone, because many people responded on my face book page called “Margaret’s Journey to Health” and I knew they were rooting for me and praying. Many people from the church here and my previous church in Ely came to pray, clean the house and brought delicious meals. Flowers and gifts came constantly. One lady sent a bag of seven gifts with the instruction to open one a day: delightful little gifts which included Vera Lynn’s life story which was entertaining and easy to read.

For me being healed was not about what man could do, but all about trusting in God’s word and the finished work of the cross. I was grateful for the treatment which I believe saved my life when I know that I was on the brink of death, but the ultimate glory for the healing goes to the Lord.

I believe that we need to establish the truths about healing for ourselves long before we get sick!

So, if you are starting from scratch, begin to fill your heart with God’s truth about healing and write down scripture that he gives you in a little book, personalising them. Proverbs 4.20 says;

*My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.1Do not let them depart from your eyes;**Keep them in the midst of your heart;22For they are life to those who find them,**And health to all their flesh.23Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*I have had little books with scriptures in for, many years, but I wrote scriptures down afresh for myself in a new little book, as I was looking for fresh revelation for this day. I put in all the scriptures and prayers and confessions that people sent me and also those that I heard for myself, those that the Holy spirit had quickened to me , because Jesus says that His rhema words are spirit and life John 15.7

I wrote down all the prophetic words that I had been given at Bethel and from Sharon Stone and others about my future ministry and read them frequently.

The most significant scripture that God gave me was Deuteronomy 33.27

*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;**He will thrust out the enemy from before you,**and will say, ‘Destroy!’*

I would often speak to the lymphoma whenever I thought about it and especially during chemo sessions and say

“*God himself is destroying you”*

I believe that this is what actually happened!

After the first treatment the doctor was amazed that I had 50% reduction of the lymphoma and after the next scan there were only tiny scrap of lymphoma left. I know because I saw the scans myself.

Then, just before I had the fifth treatment I was visited by a pastor friend from Hunstanton. As he anointed me with oil and prayed, with a rush of power I literally felt the remains of the cancer leave my body. When I went for my pre-treatment examination, I was surprised at how thoroughly the consultant examined me, far more thoroughly than any of the others had. I didn’t tell him what I thought had happened to me in the time of prayer, but when he carefully palpated all the places where the lymph nodes were previously enlarged and sick. He said;

*“I can find nothing!”*

*I said; “That’s s because it’s gone’*

In my study of the word I was also led to the passage in Exodus where God promised Israel that it would be **his hand** that would deliver them, and just as with Israel I knew that the hand of the Lord would be upon me to bless me and deliver me and upon my enemies (cancer cells) to destroy them. Exodus 7.5

*And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”*

I saw the chemo as the vengeance of God working against the enemy

Psalm 138.7

*Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;**You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me.*

I never said or believed that I was “fighting cancer” which is often what you hear people say. I was not fighting it because God was on the job, and I was just keeping myself in the right place to receive what God has already provided.

I thought a lot about the personal application of Isaiah 53, 1 Peter 2:24 and Act 10:38. I often said quietly to myself as I focused on the Lord, sometimes seeing Him on the cross and other times just in front of me;

***Jesus, you personally bore my sins and my sickness in your body on the tree and by your stripes I was healed.***

Knowing He’s done all that is necessary to make the gift of healing available means I can reach out and receive it by faith.

I meditated a lot on the scripture from the Song of Songs;

***I am my beloveds and He is mine***

A depth of belonging we have with Jesus, a symbiosis – a supernatural union that Jesus says causes fruit to be born. Out of intimacy with Him supernatural life comes!

As we draw close to Him and build our faith, healing will come out of that relationship. If we know we are children of God, He’s my wonderful daddy. Healing is on the table, and Jesus says. It’s ***the children’s bread***! Math 15.26

We must establish for ourselves that it is God’s will to heal us, not because have heard someone say it, but because we have seen it for ourselves in the Word of God and owned it personally.

I know I can trust His promises.

2 Corinthians 1.20

*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 21Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, 22who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

We need to understand that the cross is a pivotal point in the bible, as well as in history. Jesus defeated Satan everywhere he went in his life on the earth and in the punishment he bore and on the cross and in His resurrection he finished the job. So there is now a covenant between Christ and God made with the shed blood of Christ Himself. Those of us who are in Christ are by that very fact partakers of it. Thus Tony and I would sometimes take communion together to celebrate with tangible elements our belief in the effective power of the cross and our covenant with God.

Jesus broke the curse of sin **and** the results of it which include sickness once and for all. He bore sin and sickness for us so that we don’t have to bear it. The cross was a substitutionary sacrifice. We are partakers of the great exchange. The same sacrifice that forgave our sin healed our diseases.

Jesus confirmed this idea of sins and sickness being dealt with together on one occasion, much to the consternation of those listening; when He forgave a man’s sin and then after asking them which was easier to say that he was healed or to say that he was forgiven. He then proceeded to heal the man, showing there was no difference to him Psalm 103 reveals it too.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:3Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,4Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,5Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.6The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*

In Galatians 3.13 it tells me that by Christ’s work on the cross I am redeemed from the curse of the law.

*13Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us for it is written,* ***“Cursed*** *is* ***everyone who hangs on a tree”****,*

Part of the curse of the law according to Deuteronomy 28.61

*Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the Lord bring upon you until you are destroyed*.

(When reading this scripture we need to remember that God put all these sicknesses on Christ)

Many people believe that the 39 stripes that Jesus bore represent the 39 types of disease known to man.

Just as Jesus called sickness oppression and the work of the evil one, we must also believe that firmly. If we have any thoughts that God made us sick or want us sick for some spiritual reason our faith will waiver. We need to acknowledge the root of sickness and resist it. James. 4.7

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*.

I John 3.8 tells me that this is why Jesus came to earth

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

Acts 10.38 *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about healing all who were oppressed of the devil for God was with him*

By seeing what Jesus did we can know the will of the Father carried out by His obedient son?

Although I had prayer from many people for which I was very grateful, some who came regularly, and I was always blessed by it. However, I was never simply waiting for God to turn up; because I know that the power is within me

Yes, it comes from people’s hands and the words they speak over us but actually the resurrection power lives in us, and faith in His word and the joy of His presence in worship and meditation stirs that power up.

Romans 8.11*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

Eph. 3.21 *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.*

It happens by the power that works within us. One version says it quickens or makes alive our physical body. Phil 2:13

*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*

I believe that it is His good pleasure to heal me

Not only that, He has given each of us authority over sickness .Romans 5.17

*For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

We can receive the abundance of grace because we’ve already received the gift of righteousness - we are no longer just forgiven sinners but we are the righteousness of God in Christ, who can wield the same authority as Jesus gave to his disciples in Mark 16.

Another factor is that we must believe that we receive our healing before we see the manifestation of it and not be afraid to say what God is doing. Everything happens from creation onwards by speaking -

*20Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away .22So Jesus answered and said to them,* ***“Have faith in God.*** *23****For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.*** *24****Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.***

We are to have the faith of God:

* curse it,
* command our sickness to wither from the root,
* speak to the mountain or the sickness,
* tell it to go,
* believe it and receive it without doubting in our heart

Paul said; ***I believe therefore I speak*** 2 Cor 4:13

I would declare the scriptures over myself every day or read them together with my faithful supporter Claire. Did I feel like it? ...no seldom ...but that’s when I needed it most. Actually, during a lot of the treatment when my brain seemed foggy and my body felt so weak I found reading the bible very difficult but thankfully I listen to it on my Ipad or ask Alexa to open the bible and read it to me. I could relax and listen to chapters over and over to milk them for revelation.

Earlier I said that apart from two occasions I’d had great peace in my heart, and I will tell you about them.

The first occasion was when I received a letter for the consultant about the treatment he was offering, and he mentioned that he could not promise that the sickness would not return. Although I know that naturally speaking it’s the truth, this sentence pierced my heart and it took me two days of paying attention to the word of God, and going over His promises to me, before my peace returned.

The second time was just before I went for the final scan. That night I awoke in the night feeling complete panic. I had awful words going through my head ...”*What if God doesn’t exist at all...what if I’m totally deceived ...what if I’m not healed and after all these brave words I die!”*

Of course I recognised the source of all of these thoughts...I knew Satan would not give up his plan easily,

I shook Tony awake and told him about it ....sleepily he said ...”SING!”

“Sing, I said, I don’t want to sing!”

He began sleepily singing an old chorus that we both knew, and I forced myself to join in. After that we sang all the old choruses that we could think of for about half an hour and ended up laughing and rejoicing. I was not troubled again by that rubbish and slept peacefully for the rest of the night.

When I prayed about it the next day I felt God say that I had picked up a spirit of fear when I went to the hospital for the scan; so I told it to go in no uncertain terms. I can only imagine how many people feel very frightened in that place.

I drew great heart from the following scripture:

1 Peter 5.10*But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

Now I have been given the all clear: complete remission they’ve said, it’s not the time to slacken my grip on the word of God. I’m not afraid of this sickness coming back. I’m not expecting evil tidings, but I will keep my faith strong

Ps 112. 7 *He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.**8His heart is established; He will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies.*

Nahum 1.9 *what do you conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time.*

Psalm 91 With *long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation.”*

Psalm 118.17 *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.*

I think has to be miraculous that after one month of the final treatment I began to feel better and two weeks on, I now feel well and strong and back to completely normal life; Enjoying cooking, cleaning, shopping, trips out to social events etc. and people constantly say how well I look. It’s a great tool for witnessing to the goodness of God.

One chemo nurse told me that it would take me as long to receiver as it took me to have the treatment...five months. I said, “Oh no it won’t!”

The consultant told me that it would be at least two months before I started to feel well.

*“Just remember” he said.” that you have had six strong chemo treatments and you were very sick “*

Thankfully, Gods schedule is obviously different to theirs.

In Parts of Psalm 116 I found my whole story:

*I love the Lord, because He has heard**my voice and my supplications Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.*

*3The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;**I found trouble and sorrow.Then I called upon the name of the Lord:**“O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!”*

*8For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears and my feet from falling.**9I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.*

*12What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me?I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.*

*14I will pay my vows to the Lord, now in the presence of all His people.*

So that’s what I’m doing right now!