

## TWO MONTHS TO LIVE

*By Ed Landry*

The book of Philippians is about Joy and Contentment that overshadow any circumstance in life when that life is surrendered to Christ and living for Him. Any circumstance. We like the message, but few of us want the trials that test us and prove whether it is real in our lives or not.



How would we feel if we lost a loved one in a terrorist attack? Would we experience joy or contentment?

In crisis conditions would we be able to dig deep into our spiritual reserves and maintain a heavenly calm because

Jesus Christ is close along side of us and His presence overshadows the terror? Are we prepared for trials even of immense proportions?

Are we ready to live the book of Philippians, or are we satisfied to sit week after week and listen to preachers talk about it? This is a book about real life. This is how God wants each of us to live. Victorious regardless of outward circumstances. Real Christians who shine for Christ like the stars in the darkest sky.

My sky got a bit darker several years ago. I was busy in ministry and conditioning my body in preparation for a trip to Nepal in October of this year. Our work in the Philippines is a livelihood program for impoverished churches. We have been developing an approach to helping poor churches become totally self-sufficient so they can impact their target areas effectively. Other countries have asked how they can do the same. So a trip to Nepal was in the planning.

But something was wrong with my body. I have always been fairly athletic and generally in good physical condition. But I began getting very tired doing even the simplest activity. A very good friend who is a doctor recognized that I was anemic and had me get some blood tests. The results suggested that I should immediately leave for the States for more conclusive tests where I arrived in Seattle. The tests

were run. Two days later I sat in the office of the head physician over all oncology and hematology in one of the best cancer centers in the USA and was told I had acute myelogenous leukemia. I asked her to elaborate a bit about how bad this was. She said that without treatment I would only live two months at best. She explained that I had probably had the disease about a month and that it is a very aggressive type of cancer in the bone marrow. Very few survive this particular form of the disease.

Before I go on I want to ask each of you something. How would you react to that news that I got? Would you think about that for a moment? How would you feel knowing you have two months to live and, even with the best known treatment today, most only live one year? How would you feel? What about the book of Philippians? What about joy and contentment?

My first response to the doctor was, "Wow, two months. That's some disease." Then I said, "Bummer, I just got a haircut. I could have saved some money." Then I remarked, "You said I have acute myelogenous leukemia. Is that better than an ugly one?"

At this point she said, "Mr. Landry, this is not a joking matter." I said, "I thought it was a pretty good joke." All I can say at that point was that the presence of the Lord came very near. This is what I told the doctors who were present, "What you are telling me is not a big problem because to me death is not a big problem. I am a born-again Christian who lives overseas as a missionary, and it has been my greatest joy to serve my Lord in this way for many years. It will be an even greater joy when I go to Heaven and meet him face to face. For me, life has been a wonderful adventure and if this is the last chapter, then it will be the best chapter, and I look forward to every bit of it." They just stared at me. I think I was supposed to faint or something and look all sad, but I couldn't. I had such a peace inside that I couldn't contain sharing Christ with them. It was really wonderful.

At this point I would like to interject one of my favorite stories. A missionary had returned to America after a long term of Christian service in Africa. Traveling on the same ship was the American president, Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning after a game hunting

safari in Africa. When the boat steamed into port the president disembarked first to the sound of bands and shouting crowds. When the missionary finally left the ship, there was no one left to even meet him. Discouraged he went and sat down on a pile of crates and cried out to God, "Lord, this man comes home after a hunting party and the whole country comes out to meet him. I served you for years on the mission field, and when I come home there isn't even one person to greet me." He then told how God gently whispered in his ear, "You aren't home yet."

I told the doctor as she was still staring at me that I traveled a lot and one of my frequent memories is the feeling of going home after a long trip. It just feels so good to get home. She agreed with me. I then told her that life is a long journey, and many times we struggle through part of it and even get weary no matter how good the journey, but one day we will actually go home for the very first time. Home to the place we were made for. A home without sin and evil and darkness.

Then I told her, "What you told me a few minutes ago is that I may be going home fairly soon. You have not given me any bad news." You know what? That doctor became our friend. She personally took a special interest in my case and has stayed with us through the entire first month of chemotherapy even though it was at a different hospital. She even likes my jokes. It has been a neat relationship.

Many other doctors and nurses as well have now heard the gospel and we have developed a special relationship. Some came into my room late at night and just listened to the good news that eternal life is available to all who surrender to Christ and there is joy in following him even down the last path. Medical personnel working in cancer wards rarely see joy and victory and when they do it does cause them to listen.

I can't tell you every story, but I can summarize my first month in the cancer ward of the hospital with the word "joy." Deep and rich. To the world it makes no sense. I was connected day and night to feeding tubes, had 18 blood transfusions, bone chips and marrow taken from my hip three times, my spinal fluid tapped into, and chemo put in my spinal column. I was unable to eat anything for three weeks. All food

was fed through tubes that had to be surgically implanted in my chest. My hair fell out and I was only able to sleep 2-3 hours a night for the entire month. How could that be a joyful experience?

The Lord was present by my side all the time. I woke up sometimes at night, and it was like he was hugging me. Wouldn't you do that with your kids if they were sick? The night times were sometimes the best. Prayer was special, His presence was real, the Scriptures were so alive. It was pure joy. I can't even remember the pain. All I remember is the peace of heart.

Let me close with how I started. The book of Philippians is about joy and contentment that overshadows any circumstance when a life is surrendered to Christ and living for Him. If you are not living for Him, then you need to settle that right away. It makes all the difference. Because you can be sure of one thing. You too will get this news one day or something like it. If the Lord is not resident and president of your life, you will face that day in fear and regret. But if you are surrendered to Him, you don't need to ever fear that day. He is a wonderful traveling companion.