

# The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

## A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

~ All articles written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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### Blessings in the Thorn



"7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, **a thorn in the flesh was given to me**, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." **II Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)**

There has been a lot of debate about this thorn in the flesh that Paul speaks about in this passage. Mostly, people want to

know what it was. However, I have always been more focused on what we can learn from Paul's experience with this thorn, whatever it was.

I am certainly not the apostle Paul and what I have experienced is certainly very different than what he went through. However, recent events in my own life have really brought this passage to life for me. I would like to share with you some of the blessings I have found from my own "thorn in the flesh". For about five months now, I have been dealing with some stomach pain. At first, it was very mild, but it became more intense and more frequent. The doctors have been having a hard time figuring out what is causing it. Over time, I learned that what helped the most was eating very light meals. This did not solve the problem, but it reduced the intensity and duration of my discomfort. As a result, I have lost about fifteen pounds in about a month and a half.

In trying to diagnose this problem, the doctor ordered a CT scan of my abdomen. This did not show anything that really explains my stomach problem, but it did reveal a tumor in my right kidney. The

urologist told me that they are ninety percent sure that it is cancer, but they will not know for sure without removing it.

My family doctor told me that they would probably have to take the entire kidney. This did not sound like good news to me. However, the urologist said that they can remove just the lower part of my kidney. This means a shorter hospital stay and a shorter recovery time. More importantly, it will leave me with two functioning kidneys. That is a much better outcome for my long-term health. Under the circumstances, I really could not have gotten better news than this.

The stomach issue will have to wait for this kidney trouble to be dealt with. I am writing this the day before the surgery is to take place. There may be more blessings to come, but there have already been quite a few that I would like to share with you.

1. While the stomach issue has been a daily frustration for months, it has probably saved my life. There have been no indications of any issues with my kidney.

Without the CT scan, we would probably not have known about this tumor until it became a much bigger problem.

2. I was able to get this all figured out and dealt with very quickly. The time from getting the CT scan to having the surgery will be exactly two weeks. In total, including recovery time, this whole incident should last less than six weeks. There may be some additional screening in the future but that is not any big deal.
3. While none of this is fun or desirable, it could have been so much worse. My family doctor told me about a former partner of his who had an almost identical situation. His tumor was even about the same size as mine. He decided to "keep an eye on it" for a while. While he was doing that, the cancer went to his brain and killed him. It was told to me as a cautionary tale, but it also shows how much worse things could be.
4. While surgery is never fun, this surgery will be much less radical than we originally expected. It will be robot assisted surgery which makes me grateful for all the technology that is available today. I am thankful that this is happening in 2025, not 1725, 1925, or even 2005. While they need to take part of my kidney, they do not need to take all of it. While I will be in the hospital overnight, I will not

be there for a week. While the recovery time is expected to be four weeks, it will not be the eight weeks that were originally expected.

5. I am writing this on my sixtieth birthday. While this is not the way I envisioned celebrating this birthday, I have much to be thankful for today. My father died of leukemia when he was only thirty years old. I have already lived twice as long as he did. I am very grateful for the time I have had so far.

I also have every expectation that this will only be a "bump in the road" for my health. The truth is that I have been pretty healthy overall for the sixty years that I have been on this earth. I have absolutely nothing to complain about there. There are so many people who cannot say the same thing. The Lord has really blessed me in this area. Up until now, I could say that I have all my original body parts including my appendix and tonsils. I have never had to spend a single night in the hospital. God has been so good to me.

6. Though my phone has been "blowing up" for the last few days, it has certainly reminded me of just how many people are praying for me and supporting me. I am so thankful for my family and friends but most especially for my many brothers and sisters in Christ. Our bond

is far deeper than anything in this world. We are united in the blood and body of Christ for all of eternity.

I am incredibly thankful that we have a God who cares that we can pray to, and He hears and answers those prayers. I am also incredibly grateful to all my Christian brothers who have been praying. I simply have not been able to keep up with all the messages, phone calls, etc. It is almost overwhelming. It helps me to understand what David said about his cup running over.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; **My cup runs over.**" **Psalms 23:5 (NKJV)**

7. All of this has caused me to consider more carefully the hope we have in heaven. There is no reason at all to expect that this will lead to my death. However, if it does, I have someplace better to go. I certainly do not have a "death wish", but I am looking forward to that heavenly home for all of eternity with the Lord. While I would be very saddened to say goodbye to family and friends here, I have many family members and friends waiting for me in that land "beyond the sunset". I do look forward to seeing all of them again. I do not want to suffer in this life, and I want my family to be

taken care of, but I am not afraid to face the “valley of the shadow of death”. That confidence has nothing to do with my own righteousness. It has everything to do with my faith in Jesus and His blood. It is His righteousness that I am counting on for my salvation.

soon to look for the cause. The prayers of so many brothers and sisters continue to be very much appreciated. God is good!!!

Nobody, including myself, wants to find out that they may have cancer and will need surgery. But amid this “thorn in the flesh”, there is still a great deal to be thankful for. I should be completely recovered in time for the Thanksgiving holiday, but this year I am beginning the celebration early. I am already celebrating the goodness of God and thanking Him for all His wonderful blessings, even “in the thorn”.

Praise the Lord!!! Praise the Lord!!! Hallelujah!!! Praise His Name!!!

### Update

President Carter’s surgery went very well, and he was able to come home the next day. The tumor that was removed was malignant (cancerous), but they do not believe that it has spread. They did find a nodule on his lung that they do not believe is cancer. He will have to have some scans going forward to verify that there is no cancer remaining. He is recovering very well but still tires easily. He has been in the office and is getting stronger every day. Now that the kidney tumor has been taken care of, the doctors can once again focus on the stomach pain and hopefully find a solution for that. He expects to have an endoscopy sometime