

I had a neighbor named Julian that lived a few doors down on our street in Durham. One day I found out that his mother, Julie, who had cancer was moving in with him for awhile. She was not doing well, and Julian was going to get her some good medical care at Duke Hospital.

Julie was in the late stages of breast cancer which had metastasized to her bones. She was having problems with her leg, hip, ribs, skull, and sadly, was having her teeth pulled because her jaw couldn't hold several of them any more.

I started to visit her, and offered to take her to her Dr. appointments. We would visit, and share our faith, and share the music which God had given each of us. She was a country singer, and even after she had gotten cancer, she had pushed through and recorded three tapes of Country Christian music. Her voice was so soothing when she sang, just like when she talked.

I shared with her my more contemporary songs, which she enjoyed immensely. We had many short visits and little lunches over the next few weeks. Then, I needed to leave for a trip to Nashville with the Gospel Music Association. It was called the Gospel Academy.

And while I was there, I kept thinking about Julie, and thinking about why God was allowing her to suffer so much when she was such a faithful servant of His. My mind kept going to the Psalms, especially, Psalm 119, which talks about being faithful to God through affliction. And it comforted me to read of how much confidence the writer received from the steadfastness of God in his life.

*"In faithfulness you have afflicted me,  
May your unfailing love be my comfort  
according to your promise to your servant." Ps 119:15-16*

*"Before I was afflicted, I went astray,  
But now I obey your word." Ps 119:67*

*"Turn to me and have mercy on me,  
As you always do to those who love your name." Ps 119: 132*

*"My soul is weary with sorrow;  
Strengthen me according to your word." Ps 119:28*

*May your unfailing love come to me, O Lord,  
Your salvation according to your promise;  
Then I will answer the one who taunts me,  
For I trust in your word.  
Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth,  
For I have put my hope in your laws." Ps 119:41-43*

The writer is reminding God of the promises He has made. As if God needs to be reminded. And he pledges over and over again, to believe in God's goodness, to trust in his love and hope in the future. Even if we don't receive the healing we so desperately want, God ministers to us, and nurtures us with his spirit, and oftentimes through the family of believers.

As He said to Paul when Paul had prayed three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed, God responded with "My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness."

Julie is back home in Indiana now, and she is still struggling with her health. But, God is giving her the strength to go on. Day by day, he sustains her and ministers to her. And her heart responds with love for God, and for so many whom her life has touched in a meaningful way.