

Dear pastor John,

February 7, 2015

Every time I see my name on the prayers' list in North Shore Community Church's bulletin, I wanted to say "thank you" to you. But every time when the "thank you" came to my mouth, I could not let it come out of my mouth. I feel just saying "thank you" is not enough to express my appreciation. But I don't know what else I should say to add to "thank you" would be good enough to express my full appreciation. For many weeks, I have been thinking how to solve this difficulty, just now, I found the solution, that is to share with all of you my testimony:

It was in January 2014 that I began to cough, and the cough turned out to be quite unusual. The doctor's initial diagnosis was bronchitis, and I was given oral medication and nebulizer treatment. The progress toward improvement, however, was so slow that my wife and children began to suspect that my coughing was caused by something more serious. My daughter then arranged for me to go through a number of medical examinations. After repeated X-rays, CAT scans and PET scans, it was finally discovered that I had a 3-centimeter tumor growing in my left lung. Three thoracic specialists carefully reviewed the results of my tests and all recommended that the tumor, malignant or benign, should be surgically removed. On July 30, I had the surgery done at St. Francis Hospital. The hospital was picked by my daughter, and she also made sure that the surgeon and all the medical staff involved in my surgery were among the best of her former colleagues.

I have heard that it is not uncommon for lung cancers to remain undiagnosed until the late stages, simply because the early symptoms are often overlooked without thorough medical tests. In the amazing providence of the Lord Jesus, my tumor was detected early and removed in a timely manner. The Lord has never ceased to show me His wonderful grace and mercy for the past 80 years of my life. Now, once more, He surrounds me with His loving kindness. How can I not praise and worship Him with all my heart?

On September 9, 2014, my daughter took me to see Dr. Kenneth Ng, an oncology expert. Dr. Ng's family and my family both came from Canton, China, and he is a Christian, too! He was friendly and professional at the same time, explaining everything to me in detail. Since the tumor had affected a nearby structure in my lung, the diagnosis was stage II lung cancer. Dr. Ng told me that the cancerous tumor and the possibly affected upper lobe of my left lung had both been removed during the surgery, however, some cancer cells may still be lurking somewhere in my lung. The risk of a relapse is about 50%, as explained by Dr. Ng, and chemotherapy could reduce that risk down to 40%. Dr. Ng continued to inform me in a comforting voice that nowadays the advances in chemotherapy had basically minimized the side effects of the treatment.

Knowing that he is a Christian (from what I can sense, he is not just a nominal Christian), I said to Dr. Ng, “I have given my life to God. The purpose of living for me is to fulfill the will of the Lord. I’ve celebrated my 80th birthday. Now I’m running the last 10 meters of my 100-meter race, just wishing to dash towards the finishing line to win the prize.” Dr. Ng maintained his opinion from his professional perspective that chemotherapy would be helpful to me, and I told him that I would need to pray about it.

After I got home, I brought this matter before the Lord. I know my life is in the hand of the Lord – the cancer cannot take one day from my life, and chemotherapy would not add one day to it. The frequent doctor and hospital visits in the past nine months had hindered me from serving the Lord. Now, I wouldn’t even want to consider the time and energy consuming chemotherapy. But when I brought the decision before the Lord in prayer, He lifted me out of my own rationality and led me into His wonderful light through His divine nature. I began to realize that God had used the nine months that I didn’t work for Him to start a deeper work in me. I looked back and reflected on all the things that had happened to me since the end of last year. Indeed, those things had led me to know Christ more intimately and to encounter His love in a more profound way. It was a wonderful experience to me like never before!

I can recount many recent experiences of God’s amazing grace, but I will just share with you one of them. After my surgery, the anesthesiologist inserted a tube to continuously infuse anesthetic into my wound to relieve my pain. When the tube was removed, I began to take a type of painkiller for pain relief. However, a few days after I returned home from hospital, the painkiller stopped working. Instead of switching to a stronger pain medicine, which may lead to serious side effects, I decided to endure the pain without any medication. One late night, the seemingly never-ending pain had really intensified beyond what I could tolerate. “O Lord!” I could do nothing but cry out to the Lord. Just as I was calling on His Name, the mercy and power of the Lord came upon me. The amazing power of God instantly transformed the “negative energy” from my agonizing pain into “positive energy”. The pain did not disappear, but the distress caused by the pain was turned into joy. The Lord caused me to remember His cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He suffered the excruciating pain of the cross for me. He became my substitute, taking the punishment that should have been mine. If not for Christ, I would be forsaken by God eternally, a punishment far beyond a mere physical pain. Our Lord Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins by giving up His life, and then He was raised from the dead. Now He sits on the throne of God as the sovereign King. Just as Jesus said, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” (John 14:20) Because of His wondrous love and mighty power, I am no longer condemned, but become acceptable before God. Not only that, I am now a partaker with Christ Himself of His crown and

throne. And can it be that I should gain?! At that moment, springs of joy welled up in my heart. O Lord, I am willing to let your wondrous love continue its work in me without any hindrance! With no more hesitation, I asked my daughter to call Dr. Ng, telling him my decision to receive chemotherapy.

Thank you to everyone who prayed for me and the Lord has answered your prayers! He has given me grace upon grace, strength upon strength. He keeps my spirit completely unharmed, even as my body was attacked by cancer, so I can claim victory in the triumph of Jesus Christ. Besides a heartfelt thank you for your intercession, I would also like to share with you my recent health situation. Please continue praying for me as I face these challenges.

My chemotherapy began on September 19, and the treatment consists of four three-week cycles. I have been experiencing side effects such as dizziness and weakness since my first chemo. In the meantime, my blood pressure has been found to be severely elevated for several times since October 6 (it once went as high as 251/124 mmHg), and twice I was rushed to the ER at the doctor's advice. The doctor has not yet found the cause, but ordered me to rest and stay away from anything that may be physically or mentally straining. After much consideration and at the persuasion of my family, I decide to temporarily set aside my service in ministry to have ample rest at home until the doctor gives me permission to resume normal activities.

It is a real pain for me not being able to serve the Lord and serve my brothers and sisters at church. On the other hand, I am fully aware that I should first take responsibility of my health, in order to return to serve in ministry with a robust body, mind and spirit. I think that is also what I owe to the many brothers and sisters who have prayed for my recovery.

In the depths of His love and mercy, the Lord allowed certain things to happen to me for my benefit. Through things that are seen as unfortunate by the world – the surgery to remove the tumor as well as the upper lobe of my left lung, the subsequent chemotherapy and seriously elevated blood pressure – the Lord draws me closer to Him, helps me grow more dependent on Him, and leads me into a deeper union with Him. As I face new challenges, I believe that the Holy Spirit will continue teaching me how to keep a grateful and joyful heart so that I can enjoy the amazing love and power of Christ.

May the Name of the Lord be glorified in you and me.

Your brother in Christ,

David Cheung (Betty Cheung's dad)