

REFLECTIONS

November 23, 2008

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Giving Thanks

Through the cracked doorway the hall lights cast a shadowy glow into my room. The quiet around me was sometimes disturbed by muffled sounds from the nurses' station. I was alone with the anticipation of what tomorrow might bring. "It's just you and me, Lord," my mind uttered almost aloud. I knew God heard me because I felt his presence. And I was neither alone nor afraid.

The surgeon's knife would reveal the extent of my disease, but during those moments alone in my hospital room I knew God had given me the strength to endure whatever was before me. I felt his peace.

I will be quick to confess how blessed my life has been. Born in America, eyes to see, ears to hear, home for shelter, parents who loved, friends that care, children with health, grandchildren that love back—these are true blessings from God. But sometimes I must remind myself that in times of loss, or during economic hardship like those of today that these are blessings too.

Sometimes it helps to step back from the things that make life good to see how the hard times have been shaped into blessings as well. How much stronger we are from them; how much they prepare us for the next hardship or to help someone else through one of theirs. We are blessed by how much we grow during those difficult times. In those moments of helplessness, what a blessing it is to feel God's presence—to know He is there when no one else is. That's how I remember the night alone in a hospital room.

With a surgeon's knife God's grace healed my disease. I am well. Now each day is one of thanksgiving. I celebrate the blessings of a loving wife, a comfortable home, and a close family. But I also give thanks for that night in a hospital bed when no one was there but me and my Lord. It was a time that God called me by name and reshaped my life with lessons to long remember—suffering strengthens the resolve, sternness heightens the gentle, and helplessness reveals the presence of God.

We are blessed by some of life's greatest joys; and we are also blessed by some of its toughest lessons. For them all let's "*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*"¹

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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¹ (Psalm 118:1, NIV)

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