

Tested in the Furnace of Affliction

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.” ~ Isaiah 48:10

I have often heard people say, “You don’t have a testimony until you’ve been tested.” Well, my friends, God has tested me, and now I do have a testimony and want to share it with you.

God’s testing of me initially began at the age of 42 with the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis. Now, at the age of 78, He continues to test me through my afflictions. From January – July, 1985, I argued with God over this diagnosis and still remember my precious mom’s words, “Rachel, you can sit down and cry all you want, but when you get back up, you are still going to have RA.” On a Thursday night in July before I started teaching an American literature course at Wingate University, I reached my place of total surrender to God’s will for my life and prayed for the Holy Spirit to help me endure my affliction and use it to bring glory and honor to Him.

In summer school courses, we usually do two weeks work during each week. So on every Friday, my students either had a test or wrote an essay. I brought homemade cookies, sodas, and lit a candle. On the assignment instruction sheet, I wrote “Life is a celebration, just waiting for someone to light the candles.”

I have battled RA (“Arthur”) for 36 years, have been hospitalized 3 times for pneumonia, am a 30-year malignant melanoma survivor, have battled 2 lung diseases: pulmonary hypertension and interstitial lung fibrosis for the past 13 years, have been on oxygen at night for 13 years, experienced acute kidney failure in 2013, and suffered an ischemic stroke on August 12, 2016, which paralyzed the left side of my vocal cord and left me with a soft voice. I now wear a loop recorder implant above my heart to check for AFIB, and a Gore-Tex implant on the left side of my vocal cord to aid my swallowing.

God continues to test me through my physical afflictions: June 15, 2020, diagnosed with scoliosis; September 18, 2020, stage 4 esophageal hiatal hernia, repaired laparoscopically; November, 2020, COVID-19; December 12, 2020, hospitalized with unexplained nausea and vomiting; fell January 30, 2021, broke my clavicle & cracked 3 ribs; March 18, 2021, hospitalized with unexplained nausea and vomiting; August 30, 2021, diagnosed with osteomalacic (bone infection), resulted in the amputation of the pinky toe on my right foot; and September 23, 2021, medication changed to Omeprazole.

But through it all, God has sustained me, has built my trust in Him, and has blessed me with immeasurable joy! God has been good to me. I have learned to trust Him because I know He wants to give me good gifts.

Some of these gifts are my family, my friends, my students (48 years as a Christian educator), my church family, my happy heart, my joy, but most of all the presence of the Holy Spirit and the gift of eternal life. When I am battling my physical afflictions, my prayer always is, “God, help me. I know You will.” God has taught me many lessons during my journey: He loves me, is faithful to me, honors my faithfulness, takes care of me, gives me joy, and brings people into my life to bless me. I thank God for His goodness to me and give Him all blessings, glory, honor, love, praise, and thanks. You, too, may have His gifts of courage, joy, and eternal life.

God has created us to have a relationship with Him and has asked us to share this gift with others. If there has never been a time in your life when you have asked God to come into your heart, change your life, and give you eternal life, then now is the time. You may pray this prayer of salvation based on Romans 10:9-10, to God, alone or with others:

Dear Father God,

I know I have sinned and have not lived my life to honor You. I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son, that He died on Calvary’s Cross, and that He rose again on the third day for me to have eternal life. I repent of my sins, ask Your forgiveness, and ask You to come into my heart to be my LORD and Savior. Help me to live a life that brings glory and honor to You. Amen.

If you have prayed this prayer and have been saved, please share this information with a loved one or with a friend. We can be assured that after our time on earth, we will spend eternity together worshiping and praising our Holy Lamb. I also encourage you to begin studying God’s Word and find a Bible-based church where you may grow in your Christian walk.

May our LORD bless you, encourage you, and give you joy beyond measure. I love you, thank God for you, and am always praying for you.