

185. Walking Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death

By Jim & Linda Johnson

(Jim Johnson) About six or seven years ago I started realizing there were times that when I was eating fast, my esophagus would close down and not let food go down. I'd give it a rest and it would be fine. It would reoccur more frequently and Linda said, You need to go see your doctor. We met with our regular doctor and he said I needed to have an endoscopy, which meant they would go down with a camera and take a look and see what the problem was. He said while you're there, why don't you get a colonoscopy. When was your last one? I said I'd never had one. He said you're how old? I said I'm 73. He said you're supposed to start having them yearly after you're 50. I said, "Well, that's close." (laughter) We went to see the GI doctor. He went in and looked at my esophagus, did the colonoscopy. We figured we'd do both while we were under an anesthetic.

(Linda Johnson) We decided to go ahead and do both because he would be under general anesthetic for both procedures. His doctor came in as Jim was waking up from the anesthesia and said, "I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is the problem you were having with your esophagus was just a constriction of the esophagus. I've dilated the esophagus and seared a few lesions and everything should be fine there. The bad news is you have cancer." He went on to explain he had found a cancerous tumor inside the colon and would be sending Jim for a scan to see how far the tumor had progressed. He would then refer him to an oncology surgeon for surgery. I actually heard very little after the word, 'You have cancer.'

(Jim Johnson) I had the scan done. I met with the surgeon who explained that the tumor had not grown outside. It was still in the colon. It was small. He would do the surgery and have to take out about five inches of the colon. I would be in the hospital about five days and then rest for another two or three weeks. On February 27th (2019) I checked in and had the surgery done. The doctor removed the cancer, took out about five inches and sewed me back up. All the cancer was gone. They checked out all the lymph nodes and markers near it. Everything was negative. I was up and about the next day. The second day I started getting very weak, my stomach started churning and Daniel bring me a chair. My blood pressure went down.

(Jim had an issue arise at this point and they took care of it and he proceeded)

(Linda Johnson) By that evening his blood pressure began to crash and the doctors decided to take him back in to surgery to see what the problem was. Our youngest daughter, Christina, was at the hospital visiting when the doctor decided to take him into surgery. She and I went to the surgical waiting room as they took him to the operating room. At this time, it was about ten o'clock at night. I contacted our other children regarding their dad as Christina and I waited in the waiting room. As the hours went by and time began to get late, every time the door would open my stomach would jump. After four hours I finally saw his surgeon walk through the door. By now it was almost two o'clock in the morning.

The surgeon sat down with us with a heaviness on him that was visible. He began to explain that the resection he had done of the colon two days before had come apart and leaked fecal matter into Jim's body cavity causing his body to fill with infection, which is referred to as sepsis. His body had gone into septic shock. The doctor explained what he had done during surgery but then stopped and shook his head and told me, 'Your husband is very, very sick in critical condition and I am so, so sorry.' Those words were the enemy's weapons meant to be arrows directed straight to my soul to infect it with as much fear as possible. They were completely covered with the most toxic poison the enemy could dip them in hoping to penetrate as much fear into my soul as he could. Knowing that fear that breeds doubt is the power. It's the fear that breeds doubt of the power of our Savior. But it didn't work. I knew the Bible says to fear not and do not be afraid. Almost 350 times. It's one of the most referred to subjects in the entire Bible because fear is one of the deadliest weapons the enemy uses against us. Fear does so much harm and can be the difference between life and death.

Psalm 23:4: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me.

(Jim has another issue at this point and prayer is made for him)

I listened to the doctor very carefully and thanked him and asked him when we could see my husband. This is when the doctor had come into the waiting room to see Christina and I. We hadn't seen Jim yet and it had been four or five hours. I acknowledged that the situation was very serious and that we were in a battle but I had a supernatural peace and a confidence that overtook me. The thought that my husband might die never even entered my mind. I was completely calm and without fear. That was supernatural because that's what the doctors kept trying to put on me. It wasn't like I stood there and said, "No, I'm standing in the Lord." It just happened. It just happened because of what was already in my pantry. After another hour, Christina and I were finally let in to see him. He had been taken into the intensive care unit. Walking into that room, seeing him for the first time after surgery, Christina started to break down at the sight of her father hooked up to several life-support machines and intravenous lines. He had eleven different lines going into him. He was in a coma.

As Christina started to break down, I grabbed her hand and I told her, 'Pull yourself together. Your father's going to be fine.' It was a statement made by faith not by sight. But a statement I just knew to be true. My eyes saw the ventilator that was breathing for him and the dialysis machine that was hooked up to keep his kidneys alive and the feeding tube going into his stomach to bring him nutrition and the eleven different intravenous lines pouring medication and fluids into his body. But my soul knew that he was going to come through this. I know I was being protected from letting my mind go to a very different outcome. I now look back and recognize that I was protected by the full armor of God when I needed it the most.

Ephesians 6:13-17 (New International Version): ¹³ *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.* ¹⁴ *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your*

waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I had studied that for years but it never sunk in fully until I had to use it. I didn't just use it; it happened. It just happened. I was fully protected when that day of the evil came and was able to stand my ground because I had been putting on that armor of God for years. I had become proficient with every piece of the armor over the years. I knew the truth which was buckled around my waist. I had the breastplate of righteousness in place to protect me. I had my feet fitted with the Gospel, the Good News of peace that passes all understanding. I felt that peace and was able to stand strong even when it did not seem possible. I not only had the shield of faith to extinguish the flaming arrows from the evil one but I had become very proficient with it because I had used it on a daily basis for many years. I was very accustomed to it and had been well-trained in its use. I had also been well-trained in the importance of the helmet of salvation and all the authority that was given to me through that salvation. Most of all, I have learned how powerful the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God is and how to use that Spirit against the evil one.

Jim remained in the hospital for forty-five days, ten of which were spent in the intensive care unit. During that forty-five days, especially the ten days spent in the ICU, many battles raged on one after another. But my armor of God stayed in place and never failed me. Every day I used the sword of the Spirit, God's Word, proclaiming it with confidence, reading scripture after scripture out loud to my husband filling the hospital room with praise and thanksgiving for the Word regarding him. Using my shield of faith every time another bad report would try to come against his full recovery, my feet remained strong as I stood in the Gospel of peace knowing the victory was ours provided by what Jesus did on the cross.

(Jim Johnson) Being raised before all the new translations came about, I was raised with the King James. In verse fifteen of Ephesians six it talks about the preparedness and I think that's just what Linda has said – that we were prepared. Not knowingly but we were there. We had a pantry that was full. We just watched a cooking program and the first competition they had was just preparing things because they said if you're going to be a good cook, you've got to learn to prepare. If you're going to be a good person you've got to be prepared.

The other thing was in verse eighteen, it talks about praying always. As Linda just said, they filled the room with prayer. One of the things I've got to say thank you to our Pastor Arland. He came every day. He had the healing scriptures that he would read to me. I was out. I was in a coma. I was in New Orleans. I was on the Arizona border. I was trapped. Some bad people put me in a broken dumpster behind a Ralphs and there on the loading dock (laughter) was my pastor reading scripture to me (laughter). It was broken. He couldn't get me out but he was reading scripture to me. I knew that. He was there. But praying always and all you guys.

I remember during one worship time my phone rang. You guys were praising here and worshipping and wanted Linda and I to get involved with it and we knew you were praying for us, so I say thank you to each and every one of you.

(Linda Johnson) We filled the room always with prayer and with the word of God. Our kids can attest that when they would come in, their Dad wanted them to read scripture to him. He had the Psalm 91 card there. The kids would all stand there and read to him, besides the other healing scriptures that pastor would be reading every day. Anytime anyone would come in, that's what he wanted was to have them read scripture to him.

Our daughter-in-law was there one time and he said, 'Read Psalm 91' and she's like, 'Okay, uh-uh, something about ten thousand at the right hand and-and-and another thousand at the left hand' and he said, 'Here, just read it.' (laughter) He had his favorite scriptures that we all needed to read to him.

Reading God's Word I also experienced revelation early on in the first couple of days. As I was reading Psalm 23, I realized it says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." The word *shadow* jumped out at me. The Holy Spirit spoke to me that Jim was walking through the valley of the *shadow* of death. This was only a *shadow*. I was to fear no evil. That he was going to walk through this valley without harm. It was just a confirmation to me. As you read through God's Word you can have a scripture, the 23rd Psalm is so familiar to all of us. You can have read it over and over and over and then all of a sudden by revelation of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will just speak to you in a scripture, even if it's so familiar like He did here. This is just a shadow. Fear no evil. He told us that so many times. Fear not. Fear no evil. This is a shadow and he is going to be just fine.

I also experienced a peace that came because of the support and prayer that went out on Jim's behalf, prayer from so many of you, prayer from so many others and not just people praying but people truly contending for him on his behalf. And Pastor Arland who stood by his bedside came and visited almost every single day of those forty-five days. It strengthened us, praying God's Word. God's Word and the prayers of the righteous brought life to a dark situation. I know God heard all those prayers and saw the faith mixed with those prayers and stepped in to spare Jim's life. Forever I will praise Him and be eternally thankful for what He has done. As Jim spontaneously repeated when the intubation tube finally came out after a week. He said

(Jim & Linda Johnson together) Blessing, honor and glory will I sing.