



## A Sickness Unto Death

*Bless the Lord who crowns you with tender mercies (Psalm 103, NKJV).*

**T**oday is April 5, 2023 as I write this. Full moon. Grand River is rising. Predicted to go four feet over flood stage. Our house is on the river, though 10 years ago (during the 100-year flood), it was *in* the river.

The river, by the way, does have a personality. The raging anger of a bitter winter ice jam when you think the surge will bulldoze your house a full block downstream. Or the wave and smiling face as this summer grand river floats merrily downstream. But, in flood season the river doesn't care one whit whether it's driving past our house or driving right through it.

So, we get our kayaks out of storage and haul them a quarter mile up to dry land—flood season transportation. The other aggravation of the day is that for some bizarre reason I suddenly lost the email capability that I've enjoyed for nearly two decades.

A setback in transportation and communication, a mere aggravation but only in the broader scheme of things as I have come to realize.

Since last summer, I have been seriously ill and handicapped. I can now walk quite well—not the fast walking I'm used to, but tolerable for a 77-year-old woman. My right hand is partially paralyzed, though I am capable of typing at a very slow speed of about fifteen words per minute.

After suffering a fractured pelvis last July while helping my husband John with a construction project at our little shop, I contracted a case of sciatica so bad that it required three injections before I could say goodbye to my wheelchair.

Then it was Covid 19 and a three-week quarantine. One thing after another, finally confined to a hospital, a psychiatric facility, another hospital, and an infirmary. Diagnoses ranged from a UTI to bipolar. Bottom line, I was a mess.

My slow recovery began only after I was discharged and released into John's care in

December. I couldn't walk, take care of bathroom duties or eat. I was sent home with a feeding tube, plenty of diapers, and a hospital bed.

Charge me with bias if you choose, but there has never been a caregiver that could even be compared with John. I was telling a friend who commented that she knew her husband would never have done that.

What I learned today about my condition, however, was nothing short of shocking. I learned

**My slow recovery began only after I was discharged and released into John's care... home where I was given back the gift of life. Truly the gift of life.**

I was but a hair's breadth from death.

I casually asked son Carlton if he ever thought I might die while I was hospitalized. The question baffled him.

*Didn't you know how bad things were?*

It turns out that, as my guardian, he was twice called in by doctors for consultation. Their reasoning: I was 77, terminally ill, not eating, saying to staff that I wanted to die, and occupying a hospital bed someone else would need.

They had decided to remove life supports and have me transferred to hospice. I can't even imagine Carlton's outrage. Absolutely, categorically, emphatically, *no*. He would never under any circumstances permit them to just let me die. *How dare you!*

Days later I would be transferred to an infirmary. Then two critical things happened. Staff at the infirmary had me walk, holding onto parallel bars. I slipped, paralyzing my right hand.

On the positive side, they trained John how to care for me at home—home where I was given back the gift of life. *Truly, the gift of life.* Crowning me with tender mercies to the uttermost. □

—Ruth Tucker